Funded by
UK Government

West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan

Annex B: Background and Method

May 2023

Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce

Contents

Overview: West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP Research 3

Project Governance 3

Engagement With West Midlands Combined Authority 5

Summary of Research 6

Priority Growth Cluster Focus Groups 7

Sample and Methodology 7

Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices and Aerospace (including manufacturing of alternative fuels) 11

Logistics and Distribution 17

Health Tech and Med Tech 24

Professional and financial services and supply chain 30

Modern and low carbon utility and manufacturing of future housing 40

Supplementary Roundtables 47

Sample and Methodology 47

Supplementary Roundtable 1 48

Supplementary Roundtable 2 50

Supplementary Roundtable 3 54

Supplementary Roundtable 4 56

Provider Roundtables 58

Sample and Methodology 58

Provider Roundtable 1 59

Provider Roundtable 2 62

Provider Roundtable 3 66

Provider Roundtable 4 70

Employer and Provider Priority Sessions 73

Sample and Methodology 73

17th March: Have Your Say: West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP Priorities 74

Priority Growth Cluster Priority Feedback Focus Group 78

Employer Surveying 82

Sample and Methodology 82

Analysis 84

Meaningful Engagements 172

Sample and Methodology 172

Analysis 172

High Level Curriculum Mapping 185

Overview: West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP Research

Following extensive mapping of existing research and data to avoid duplication (as outlined in Annex A), the West Midlands and Warwickshire (WMW) Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) gathers both quantitative and qualitative insights into the strategic priorities and digital and green skills needs across the sectoral composition of the regional business community, from over 1000 engagements with employers operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire between 10th January and 31st March 2023.

Project Governance

To ensure that the West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP is developed and implemented in a genuine, collaborative and meaningful way for the benefits of the employers, educators and stakeholders in the area it represents, the project convened a robust Operational board comprising of representatives from the below organisations.

This Operational Board has to date, informed the strategic direction of the project, advised on research approaches and methodologies and shared insights on research findings and proposed responses as the LSIP has progressed. With the exception of Birmingham City Council, which was engaged in the Operational Board from May 2023, following withdrawal of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (as part of managed closure of the organisation), the below organisations were engaged throughout the development of the WMW LSIP. These organisations were invited as representatives of a cross section of stakeholders involved in the provision of post-16 technical education and training and engaged with the community on this agenda.

Operational Board Membership

- Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce
- Black Country Chamber of Commerce
- The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
- Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
- Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (*resigned 2nd May 2023*)
- Birmingham City Council (*from May 2023*)
- Aston University (on behalf of the HE sector in the West Midlands and Warwickshire)
- West Midlands Provider Network
- Colleges West Midlands
- Warwickshire Skills Hub
- West Midlands Regional Economic Development Institute
- Careers and Enterprise Company
- Make UK
- Warwickshire Colleges Group
- Department for Work and Pensions Job Centre Plus

Frequency of Communications

Virtual meetings of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan Operational Board were convened on:

18th November 2022

13:00-13:10 Welcome from the chair (Raj Kandola, Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce) and introductions

13:10-13:25 Overview of employment and skills in the West Midlands and WMCA research and activities, (particularly in regard to digital and green skills) – Dr Fiona Aldridge, Head of Insight - Economic Delivery, Skills and Communities, West Midlands Combined Authority

13:25-13:40 Q&A Discussion (delivery plan, timelines)

13:40-13:55 Update on the WM LSIP, delivery plan and focus - Corin Crane, Chief Executive, Coventry & Warwickshire Chambers of Commerce

13:55-14:05 LSIP trailblazers and our approach to the secondary research so far –Emily Stubbs, Senior Policy and Projects Manager, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

14:05-14:25 Q&A Discussion (delivery plan, focus of the secondary research, further research we need to review)

14:25-14:30 Summary of actions and close

3rd March 2023

Agenda

10:30-10:40 Welcome from the chair (Raj Kandola, Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce) and introductions

10:40-10:50 Update on the WM LSIP research and key themes emerging from qualitative research, Emily Stubbs, Senior Policy and Projects Manager, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

10:50-11:05 Q&A discussion (Are the key themes resonating with what board members are hearing? Are we missing anything?)

11:05-11:20 Phase 2- App and website development, Sean Rose, Head of Policy & Chamber Talent Lead, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce

11:20-11:30 Q&A discussion (Feedback on phase 2 plans and how we share our data in a constructive way)

11:30 Summary of actions and close

24th March 2023

Agenda

10:30-10:35 Welcome from the chair, Raj Kandola, Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

10:35-10:45 Update on the WM LSIP research and draft priorities, Emily Stubbs, Senior Policy and Projects Manager, Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce

10:45-11:15 Feedback on draft priorities & Q&A discussion (Are we missing anything? Do Operational Board members have other suggestions/recommendations?)

11:15-11:30 Feedback and Q&A discussion (How do we effectively embed the LSIP locally?)

11:30 Summary of actions and close

Operational Board members were also consulted via email and individual virtual meetings in regard to research questions and scripts (the final versions of which are presented below), and to provide feedback on the final WMW LSIP report.

Engagement With West Midlands Combined Authority

The West Midlands Combined Authority have been a key partner of our LSIP throughout application and the subsequent delivery of the project. Early discussions focused on accepting the role of the ERB in setting out employer needs and the WMCA ,through their devolved status, would act as a responder and help galvanise the provider response to the LSIP.

- Senior contacts at the WMCA commented on and supported the application process and ensured that the proposal sat comfortably with the emerging skills devolution deal
- Regular meetings between the ERB designated officer, Corin Crane, and senior contacts at the WMCA
- Place on LSIP Operational Board
- Updates by Corin Crane to key WMCA strategic groups including Economic Growth Board, Economic Impact Group and Skills Advisory Board. Agreement for Corin Crane to present final report to Skills Advisory Board.
- 3 One to One Calls and 2 Online Meetings during the LSIP development to talk through key issues and help shape research, early priorities and final report
- Detailed feedback submitted at early design stage and final report

Feedback from the WMCA has been extensive and very useful. They have been the most engaged and influential of all strategic partners. A majority of feedback has been adopted by the LSIP operational group and built into the report. In particular there were 3 main areas that had most influence:

a) Although our original application had set out the key themes of digitalisation and net zero as cross cutting themes that would apply to all sectors, on the advice of the WMCA we focused on the key clusters set out in their Plan for Growth Strategy. This allowed us to maximise secondary research collected for this strategies development, but also make sure our LSIP didn't duplicate existing activity.
b) On advice from the WMCA, we also focused on Leadership and Management Skills and built in questions around T-Levels and Bootcamps into our questionnaires. We also designed the questionnaires to dig deeper into issues around 'soft skills' to offer more value in our data to the WMCA team.
c) At final report stage we redesigned the report to focus primarily on three main skills areas and taking emphasis away from careers support so as not to cut across Careers Devolution discussions.

Although most areas of debate have now been resolved, there is one are that will need continued consideration. With part of our LSIP in a non-Devolution area and the other within the WMCA Devolved Geography there are several areas in Years 2 and 3 of the LSIP where we will need a strong focus. Warwickshire has less powers and budgets to action the LSIP, whilst not diminishing ongoing devolution discussions for the WMCA. Careers, Flexible AEB budgets and greater focus on net zero and digitalisation are examples of this.

Summary of Research

Together with the Operational board, the WMW LSIP developed a research methodology which yielded over 1,000 engagements with employers – 990 with industry employers, excluding stakeholders and FE providers, and 1,088 with total employers - through:

- Focus groups with 'Priority Growth Clusters' identified by the West Midlands Combined Authority
- Supplementary focus groups with employers and partner employer representative organisations
- Roundtable discussions with Independent Training Providers, Colleges and Universities engaged in Post-16 Technical Education and Training
- Employer and provider priority sessions, gathering responses to some of the preliminary findings of the WMW LSIP research
- Surveying of employers intended to reflect all sectors of the local economy
- One to one conversations with senior representatives of employers (referred to as 'meaningful engagements')

Please note: the term 'FE providers' or 'providers' is used throughout the WMW LSIP for simplicity and should be taken to include FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Private Training Providers and any other organisations delivering statutory and non-statutory post-16 education and training.

Many employer engagements were conducted anonymously, or with optional anonymity offered to employers, however, steps were taken to ensure that businesses engaged in surveying were not engaged in meaningful engagements, and that employers (and FE providers) did not partake in multiple roundtables or focus groups (excluding feedback sessions). It is therefore estimated that a minimum of 887 employers were engaged in research in Stage 1 of the WMW LSIP.

What follows is an overview of this research and key findings.

Through further collaboration with regional stakeholders, including the West Midlands Combined Authority and providers of post-16 technical education and training, the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan has been developed. This included high level curriculum mapping among colleges in the West Midlands and Warwickshire, also included below.

Priority Growth Cluster Focus Groups

Sample and Methodology

Through online focus groups, the West Midlands LSIP gathers qualitative insights into 'Priority Growth Clusters' identified by the West Midlands Combined Authority, in which the West Midlands is considered to have a comparative regional advance and attract confident business investment. It is proposed in the Plan that the region may be able to stimulate levels of growth in these clusters above those currently forecasted.

The Plan for Growth states that additional GVA of between £750m and £1bn will need to be generated over the period for the West Midlands to be the fastest growing region outside of London, while the additional gap to match London is £2.7-3.1bn. The base scenario of the Plan for Growth states that the WMCA expects targeted interventions in the eight primary clusters to deliver additional GVA of £2.9-3.2bn within the West Midlands, raising the regional growth rate above the UK average and delivering 40,300-44,800 additional jobs. [1]

The eight primary clusters identified by the Plan represent between 10.0-15.5% of current employment concentrations in the Black Country, Greater Birmingham and Solihull and the Black Country, but the Plan proposes that additional growth in the mid-to-high-value clusters in the region will generate direct, indirect, and induced gains in prosperity to be shared across communities.[2]

Chamber-led focus groups and one to one calls with employers between 10th January and 9th February 2023 sought to further understand and compare the green and digital and leadership and management skills needs of the priority growth clusters identified by the WMCA and relevant to Warwickshire where clusters are recognised to represent medium-to-very-high regional strengths. These are as follows. Please note, smaller clusters (by current total employment), where deemed appropriate, have been combined with others to ensure that the current size of those clusters represented by each focus group feasibly allows for identification and engagement of relevant employers:

- Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices and Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuel) (combined)
- Logistics and distribution
- Health Tech and med tech
- Professional and financial services and supply chain
- Modern and low carbon utility and manufacturing of future housing (combined)

These areas cover seven of the largest (by current total employment) of the eight priority growth clusters identified by the WMCA Plan for Growth. They are each ranked by the Plan for Growth as representing Medium to Very High regional strengths (relative the UK average) and Medium to Very High relative growth potential.

An eighth priority growth cluster, creative content production and gaming, has been excluded from this in-depth research, due to its representation of a relatively low regional strength (compared to

[1] West Midlands Plan for Growth, West Midlands Combined Authority, 2022
[2] West Midlands Plan for Growth Framework, EY, 2022 (unpublished)

the UK average and other priority growth clusters, as per the Plan for Growth) and concerns about accessing enough businesses to make a statistical inference.

Focus groups were undertaken with these clusters in particular due to a need for further exploration into these emerging areas, as recognised in conversations with stakeholders during the mapping of existing evidence conducted at the beginning of the WMW LSIP process (presented in Annex A).

For the purposes of focus group participation, these clusters have been defined in their broadest terms, with inclusion of supply chains, in recognition that the supply into these clusters is of critical importance.

These focus groups each followed a script designed by the Chambers, with the support of the WMW LSIP Operational Board.

In total, 59 employers participated in these focus groups and/or one on one calls following the same script, distributed between the priority growth clusters as per the table below.

Priority Growth Cluster Group	**Number of Focus Group Participants**
Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices and Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuel)	9
Logistics and distribution	10
Health Tech and med tech	7
Professional and financial services and supply chain	22
Modern and low carbon utility and manufacturing of future housing	11

Focus Group Script

5 minutes: Welcome and introductions, Chair

- Chair to set out the background to the research and confirm informed consent for participation
- Chair to clarify recording arrangements and inform participants on the structure of the session

20 minutes: Introductions from participants and summary of business activity and general overview of business performance & looking ahead to challenges and opportunities

- Each participant to share a short update on their role, nature of the work their organisation specialises in and the area the business is based in and/or operates in, within the West Midlands region. Types of questions to be asked:
    - What are your plans for the next 12 months?
    - Are you looking at new markets?
    - Do you expect to grow or scale back operations?
    - Are you fully staffed?
    - What challenges are they seeing in the workforce to support growth/maintain productivity?

- What do they see as the skills implications of these challenges and opportunities.

30 minutes: Objective One: gather feedback from businesses on their current and future skills needs?

- Are you facing challenges as a result of the labour market?
- Are you facing skills challenges in your business?
- At what level in the business do they see skills challenges? (entry level, clerical, technical, management and senior management)
- In terms of job roles, where do you see the most demand both for now and in the future in your organisation and wider sector? (starting to think about the key skills required in the sector and gaps/future skills needs)
- Have you started to think about how your working practices in the business will need to change to reduce carbon emissions as we move to net zero and industry 4.0? What skills challenges will this present both for your current and future workforce?
- Are there particular skills you struggle to source within the local labour market or further afield (nationally or globally perhaps)? How will you plug those gaps moving forward?
- Have your skills needs been changed in any way by the impacts of Brexit, the covid-19 pandemic, legislative changes and/or the energy crisis? Which skills requirements will become even more pressing for your business in light of these developments?
- What are you currently doing or planning to do to meet any respective skills gaps? (e.g. investing in new technologies, emphasis on internally training or perhaps outsourcing activity)

30 minutes: Objective Two: gather feedback from participants on how existing post-16 technical education and training provision can be more agile and responsive to the needs of local businesses

- Are you aware of organisations that currently help businesses meet their skills needs?
- What links does your business currently have and what would you like to do more of, with training providers, colleges and/or universities?
- Do you currently work with schools, training providers, colleges and/or universities in regard to meeting the skills needs within your business? (Either through recruitment of new staff or up-skilling existing staff)?
    - Where yes:
        - What specific skills and skill levels has this been in regard to?
        - What model of training did you utilise? (e.g., apprenticeships, sector based work academy programmes, T levels)
        - Do you use short or long term courses?
        - Has this approach been successful in meeting the needs of the business?
    - Where no:
        - Have you considered doing so previously?
        - Would you consider doing so in the future?
        - What are the reasons why/why not?

- (Whether or not participating businesses currently engage with education and training) – Have you experienced any barriers in engaging with post-16 technical education and training (with schools, training providers, colleges, or universities)?
- How could existing post-16 technical education and training provision better suit the needs of your business? For example, would different models, locations, or length of training better support your organisation?
- What additional support from stakeholders (e.g., WMCA, Local Authorities, Government, Universities) would help organisations in your sector to make the most of post-16 education and training to develop the skills required for your business? (e.g. changes to funding mechanisms, business mentoring, support with skills needs analyses, support identifying appropriate training providers)

5 minutes: Summary and closing remarks

- Chair to summarise the main points discussed
- Chair to ask the participants their key ask of local skills provision in regard to skills requirements
- Chair to ensure respondents understand how information will be used and ensure consent for re-contact if needed
- Chair to make businesses aware of the work observers do in this sector/cluster and encourage them to get in touch with observers for support, if of interest.
- Thank you and close

Observations and recommendations from these focus groups and interviews are presented below. Where it may be beneficial, key themes of discussion are also outlined further.

Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices and Aerospace (including manufacturing of alternative fuels)

Focus Group 1

Date: 10th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 small machine component manufacturer
- 1 small specialist coating manufacturer
- 1 large automotive manufacturer
- 1 small to medium electric light vehicle organisation
- 1 small to medium renewable light vehicle organisation
- 1 small to medium battery technology and installation organisation
- 1 employer representative body representing regional aerospace businesses

Observations:

- Participating businesses require an increased pool of talent with broad engineering skills and more practical engineering experience than current apprenticeships offer. Organisations have appetite and ability to develop young people with base engineering skills with further, specialist skills in-house.
- Employers are experiencing significant challenges in attracting young talent to industry (particularly engineering and machine operation roles). There is a potential role for Employer Representative Bodies ERBs to engage young people better with all employment opportunities in the region, and interest in how T Levels could attract young people into technical education early (if delivered well).
- Most participating SMEs are uncertain about where to go for skills support.
- Participants place emphasis on the need for policy makers to support SMEs who play a critical role in local industry and are heavily reliant on skilled talent but frequently do not have significant resource to invest in training.

Recommendations:

- Engineering provision must focus on broad engineering skills and practical experience.
- More joined-up thinking is required by policy makers, to enable delivery of (a complex variety of) sustainable solutions to big Net Zero challenges in aerospace and automotive.
- It is proposed by participating firms that organisations (particularly SMEs) be funded to up-skill new manufacturing and engineering talent to tackle the issue of the aging workforce.
- Larger organisations want education providers to be able to deliver joined-up skills pathways to meet technical skills demands (they currently report having to piece together various components of available training to meet needs).

Key Themes:

Skills shortages

Several participants reported skills gaps 'across the board,' but all agreed that engineering (at all levels) is the biggest shortage, including design engineers, works engineers and planners. The aerospace sector additionally reports a need for more 'space skills' to enable automotive businesses to access the aerospace supply chain.

Component manufacturers report significant challenges attracting staff, in particular machine operators. They believe that there is a big gap for school/college leavers who want to become skilled machinists. In the past they regularly took on 23-24 year olds, but now are filling the same roles with older workers (aged 40+). While these individuals have more experience, the business is concerned about relying on an aging workforce and want the sector as a whole to develop better links with schools and colleges to encourage new talent to consider careers in manufacturing.

The large automotive manufacturer also shared concerns regarding pipeline talent and a lack of drive towards STEM and engineering in secondary schools in particular. This sentiment was echoed by the specialist coating manufacturer, who reported struggling to find scientists to work in their labs. While they are interested in potentially utilising apprenticeships, they struggle with where to send junior talent to gain the broad, practical engineering experience that they look for and can train in-house to perform niche functions. Several employers indicated that they would be interested in finding out about opportunities to engage in jobs fairs and support to upskill locally.

The SME machine component specialists and specialist coating organisation also both reported challenges, competing with wage demands, driven by high wages paid by those further up their supply chains and external economic factors, including labour shortages across the UK.

The representative body for regional aerospace organisations also raised concerns that while providers are doing brilliant work, more needs to be done to raise awareness of engineering careers.

The small to medium battery technology and installation organisation present is not struggling as a result of skills shortages currently but do require more electricians for solar installations and battery storage products. They also mentioned that as a smaller organisation they require multiskilled installation staff – roofers, ground workers and electricians. They are currently speaking with a number of providers about collaborative projects and potential placements, and how they can find people seeking to become multi-skilled.

The small to medium renewable light vehicle organisation raised an increasingly urgent need for joined up thinking on resilience, standards and supply chain issues, regarding post-EV life and recovery of materials used, and the skills required for all this to allow scaled production.

Low-carbon opportunities

Machine component specialists report years of development now coming to an end, enabling them to scale up supply of EV products. They report challenges finding additional EV customers but believe there are opportunities, with the UK leading the way in electric vehicle manufacturing.

They discussed that the transition towards EVs hasn't had a significant impact on workforce skills requirements; they are making slightly different steel and aluminium component parts but with the same skills.

The renewable light vehicle organisation reported delays in developing battery flywheel technology following a successful Innovate UK funded pilot, due to a shortage of engineers. While they are working with colleges and a local university to develop a cluster of expertise in the area in new energy technologies (including bio methane), they believe that much more could be done to build on this.

The large automotive manufacturer present discussed that they are currently re-skilling and up-skilling their existing workforce to manufacture electric vehicles (rather than carbon combustion).

The small to medium battery technology and installation organisation present outlined that though the business was founded to specialise in EV charge point installation, they have recently diversified into solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage, which they expect to be growth markets moving forward.

Interview 1

Date: 26th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- A large aerospace organisation

Observations:

- The aerospace industry has suffered greatly as a result of the covid-19 pandemic; a loss of staff during lockdown periods has has left significant skills shortages.
- Engineering and digital skills represent the most prominent current skills gap and future skills needs.
- Upskilling is also needed to navigate the innovation required to ensure the aerospace industry is on track with its net zero aims.
- Employers are prepared to engage more with schools and education providers to improve careers education and ensure that young people are informed about future opportunities in the industry.

Recommendations:

- The intervieww expressed concerns that early careers guidance does not pay sufficient attention to practical skills and basic workplace competences. It was recommended that better relationships need to be built between educators and employers to aid understanding of the skills that will be needed in future jobs.
- The technical skills that need to be prioritised mostly fall within the realms of digital and engineering.
- Communication and customer service skills should be emphasised in careers education due to their importance for many industries. Customer service courses in cabin crew training were cited as an example of best practice that should be replicated in the aerospace/aviation industries and in a variety of other sectors due to the versatility of such skills.
- Opportunities for employers to work with educators to provide job application support and career insights should be explored to help relieve the pressure on careers education leads.
- When imposing requirements on industries to innovate and to meet net zero targets, policy makers need to offer more support to help these be realised, in particular during the current economic downturn when businesses are navigating risks to their financial health and still recovering from losses due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Key Themes:

Staff shortages

The participant shared that 43% of their workforce was lost during the covid-19 pandemic, many of whom took up jobs in other sectors. At the time of interviewing, there were 160 live vacancies at the organisation and an urgent need to recruit 90 security officers by the summer peak travel period. The interviewee outlined some of the main obstacles to resolving staff shortages which included factors such as the nature of the work involving unsociable hours and there being more flexible and better-paying work options involving a similar skillset with the emergence of the gig economy.

Future skills needs for navigating innovation and net zero

The interviewee spoke about the increased automation of the aerospace industry which involves the usage of state-of-the-art machinery and technology, it was identified that digital and high-level engineering skills will be critical for the future of the industry. Digital skills will also be a priority given the transformation of security with the use of artificial intelligence. On the topic of net zero and sustainability, the aerospace industry is prioritising innovation in areas such as using waste cooking oils and hydrogen as jet fuel, which will require engineering skills.

Given the complexity of the skills needs in the industry, the interviewee expressed that it may be hard to recruit locally and that outsourcing may be the best option to resolve skills gaps. However, they remained keen to balance fulfilling skills needs with prioritising job creation for local people and growing local talent. Additionally, more support from the Government needs to be given to help realise the targets that are being set and in relation to net zero and innovating for the future of the industry.

Education partnerships

The interviewee's organisation works in partnership with a local college and a university but would like to develop closer relationships with other education institutions to ensure that employers have a degree of influence in earlier-stage careers education. Careers education should be employer-led to ensure that the skills needs of various industries are being effectively communicated to both educators and learners.

Interview 2

Date: 2nd February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A large machine tool manufacturer

Observations:

- Due to supply chain disruption, the business is looking to acquire smaller businesses from their supply chain over the next 12 months.
- The business reported facing recruitment challenges - which have been exacerbated by Brexit (skilled workers returning to their country of origin).
- Staff are reportedly headhunted by larger clients and the business will themselves approach those lower in the supply chain to find talent.
- The participant's business finds it harder to recruit more senior staff with technical skills (particularly with mechanical engineering skills).
- In terms of Net Zero, they've been impacted by higher energy prices but they can't specifically afford to implement net zero policies currently.
- In regards to digitisation, the business expects that they will need to upskill parts of the workforce depending on the technical needs of the requirements of their clients. Also, certain customers expect invoices to be paid digitally so they will need to upskill some back office staff).
- The Help to Grow Scheme has been very positive for them (they worked with Birmingham City University on utilising this scheme for their business).

Recommendations:

- The participant would like to see more emphasis on attracting people into engineering at level 2 and level 3 and raising awareness of what a career in engineering entails.
- They also see a role for Chambers of Commerce to bring together various stakeholders to facilitate upskilling talent to meet industry needs.

Logistics and Distribution

Focus Group 1

Date: 12th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 3 small to medium freight and logistics organisations
- 1 small specialist international trade advisory organisation
- 1 small to medium hospitality organisation

Observations:

- This sector has been greatly affected by recent challenges, namely Brexit and rising inflation and costs, which has made it difficult for other priorities such as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies to be realised.
- Businesses are struggling to establish a pipeline of strong future talent and have concerns about how individuals are being prepared by the education system to enter the workforce.
- Technology has become increasingly embedded into the logistics industry; therefore, companies are keen to upskill staff that are less accustomed to the digital world.
- For smaller firms, the time it takes to adequately train new hires presents a difficult task.

Recommendations:

- Participants believe that education providers need to place more emphasis on ensuring that learners are proficient in basic skills such as simple arithmetic, literacy, communication, teamwork.
- Small firms find it difficult to make contacts within education providers, not only to establish a pipeline of potential future employees but also to promote the benefits of working in the industry, and as such are keen to see organisations such as Chambers of Commerce host events to facilitate networking.
- A British Independent Freight Association (BIFA) scheme promoting the logistics industry to school leavers and graduates was praised, and it was recommended that more, similar initiatives would be beneficial.
- Upskilling workforces in basic IT literacy is considered key to the future of the industry.
- Re-introducing in-person courses, as opposed to training being predominantly online, is desirable.

Key Themes

Net zero and sustainability

Despite acknowledging the importance of being an environmentally and socially conscious business, participants indicated that implementing such practices can be challenging. It was mentioned that adverse economic circumstances have hindered companies' progress towards a more sustainable business model. This compounds existing obstacles that the logistics industry has faced due to Brexit and the resulting increased costs of doing business.

One participant from a small family-run freight and logistics business admitted to being confused about the definition of net zero and their understanding of how to implement it.

Recruitment difficulties

Many participants report having difficulties recruiting staff with an appropriate skillset to fulfil business needs, especially at entry level. A business owner of a small logistics firm with 15 staff stated that they most frequently experience recruitment challenges attempting to recruit apprentices and school leavers in the 16-19 age bracket. Sometimes, however, businesses find that it is necessary to invest in the recruitment process at entry level, for instance, when there are budgetary constraints for a role and a junior candidate with lower labour costs is required.

In terms of recruitment methods, one member of the group was very pessimistic about the use of jobs agencies, giving the example of their firm engaging with 7 recruitment companies, that yield very few promising results in terms of the candidates put forward. Employers are instead keen to take a hands-on approach to recruitment, especially at entry level, and have direct contact with schools and colleges.

Training

This focus group, predominantly of small local logistics companies, expressed concern about the quality of training that they can offer to new recruits. One participant suggested that complete training from scratch can take around three years, which is a time-consuming commitment for small employers in particular. On the one hand, it was said that online courses are not as effective as traditional forms of professional education at after-hours college sessions, and similarly, that very few university courses cover content that could provide background knowledge of the industry. Conversely, others suggested that 'on the job' training is sufficient so long as the candidate has transferable skills and 'common sense', thus placing less emphasis on concerns about the quality of formal 'classroom style' education. The panel indicated that to some extent, soft skills are lacking in entry level candidates, for example, email and telephone etiquette, basic literacy and arithmetic, effective communication, and that this causes some frustration for hiring managers who expect basic professional behaviours to have been embedded by educators.

Advancement of new technologies

Participants reported that the logistics industry has evolved over recent years due to the digitalisation of documentation and procedures, however, some of the workforce are said to lack understanding of the online world. One member mentioned that employees' ability to proficiently use digital systems can save companies from having to pay admin fees for the details to be processed by shipping line companies, therefore, the upskilling of employees in digital competences is a priority. Many participants also raised concerns about not knowing where to start in making use of new opportunities associated with digital marketing and data analytics.

Focus Group 2

Date: 16th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 employer representative body representing transportation and distribution businesses
- 1 specialist recruitment organisation

Observations

- The aging workforce in the logistics and distribution industry is a concern to the focus group participants, and the sector experiences difficulties recruiting young talent.
- Lack of local training will continue to be a barrier to entry to this industry if local policy makers do not address the funding constraints of FE colleges, which has reduced the number of courses on offer.
- In addition to the skills gap, other challenges faced by this industry include establishing a clear sustainability/net zero strategy, diversity and inclusivity, and presenting a competitive and desirable career path to jobseekers.
- SMEs are facing the largest challenges, for instance, in terms of being outcompeted with salaries and under-resourced for offering work experience.

Recommendations

- Replicate the model of short and flexible courses known as 'bootcamps' to make training more convenient and easily accessible to those with other commitments, especially where there are skills gaps in roles such as mechanics and technicians.
- To address difficulties in attracting young people to the sector, local stakeholders could hold careers events which would facilitate direct contact with employers and could provide the opportunity to undertake activities such as driving simulators.
- Part-time apprenticeships or similar forms of training would remove barriers to entering the sector.
- One participant suggested that the sector should consider utilising the skills of ex-Armed Forces personnel and re-training them with industry-specific knowledge to help address the skills gap.

Key themes

Limited availability of qualified workers

Participants expressed that the past two years have been difficult for the industry in terms of recruitment, which began with a shortage of HGV drivers that has now extended to coach drivers, mechanics, and technicians. Whilst the difficulty in recruitment appears to be widespread, the challenge is especially apparent at entry-level since logistics businesses are outcompeted in terms of salary by e-commerce multinationals and the gig economy.

Barriers to training

Reductions in FE colleges' budgets for running courses in the logistics and distribution industry have meant that there are fewer providers, making it more difficult to undertake training locally. It is therefore becoming more common for courses to require residential stays, which frequently places

barriers to entry for those with caring responsibilities. A member of the group highlighted the best practice of 'bootcamps' at level three can be completed alongside any existing work commitments.

Apprenticeships are a common route into the logistics and distribution industry, however the fact that it is not possible to offer this form of training on a part-time basis restricts entry to the profession for some individuals.

Upskilling

It was suggested that upskilling former Armed Forces engineers with commercial and regulatory knowledge would help to address the skills gap and recruitment challenges. The same was said for mechanics or those returning to work after a long absence, who require a degree of training in software. The above-mentioned 'bootcamps' are a potential means of implementing this.

Adapting to net zero

Participants admitted that the logistics and distribution industry is not on the same sustainability journey as other sectors. Key reasons cited are that the development of eco-friendly HGVs is very much in its infancy as there remain many questions about factors such as the type of fuel that will be used, and the weight and range of the battery. Greater progress has, however, been made in lighter vehicles such as vans.

Additionally, small businesses do not have the available funds to be able to buy electric or hybrid lighter goods vehicles with the aim of testing them. SMEs also rely heavily on the second-hand market when purchasing new vehicles due to budgetary constraints, therefore accessing eco-friendly vehicles will take several years.

The changing landscape of the industry

The industry has evolved in recent years, seeing the creation of roles that deviate from the traditional HGV driver, fork-lift truck driver, or warehouse operator. Some new jobs incorporate working within the industry on matters of sustainability, which are of greater interest to young people but do not remedy the current skills shortages in the most urgently essential roles.

It is also recognised that the lack of diversity in the industry needs to be addressed; specifically, one participant referenced that only 1% of HGV drivers are female.

National minimum wage increases, coupled with salary increases for drivers that were seen in 2021, have had an impact on employment costs in the industry. This has been offset to an extent by an appreciation in the cost of deliveries.

Finally, the increasing prioritisation of flexible working in other industries appears to have encouraged the logistics sector to consider how it can adopt similar changes. It was, however, acknowledged that adapting an industry that operates 24/7 to changes made by other sectors is not always possible.

Interview 1

Date: 26th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- An employer representative body representing freight organisations

Observations

- The interviewed organisation has developed their own apprenticeship in freight forwarding – open to all logistics firms – as well as a programme on a Freight Development Pathway – there's a shortage of entry level staff with customs experience.
- They have also set up an industry-specific network for young professionals to develop young talent in the sector.
- Freight organisations have been significantly challenged by Brexit; many did not have the technical expertise to adapt to the new customs system (CDS).
- The interviewee expressed positive sentiment about the Government's Ambassador Network for Logistics and 'Generation Logistics' - a scheme which aims to raise awareness of the sector.

Recommendations

- The interviewee expressed concerns that freight firms must do more to engage with education providers, such as schools and colleges.

Interview 2

Date: 9th February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A medium-sized transportation organisation

Observations

- The business has transitioned general haulage away from Europe post-Brexit to focus on UK provision, warehousing and pallet networks.
- The organisation has been significantly impacted by driver shortages, with many drivers returning to their country of origin during the covid-19 pandemic.
- The organisation previously utilised family relationships for pipeline talent, however, this has been impacted by new health and safety constraints (e.g., drivers can no longer can take family with them in cabs during summer).
- Increased compliance regulations are perceived to have made driving less attractive; previously, these jobs appealed to people who wanted to be on the road alone, now, the business is struggling with an ageing workforce and regular driver Certificate of Professional Competence regulations ('CPCs') requiring classroom training every 5 years are perceived to be driving drivers reluctant to engage in classroom learning to early retirement.
- Drivers were previously only required to have an HGV licence, however there are now greater compliance, training and health and safety requirements, and the organisation's pallet business is now B2C, so there are also more customer service requirements of drivers.
- The transition towards B2C deliveries has meant that drivers are now using e-pods for signatures and photos of delivery; this requires training, especially for older drivers.
- Prior to the covid-19 pandemic, the organisation started driver training school on premises with Telford College, however this was paused due to health and safety during the pandemic.

Recommendations

- Modular courses would be beneficial. Mandatory driver CPCs every 5 years (or annually) are currently only deliverable in 7 hour modules. Classroom learning for 7h is perceived to be unnecessary and the interviewee is concerned that drivers lose interest. Breaking down training into smaller modules and directing this more towards newer challenges in industry – e.g., customer services, safely delivering to home addresses, using e-pods - might be beneficial.

Interview 3

Date: 9th February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A small to medium food wholesale organisation

Observations

- Logistics is a difficult environment in which to employ people due to unsociable hours.
- There has been an increased demand for digital skills in the sector as a result of Brexit and the covid-19 pandemic. Drivers are also in short supply.

Recommendations

- More needs to be done to support ESOL, maths and IT capabilities among learners, as well as basic sales, purchasing and communication skills. The interviewee would also like candidates to have some awareness of food supply chain and access to regulatory food standards training.
- The interviewee suggested that stakeholders could sponsor people to undertake apprenticeships in businesses that wouldn't otherwise be able to afford them to raise skill levels and encourage the development of new talent in sectors like logistics and distribution.
- Sharing apprenticeships or modular training could be beneficial for individuals, but the challenge is likely to be getting businesses to see the value of them.

Health Tech and Med Tech

Focus Group 1

Date: 17th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 specialist accessibility equipment manufacturer
- 1 scientific equipment provider
- 1 employer representative body for health tech and med tech organisations
- 1 stakeholder engaged with health tech and med tech organisations

Observations

- Companies in this sector recognize the importance of innovating to become more sustainable and moving towards net zero, however, it is not always possible when health and safety regulations require existing practices to be maintained.
- Upskilling in digital skills is important for businesses to operate more efficiently considering the rapid evolution of technology.
- Apprenticeships are popular amongst the group, however, there were some suggestions of ways in which providers may be able to improve services to best serve both businesses and apprentices.
- Brexit has had a profound impact on the industry in terms of regulatory changes when shipping to the EU and fulfilment orders in a timely manner.
- SMEs are having difficulty with recruitment and retention of staff for reasons such as being unable to compete with large companies on salary and struggling to attract talent to work in the West Midlands.

Recommendations

- More engagement is needed with universities whose student population is predominantly West-Midlands based, to try and create a local pipeline of talent.
- Whilst health and safety requirements impede some of the transition towards more sustainable business practices in aspects such as product packaging, other efforts can be made such as examining the environmental credentials of supply chains and consider how they align with the company's own CSR mission.
- Apprenticeship providers must be supported to better understand the needs of businesses to provide more targeted training and need to be more supportive of and involved in apprentices' learning journey.

Key Themes:

Skills gap

The health and med tech sector is experiencing a skills shortage linked to digital skills. It was highlighted that there is a need to upskill some staff in basic IT literacy such as using spreadsheets. Participants also emphasised a need for more IT data analysts, to ensure that staff are prepared for greater streamlining and automation of business systems and processes.

Apprenticeships are said to be an excellent means of digitally upskilling and recruiting talent. A talent pipeline can also be formed at graduate level, and participants discussed that this is typically most successful where companies engage with university programmes and learners prior to graduation.

Recruitment challenges

Participants underlined various recruitment challenges that are exacerbating existing skills gaps. An individual example given was that sometimes candidates do not show up for interviews and that SMEs are losing talent to larger businesses in the sector that pay considerably higher salaries. A trend in staff leaving work for personal reasons such as career breaks has also been noticed by one participant.

Furthermore, the West Midlands appears to be a less popular region to work in than in London and the South where people see greater scope for longer-term career progression. It was also noted that science graduates who are originally from the West Midlands sometimes do not return home when they have moved away for university. A solution to this is to engage with universities in Birmingham that have a sizable population of local students to ensure that talent can be recruited from within the region.

Finally, the health and med tech sector requires employees to be on-site as opposed to working from home, which is seen as a less appealing prospect in comparison to other career paths that better allow for hybrid-working.

Adapting to net zero and environmental priorities

Although companies in the health and med tech sector can take simple steps to make their business practices more sustainable, such as installing solar panels, reducing paper usage in the office, and switching to low-energy lighting, stringent health and safety regulations of products can make other changes more complicated. For example, one participant stated that it is often impossible to change the packaging of pharmaceutical products where materials such as plastic are required for safe storage and transit. In the instances where a more sustainable alternative meets safety regulations, SMEs are not always able to purchase these materials in a way that would be economical. For these reasons, members of the focus group express concern at the difficulty in balancing health and safety and environmental concerns. It was also noted that some sustainability efforts can be hard to measure and quantify, which brings about problems when companies that supply the NHS are required to evidence their sustainability journey.

Conversely, a representative from a participant which manufactures accessibility equipment stated that using primarily UK- based labour and materials can greatly reduce carbon footprint, but the issue remains for items such as PPE that is mostly imported. Businesses can make efforts in other areas such as re-evaluating their supply chain to ensure that suppliers are as closely aligned to their CSR goals as possible.

Interview 1

Date: 20th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- 1 small medical device manufacturer

Observations:

- Becoming more sustainable is important for the health tech and med tech industry, however, it is a process that requires the careful balancing of adapting business practices whilst not compromising on safety or client priorities.
- Navigating regulatory divergence due to Brexit is an obstacle that the industry is in the process of overcoming.
- Post-16 training is highly beneficial to this industry as it facilitates on-the-job training that balances theoretical and practical skills that can be honed specifically to business needs.
- The skills portfolio of the industry is multifaceted, which means that providing comprehensive training programs can be complicated.

Recommendations:

- On the topic of R&D in the sector, although the existing focus on research is beneficial, more attention needs to be paid to development which would benefit businesses on their sustainability journeys.
- To address recruitment needs, employers should engage with colleges to better attract post-16 talent.
- Skills priorities should include health data scientists and integrating industry-specific competencies such as understanding the nature of a disease, disease algorithms, engineering, and product design of digital devices.
- Understanding regulatory divergence between the UK and the EU should be prioritised by businesses in order to grow through exports to external markets.

Key Themes:

Transition to net zero

Net zero and low carbon strategies are key drivers of the evolution of the health tech and med tech sector, according to the interviewee from a small medical device company. This business is scrutinizing every element of its supply chain, from looking at transitioning to using reusable materials or those with a longer shelf life, to considering the environmental implications of disposal methods of single-patient use devices.

It has been noted that some of the company's competitors have been accused of greenwashing (defined as engaging in 'behavior or activities that make people believe that a company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is'[3]) to try and establish a more competitive market position, however, the interviewee believes in embarking on a journey to strike a balance between becoming more environmentally friendly and balancing customer requirements.

Skills shortages

[3] Definition of greenwashing from the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press

It was highlighted that there are not enough health data scientists in the industry to facilitate the scaling up of the move toward remote diagnostics and digital patient data. Skills associated with expertise in this regard include coding, engineering, knowledge of disease algorithms, and understanding of how these can be incorporated into patient device format. Other skills that the industry looks for are strategic thinking, project management, and technological aptitude, which can be found at post 16 and graduate level.

Despite the skills shortage in certain areas of the industry, the interviewee highlighted that the West Midlands benefits from robust expertise in robotics, which is key to the development of medical devices.

Because of the large portfolio of skills required in producing patient medical devices, the interviewee anticipates that it may be difficult to create a training program that incorporates all skills in a cohesive way.

Brexit

The interviewee cited the importance of businesses understanding various regulatory environments post-Brexit, namely, the UK, the EU, and other key markets for imports and exports.

Engagement with education providers

The interviewee works closely with a local university through their role as a visiting professor and engages with schools to acquaint them with the health and life sciences industry and the opportunities within it for school leavers.

The company currently prefers to recruit and up-skill non-specialists to ensure that both academic and practical skills are embedded in a way that meets the specific needs of the business and paves a long-term path for individuals to grow their careers within the company. T-levels were praised for the range of skills that they can provide to benefit the industry. Higher level skills such as those gained at university remain desirable, however, the interviewee believes that a 3-year degree or even doctoral-level training is not necessary for building the foundational knowledge needed for this industry, nor are they currently aware of a university course that provides such training. It is hoped that engagement with universities and FE colleges can help to facilitate more cross collaboration between sectors to drive innovation in health tech and med tech.

Growth and the future of the industry

To secure rapid growth, it is recommended that businesses in the sector are outward-looking and consider doing business overseas; anecdotal evidence from the interviewee articulates the value of this for their organisation that exports more goods than it sells in the UK.

Interview 2

Date: 30th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- 1 small manufacturer of sanitising products

Observations:

- The business is engaged in manufacturing a sustainable product, however — they are struggling to recruit staff with the right technical, chemistry background and understanding of the industry to develop product further.
- The organisation has advertised roles with universities and colleges but only received a very small number of applicants for these positions.
- In particular, they are currently struggling to recruit junior engineers to be trained by the technical director in warehousing (machining, quality checks, keeping logs, using CRM system).
- The business is anticipating future workforce growth in warehousing, technical labelling; administration and sales.
- The organisation worked with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to identify opportunities to improve entry to international markets and with Santander on sustainable products and peer to peer learning. From this, they understand they need to upskill staff in digital sales and marketing in particular.
- The organisation has worked with universities to offer work experience and had a really good experience of doing so, but then followed up with University contacts about offering jobs to placement candidates and received no response.

Recommendations:

- The interviewee would recommend use of DIT and Santander support to understand how to access and maximise new opportunities.
- Providers must ensure adequate follow-up support for placement programmes to maximise effectiveness for all involved.

Interview 3

Date: 9th February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A large NHS hospital trust

Observations:

- The organisation is currently facing recruitment difficulties across all disciplines, in particular a crisis in nursing from qualified degree level to nurse associates at level 4; and healthcare assistants at entry support level. They had 300 vacancies in support and entry level staff at the start of the year.
- Level 1 literacy and numeracy skills are a real barrier to employment in the communities the organisation works in.
- The organisation's apprenticeship levy is huge and they are trying to get 400 nurse associates through that scheme but are facing issues with literacy and numeracy level 2 requirements. They are linking into providers who have AEB funding to do upskilling of staff, but a large number of staff live outside of relevant postcodes so are not eligible, raising equity issues.
- They are currently working through an integrated care system to encourage local unemployed people into their entry level roles. Sometimes this can be logistically difficult where there is no standardisation in entry level requirements between NHS trusts.
- Even as a very large organisation, the interviewee expressed difficulty navigating funding, acronyms and language involved in Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs).
- The organisation's apprenticeship team are currently trying to promote frameworks to managers to meet and tie into recruitment shortages.
- Sometimes working with colleges doesn't always work for this organisation due to shift patterns and term times. They are looking to put in for funding to become a provider themselves.

Recommendations

- Apprenticeships are seen to be the way forward and educators and employers need to do more to promote these as alternative pathways.
- Though the organisation is looking to utilise some T Levels, they require learners to gain wider experience than T levels currently offer. Wrap-around support for T Level candidates will need to be adequately resourced and the interviewee suggests needing ring fenced funding to give dedicated support to learners.

Professional and financial services and supply chain

Focus Group 1

Date: 11th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 large financial consultancy business
- 1 large technology services firm
- 1 large bank
- 1 small to medium accountancy firm
- 1 small HR consultancy business
- 1 large provider of public services
- 1 small IT consultancy business
- 1 medium to large IT consultancy business
- 1 medium to large tax consultancy business

Observations:

- Unanimously, employers in the group expressed concern about current and future recruitment, citing a lack of appropriate skills as the main barrier to finding the right candidate for a role.
- There is a perceived disconnect between education providers (including FE colleges and universities) and employers, and concerns that curriculums do not sufficiently align with employers' needs.
- Keeping up with sustainability-related priorities and goals is a challenge, especially for small businesses. External expert assistance is often needed.

Recommendations:

- Internships and placement schemes can allow employers to see how students approach their work in a fixed-term contract, and then they may choose to offer a graduate job if they perform well. They also aid career preparedness for learners.
- There needs to be better engagement between education and industry.
- The different lines of service within a business, especially those that may not be immediately obvious, need to be emphasised in careers education to help individuals better explore their career options.
- Less complex ways in which businesses can engage with the sustainability agenda could involve introducing an electric car scheme, using less paper in the office, and asking suppliers about their sustainability efforts with a view to creating more sustainable supply chains.

Key Themes:

Recruitment challenges

Almost all participants in the group expressed concern about being able to recruit staff with the right skillset for the future success of the business. For example, a small accountancy firm stated having experienced difficulties in recent years with recruiting staff that meet the business' requirements, which is said to be a consequence of the covid-19 pandemic. In the technology industry, entry level roles are popular, however, smaller firms face issues retaining talent due to highly competitive

salaries elsewhere in the market, especially in larger firms. A participant from this industry mentioned the importance of recruiting individuals with high-level and niche skillsets, who are often experienced professionals that have high salary expectations. Some participants raised that highly technical apprenticeships, that are recognised as providing robust training in preparation for roles in technology, can be costly and difficult to implement in their organisations.

Whilst employers understandably look for job-specific skills, it is emphasised that the latter represents only some of the recruitment challenges faced. Numerous participants observe that qualities such as the ability to communicate well, be empathetic, and work in a team are often lacking in candidates. These skills are key to business success and productivity.

Furthermore, the businesses in the focus group often want to recruit locally, but due to skills shortages, they are required to widen their search outside of the region. It was suggested by one participant that more employers consider obtaining a visa sponsorship license to widen the talent pool to international students.

Modern challenges

Prioritisation of sustainability and ESG matters is important for all of the businesses in the focus group but are said to be large tasks to take on, therefore it is often beneficial to invest in outsourcing expertise to assist companies on their sustainability journey. The current economic climate has meant that some businesses have had to reduce their ESG budget, thus making it more difficult for sustainability goals to be met. Nevertheless, businesses are doing what they can to tackle big questions about the environment, sustainability, and net zero. There is evidence of holding their stakeholders and suppliers to account on environmental matters by ensuring that their missions align in this regard, as mentioned by participants from a small accounting firm and a specialist bank.

Remote working as a result of the covid-19 pandemic has been challenging for employees' wellbeing and for team morale. One participant reported that during the remote working period, the firm had to compromise on its quality of service to clients to allow employees more leeway with deadlines. Whilst working from home gives balance and flexibility, there are some concerns that entry level team members can miss out on informal learning opportunities that they would otherwise benefit from, if working regularly in closer proximity to more experienced colleagues.

Diversity and inclusion are high on the agenda and only becoming increasingly important for participating businesses. In regard to the technology industry in particular, participants raised concerns about needing to increase gender diversity in the local talent pool.

Focus Group 2

Date: 12th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 2 large banks
- 2 small to medium law firms
- 1 large engineering and professional services firms
- 1 large accountancy firm
- 1 small to medium non-league football club

Observations:

- As a result of macroeconomic challenges, participants report increasing demand for access to business finance.
- Increases in professional indemnity insurance rates and wage inflation are hampering growth in the legal sector.
- Accountancy skills are currently in a global shortage and one firm reported that 80% of candidates for their vacancies currently require visa sponsorship or visa transfers.
- Many participants are actively looking to recruit locally through methods such as apprenticeships, graduate schemes and working with local universities and are proud to invest significantly in local talent.
- Firms report struggling to both recruit and engage mid-career individuals, particularly working virtually since the covid-19 pandemic.
- Firms report increasingly needing digital skills to continue growth and meet digital expectations of clients (within the legal sector particularly).
- There is a significant drive to reduce energy within businesses, but this requires up-front capital investments which many firms are currently unable to make.

Recommendations:

- Offering apprenticeships as an option for those who wouldn't otherwise come to a particular business presents a challenge but also a unique opportunity in regards to diversity and inclusivity.
- To recruit and engage mid-career individuals, participating businesses are trailing within-company transfers for career development, reassessing value propositions, and shifting budgets considerably from talent acquisition to intensive training and development and greater use of apprenticeships.
- One participant discussed engaging with a local university through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) on an innovative project on using AI and AI processes to automate audit processes – it's thought that going forward automation, data analytics and data mining will be increasingly important in accountancy.

Key Themes:

Demand for services

Macroeconomic challenges mean customers are increasingly seeking access to finance. Several firms anticipating rapid expansion and growth, although one recognised a drop in rental yields, and some in commercial and corporate services. One participant highlighted that professional indemnity insurance rates for law firms have increased significantly and is one of the challenges hampering growth in the sector.

Available talent

While law firms recognise a large pool of skilled talent is available in the region, certainly in Birmingham, there is significant competition in regard to salaries, particularly acute for smaller law firms across the region looking to compete with larger Birmingham counterparts. Accountancy skills are currently in a global shortage and one firm reported that 80% of candidates currently require visa sponsorship or visa transfers, and this has led to increased administrative challenges in recruitment.

Training talent

Many participants are looking to recruit locally through methods such as apprenticeships, graduate schemes and working with local universities and are proud to invest significantly in local talent. Highly regulated industries including banking report consistent and regular training of staff. It was discussed that offering apprenticeships as an option for those who perhaps wouldn't otherwise come to a particular business presents a challenge but also a unique opportunity in regard to diversity and inclusivity.

Engaging skilled talent

Firms report struggling to both recruit and engage mid-career individuals, particularly working virtually since the covid-19 pandemic – within-company transfers are now among other things offered for career development to encourage talent to stay within the organisation. Other firms discussed reassessing value propositions, and shifting budgets considerably from talent acquisition to intensive training and development and greater use of apprenticeships to tackle these issues.

Digital Skills

Firms report increasingly needing digital skills to continue growth and meet digital expectations of clients (in law particularly). One participant discussed engaging with a local university through a KTP on an innovative project on using AI and AI processes to automate audit processes – it's thought that going forward automation, data analytics and data mining will be increasingly important in accountancy.

Net Zero

Inclusion and sustainability are increasingly important for firms, customers and prospective employees (particularly younger candidates). Quarterly internal training is undertaken across two participating organisations by all staff, to support meeting internal sustainability targets and support clients on their net zero journeys. There is a significant drive to reduce energy within businesses, but significant energy savings require up-front investment which many firms are currently unable to make.

Focus Group 3

Date: 26th January 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 medium to large UK subsidiary of a global bank
- 1 medium sized food business

Observations:

- Challenges presented by Brexit, the war in Ukraine, and rising prices are impacting businesses in professional and financial services and the associated supply chain.
- Such challenges have impeded some organisations' journeys to net zero due to them having to focus on addressing fundamental threats to the health of businesses as a priority.
- For smaller organisations or teams, it is difficult to establish and/or maintain formal links with education providers, so ad-hoc engagement can be more desirable.
- The industry has experienced more recruitment difficulties since the onset of the covid-19 pandemic.
- Apprenticeships and 'on-the-job' training are favoured by organisations for providing the exact skills they need and setting the foundations for strong career progression.

Recommendations:

- Providers need to incorporate more practical elements into post-16 technical education and training to better prepare learners for entering the workplace and meeting employer needs.
- The 'MK Job Show' in Milton Keynes was mentioned as an example of an initiative that is highly effective at connecting employers to job seekers and should be replicated in the West Midlands.
- Apprenticeship providers need to ensure that both level 2 and 3 apprenticeships are equally prioritised as some employers are experiencing a shortage of level 2 skills and report that there is a lack of training available in this area.
- Where relevant, companies need to prioritise investing in their supply chains over the next five years. Due to disruption caused by the war in Ukraine and Brexit, it can be easy for supply chains to break down which means that businesses are unable to complete production and make sales, and therefore run the risk of falling into liquidation.

Key themes:

Recruitment difficulties

A participant from an international bank stated having had more difficulty with recruitment in Birmingham and Wolverhampton than in London due to a lack of appropriate experience and skills in the West Midlands. Having said that, it was mentioned that often it is sufficient to have basic knowledge of finance and any specialist skills can be taught on-the-job.

With the advancement of technology, employers are concerned that their workforce lacks the digital skills to fully embrace the increased automation of certain functions of their sectors.

A participant from a food company explained that their organisation has undertaken very little recruitment since the covid-19 pandemic as they do not want to risk the consequences of recruiting

unsuitable candidates. However, when they do recruit, they look for entry-level candidates so they can be trained within the business and can assist senior employees.

Links with education partners

The international bank has a partnership with a local college to aid the delivery of internal staff training. The participant from this organisation mentioned that, since each office has a small team, they prefer to have informal engagements with local universities as it is less time-consuming for staff than having to maintain formal commitments on a regular basis. It was also mentioned, however, that establishing links with colleges and their students studying finance-related courses could help to resolve some recruitment issues.

The food company does not have any links with professional training bodies or education providers. The participant mentions that education partnerships are valuable but should be leveraged more to give employers an opportunity to influence curriculum content with the aim of including skills needed in the workplace.

The journey to net zero conflicting with other challenges

For the international bank, saving energy on premises is a priority on their journey to become more sustainable, however, they are conscious to ensure that it does not compromise the client experience when visiting. The food company is committed to reducing waste, although this can be difficult to prioritise when managing disruption to the supply chain that presents a real risk to the health of the business.

Training

Both participants emphasise that on-the-job training is the most effective way for entry-level staff to learn. The international bank runs an apprenticeship scheme which was described as highly effective and has facilitated progression within the organisation.

Difficult business conditions

Complications with paperwork and bureaucracy arising from Brexit was said to be a “demotivating factor” for businesses with international presence. The war in Ukraine and rising inflation has also led to difficulty in obtaining commodities, which are the basis of the food industry and has resulted in disruption to the supply chain and price pressures.

Future priorities

Investing in supply chains over the next five years is said to be key to guaranteeing the health of businesses that are currently facing challenges in obtaining goods.

The importance of automation in increasing efficiency of day-to-day business operations was recognised by the group participants, however the high costs involved are the greatest obstacle to improving technology, especially for smaller businesses.

Interview 1

Date: 24th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- A large full service UK law firm

Observations:

- The organisation is growing and has a number of vacancies due to a recruitment crisis in law.
- The interviewee discussed that the firm works hard to demonstrate support for employees around emotional wellbeing, progression pathways and meaningful commitments to diversity and inclusivity, and is looking to do more of this.
- While law is an attractive career, and the organisation runs vacation schemes to identify candidates for training contracts each year, the sector as a whole needs to make sure diverse talent is better represented. The interviewed organisation is taking various approaches to try to ensure that it is an attractive, safe and comfortable place for all.
- Ensuring the business becomes more environmentally sustainable is an extremely topical issue among pipeline talent, which is expected to drive change over time. Currently, the businesses is on a carbon reduction journey but there is uncertainty about how net zero will be achieved.
- The organisation is also working with international partners to support colleagues in Ukraine and has recently employed a Ukrainian lawyer through a partner firm.
- The organisation has previously worked with the Ahead partnership and Envision, to offer coaching and support to young talent. They also encourage micro volunteering among staff and are and looking to spread this wider.
- While the organisation utilises some of their apprenticeship levy, management capacity is an internal barrier to utilising more of this.

Recommendations:

- The interviewee suggested that existing post-16 technical education and training provision would better suit the needs of their business if it could be delivered more flexibly. They believe this has improved following the covid-19 pandemic and digitisation, but from their experience, could be more flexible still.
- The organisation would like to see a city-wide approach to upskilling for young people who want to work in professional services. The organisation shared positive feedback in regards to Birmingham Professional Services Academy but would like this to be scaled up.
- The interviewee also discussed need for a joined up push for learners to utilise apprenticeships, potentially led by WMCA.
- The organisation also suggest that more employers need to recognise the value of lived experience, alongside formal qualifications.

Interview 2

Date: 1st February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A small accountancy business

Observations:

- The organisation has utilised apprenticeships for the last 10 years.
- Their experience of apprenticeship candidates has been mixed; though pre-pandemic they were getting professional candidates with a good interest in accountancy, more recently there has been a shortage of candidates and as an employer they will struggle to take on those who have applied due to a lack of (relevant) experience.
- The organisation very much advocates for on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
- When developing apprentices over 2-3 years they do so with a view to them staying with the business longer-term.
- The organisation has developed a strong and highly successful relationship with a particular independent training provider. A relatively high turnover of administration and accountancy teaching staff at this provider over the last year has been slightly unsettling for new apprentices, however, the delivery of training was noted as being fantastic.
- AAT Level 2 Apprenticeships were the only apprenticeships the organisation had used until 18 months prior, but they now also recruit through administration apprenticeships.
- Outside of apprenticeships, the organisation has also struggled to fill a bookkeeper role due to a lack of skilled talent available in the region.

Recommendations:

- Access to more modular training would be beneficial – examples of modules the organisation would be interested in training staff with include communication (emails and letters with clients) and possibly some Microsoft Excel training.
- The organisation suggested that it would be great to be able to access funding to provide placement students with a salary while undertaking T Levels.

Interview 3

Date: 2nd February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A small not for profit specialist finance provider

Observations:

- Covid-19 has fact tracked changes in digital skills requirements; the business has needed to streamline and save money save and therefore needed to improve their skills base.
- The organisation had a significant recruitment drive recently but has struggled to find the right people (specifically, they have struggled to find a credit controller and a head of finance).
- Green finance may be an avenue for the organisation to explore but they don't currently have the expertise to do so internally, and so many need to bring external help for this.
- The organisation lacks management and leadership skills, in particular effective line management skills, but they are investing in improving these.
- While the interviewee is keen to train new recruits, this is a challenge as it takes time and resource. In house training is perceived to be helpful but expensive and time consuming.
- Looking to the future, its believed that loans officers will become even more scarce because of changes in lending, meaning that there will be more focus on alternative providers.
- The organisation is currently exploring working with local training providers for leadership and management training.
- Where the organisation has utilised apprenticeships they have had a positive experience of this, and seen a significant improvement in learner confidence.

Recommendations:

- The organisation would like to see more training providers facilitating peer to peer learning via in-person workshops.

Interview 4

Date: 3rd February 2023

Participating organisation:

- A small not for profit events business focussed on environmental sustainability

Observations:

- The organisation has successfully brought together both learners and businesses at a hydrogen fuel cell conference.
- They are also working with Tyseley Energy Park, University of Birmingham and Warwick University to run a series of workshops connecting companies working on the site and local students.
- The organisation anticipates significant employment growth in the green energy sector, particularly in regards to solar panel installation, retrofitting, battery storage and district energy solutions and associated innovation activities.

Recommendations:

- The interviewee believed that all stakeholders – including the West Midlands Combined Authority and Local Authorities - have very good green policies, however flags that funding is a challenge and the end of ERDF funding will put further financial pressures on implementing change. They suggest that organisations prioritise utilising a framework of genuine partnership delivery to deliver against sustainability targets.
- The organisation interviewed is engaged in the extension of Tyseley Energy Park into East Birmingham and encourages promotion of this project as a flagship example of Birmingham's low carbon transition.

Modern and low carbon utility and manufacturing of future housing

Focus Group 1

Date: 17th January 2023

Participants:

- 1 large international infrastructure business
- 2 large property developers
- 1 small employer representative body, representing construction firms
- 1 small distributor of innovative green products
- 1 small estate and letting agency
- 1 medium sized manufacturer

Observations:

- Embracing the move to net zero is crucial to future housing, however a skills gap will impede progress in this area, especially until more sustainability specialists enter the workforce.
- As well as internal shortages, businesses are struggling as a result of shortages of skilled planners and ecologists within local authorities, which frequently causes projects to be delayed.
- Creating a more dynamic and gender inclusive image of this industry is key to attracting future talent.
- Recruitment challenges created by Brexit have meant that some firms are changing their approach to finding future talent and now focussing on 'growing their own' through apprenticeships and graduate roles.
- SMEs are facing more challenges in terms of recruitment and the skills gap than larger firms, which is mostly because they have less staff and therefore less time to create development programmes or to spend on searching for talent.

Recommendations:

- To address skills shortages and difficulties establishing a talent pipeline, companies should focus on entry-level recruitment with the aim of training and promoting from within.
- Individuals might benefit from having access to expert regional careers advisors that have extensive, specialist knowledge of different sectors
- Firms need to ensure that management staff are adequately skilled and resourced to ensure that apprentices are enabled to make the most of their training.

Key Themes:

Skills Shortage

The industries within this focus group are experiencing a skills shortage that is said to have intensified as a result of Brexit and the covid-19 pandemic. It is particularly acute in areas of the industry that are using new technologies; specifically, there is a shortage of air-source and ground-source heat pump engineers, and experts in carbon reduction strategies. There are now graduates entering the jobs market that have studied sustainability and can help to fill skills gaps, however, smaller businesses recognised the need to address the issue of retaining talent post-training.

It was also reported that there is a shortage of skilled planners and ecologists within local authorities, which often results in delays to the building process and thus the completion of projects.

Additionally, skilled individuals are in high demand in regard to implementing new regulations of the Grenfell Building Safety Act. As much as technical and industry-specific skills are in demand, participants also emphasised the need for investment in core skills and at level 2 and 3 to ensure good foundations for learning.

The difficulties are felt more amongst SMEs than large firms, which anticipate their growth being restricted if they are unable to recruit new staff. Access to expertise in developing energy strategies was cited as a specific example of where the skills shortage is prominent for small businesses.

Net zero and sustainable business practices

A participant from an energy trading business emphasised that high-quality carbon offsetting programmes are crucial for businesses aiming for net zero. A move towards clean heat is also of great importance to this sector. One of the key challenges for the construction sector mentioned by participants was retrofitting 26 million homes in the coming years.

Marketing the industry

Participants acknowledge that the utility, manufacturing and construction industries are not amongst the most appealing at first glance for people considering their career options. It was stated that working on-site can be uncomfortable, and that there are other industries that offer more favourable working conditions for similar salaries. To remedy such problems with industry image, one member suggested that experienced workers who are passionate about their jobs should better utilise opportunities to visit schools and colleges to talk about the advantages of their careers.

It was also mentioned that this sector has typically been male-dominated and there have been cases of women feeling uncomfortable at work. Behaviour and conduct needs to be addressed to ensure that principles of diversity and inclusivity are upheld.

Apprenticeships in the sector

The pandemic may have been a barrier to progression for some recent recruits, with one participant expressing concern that individuals who joined the industry during the remote working period have missed out on on-premises experiences and learning opportunities.

Although the importance of apprenticeship programmes was recognised by members of the group, there are some sub-sections of the sector that do not find them to be the most suitable form of training. For instance, in design work, participants find that entry is most suitable at graduate level because of the experience that relevant degrees provide.

Finally, some SMEs in the sector do not have enough resources to dedicate time to forging partnerships with schools, colleges, and universities. This creates a barrier to entry to the smaller enterprises because students are less likely to be aware of the roles on offer or to have access to dedicated training schemes as a path into employment opportunities.

Focus Group 2

Date: 19th January 2023

Participants:

- 1 large housing association
- 1 medium sized property developer

Observations:

- According to participants, Brexit and the covid-19 pandemic are the root cause of the main recruitment challenges impacting the housing sector.
- Organisations would like to invest in engagement with schools and colleges, however, there are not always the staff resources to facilitate these links.
- Companies benefit greatly from partnerships with universities (particularly knowledge transfer partnerships).
- Participants are positive about the quality of training delivered for their industry, with encouraging feedback regarding apprenticeships and support from the regional combined authority.

Recommendations:

- There is a need to ensure that engineers are trained in working with new technologies installed in household appliances.
- Local authorities must regularly assess training needs in this sector, especially bearing in mind support for social businesses that provide vital services.
- Engagement with local universities is beneficial and links should be established where possible.

Key Themes:

Recruitment difficulties

A local housing association has experienced difficulty recruiting multi-trade operatives that are able to respond to all kinds of maintenance queries from tenants. Many trade workers who were furloughed during the covid-19 pandemic became self-employed and post-pandemic, many decided to continue working for themselves. The same social housing business also had a job opening for a communications role for almost a year before finding the right candidate.

On the one hand, as a result of Brexit, it is now more difficult to fill vacancies via recruitment from EU countries. Conversely, a positive recent development, as highlighted by a property developer, is that the West Midlands is now benefiting from the experience of individuals that worked for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Skills shortage

With the introduction of new technology in homes to improve energy and cost efficiency, there is a vital need for engineers to install and service these facilities. A specific example given was a need for expertise in new energy-saving boilers.

The property developer in attendance was optimistic about fulfilling the skills needs of their business within the next 12 months.

Training

The participants in this focus group had positive sentiments about the quality and availability of training for their sectors. Employees at the property developer undertake a variety of training from vocational qualifications to master's degrees. The West Midlands Combined Authority was praised for its efforts in helping businesses meet their future training needs.

Engagement with education providers

Both participants in the focus group engage with education providers in the West Midlands. The housing association is working with PhD students at a university in Birmingham to conduct research focused on the lived experiences of the tenants in their properties. They also work with schools to recruit for their popular apprenticeship scheme. The property developer participant described their organisation's work with a local university to look at improving physical literacy for play areas.

The property developer has been approached by colleges to provide insight for A-Level students about a career in planning. This link is facilitated by the fact that this organisation builds schools and various staff members sit on school governance boards, however, it was acknowledged that engagement with education providers can nevertheless be limited by time and resource constraints.

Financial Constraints

The social housing sector has had to balance two key priorities: protecting its revenue and providing housing to tenants at a fair price. The Government's increase in the rent ceiling for the sector allows providers to increase their rent by up to 11.1%. This housing association has chosen to limit their increase to a lower rate. This was considered to be a responsible thing to do where affordable, given the context of the cost-of-living crisis, however, it will put pressure on budgets for projects within the next year.

Interview 1

Date: 24th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- A business representative organisation representing the building industry

Observations:

- The building industry has an aging workforce and the interviewee reports a trend of early retirement from manual jobs.
- The industry was previously reliant on skills from abroad, and Brexit, together with the covid-19 pandemic, has impacted the amount of skilled workers available in the UK.
- The construction industry has an image issue; it is perceived to offer poor working conditions and low paid, low skilled jobs.
- Pay is an issue, particularly for apprentices, who often don't get paid enough to cover their travel costs – especially where they have to rely on people with cars to access job sites – and their Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards.
- Apprenticeships are frequently disrupted by misalignment of length with project timelines.
- The industry is facing huge gaps in the skills needed to deliver against environmental sustainability targets. The industry is working under tight profit margins so often can't afford to be proactive in anticipating market changes.
- Public sector clients are driving larger businesses to bring in talent and address challenges around diversity and inclusivity and sustainability.
- There is a lack of understanding in the sector regarding the transition to net zero and opportunities associated with digitisation and new technologies.
- Companies tend to have some interaction with colleges on projects and digital skills, but less capabilities to facilitate placements; due to CSCS card requirements it can be difficult getting apprentices on sites.

Recommendations:

- Policy decisions on future homes and retrofitting standards are needed to drive training new skills; given the climate crisis and time necessary to upskill at scale, this is needed urgently.
- The industry is anticipating gaps in senior leadership in the next few years and needs to create better opportunities for women and global majority individuals to come up into leadership positions.
- The industry has benefitted from the work done by the WMCA to understand industry skills gaps and direct priority funding where needed, however, the geographical boundaries of the Combined Authority restrict the impact that they can have, and the interview participant would like to see a cohesive regional plan on skills shortages and upskilling local talent with actionable targets that also engages local authorities across the whole West Midlands.

Interview 2

Date: 26th January 2023

Participating organisation:

- A large utilities provider

Observations:

- According to the participant, the main skills needs for this industry fall within digital and engineering.
- Larger companies have better access to school and college partnerships than SMEs, therefore it is easier to promote their careers and establish a future talent pipeline.
- Recruitment challenges originate from a lack of awareness of the variety of jobs in the sector and uncertainty around employing non-UK citizens post-Brexit.
- Apprenticeships and graduate schemes are successful means of recruitment and developing talent pipelines.

Recommendations:

- Upskilling in the utilities industry needs to focus on digital and engineering skills to maintain momentum in modernisation and working towards net zero goals.
- People are not always aware of the variety of jobs available in the utilities industry. Careers education should focus more on educating learners about specific sectors and provide in-depth insight into what related career paths could look like. This could be facilitated through better education-employer partnerships.
- To address sector-wide recruitment challenges, there needs to be more collaborative thinking between large and small employers.
- To dispel myths and negative stereotypes about the industry, employers need to ensure that they "tell compelling stories" about the career paths already taken by professionals instead of just providing abstract information about available jobs with no context to help a young person imagine what their future could look like within a sector.

Key themes:

Skills shortages

The interviewee highlighted that the most prevalent skills shortages within the business are in data analysis, digital skills, engineering, and design. There is concern that some workers within the company are not "digitally savvy" enough to keep up with the technology that helps to modernise the industry and that upskilling staff in this area will require a significant behavioural change that may be difficult to overcome. Additionally, the number of people studying engineering at universities has not grown enough over the last 10-15 years to meet the increased demand for these skills that industries are now facing.

It was highlighted that neither Brexit nor the covid-19 pandemic changed the skills needs of the industry, rather, recent changes have been driven by the emergence of new technologies and adapting to net zero priorities. Engineers and designers are in high demand as they are required to create new utility management systems to ensure the continuous modernisation of the industry and services provided to customers.

Recruitment challenges

Businesses struggle to recruit into the utilities industry due to myths, negative stereotypes about the work involved and a lack of awareness of available roles. Since Brexit, the company has noticed an increase in candidates applying for graduate programmes who require visa sponsorship. Specifically, they sponsored visas for 10% of the current engineering intake and estimate that 40% of the upcoming intake will require sponsorship. This has led to concern about a loss of the existing workforce and potential recruitment issues in the event of changes immigration policy.

Education and training

This particular company, being a large employer, has the capacity to form partnerships with schools, colleges, and universities. Understanding that this can be more difficult for SMEs in the industry, the interviewee advocated more "joined-up thinking" between businesses within the sector to address industry-wide skills shortages by engaging collaboratively with education providers.

There is optimism surrounding apprenticeships as a successful form of education and training. Currently, there are 230 apprentices in the interviewed organisation, and a potential 130 will be recruited this year. T-Level placements will also be trialled by the business for the first time this year.

Sustainability and net zero

The business is committed to investing in new technologies to aid the transition towards net zero including carbon capture, offsetting, and elimination, purchasing more electric vehicles, and running sites on energy that has already been generated. There is a vital need for training and upskilling to continue to meet these goals in the future.

Supplementary Roundtables

Sample and Methodology

A series of partner employers and Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) were additionally commissioned by the WMW LSIP to lead online roundtables in February with their specialist areas. These conversations utilised the same script used for the Priority Growth Cluster Focus Groups (available above).

Due to a greater concentration of priority growth cluster firms in Greater Birmingham and Coventry and Warwickshire, the Chambers of Commerce had concerns regarding a lack of representation of key sectors in the Black Country among focus group participants. In response, the WMW LSIP has sought to strategically select partner ERBs to both supplement insights from priority growth clusters and ensure that the final report produces valuable insights for all geographical areas within the region. This also ensures, together with quantitative surveying, that the WMW LSIP engages with a wide range of employers and representative bodies, beyond just Chamber members.

The following employers and Employer Representative Bodies convened online roundtables with a total of 28 West Midlands employers for the purposes of this research between 16th and 24th February 2023:

- Federation of Small Businesses
- Business in the Community
- NHS
- Make UK

Notes from supplementary roundtables are presented below.

Supplementary Roundtable 1

Convened by: Federation of Small Businesses

Date: 16th February 2022

Participating organisations:

- 1 micro production business
- 1 micro HR consultancy
- 1 micro research, design and marketing employer
- 1 micro manufacturing employer
- 1 micro web development, design and content production organisation

Observations:

- Smaller firms are report being unable to compete with wage inflation and availability of hours.
- Some participants reported positive experiences of recruiting via Kickstart and from School of Code.
- The manufacturing participant highlighted that they would like to recruit talent with broad, basic manufacturing knowledge and experience that they can train in niche skills internally.

Recommendations

- Participants agreed that there is an important role for SME business leaders to engage with providers and learners to improve 'soft' or 'essential' skills.
- It was recommended that support around numeracy, literacy and core workplace skills should be better embedded into curriculums (examples of core workplace skills referenced include teamwork, communication and finance).
- It was suggested that smaller organisations need support to meet net zero (a lack of which is currently preventing them from meeting compliance specifications for some supply chain opportunities).
- One participant suggested that providers might be able to offer facilities for apprentices to be based in, to support remote or distributed workforces.

Key Themes:

Socio-economic challenges

Micro organisations have been particularly impacted by high cost pressures and where possible are relying on small stockpiles of materials to deliver against contracts. Some are considering investment in new technologies to overcome high supply costs.

Additionally, participants reported that micro organisations which have previously exported to Europe are now struggling with new documentation requirements associated with doing so, and many do not have the resources to engage consultants to support with these challenges.

Means of recruitment

Participating organisations frequently outsource work to contractors before committing to onboarding employees. One discussed exploring the role AI products could play in improving efficiency and outputs.

Some participants reported positive experiences of recruiting via Kickstart and from School of Code.

Green skills

While some participants discussed considering how they can work towards net zero, they were broadly uncertain as to how to address environmental sustainability issues in their organisation.

Participants that had explored 'greening' their business with the support of their local Growth Hub had positive feedback about this support.

Supplementary Roundtable 2

Convened by: Business in the Community

Date: 20th February 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 large property management company
- 1 large digital services business
- 1 large infrastructure organisation
- 1 medium to large specialist construction firm
- 1 large utilities provider
- 1 medium sized provider of post-16 technical education and training

Observations:

- Participants noted spiralling wage costs in construction, in part attributable to Brexit, and having to fill roles with agency workers.
- Construction and infrastructure participants discussed industry-wide challenges attracting diverse talent and efforts to overcome these by actively reaching out to different communities to recruit.
- Participants agreed that more automation in almost all roles is inevitable in the future.
- Participants discussed struggling to fill roles in engineering (particularly engineering design roles for Modern and Low Carbon Utilities), digital (e.g. cyber security, SCRUM, agile) broader project management, frontline customer service, data analytics, and surveying.
- Concerns were raised regarding short term decision making in the employment market driven by the cost-of-living crisis.
- The digital services participant reported constantly upskilling all staff to meet the needs of client projects, primarily using online platforms such as LinkedIn Learning and Udemy, and that they are more concerned with rapid application than accreditation.
- Participants discussed all having set budgets and (to varying extents) plans for investing in skills, but that they also like to supplement these with free training for 'soft skills' and 'above and beyond' activities (an example given being mental health and wellbeing training).

Recommendations:

- It was recommended that to facilitate provision of low carbon utilities, there is a need for stronger links between technical skills and innovation skills in engineering provision.
- Participants discussed having success in upskilling engineers through apprenticeships, as a means to filling skills gaps (though noted an associated lag in workforce readiness).
- One participant suggested that focussing on STEM to attract engineers is too limited, and that people ought to also be made more aware of wider opportunities within the field.
- Participants from property, infrastructure and utilities firms acknowledged a need to do more to demonstrate the attractiveness of their sectors.
- It was suggested that pressure on educators and careers leads needs to be alleviated in order to facilitate more effective relationship building between schools and FE colleges and

employers; a large employer with a dedicated education team reported that even they find it tricky to connect and build partnerships with schools and colleges.

- It was also recommended that training providers need to be supported to invest in piloting new capabilities to enable rapid, dynamic responses to skills needs.
- It was suggested that intervention to support provision of 'soft skills' be focussed around the Skills Builder Partnership's Skills Builder Universal Framework.

Key Themes

Recruitment Difficulties

Participants in construction and utilities both discussed struggling to fill engineering roles, and in utilities challenges recruiting into digital roles (e.g. cyber security, SCRUM, agile) were also raised.

The participant from a large property management organisation discussed a marked decline in private sector work but that they are anticipating growth nevertheless, as a result of public sector contracts. They raised concerns that construction is not usually a person's first choice unless they have family in the industry and therefore have sight of the development and career opportunities available. The business has a challenge recruiting, which they try to address through 'very successful' recruitment of apprenticeships, and has a strong retention rate for staff developed in this way, but has difficulties due to how long it can take to get someone skilled enough to fill gaps. As a result, they are filling many of these gaps currently with agency workers. They attribute many issues with skills in the industry to a "mass exodus" following Brexit.

The same business is also trying to address a lack of diversity in the construction industry and noted that new recruits are more diverse than 10-15 years prior, however they expressed that there is 'still a long way to go until construction is seen to be a career for everyone'.

Within construction, another participant raised a particular lack of awareness of opportunities in tunnelling, particularly with high demand for tunnelling work being driven by HS2. However, they discussed having positive experiences in particular with some of the first tunnelling apprenticeships, which could be a means to fill skills gaps in the future.

The large utilities provider referenced that they struggle to recruit for project management and frontline customer service roles – and that this is the first time that they've experienced recruitment challenges regarding frontline customer services. This is in part attributed to the rising costs of childcare and other, more lucrative temporary jobs available. They are reviewing starting salaries and benefits and assessing how they demonstrate long term benefits to permanent roles in their frontline customer service teams (e.g. access to pensions, career progression) to attract applicants to roles, and bolster employee engagement.

The same organisation would also like to see stakeholders address reports that levels of engineering students haven't grown in recent years. They raised that as a majority of students applying for roles with them are from outside of the UK and therefore require Tier 2 sponsorship, they are concerned about business resilience; if immigration policy were to change, they estimate that they could lose 40% of their engineering workforce.

The infrastructure employer present echoed sentiment regarding recruitment of project managers, adding that they are currently experiencing challenges recruiting surveyors, however, added that they most struggle to recruit operatives that don't have e.g. LinkedIn. They try to access these skills through agencies and are working to offer part time, flexible working roles to tap into different talent pools, including parents and carers. They expressed sentiments that moving jobs is an unappealing proposition in the current economic environment.

'Soft' skills

The digital services participant advised that they recruit from broad background and at associate level don't expect a lot of experience in product tech and digital, but look for people with strong professional skills; presentation, organisation, accountability, dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity, collaboration, active listening, getting your opinion across in the right way, communication for client facing work, working through uncertainty. They work with the Ahead Partnership across the region to talk about careers in digital and tech and bring young people into their offices to bring to life a role in problem solving.

The infrastructure employer suggested that when they look at 'essential skills' in schools, as developed by the Skills Builder Partnership, these are exactly the same as what they look for in employing someone, and that these are much more important to them than technical skills, which they can train internally.

Transition to Net Zero

The participant from the large infrastructure business discussed new skillsets increasingly needed in their sector to facilitate in-organisation education on carbon literacy and procurement policy notices regarding net zero plans and social value. They are currently also facing technological challenges in trying to achieve net zero, and considering challenges such as how to get rid of diesel. They have found that despite building new infrastructure to facilitate the transition towards net zero, people qualified to work with electric vehicles are few and far between and available courses seem very general (though do seem to be improving).

The utilities provider echoed many of these sentiments, highlighting challenges recruiting to engineering design roles and increasing need for all their engineers to have strong innovation capabilities to facilitate the provision of low carbon utilities, through exploration of carbon capture and designing out carbon from processing.

Relationships with providers

The large utilities firm reported that, in their view, 'when employers work in partnership with providers, skills provision works really well.' They discussed having some challenges working with providers where, on some recent courses, tutors and end point assessors have been regularly swapped out (3, 4 or even 5 times), impacting learning. Their biggest concern is how they make sure that the wraparound infrastructure is available to deliver great quality apprenticeships and broader qualifications going forward. They also asked how stakeholders and/or providers can create a more systematic way of ensuring that people who have been let go from apprenticeships and other in-work training as a result of liquidations are supported back into opportunities, especially in the current economic circumstances.

The digital services participant reported constantly upskilling all staff to meet the needs of client projects, primarily using online platforms such as LinkedIn Learning and Udemy, and that they are more concerned with rapid application than accreditation. They also discussed pairing staff up on projects to facilitate informal peer to peer learning.

Supplementary Roundtable 3

Convened by: NHS

Date:21st February 2023

Participating Organisations:

- 5 NHS Trusts operating in the West Midlands and Warwickshire

Observations:

- The NHS staffing crisis has two dimensions: skills shortages in a variety of roles/levels and the complicated nature of the recruitment process.
- Education providers need to provide training at a wide variety of levels to ensure a comprehensive solution to the skills shortage aspect of the staffing shortage.
- To future-proof the skills needs of the NHS, digital skills at both basic and technical levels need to be a priority for upskilling.
- Other key priorities for recruitment and retention include offering more flexibility in work schedules and focussing on home-grown talent.

Recommendations:

- The NHS needs to look more towards focussing on skills as opposed to specific job roles since the needs of the industry are becoming more and more centred around the transferability of skills that can enable an individual to work across a variety of jobs as opposed to a fixed skillset.
- More 'joined-up thinking' and collaboration is needed between employers and educators to ensure the future workforce is ready to meet the needs of the healthcare industry.
- A 'business case' needs to be made to incentivise local businesses to engage with apprenticeships, for example, offering incentives in the form of funding and guidance.
- In order to grow talent locally and balance a currently significant reliance on the international labour market, training needs to be provided locally and a more diverse range of course and work experience levels needs to be made available.
- The recruitment process into the NHS, especially with apprenticeships, needs to be simplified and modernised in order to address staff shortages more quickly.

Key Themes:

Recruitment and labour market issues

Participants unanimously agreed that there are recruitment issues in both general and specialist roles in the NHS, with the latter affecting the quality of care provision. The NHS relies heavily on a global labour market with about a third of staff being recruited from overseas, which is double the OECD average. By contrast, healthcare-related vacancies represent 13% of the West Midlands jobs market, therefore this, coupled with the region's young populations, means that there is an appetite to leverage these factors to help cultivate home-grown talent.

It was also noted that recruitment into the NHS through apprenticeships is a complicated process that could be deterring potential applicants. Others agreed that the wider recruitment process needs to be modernised to ensure people can apply for jobs much more easily. Finally, it is acknowledged

that that low salaries are an obstacle to attracting talent, so the rewarding aspects of the job need to be emphasised.

Retention

In addition to recruitment, retention is also an obstacle for the industry. Participants agree that people's preference for flexible working patterns needs to be a key factor in informing modernisation and driving cultural change in the NHS. It was also mentioned that where retention issues arise, the reasons for staff leaving are often unknown, which is also something that needs to be addressed.

Training and skills needs

Recruitment difficulties are primarily driven by skills shortages in the healthcare sector. One member of the group suggested that a broader range of training options, for example, the care certificate is sufficient for entry-level care support worker roles, however, this course is not widely available in colleges.

Although classroom-based education is important for gaining essential background knowledge, it needs to be coupled with training through work experience. Work experience also needs to be provided for to ensure that there are entry points into the sector for individuals of a wide range of age groups.

The participants stressed that many individuals who want to join the healthcare sector do not want to have to travel long distances or relocate to complete their training, therefore ensuring training can be done locally is key to attracting new staff to the sector.

Finally, digital skills were highlighted as needing to be prioritised in professional development within the healthcare sector, specifically focussing on lifelong learning to ensure that the sector can keep up with rapid changes in healthcare technology such as AI and genomics.

Supplementary Roundtable 4

Convened by: Make UK

Date:24th February 2023

Participating organisations:

- 1 medical devices company
- 1 organisation which supports manufacturers and engineering firms to run apprenticeships
- 2 aerospace businesses
- 1 metal manufacturer
- 1 architectural ironmonger
- 1 multinational energy management and digital automation company
- 1 chemical manufacturer
- 1 steel stockholder
- 2 packaging manufacturers
- 1 engineering firm

Observations:

- The main recruitment obstacles for SMEs in this industry are being unable to compete with large firms offering high salaries and outdated stereotypes about the nature of working in manufacturing.
- The sample of small businesses in the group reported that they are doing their utmost to engage with the net zero agenda, however, recruitment and retention issues are their most important priorities to address before more meaningful progress can be made in this regard.

Recommendations:

- Although much effort has already been made, it was suggested that more needs to be done to educate learners and educators about the reality of working in the industry and provide real-life stories from people who have been successful in their apprenticeships and other practical training.
- Offering work experience to learners is reported to be an excellent way to engage with those that have an interest in a practical career as opposed to academic studies. This can help to create the future pipeline of talent.

Key themes:

Recruitment difficulties

All participants in the group mention having experienced recruitment difficulties. Commonly cited reasons include difficulties in finding talent locally, not being able to recruit enough people into roles such as engineering and toolmaking and SMEs struggling to compete with higher salaries offered by large companies. It was also expressed that outdated stereotypes about the manufacturing industry, such as the idea that this type of work is “dirty”, are deterring people from exploring such career options. Roles that organisations are finding to be more popular amongst entry level talent are in the fields of data project management and R&D.

Staff retention

Echoing the recruitment difficulties, many businesses in the discussion cited having difficulty retaining staff. The most commonly cited reason for this is losing employees to larger competitors who can afford to pay higher salaries.

Net zero

All of the businesses in the group expressed great interest in the net zero agenda, however, as SMEs with recruitment and retention difficulties, it is often challenging to fully engage in sustainability matters. Larger transformations towards net zero require substantial upfront investment and potentially a delayed reward, however, participants widely acknowledge that simple changes such as energy saving can yield results both in terms of financial gain and sustainability.

Provider Roundtables

Sample and Methodology

Further, online roundtables were conducted with a range of Independent Training Providers, Colleges and Universities engaged in Post-16 Technical Education and Training, in partnership with Colleges West Midlands and the West Midlands Provider Network.

These utilised the same script as the Priority Growth Cluster and Supplementary Focus Groups, to gather insights from participants in their capacity as employers and to additionally provide attendees with insights into the approach and upcoming milestones of the WMW LSIP, with the Chamber team answering questions on the LSIP from those present.

In total, these roundtables convened 67 providers between 17th and 28th February 2023. Notes from provider roundtables are available below.

Provider Roundtable 1

Date: 17th February 2023

Participating Organisations:

- 13 Further Education Colleges operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire

Observations:

- Many colleges referenced severe hiring difficulties, across delivery staff and back office staff, several citing 7-10% of total roles consistently vacant, rising to up to 30% of roles in certain small teams. Specific examples are cited below.
- Interim, temporary and agency staff are reported to be masking vacancy issues, at significant financial cost to providers and causing significant risk to provider resilience.
- Recruitment challenges appear attributable in large part to funding constraints and an inability to compete with significant increases in industry salaries.
- Colleges are actively working towards net zero but capital funding and knowledge are presenting barriers. The sector is exploring innovative ways to overcome these challenges through collaboration.
- Skills needs are particularly acute in regards to digitisation internally and provision of digital skills.
- The industry is at a competitive disadvantage in an increasingly remote and flexible labour market due to a need for most staff to fulfil their roles in-person.

Recommendations:

- Providers need support to anticipate and prepare for what the future of industries looks like in regards to sustainability, and are particularly interested in understanding an SME view on this.
- Colleges should explore investment in AI as a means to alleviating workload issues and supporting staff wellbeing.
- The FE sector needs to explore with industry how each can mutually provide solutions to the other.
- One college suggested that they would like to see a message to larger employers encouraging them to consider allowing colleges access to their skilled talent as part of CSR activities, for instance through governor roles.

Key Themes:

Recruitment challenges: delivery staff

All participating Colleges, of varying specialisms, discussed challenges attracting and retaining staff, with several referring to this as their biggest barrier to growth. Specifically, it was discussed that the sector is reaching a crisis point in recruiting in technical skills for delivery of provision. Examples cited included:

- Technical engineering

- Manufacturing
- Accountancy
- Electrical maintenance
- Sociology
- Air conditioning and refrigeration
- Chefs
- Automation and robotics

It was discussed that the crux of this issue is funding constraints, as a result of which the sector is unable to compete with industry salaries. In some areas, industry is now recruiting delivery staff from colleges – some colleges referenced agreements with partner businesses discouraging active recruitment of delivery staff, but these agreements don't stop non-partner businesses. One college discussed having always put staff back into industry on secondments to be upskilled, but expressed that they are cautious about doing so now, as following this some staff have left FE to return to industry permanently.

Recruitment challenges: back office staff

Providers also consistently referred to recruitment challenges in 'back office' roles. Areas cited include:

- IT
- Cybersecurity
- Data analytics (e.g. power BI)
- App development
- Finance
- Estates
- Capital projects leads
- Learning support assistance
- Senior leadership

Providers also cited significant rates of burnout among staff due to enormous pressure on those in the sector, particularly college leaders, causing them to leave further education.

Net Zero

Colleges present have invested in transitioning towards net zero, though, for example: solar cells; biomass boilers; and other energy saving technologies and processes. Some cautioned about practical issues with, for example, biomass boilers, suggesting that some solutions may appear appropriate in theory but long term aren't practicable.

The main barrier to investment in net zero for those present is financial resource, and a need for greater capital funding to facilitate the necessary changes. One participant discussed that they were awarded funding to improve their sustainability as part of a public sector decarbonisation scheme 3-4 years ago and found this extremely beneficial. Another referenced ongoing best practice from a

local college (not present) which is spearheading a scheme to gather and if necessary 'buy in' expertise for collective use.

Colleges also raised needing more staff to deliver net zero within the sector and upskill businesses to facilitate a just transition.

Many participating organisations provide training for other organisations looking to improve their environmental sustainability, or that of their products and services. They expressed that this needs to go beyond a generic sustainability curriculum as core to every programme (which they are already delivering and will continue to deliver). Rather, they want to anticipate and prepare for what the future of industries looks like in regards to sustainability, and are particularly interested in understanding an SME view on this (as they most frequently engage with large employers). This needs to be as far in advance as possible as qualifications and exam boards are known to be slow to change.

Digitisation

Many colleges present discussed that they are unable to recruit digital experts or specialists for delivery of existing provision (e.g. in Media and Production) and future, expanded provision of T Levels. One college highlighted that digital for them covers everything; in every area of provision they seek digital experts in the field; in some areas they are ahead of industry trends, in others they raised issues of timescales, financial resource and human resource.

This is due to an inability to compete with industry salaries, driven by high demand and shortages of these skills across the labour market as a whole. Colleges also need a significant throughput of students to make all courses, but particularly digital courses, financially viable.

Due to high labour market competition, some colleges present referenced that particularly in digital teams, when a senior member of staff leaves the organisation, they will frequently take the next three layers of people below them with them, and expressed how difficult it can be to rebuild these teams.

One college discussed investing in AI to support teaching staff in a whole series of areas, recommending that the level of support it can provide, alleviating workload issues, is remarkable.

Impact of the covid-19 pandemic on ways of working

Following the pandemic, colleges relayed challenges regarding greater expectations of remote working among existing staff and candidates for roles, and the competitive disadvantage this poses in a tight labour market, given that it isn't effective in many College functions.

Most of those present reported provision being primarily delivered face to face, and a resulting practical need for back office staff to then be on site as well.

Several participants discussed having needed to invest more in softer support for staff – e.g. mental health first aider training and more active staff wellbeing boards/networks – within the last year, due to increasing levels of stress related absences, attributed to 'life' challenges (e.g. the cost of living crisis) as well as work stresses.

Provider Roundtable 2

Date: 27th February 2023

Participating Organisations:

- 1 third sector awarding body
- 3 provider representative organisations operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire
- 1 large FE college operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire
- 27 independent training providers operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire

Observations:

- Widespread recruitment challenges regarding delivery staff are being worsened by wage inflation across industry, which has reportedly not been matched by increased funding for training provision, as well as bureaucracy and a pressing need for 'future skills'.
- Sector-specific demands of managerial staff are contributing to talent shortages at this level.
- Prescriptive and piecemeal funding for provision is a significant barrier to genuinely delivering against employer need.
- Employers' focus on soft skills has led to some concerns about social mobility.
- In regard to digital skills, employers and learners may need to learn together in more innovative ways so businesses can develop an understanding of capabilities afforded by new technologies and digital skills, and keep up with the rapid speed of technological change.
- Providers discussed conversations with employers about green skills needing to begin by understanding employers' strategic priorities on this agenda.
- Some providers present are undergoing exercises to make green and digital skills cross-cutting themes in all their training.

Recommendations:

- To overcome recruitment challenges and encourage staff retention, some providers are looking to offer additional holiday time to staff.
- Providers called for support to help SMEs access quality provision.
- Streamlined mechanisms of funding are needed for employers operating nationally and seeking to engage in large scale up- and re- skilling of staff.
- Funding for more, shorter courses for job readiness may be needed.
- Models of partnership between the WMCA and private providers were said to be really positive and it was suggested that these could be rolled out nationally.
- Greater employer engagement with the sector, as well as funding for development of 'soft skills' are needed to develop these for employers.
- It was suggested that a campaign around the pride of a career in Vocational Training could be beneficial to attracting talent to the sector.

Key themes:

Sector specialisms

Collectively, independent training providers represented in this roundtable specialise in:

- Adult education
- Logistics and distribution
- Recruitment in warehousing and logistics
- Health and social care
- Early years education
- Administration
- Digital (including network engineering, data analytics, AI and digital marketing)
- Manufacturing and engineering
- Hairdressing and barbering
- Construction
- Arts
- Creative industries
- Management
- Security
- Facilities management
- Warehousing
- Cleaning
- Customer service
- Finance, accountancy and tax
- IT

Recruitment challenges: delivery staff

While demand in some sectors, such as the security industry, is high, providers present discussed concerns that they are struggling to recruit the right delivery staff, with one provider saying that candidates are raising salary expectations and 'playing providers against each other.'

Several providers discussed having previously always brought people in from industry and trained them up as delivery staff, but that this increasingly challenging, as industry salaries are beyond what providers can compete with. One example given was of a chef, recruited by a provider's client and offered £80,000 per annum.

In construction, providers discussed lots of skills shortages and demand for provision, but difficulties in retaining staff and trainers, who can earn twice or three times the salary working on-site as self-employed tradespeople. Similar challenges were raised in regards to engineers, management experts, maths tutors and software development and computing trainers for T Levels.

In construction and HGV, it was also discussed that paperwork requirements in the education and training sector can be off-putting; working in industry allows for less paperwork and more flexibility, as well as higher salaries.

Another provider, agreeing with the challenges expressed regarding attracting and retaining talent, added that new trainers need training skills and broader knowledge than just that they have learned

in their industry role, which takes 1-2 years to develop. This was concurred by a provider struggling to train assessors in the Midlands.

Recruitment challenges: 'back office' staff

As well as with delivery staff, providers also raised challenges recruiting and retaining 'back-office' staff. Providers present reported investing heavily in formal upskilling and providing informal development opportunities for back-office staff.

It was discussed that managerial staff are particularly difficult to recruit, due to a need for strong management skills, but also additional industry-specific knowledge around funding and compliance.

Funding for the right provision

One provider raised that while some of their employers are looking to proactively address the skills shortages they're facing, unless apprenticeships are the right fit, the provider struggles with having to source multiple pots of funding for lots of different regions for each big employer. This is time consuming and expensive for providers and presents bigger risks to delivery than if they were able to use one single pot of funding. They reported that their employers want to see this streamlined.

Other employers are said to insist on using apprenticeships (where they're considered to probably not be quite the right fit for the particular purpose at hand) as they want their programme funded through the levy, and sometimes haven't taken into account the significance of 20% off the job training (especially with senior staff). It was suggested that more, shorter courses for job readiness are needed.

In the WMCA area, partnerships between WMCA and providers to fund provision based on employer need were said to be really positive and it was suggested that this could be a model rolled out nationally.

'Soft skills'

One provider raised concerns while it's easy to attribute gaps in 'soft' or 'essential' skills to schools and colleges, there is a systemic problem with a lack of employer engagement. This needs to be improved in order for providers to connect employer need and provision.

Another provider present disagreed with this sentiment, reporting that many of their employers do share what they want vital/soft skills to look like. They are currently delivering a programme working with firms from across the business and professional services sector to develop the vital/soft skills needed. This is not funded, but rather, built on good will and historic relationships.

Additionally, one provider raised concerns that many of their students are from some of the most deprived areas of the region and do not have life experience of developing the soft skills that employers want. Employers' focus on soft skills has led to some concerns about social mobility.

Digital and 'Green' skills provision

Providers discussed increasingly needing people specialised in data roles that they didn't have before, and digital marketing subdividing into different aspects of digital (e.g. web design).

One provider raised that, when looking for digital skills in particular, employers often may not know what they are looking for as they don't know the challenges ahead. They believe that the employers and learners need to learn together so businesses can develop an understanding of capabilities afforded by new technologies and digital skills, and keep up with the rapid speed of technological change. They have found that businesses are increasingly more open to these kinds of outcome-focussed discussions.

One provider present discussed looking at emerging technologies through SDF investment, focussing on skillsets and market needs within fintech and proftech, and developing a programme that understands and meets these, using hybrid models and collaborating with Higher Education.

Providers discussed conversations with employers about green skills needing to begin by understanding employers' strategic priorities on this agenda. Many employers are reported as not knowing where to start, or what everything means. They know it's important, but don't have much capacity to think about it and future-proof.

Some providers present are undergoing exercises to make green and digital skills cross-cutting themes in all their training.

Provider Roundtable 3

Date: 27th February 2023

Participating organisations:

- 4 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire
- 1 representative body for the Higher Education sector in the West Midlands

Observations:

- One HE provider present discussed that they are significant growth in international students, but are wary that this could be affected by immigration policy outside of their control.
- With European Social Fund (ESF) projects coming to an end across the UK, HE institutions are investigating alternative funding opportunities.
- Some HEIs are currently delivering degree apprenticeships as loss leaders, and have concerns that this is not sustainable long-term.
- There is significant risk that some standards which are currently being supported by HEIs will disappear due to the unsustainable cost of delivery to SMEs with small cohorts.
- Those present report recruitment challenges regarding:
    - Digital roles (e.g. software engineering, cybersecurity, data assessment and analysis, planning and systems management, IT)
    - Support staff for apprenticeship provision (e.g. assessors and staff with sufficient knowledge of funding rules and compliance)
    - Apprenticeship and student placement teams
    - Middle to senior management roles in professional services provision (e.g. marketing and recruitment)
    - Engineering (particularly civil engineering)
    - Construction
    - Project management
- One HEI present discussed that they are currently building a whole new team to support them in thinking creatively about how to link industry into provision and get right level of instruction and industry support for students.
- Some smaller HEIs present reported being able to be more agile and responsive to employer need than some of their larger counterparts, but nevertheless said that they are not as agile as they would like to be.
- So-called 'soft skills' are seen to be a complicated issue, whereby perceived employability can be unfairly rooted in social capital and upbringing.

Recommendations:

- It is suggested that stakeholders look at better support mechanisms for university graduates, beyond just that which universities and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) can provide.
- One HE institution suggested that they'd like to see improved transport links in West Birmingham, to increase their attractiveness to students and potential staff.

- Funding is needed for short, 1-2 month modular courses to deliver the 'green' skills needed by employers flexibly and at pace .
- It was discussed that in all organisations – employers and providers – embedding effective change in the transition to net zero needs to be driven from the top, and relies on ambition and strong organisational alignment.
- The best way to approach future proofing HE talent pipelines is through discussions with industry and encouraging them to think beyond short term challenges to 5-10 years from now and investing for the long term.
- To improve 'soft skills,' focus needs to be placed on genuinely inclusive growth and building up confidence and self-worth in among learners, which all HEIs present are already striving to do.

Key Themes:

'Green' Skills

HEIs see significant opportunities for provision in the transition to net zero, and opportunities for collaboration with employers and stakeholders. Some discussed whether short, 1-2 month modular courses might be the best way to deliver flexibly and at pace against employer need for green skills, but that funding might limit the feasibility of this.

The biggest change in the environmental sustainability of the HE industry is thought to be as a result of remote working. One HEI discussed embedding sustainability into their teaching programmes, but that they know they probably need to do more internally to be more environmentally sustainable.

It was discussed that in all organisations – employers and providers – embedding effective change in the transition to net zero needs to be driven from the top and relies on ambition and strong organisational alignment.

Digital skills

Institutions present are interested in recruiting or developing advanced digital skills among internal, 'back office' staff, as well as delivery staff.

One HEI discussed having recently lost many software engineers from their organisation, including a whole team who left to go to better paid, fully remote jobs in industry. The institution is currently trying to backfill these roles.

Recruitment into digital and data is reported to be particularly challenging. Other specific digital roles HEIs are finding it difficult to recruit into include: cybersecurity, data assessment and analysis, planning and systems management and IT.

Recruitment challenges

One HEI present noted that they have found that transport and requirements for on-premises working are increasingly significant factors in securing talent. They report struggling to fill 'back office' roles, such as in their apprenticeship and student placements teams, where they don't see a significant pool of skilled talent available in the region.

It was echoed by others that HEIs have found it especially difficult to recruit support staff for apprenticeship provision - examples given were assessors and staff with sufficient knowledge of funding rules and compliance. It was acknowledged however that this is in part probably because this provision is a new area for HEIs and that this recruitment appears to be getting easier with time.

One HEI, concurring with comments already made, reported that they can recruit academics quite easily, however are finding it increasingly difficult to fill middle to senior management roles in professional services provision, such as marketing and recruitment. They attribute staff in these areas moving outside of Higher Education to the fact that businesses are able to offer them almost entirely remote working opportunities.

Another HEI agreed, adding that everyone they are interviewing asks about remote working, and they usually can offer some of this, but that due to new flexibilities in the way we live and work, they are now worried about having to compete for talent with, for example, London universities which will pay higher salaries, and institutions that offer flexibilities such as a four day working week. The labour market in the sector is seen to be competitive in new ways post-pandemic.

One of the smaller HEIs present discussed that they are currently struggling to recruit in engineering (particularly civil engineering) due to the size of their provision in this area. Candidates seem to want to work in larger, separate engineering departments, where they believe they'll be more likely to bring in large research grants.

In construction, it was discussed that while education used to be considered an attractive proposition for those towards the end of their careers, this is less and less the case, due to recalibration of salaries.

HEIs discussed challenges whereby delivery staff, who they have upskilled, move on to work for external partners. It was agreed that the best way to approach future proofing talent pipelines is through discussions with industry and encouraging them to think beyond short term challenges to 5-10 years from now and investing for the long term.

Agility

Some smaller HEIs present reported being able to be more agile and responsive to employer need than some of their larger counterparts, but nevertheless said that they are not as agile as they would like to be.

One such HEI estimated that it probably takes 2 years to develop something from an idea to an offer, then if a course is at degree level it will be 3 years long, meaning in total its 5 or more years until those skills are in industry. While apprenticeships and post graduate provision can be quicker, there is still a delay.

One example of best practice was shared where a participating HEI has recently taken an idea to delivery in 1 year.

'Soft' skills

So-called 'soft skills' are seen to be a complicated issue, whereby perceived employability can be unfairly rooted in social capital and upbringing.

One of the HEIs present highlighted that they have a large proportion of students from relatively deprived backgrounds, meaning that their prior experience and support outside of university can be different to those attending other institutions. The HEI in question works to try and bolster this, but find that it's not just about an ability to engage in teamwork and communication, but actually about being like those interviewing for roles. They also suggested that while many companies will be flexible as to what kind of degree a candidate has, by requiring them to, for example, complete verbal reasoning tests, they can be (unintentionally) filtering out people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The HEI suggests that focus needs to be placed on genuinely inclusive growth and building up confidence and self-worth in their learners, which they are already striving to do.

Concerns were also raised that following the covid-19 pandemic, a lot of current learner cohorts will have had reduced opportunities to interact with employers, undertake work experience and make informed choices about their careers.

Provider Roundtable 4

Date: 28th February 2023

Participating organisations:

- 17 Further Education Colleges operating across the West Midlands and Warwickshire

Observations

- Agencies are charging providers extortionate fees to fill staff shortages and this is causing some full time staff to leave their current positions and return to the same providers at higher agency rates.
- Providers all report recruitment difficulties, driven in large part by skills gaps in the wider labour market, higher wages in industry (and higher education) that FE Providers are unable to compete with and the time needed to train people as educators.
- Recruitment challenges are particularly acute among providers specialising in supporting students with education health and care plans.
- Delivering 'green skills' is considered to be a challenge as it requires understanding future jobs markets and aligning this with demand that sometimes doesn't yet exist (e.g. in skills for retrofitting). Electric vehicles, hybrid and hydrogen technologies and electrical installation were reported by one college to be among key growth areas.
- One participant discussed best practice coordination amongst several colleges in an SDF bid for investment in battery technologies and retrofitting.
- Several colleges discussed having strong social and climate justice missions but raised concerns about the costs of their own organisations transitioning towards net zero. One stated that just switching to LED lighting in their premises will cost £2million.
- Several colleges present discussed having a very strong relationship with various Higher Education Institutions across the region and shared examples of best practice collaboration.

Recommendations

- Funding for provision should account for providers having to compete with industry pay.
- Stakeholders ought to assess money spent by providers with agencies to fill staffing gaps and adjust funding to allow allocation of this money to direct staff pay.
- More funding is needed to support people with additional and special educational needs to engage in workplaces and greater understanding and confidence is needed within employers of all sizes regarding how to work with people who have additional and special educational needs.
- One provider suggested that better utilisation and engagement of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students presents a significant opportunity for the region.

Key Themes

Recruitment difficulties

Providers discussed that recruitment of staff in construction and engineering trades is a real challenge – particularly where specialist skills are needed in higher level programmes. One provider

reported turning away 200 students last year because they couldn't get the staff to teach electrical engineering and plumbing.

One provider discussed having significant gaps in health and social care professionals at advanced level and nurses.

Another provider stated that the only way they can recruit successfully is by bringing people in on temporary contracts to begin with, and then offering them permanent roles. This is expensive and time consuming but retention of these staff members is considered to be reasonably good.

It was also discussed that due to wage inflation in industry and the cost of living crisis, new recruits are demanding salaries at the top of pay scales. Together with increases in the national living wage, this is having an impact on staff morale in some providers, who are anticipating needing to increase salaries elsewhere as a result.

Meeting salary requirements is a significant challenge for providers, along with the time taken to train people to teach.

Staff retention in the sector is also considered difficult due to the rapid pace of provision and demands on the workforce.

Recruitment needs among support or 'back office' staff were argued to be in some ways more pressing than delivery staff.

One provider discussed taking their catering back in house, and that they managed to get a manager for this, but that that manager is now cooking because they can't recruit a cook and agency cooks are unfeasibly expensive due to industry demand.

It was raised that HEIs are able to pay staff significantly above what colleges and independent training providers can, meaning that the latter are competing with both higher salaries in industry, and in HEIs.

Another provider reported that they have been functioning without a full estates team for 2 ½ years as they can't compete on salary with universities who will pay candidates £8,000-£10,000 per annum more. The same provider reported also recently losing several systems developers, one of whom is going to work for a university for £12,000 per annum more than they can offer.

Other examples of 'back office' roles providers report being unable to recruit to include (apprenticeship) administrators, leaning support assistants, assessors in many areas, senior and executive roles such as Vice Principal and Assistant Principal, Heads of Quality and Managers in tech-based faculties

One provider, which specialises in supporting students with education health and care plans discussed acute challenges accessing staff that understand the needs of their learners as well as the workplaces that they put their students into. They require staff with work experience themselves in a number of roles, as well as understanding of and ability to manage complex behaviour, and confidence working with medical professionals as part of a multidisciplinary team.

'Green Skills'

Delivering ‘green skills’ is considered to be a challenge as it requires understanding future jobs markets and aligning this with demand that sometimes doesn’t yet exist (e.g. in skills for retrofitting). Electric vehicles, hybrid and hydrogen technologies and electrical installation were reported by one college to be among key growth areas.

One participant discussed best practice coordination amongst several colleges in an SDF bid for investment in battery technologies and retrofitting.

Several colleges discussed having strong social and climate justice missions but raised concerns about the up-front costs of their own organisations transitioning towards net zero. One stated that just switching to LED lighting in their premises will cost £2million.

Relationship with HE

Several colleges present discussed having a very strong relationship with various Higher Education Institutions across the region.

One example of best practice collaboration between FE and HE mentioned included a college cross mapping their curriculum with a local university that 80% of their students are said to progress to. Others are also working with FE and HE partners to map provision in health and social care and collaboratively support career pathways into the NHS.

Employment support

Providers are seeing increasing demand for reengagement of people back into learning and ultimately employment. One provider suggested that better utilisation and engagement of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students presents a significant opportunity for the region, with many ESOL learners currently not being enabled to engage economically and productively simply due to not being able to access English classes.

Employer and Provider Priority Sessions

Sample and Methodology

As outlined above, on 17th March, the Chambers of Commerce convened a group of employers and providers which operate across the West Midlands and Warwickshire at an in-person event at Aston Villa Football Club to present the preliminary findings of the WMW LSIP research and workshop potential responses.

As identified by Coventry and Warwickshire Chambers, providers of post-16 technical education and training invited to participate in this event were prioritised on the basis of participation in earlier provider roundtables (through engagement in partnership with Colleges West Midlands and West Midlands Provider Network, as above) and reaching out to be further involved in the LSIP.

At the end of March, the Chambers of Commerce additionally convened 6 employers from across the LSIP area – which together represented each of the Priority Growth Cluster groups - to gather their feedback on the preliminary findings, and initial suggestions of responses.

Insights from these sessions are summarised below.

17th March: Have Your Say: West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP Priorities

Agenda

15 minutes: Welcome and Introductions, Chair

- Chair to set out the background to the research (for those who haven't previously been involved in the LSIP)
- Chair to clarify recording arrangements and inform participants on the structure of the session

3 hours 30 minutes: Feedback and potential responses to be discussed among participants on tables and fed back theme by theme:

- *Theme One: Strategic Leadership*
- *Theme Two: 'Essential Skills' and Practical Experience*
- *Theme Three: Identifying the Right Providers*
- *Theme Four: Identifying the Right Means of Delivery*
- *Theme Five: Recruiting into Education*

15 minutes: Thanks and close and invitation to join networking lunch, Chair

Participating organisations:

- 16 Businesses:
    - 3 medium sized recruitment companies
    - 1 large business communications, IT and digital security company
    - 1 large automotive manufacturer
    - 1 medium sized theatre company
    - 1 employer representative organisation, representing the construction sector
    - 1 small beauty business
    - 1 medium sized commercial landlord
    - 1 small printing company
    - 1 small automotive mechanics business
    - 1 medium sized alternative health business
    - 1 small photo editing business
    - 1 small travel agents
    - 1 small mobile phone and accessories business
    - 1 small engineering consultancy
- 15 Independent training providers
- 13 Colleges
- 3 Universities

Observations and recommendations:

Theme One: Strategic Leadership

It was discussed that developing strategic leadership capabilities at a regional level may also facilitate better understanding of future skills needs among providers and stakeholders.

When presented with the initial findings of the LSIP research in regard to strategic leadership, proposed recommendations from employers, providers and stakeholders brought together both skills needs and wider business support needs, identifying that intervention at a regional level ought to convene a holistic package of support, based on business outcomes, rather than just specific courses or qualifications.

In regard to the skills aspect of this support, short, modular training for leaders, managers and future leaders and managers is favoured as an agile and accessible means of delivery, customisable to critical business needs. Strategic leadership training may not require formal accreditation (though should recognise critical milestones), but ideally this could be stackable to meet the requirements of accreditation, to encourage ongoing development. Funding of this training – and training more broadly – must account for flexibility in delivery, to mirror the remote and flexible working patterns of businesses.

It was suggested that provision ought to take lessons from programmes such as the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses UK programme, particularly in regard to delivery methodology, minimal eligibility criteria and presenting a clear outcome or return on investment that links into wider business needs.

In regard to the wider need identified, support with strategic leadership that extends beyond simply skills; many businesses require support to put together bids, develop business plans, and conduct market analysis, among other things. As such, effective intervention ought to include facilitation of peer-to-peer learning. It was suggested that this could be delivered through mechanisms such as mentoring - taking lessons from schemes such as Help to Grow: Management - or through supplementary, cross-sector collaborative learning, delivered by local business leaders.

An accessible leadership and management training offer, potentially delivered with devolved adult skills funding, and ideally capable of pivoting to specific leadership and management disciplines – such as strategy development, project management, business change, finance, and workforce development – might be linked in as part of wider business support and advisory services delivered by regional stakeholders.

Theme Two: 'Essential Skills' and Practical Experience

Consultation with regional stakeholders, providers, and employers in regard to this challenge identified a number of potential recommendations.

It was emphasised by providers that curriculum funding and assessment must recognise the importance of essential skills, including communication, collaboration, problem solving, innovation and commercialisation in employability and practical application of technical skills.

Best practice approaches to delivering these skills, already being undertaken by providers across the region, include offering learners mentoring, as well as holistic learning support in the form of mental health advocates and onsite counselling, and embedding customised employability provision within learning. However, this is currently being undertaken – particularly in independent training providers and colleges – with very limited funding and therefore capacity.

Regional centralisation of wraparound support for learners, building on some of these best practice approaches, was recommended to maximise delivery of essential skills.

It was also recommended that to support the development of essential skills, employers be encouraged to engage more with providers, through employer representative bodies, clusters and

sector networks raising awareness of existing programmes - such as those delivered by the Careers and Enterprise Company.

Further potential responses may include facilitation of an 'exchange' programme between different employers, and facilitation of project work across multiple disciplines within a university or college, or between independent training providers.

Theme Three: Identifying the Right Providers

Consultation with regional stakeholders, providers, and employers in regard to this challenge identified several potential responses, including the below.

Providers must work together better, recognising and building on individual specialisms. Examples of this are already happening within the West Midlands, including Institutes of Technology, collaborative Strategic Development Fund bids and Colleges West Midlands collaborations on electrification and battery technologies, and construction. Such collaborative working among and between all providers – universities, colleges and independent training providers - must be fostered and facilitated further by funding bodies, to reduce competition between providers and in turn reduce the barriers businesses face in identifying appropriate providers.

Introduction of a standardised regional assessment of customer experience and employer confidence, beyond just provision outcomes, is also recommended. This may form part of a 'quality mark' for providers, such as the Greater London 'Mayor's Academies Quality Mark.'

20% of survey respondents identified that independent, funded support to identify skills needs and advice on suitable training provision would help them overcome barriers to increasing investment in skills and training. Access to independent advice on skills provision and funding may support those that haven't utilised post-16 education and training previously to do so, and those employers which have (particularly where infrequently or only in some areas of their business) to do so more. Some recommended that regional authorities take this a step further, to trial facilitation of cluster or sector groups setting training priorities, for providers to bid to deliver and (if approved) receive a kitemark that other employers might recognise.

Raising awareness of the West Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador Network might form a part of this intervention, to amplify positive experiences employers have recently had with providers across the region.

Recommendations from consultation with employers, providers and stakeholders varied in regard to development of a centralised portal of provision, or 'one stop shop' for skills support. West Yorkshire Combined Authority's interactive map of provision received some positive feedback from those who had used it, however, many expressed concerns that centralised portals haven't been successfully delivered in the past due to significant costs and maintenance challenges.

That said, while attempts to develop a single portal for regional skills provision in the West Midlands in the past have been unsuccessful, it should be recognised that since this was last attempted, the regional landscape of skills provision has become more collaborative, and devolution has afforded the region greater flexibility in regard to funding of provision. It has been proposed that a collaborative, pan-regional approach, drawing on powers of devolution through the West Midlands Combined Authority to broaden engagement with employers, enhancing the employer experience and focusing on both resident and business outcomes could potentially deliver a considerably more successful digital signposting solution for provision in the West Midlands now than has been feasible previously.

Theme Four: Identifying the Right Means of Delivery

Ultimately, there is a clear need for providers and stakeholders to collaborate on the offer being made to employers, providing consistent messaging, and focussing on employer experience, so that employers feel 'worked with' rather than 'sold to' and greater confidence can be fostered between the post-16 education and training sector and employers as a whole. This could capitalise on established assets, including employer engagement teams within providers, existing intermediaries and business support services.

Consultation with regional stakeholders, providers and employers in regard to this challenge consistently identified an opportunity to utilise flexibilities afforded to the WMCA area through devolution, to create a single pot of discretionary funding, to fund training led by employer need rather than otherwise available products. This might be trialled in a sector or priority growth cluster with a particularly high proportion of SMEs requiring access to bespoke training, or with relatively high place-based innovation potential, and (likewise) requirements for bespoke skills support.

While modular training appears to be favoured by the regional business community, further research is required to understand the specific expectations of 'short,' modular training, and identify where longer training might still be preferable. Lessons must also be learnt from previous projects to ensure that any offer of modular training in response to the LSIP takes full advantage of new mechanisms for collaboration between providers and receives appropriate take-up from the local business community.

Some employers and providers also proposed that clear mapping of pathways outlining development opportunities and funding access may facilitate greater understanding of various means of delivery.

Others proposed facilitating flexible, 'shared' apprenticeships between micro and SME businesses to alleviate cost pressures associated with longer-term training - reflecting the responses of 23% of survey respondents.

Theme Five: Recruiting into Education

Consultation with regional stakeholders, providers, and employers in regard to this challenge identified a need for independent organisations to be funded to facilitate genuine conversations at a senior level between employers and providers, to develop innovative, collaborative solutions to mutual skills shortages.

Such solutions might build on existing models of best practice, such as those seeking to engage staff towards the end of their careers to share their experiences with incoming talent, engaging skilled individuals who have recently retired to act as mentors for incoming talent and delivery staff, and utilising employees on day-release by providing a financial subsidy for their time, increasing the training capabilities of that individual to upskill staff in-house and conducting a training needs analysis for the business, in return for use of their expertise in training delivery.

Lessons might also be learned from work conducted by Colleges West Midlands, which sought to facilitate 'shared' employment of specialist staff across multiple colleges.

Others recommended regional authorities utilising the bootcamp model of training delivery for the further education sector, to attract more people to work in post-16 technical education and training.

Priority Growth Cluster Priority Feedback Focus Group

Script

5 minutes: Welcome and Introductions, Chair

- Chair to set out the background to the research (for those who haven't previously been involved in the LSIP)
- Chair to clarify recording arrangements and inform participants on the structure of the session

5 minutes: Introductions from participants and summary of business activity

- Each participant to share a short update on their role, nature of the work their organisation specialises in and the area the business is based in and/or operates in, within the West Midlands region

20 minutes: Gather feedback on research and potential responses to *Theme One: Strategic Leadership*

- Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC) to provide an overview of WMW LSIP research focus & methodology
- GBCC to provide an overview of research and potential responses to Theme One
- Chair:
    - Does this reflect your experience? Is there anything in these findings that is surprising?
    - Would you find any of the proposed responses helpful in your business/sector?
    - Are there any other potential responses you'd be interested in seeing, or ideas to make potential responses more attractive to local businesses?

20 minutes: Gather feedback on research and potential responses to *Theme Two: 'Essential Skills' and Practical Experience*

- GBCC to provide an overview of the research and potential responses to Theme Two
- Chair:
    - Does this reflect your experience? Is there anything in these findings that is surprising?
    - Would you find any of the proposed responses helpful in your business/sector?
    - Are there any other potential responses you'd be interested in seeing, or ideas to make potential responses more attractive to local businesses/individuals?

20 minutes: Gather feedback on research and potential responses to *Theme Three: Identifying the Right Providers*

- GBCC to provide an overview of the research and potential responses to Theme Three
- Chair:
    - Does your business engage with post-16 technical education and training? If yes: how do you identify the right providers?
    - Do these findings reflect your experience? Is there anything in these findings that is surprising?

- Would you find any of the proposed responses helpful in your business/sector?
- Are there any other potential responses you'd be interested in seeing, or ideas to make potential responses more attractive to local businesses?

20 minutes: Gather feedback on research and potential responses to *Theme Four: Identifying the Right Means of Delivery*

- GBCC to provide an overview of the research and potential responses to Theme Four
- Chair:
  - Does your business engage with post-16 technical education and training? If yes: what provision/funding do you utilise? (e.g. apprenticeships, t levels, etc) How do you identify the right means of delivery?
  - Do these findings reflect your experience? Is there anything in these findings that is surprising?
  - Would you find any of the proposed responses helpful in your business/sector?
  - Are there any other potential responses you'd be interested in seeing, or ideas to make potential responses more attractive to local businesses?

End: Thanks and closing remarks

- Chair to:
  - Summarise the main points discussed
  - ensure respondents understand how information will be used and ensure consent for re-contact if needed
  - Thank you and close

Summary of discussion

Date: 30th March 2023

Participating organisations and priority growth clusters:

Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices and Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuel)

- 1 small electric vehicle provider

Logistics & distribution

- 1 small to medium logistics firm
- 1 specialist logistics recruitment business

Professional and financial services and supply chain

- 1 small HR consultancy

Health Technology and Medical Technology

- 1 large medical device manufacturer

Modern and low carbon utility and manufacturing of future housing

- 1 large housing association

Observations and Recommendations:

Theme One: Strategic Leadership

The logistics recruitment firm agreed that this really needs improvement in their sector/cluster. They stated that many lower levels of managers don't receive (adequate) training. Together with staff shortages in these industries putting high levels of stress on employees, this causes employees to leave, exacerbating challenges. Team leaders and supervisors are reported to frequently not have the leadership skills needed of them.

The small to medium logistics and distribution employer also highlighted that they are not looking into net zero at the moment because their focus is on cost – all their clients need transport costs to be as low as possible due to cost pressures everywhere.

In professional services, it was suggested that the big challenge is no one knowing how to deal with climate change and the associated challenges and cost implications of regulation. It was agreed that anything employers, stakeholders and providers can do to strengthen management and middle management to master this change is critical.

The large housing association present discussed that they are currently trying to recruit for future home building and retrofitting roles, and they are struggling as they are trying to compete for these skills at the same time as 'everyone else' in their industry. As a social landlord, they have a rent ceiling so are unable to compete on pay. They are having to invest significant resources currently to support residents hardest hit by inflation and the cost of living.

The electric vehicle provider fed back that they are "baffled" by the challenge of implementing simple ideas in the region, and would like to see the structure of funding for education and training reviewed to allow for further flexibility and accelerating successful pilots related to the transition to net zero in particular. They would like to see a fast tracked package of opportunities for upskilling people with green and associated digital skills, alongside leadership and people management provision.

The large medical device manufacturer raised concerns that industry plans to meet net zero requirements have purposeful elements that aren't understood and/or connected to organisational strategies currently. They believe that the key challenge in meeting net zero however is delivery of more Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) qualifications, engaging more people and supporting local authorities and educators in STEM. As an organisation they already invest in leadership skills and don't have a skills gap at this level.

Theme Two: 'Essential Skills' and Practical Experience

Participating employers encouraged that the term 'essential skills' be used rather than 'soft skills' in discussion of this theme.

The professional services sector participant raised that this is something which employers (including themselves) can help with, through providing practical experience (via, for example, internships). They highlighted challenges in engaging with educators on this topic however, including educator resource being stretched by other priorities, and confusion amongst employers regarding 'where to go and what schemes are out there'. It was proposed that employers could benefit from a single

point whereby each provider or local authority summarises all their employer engagement asks and deadlines for involvement. The participant discussed that they want to support as widely as possible but currently end up engaging with the same schemes every year.

A participant specialising in logistics recruitment discussed that while technical provision in universities (for their sector) is extremely good, both FE and HE providers could enhance provision further by bolstering 'essential skills'.

Theme Three: Identifying the Right Providers

A representative from the large medical device manufacturer discussed concerns that providers are 'shoehorning' the inappropriate provision into delivery against employer needs as a result of restrictive funding and industry targets. They would like to see employers directly funded to develop internal training arms which give them control of their own talent development and allow for a focus on on-the-job targeted training, which will in turn support development of essential skills.

Further, it was discussed that better language provision is needed in the region, as well as better means of supporting recruitment for those with disabilities.

Theme Four: Identifying the Right Means of Delivery

Employers broadly agreed with the findings of research associated with this theme. The HR consultancy suggested that the region is also missing STEM-educated people who have taken career breaks, and that more also needs to be done with short, modular training for career returners and career changers, to ensure up to date knowledge and confidence.

Further to previous discussions of experiences with various providers, examples of best practice industry collaboration were shared; as one such example, the logistics firm discussed the BIFA 'freight development pathway' scheme developed with Manpower, which they said they would consider using if they needed support to identify, attract and train suitable candidates from outside of the freight forwarding and logistics sector. They currently recruit successfully through word of mouth and existing relationships.

Employer Surveying

Through surveying, the West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP gathers further, primarily quantitative insights on the strategic priorities and green and digital skills needs of employers across the region, producing data that is statistically relevant and broadly representative of the business demography as a whole, in regard to both size and broad industry sector.

Sample and Methodology

WMW LSIP employer surveying was conducted throughout 1st February to 3rd March 2023 by a telemarketing provider, using data lists that sought to exclude members of the three Chambers of Commerce involved in the WMW LSIP. This was done to ensure that the data was, where possible, unbiased, and representative of the wider business community, to supplement the extensive research conducted with Chamber members, through focus groups and Meaningful Engagements.

The Chambers sought for quantitative surveying to represent a confidence interval of no more than +/-4.5% with a confidence level of 95%. With 120,615 enterprises in the LSIP geography (93,415 in the WMCA area and 27,200 in the Warwickshire Local Authority area) in 2022[4], this would require 472 responses. The target number of responses was rounded up to 500, and in total, the WMW LSIP received 501 survey responses from employers operating in the West Midlands; the additional response was due to collection error. A survey sample of 501 responses offers a confidence interval of +/- 4.37% and a confidence level of 95%.

These responses were from businesses operating across each of the three LEP geographies covered by the WMW LSIP. A geographical breakdown of where respondents are primarily operating within the region is as follows:

Region	**Percentage of survey respondents**
Coventry & Warwickshire	38
Greater Birmingham	36
Black Country	25

The tables below reflect the distribution of responses by size, industry sector (as self-reported) and, for comparison, the distribution of regional businesses by the same measures. It should be noted that only employers were eligible to participate in WMW LSIP business engagement activities. Businesses with only one employee were excluded from surveying. Those surveyed were senior representatives of their organisations, with telemarketers asking to speak to senior decision makers, such as Chief Executives, Chief Financial Officers and Finance or Human Resource Directors. Where survey respondents differ in size and sector from the wider business demography of the WMW LSIP geography this is unfortunately due to challenges with a lack of contact data available for individuals in businesses meeting the specifications of the project.

Business size	**Percentage of survey respondents**	**Percentage of Enterprises in the**

[4] Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS), accessed via Nomis, 2023

		WMCA area and Warwickshire[5]
1-9	74.1	88.9
10-49	22.8	9.1
50-249	2.8	1.6
250+	0.2	0.5
No answer	0.2	n/a

Business Sector	**Percentage of survey respondents**	**Percentage of Enterprises in the WMCA area and Warwickshire[6]**
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	1.2	1.4
Mining, Quarrying & Utilities	0.0	0.5
Manufacturing	13.0	6.5
Construction	9.8	12.2
Motor Trades	2.8	3.6
Wholesale	6.0	4.6
Retail	10.8	9.7
Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	3.4	9.0
Accommodation & Food Services	1.8	6.5
Information & Communication	4.2	5.6
Finance & Insurance	2.4	1.6
Property	4.2	4.1
Professional, Scientific & Technical	5.4	13.5
Business Administration and Support Services	2.6	8.7
Public Administration	0.2	0.1
Education	0.6	1.8
Health	5.4	4.8
Other	26.3	n/a

[5] Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS), accessed via Nomis, 2023
[6] Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS), accessed via Nomis, 2023

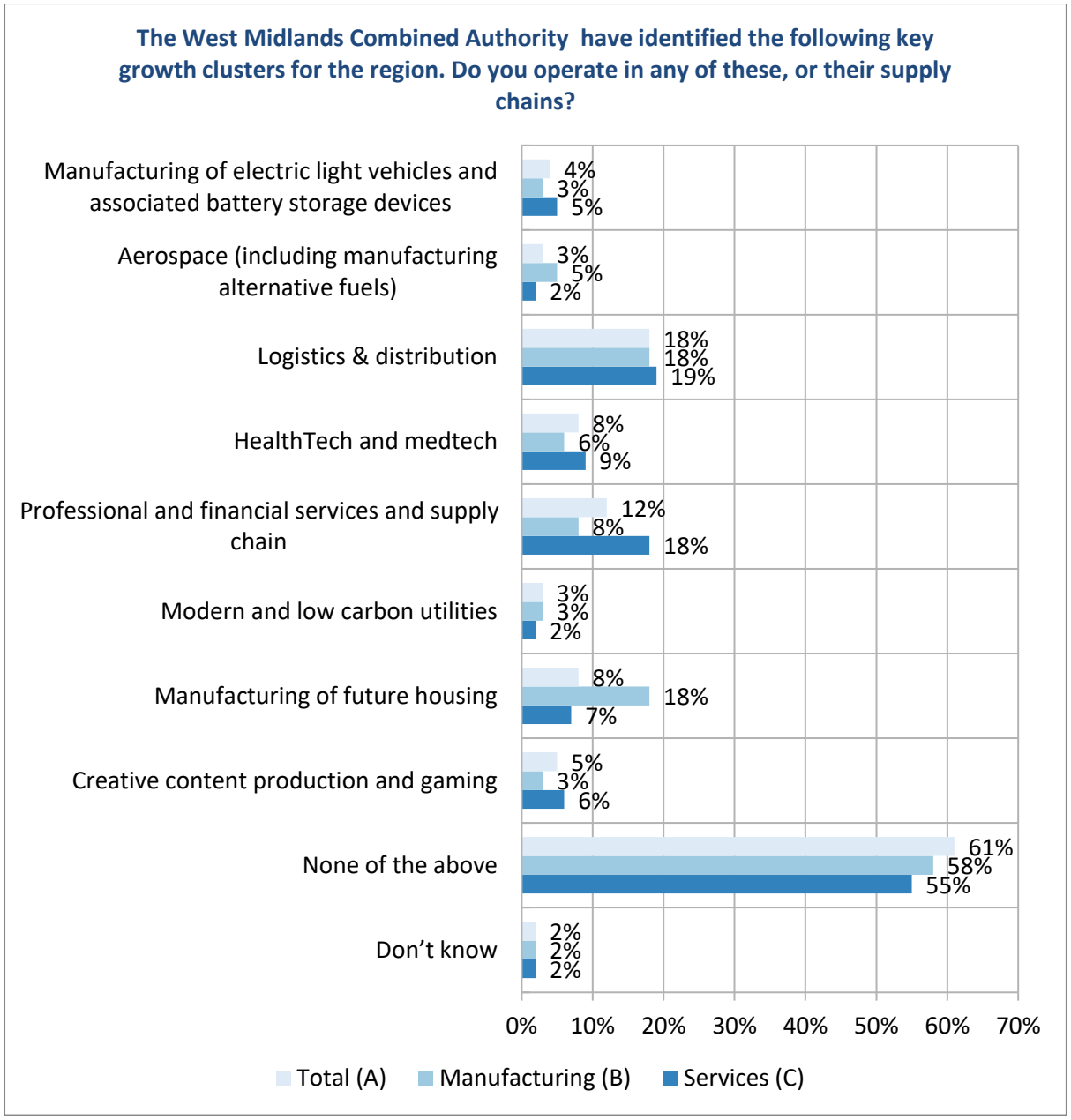
Unless stated otherwise, analyses of the quantitative survey findings in this report are based on all respondents less those who chose not to answer specific questions. Where figures do not sum to 100%, it is due either to rounding and/ or participants being able to select multiple answers. The following graphs show results from the total number of participants involved. For the purpose of analysis, broad business sector (a breakdown between service firms and manufacturing firms) comparisons have also been included.

For comparative purposes, all those who identified the following as their main business activity were grouped as broad 'services' sector businesses: health, public administration, motor trades, wholesale, retail, transport & storage (inc postal), accommodation & food services, information & communication, finance & insurance, property, professional, scientific & technical, business administration and support services and education.

Those who identified the following as their main business activity were grouped as 'manufacturing' sector businesses: manufacturing, construction, agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Analysis

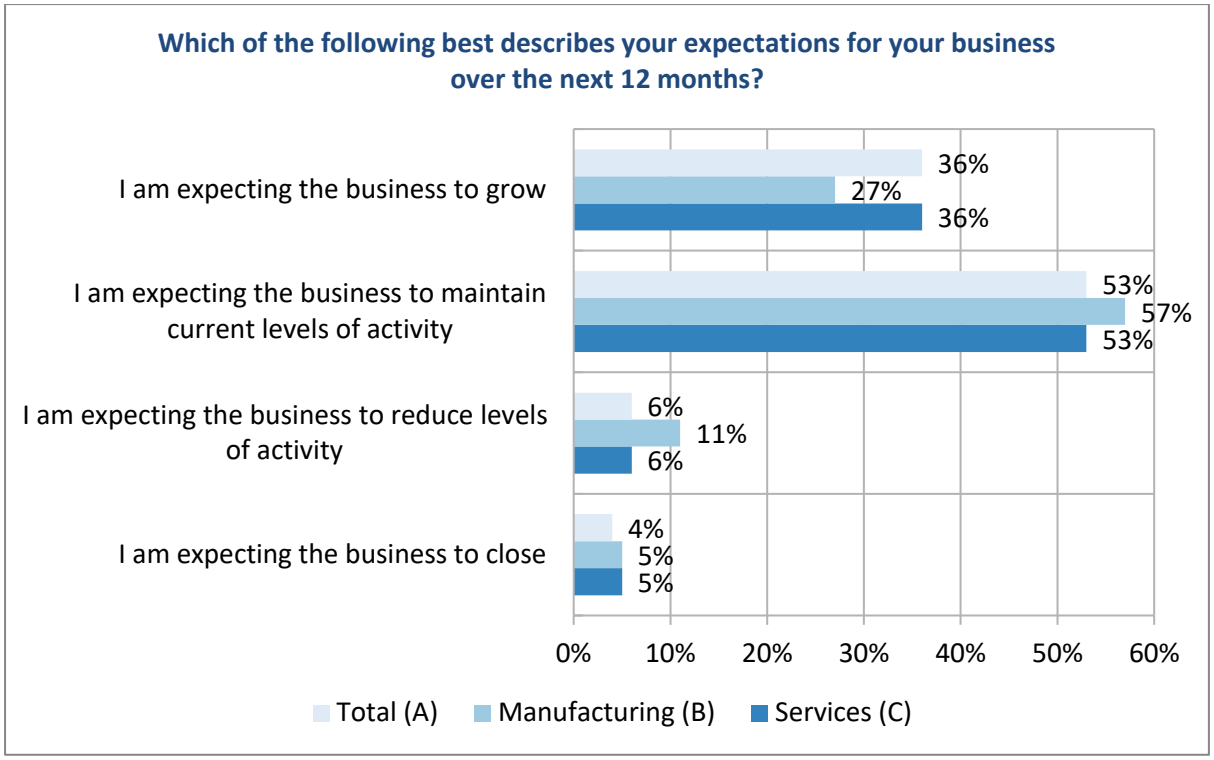
I: Priority Growth Cluster Participation



Over a third of businesses surveyed (37.3%) indicated that they currently operate in, or in the supply chain of, one of the Priority Growth Clusters outlined in the WMCA's Plan for Growth. Most frequently, businesses were engaged in Logistics and distribution (17.8%) and Professional and financial services and supply chain (12.4%), followed by Manufacturing of future housing (8.4%).

Services sector firms were slightly more likely than manufacturing firms to engage in one or more clusters (43.0% compared to 40.3%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was particularly evident in the Professional and financial services and supply chain cluster, in which 18.0% of services sector firms and 8.4% of manufacturing firms reported operating. Nevertheless, manufacturers were significantly more likely to be engaged in Manufacturing of future housing (17.6%) than services sector firms (6.6%), and to a lesser extent, more likely to be engaged in Aerospace (5.1% compared to 1.6%), although caution should be exercised, given the particularly small sample of firms operating in the Aerospace cluster and supply chain.

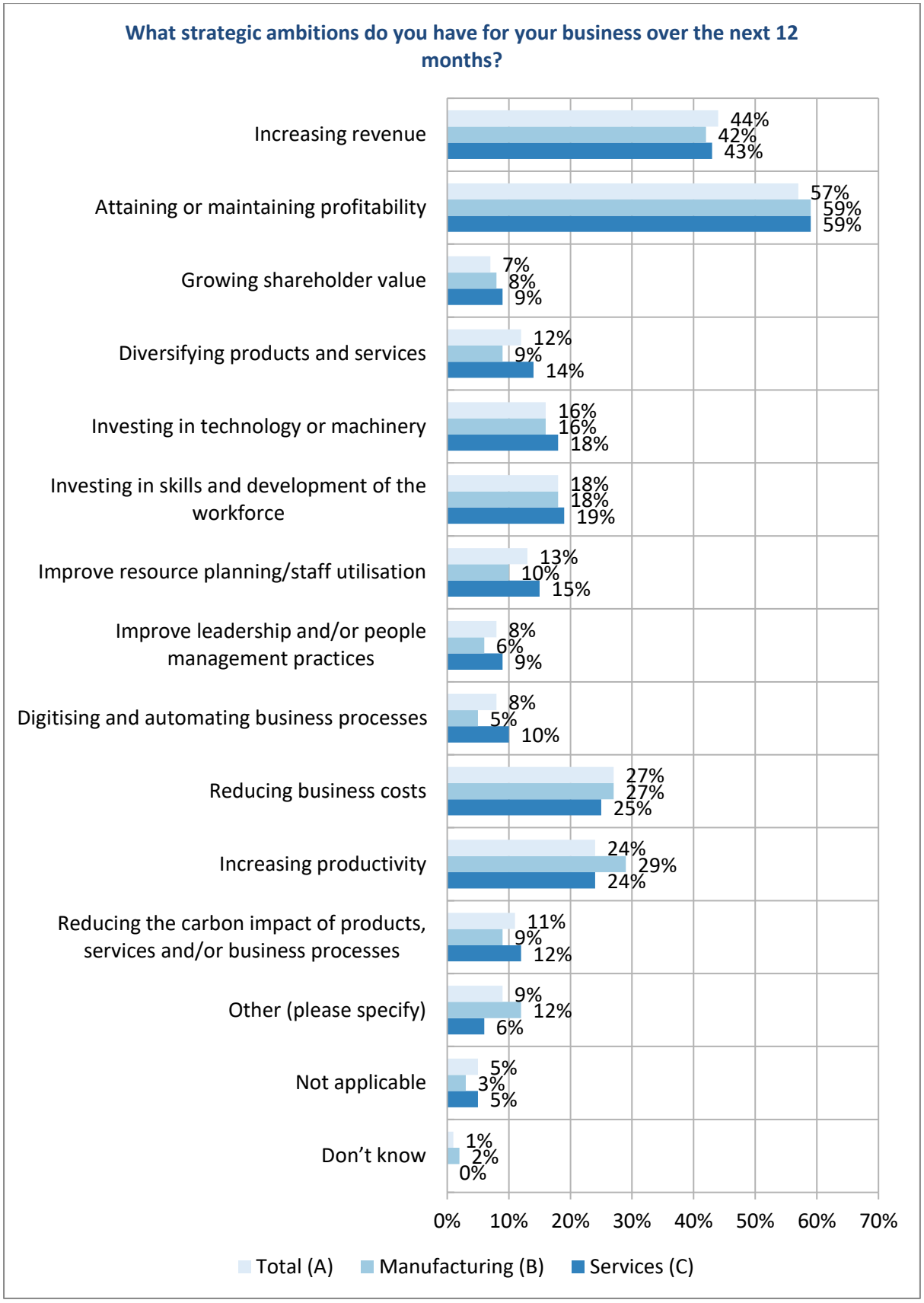
II: Expectations and Strategic Ambitions



Whilst an overall 36% of firms anticipate business growth over the next 12 months, services sector businesses reported more optimistic expectations than their manufacturing sector counterparts; 36.5% of services sector businesses reported expectations of business growth, compared to 26.9% of manufacturing sector firms.

In total, 53.1% of respondents expect to see their firm maintain current levels of activity – 57.1% of manufacturers and 52.9% of services sector firms. 6.2% expect their business to reduce levels of activity over the next 12 months – 10.9% of manufacturing firms and 5.7% of services sector businesses.

5.0% of manufacturers and 4.9% of services sector firms reported expecting their business to close in the next 12 months. In total, this represented 4.4% of survey respondents (including those which didn't identify with the standard industrial classifications divided into broad 'services' and 'manufacturing' sectors).



Respondents most frequently reported 'attaining or maintaining profitability (57.0%), 'increasing revenue' (44.3%) and 'reducing business costs' (27.1%) among the strategic ambitions of their businesses over the next 12 months.

As illustrated above, there are small distinctions in the data between services and manufacturing sector respondents.

Particularly notable for the purposes of this research, services firms more frequently reported ambitions to 'diversify products and services' (13.8%, compared to 8.8% of manufacturers), 'invest in technology or machinery' (17.7% compared to 15.9%), 'invest in skills and development of the workforce' (19.4% compared to 17.7%), 'improve resource planning/staff utilisation' (14.7% compared to 9.7%), 'improve leadership and/or people management practices' (9.5% compared to 6.2%), 'digitise and automate business processes' (10.3% compared to 5.3%) and 'reduce the carbon impact of products, services and/or business processes' (11.6% compared to 8.8%).

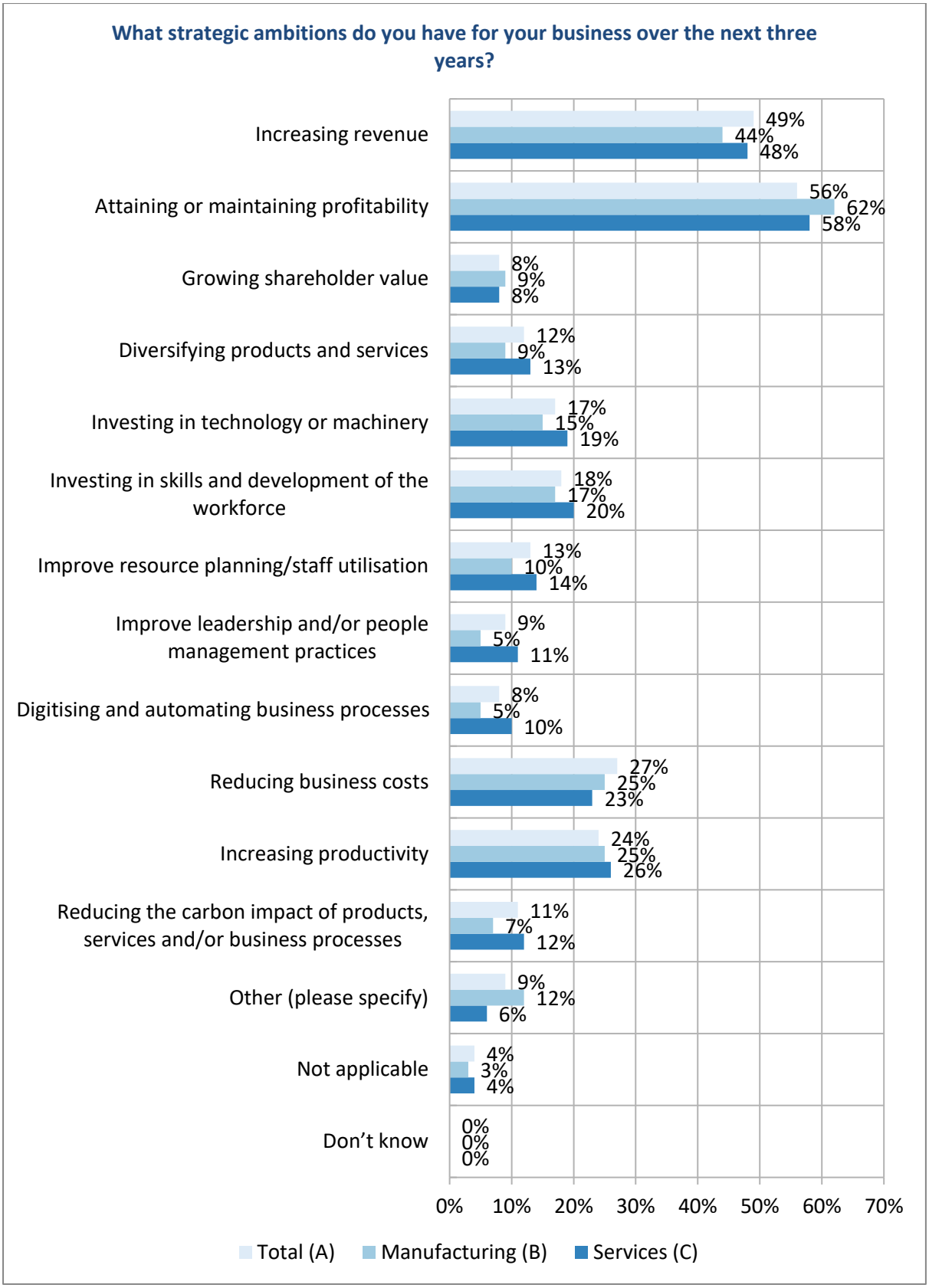
Manufacturing sector firms more frequently reported ambitions to 'reduce business costs' (26.5% compared to 25.0%), 'increase productivity' (29.2% compared to 24.1%) or that respondents didn't know their business's strategic ambitions for the coming year (1.8% compared with 0.4%).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Construction	Professional and financial services and supply chain	retirement
1-9	Security	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	None - Looking to sell the business
1-9	Community Centre	none	Run more activities and events and provide more information
1-9	Manufacturing	none	grow headcount and turnover
1-9	Retail	Professional and financial services and supply chain	temporary accommodation
10-49	Retail	none	Expand and move premises
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	announce membership nationwide
10-49	Construction	none	Increase and improve operational effectiveness
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Creative content production and gaming	remain stable
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Stay trading
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	stay the same
1-9	Information & Communication	none	None - Just keep ticking over (carrying on as we are)
1-9	Production	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	Social Media Marketing
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	update offices
1-9	Construction	none	None - Ticking over nicely
1-9	Internet Technologies and mobile application	none	Return in investment
1-9	Promotion Of Products	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Increasing Sales
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	e commerce
1-9	Business Administration	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated	increasing members

	and Support Services	battery storage devices	
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Lot of our customers have retired or closed in their businesses
1-9	Manufacturing	none	to survive
1-9	Trade only sales of personalized gifts and promo products	none	more staff
1-9	indoor bowling club	none	mental health (working with Mind), social support and visual impairment, disability Bowls. Making the club more inclusive.
50-249	Business Administration and Support Services	none	employing more staff and expanding workforce
1-9	MSP IT support	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming; none	more staff
1-9	Retail	none	Sell the business on so that I can retire
10-49	Motor Trades	Logistics & distribution	Staying afloat
10-49	Online Retail	none	None
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	Purchase or look for more properties from landlords
1-9	Charity non for profit	none	Keep going as a charity
1-9	Make tow bars for vehicles	Logistics & distribution	We been going 30 years between me and my colleague it's not ever getting easy
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	increasing exports
1-9	Fast Food Take Away	none	Uber Eats
1-9	Property	none	be proactive
1-9	historical gardens	none	survive for the future and protect the gardens
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Energy prices impacting us as a business
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Currently we are short of work and can always benefit more work as and when it arises
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Keep people in jobs

1-9	We make glass to be fitted in cars that those are wanting to be mobile i.e. homes	Logistics & distribution	Just for the business to stay afloat as it's been a struggle since we have been going for 10 years



Looking at strategic ambitions over the coming three years, responses were not dissimilar, with respondents once again most frequently reporting ambitions to 'attain or maintain profitability (55.9%), 'increase revenue' (48.6%) and 'reduce business costs' (26.6%). Slight variations in broad sector responses are demonstrated in the chart above.

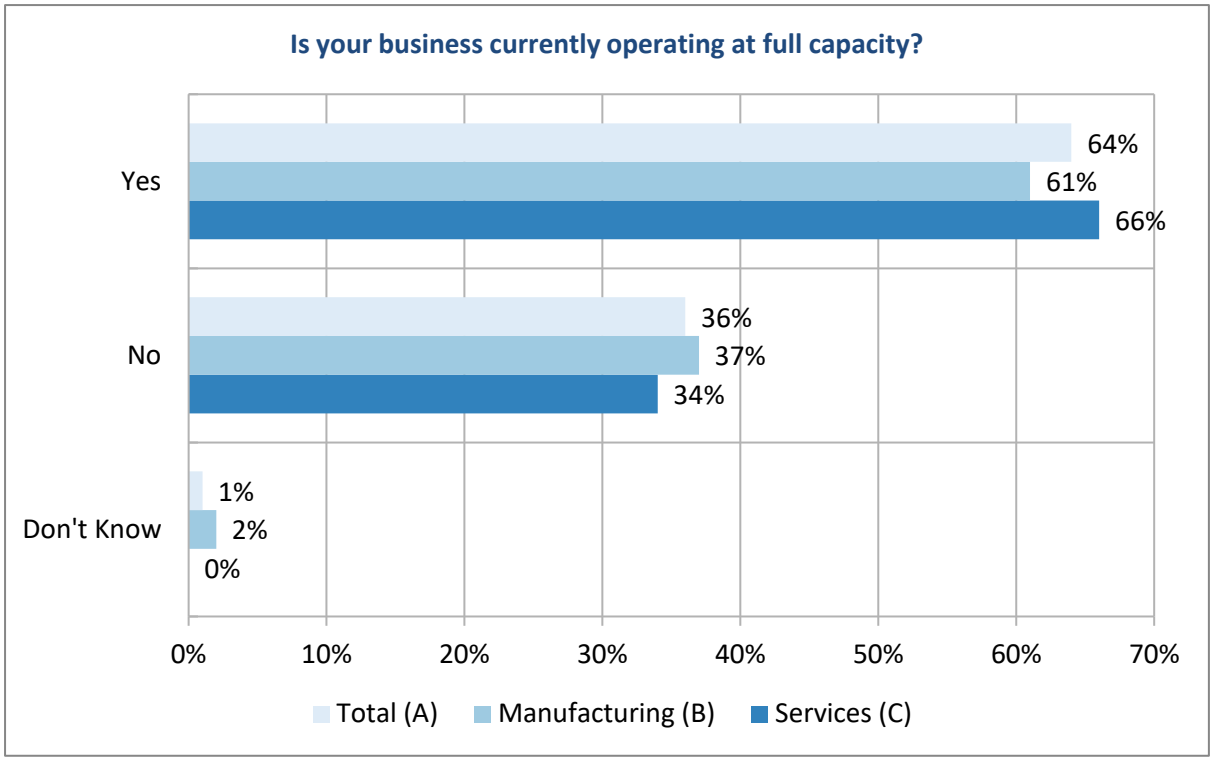
'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Streamlining the business operations prior to retirement
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain	retirement
1-9	Construction	Professional and financial services and supply chain	retirement
1-9	Security	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	None - Looking to sell the business
1-9	Community Centre	none	Even more outreach and support for the community on a longer-term basis
1-9	Retail	Professional and financial services and supply chain	stay the same
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Sell up and retire
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	announce membership nationwide
10-49	Construction	none	Increase and improve operational effectiveness
1-9	Wedding & Other Events	none	Want to build more traction of work
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Creative content production and gaming	Continue
50-249	Education	none	partnership in the area
10-49	Public Administration	none	Hoping to change the business model in the coffee shop via a rebrand
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Continue in house training
1-9	Information & Communication	none	None - Just keep ticking over (carrying on as we are)
1-9	Production	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);	Social Media Marketing

		HealthTech and medtech	
1-9	Construction	none	None - Ticking over nicely
10-49	Media	none	Identify what is required from the organisations going to use the content we produce
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	Delivering Excellent customer service
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Looking to sell up and retire
1-9	Promotion Of Products	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Increasing Sales
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	looking for new members
1-9	Food Service/Retail	none	Looking to sell up the business
1-9	Manufacturing	none	to survive
1-9	Creative and Marketing agency	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming; none	Employ more staff
1-9	Trade only sales of personalized gifts and promo products	none	more staff
50-249	Health	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	Maintain steady levels
1-9	indoor bowling club	none	Making it more inclusive for people with physical and mental disabilities
1-9	Pet professional services	none	Earn my money more other than just doing dog treatments and add a grooming spa services
1-9	MSP IT support	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming; none	More staff
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Extend the premises
1-9	Charitable/Third Sector	none	Return to normality and secure additional funding

1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Not thought that far ahead
10-49	Motor Trades	Logistics & distribution	Staying afloat
10-49	Online Retail	none	None
10-49	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Spreading the word about the business helping farmers we do as a charity organisation
1-9	Charity non for profit	none	Keep going as a charity as we rely on funding
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	increasing exports
1-9	Fast Food Take Away	none	Looking to sell up the business
1-9	Property	none	be proactive
1-9	historical gardens	none	get more funding
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Cannot afford electric vehicles to go green is our issue
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	To survive against our competitors
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Using filtered water and solar panels

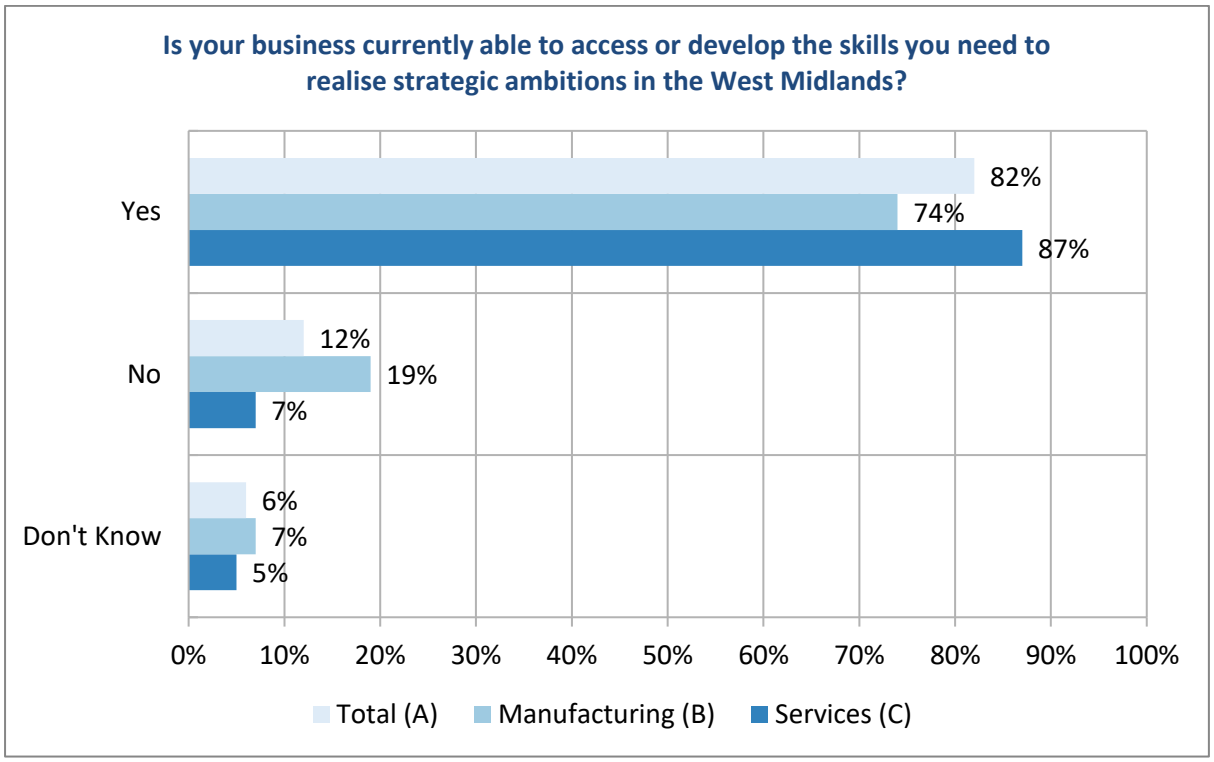
III: Business Capacity



Less than two thirds (63.5%) of businesses surveyed reported currently operating at full capacity; 61.1% of manufacturing firms and 66.2% of services sector firms.

37.2% of manufacturers and 33.8% of services sector businesses reported that they were, at the time of surveying, not operating at full capacity.

IV: Ability to access or develop skills



Though 82% of firms overall reported that they are currently able to access or develop the skills needed to realise strategic ambitions in the West Midlands, while 12% reported that they weren't currently able to do so.

This varied significantly between broad sectors. Though 87% of services sector firms reported being able to access or develop the skilled talent they require (and just 7% said they were unable to do so), comparatively, a lower 74% of manufacturers reported being able to do so, and almost a fifth (19%) of manufacturing sector firms reported not being able to access or develop the skills they need to realise their strategic ambitions.

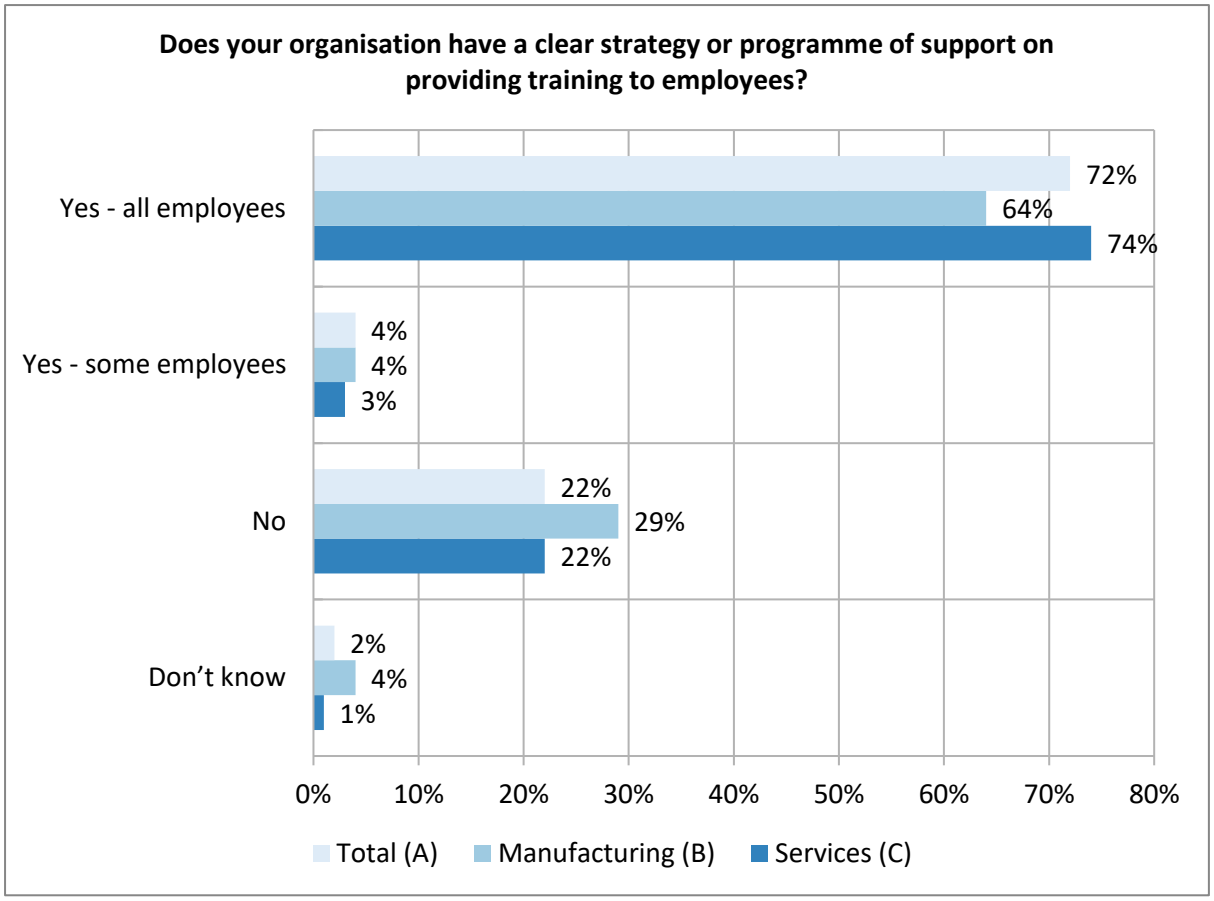
If no - what skills needs are you currently unable to meet in the West Midlands?; Are there specific types of training which you are currently unable to access in the West Midlands which would be of benefit to your business? Please provide details of how you think this needs to be delivered to be effective (e.g. time, location, duration)

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	What skills needs are you currently unable to meet in the West Midlands?	Are there specific types of training which you are currently unable to access in the West Midlands which would be of benefit to your business?
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Digital Marketing in the sector of advertising.	Digital training
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Office staff (training for software).	Not to benefit it
1-9	Manufacturing	none	We can't get fitters. There is no one to do the job	Training for fitters for aluminium. It's cutting and the manufacturing, it's not that hard.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	difficulty in finding someone that provider for skills we require	hydraulic engineering is specific, there is no one in the west midlands.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Creative content production and gaming	they have a check list that they are working on	no
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	not looking for any	no
1-9	Wholesale	none	skilled labour shortage	n/a
1-9	Events management	none	there is no training for events management, it's all on site learning	Event management, learn on the job training
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	engineering skills which are specifically promoting pumps this is a niche skill which is very hard to source	yes as stated, the pump engineering skills are hard to source therefore we are trying to do this in house.
1-9	Construction	Modern and low carbon utilities	Having to travel to get new technology training	Training on renewable heating
10-49	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	can't find local people niche professions	none
10-49	Property	none	There is lack of people in the industry with the skills we require. The training is there but there are not enough people.	The qualifications are available just the people are not available who are qualified
1-9	Motor Trades	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Mechanics	Getting the people
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	We are an events company and only do the events as and when they arise, mainly First Aid training would be useful to my business	Again from the last question our events are timetabled in the year so we only require any form of training as and when they arise, I suppose the main ones are

				First Aid we need in our business as we run a horse event, but otherwise we can reach out to general training without an issue
10-49	construction and architect	none	I have been to colleges to take on apprentices and there needs to be much less paperwork. I'm too small a business	we provide our own training. I'm looking for ambitious people who work hard. I did a degree in this and I've never used it the people who teach these subjects need to have worked in the industry
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Skilled fabricators and welders	Welding NVQ
10-49	Manufacturing	none	finding engineers	attracting young people to the field
1-9	Construction	none	find skills	no
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	none	not being able to employ someone who has experience	no. in house training
1-9	Industrial Electric Motor Repairs	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	Electrical Rewinds	Specialised Electrical Rewinds is a skilled trade
1-9	Road Transfer and Storage	Logistics & distribution	Finding Drivers Difficulty- shortage of vehicles to purchase - Van vehicle production shortage	No
1-9	Wholesale	none	Finding the people with the right skill sets	More digital training
1-9	electrical and mechanical engineering	Logistics & distribution	welders and fabricators	apprenticeships
1-9	Construction	none	Lack of qualifications in car charging	It's not just the training unavailable it's also the lack of resources and funding that is the problem. It's very expensive at the moment.
10-49	Construction	none	Appropriate types of labour is needed which we suffer at times	Training is what we need so we are okay in that area
1-9	MOT	none	trained mechanics	engineers
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Looking to recruit	Mazatrol based
50-249	Business Administration and Support Services	none	HR Course. We go to London for that	not sure
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Aren't enough people in the business. Not enough skilled people to recruit, training for the apprentice has been appalling for	Apprentices need to be trained well and know how to use different types of machinery

			the past few years. Cost of recruitment agencies is very expensive.	
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	Need to teach people but lack of trainees	no
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Digital - IT	SEO - Search Engine Optimisation (to drive more Web Traffic to their website)
1-9	national charity	none	we have grown people and supported them to fit the organisation	to access low cost Microsoft excel training and also word training. I live in London so I'm not aware of the opportunities in the West Midlands. Use of databases is what we are interested in.
1-9	Construction	none	We are struggling with employing new young people into the industry	No
1-9	Post office	none	not sure	Don't know
1-9	Manufacturing	none	No because of how the jewellery trade is	Don't tend to look for this
10-49	Online Retail	none	Technology - IT Skills such as Computer Literacy	Technology - IT Skills such as Computer Literacy
1-9	wholesale	Logistics & distribution	retail is dying hardly any custom anymore due to online	yes
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Struggle for staff	no
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Manual skills	No, not really. It's quite bespoke what we do.
1-9	Fast Food Take Away	none	Not Applicable	No
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	most of work in specialist course leading to Manufacture	some specialist electrical course which are out of west midlands
1-9	Manufacturing	none	trades saddle makers skills	saddle makers no skills are available and we teach inhouse
10-49	Manufacturing	none	it’s a specialist field and it’s hard to attract labour	sheet metal work
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	I.T skills is lacking and we need training on this as we are only a small business	Health & Safety and First Aid for Pets would be helpful. Technology to better route when we collect and drop off the pet dogs.
1-9	Retail	Don’t know	none	none

V: Clear Strategy or Programme for Employee Development

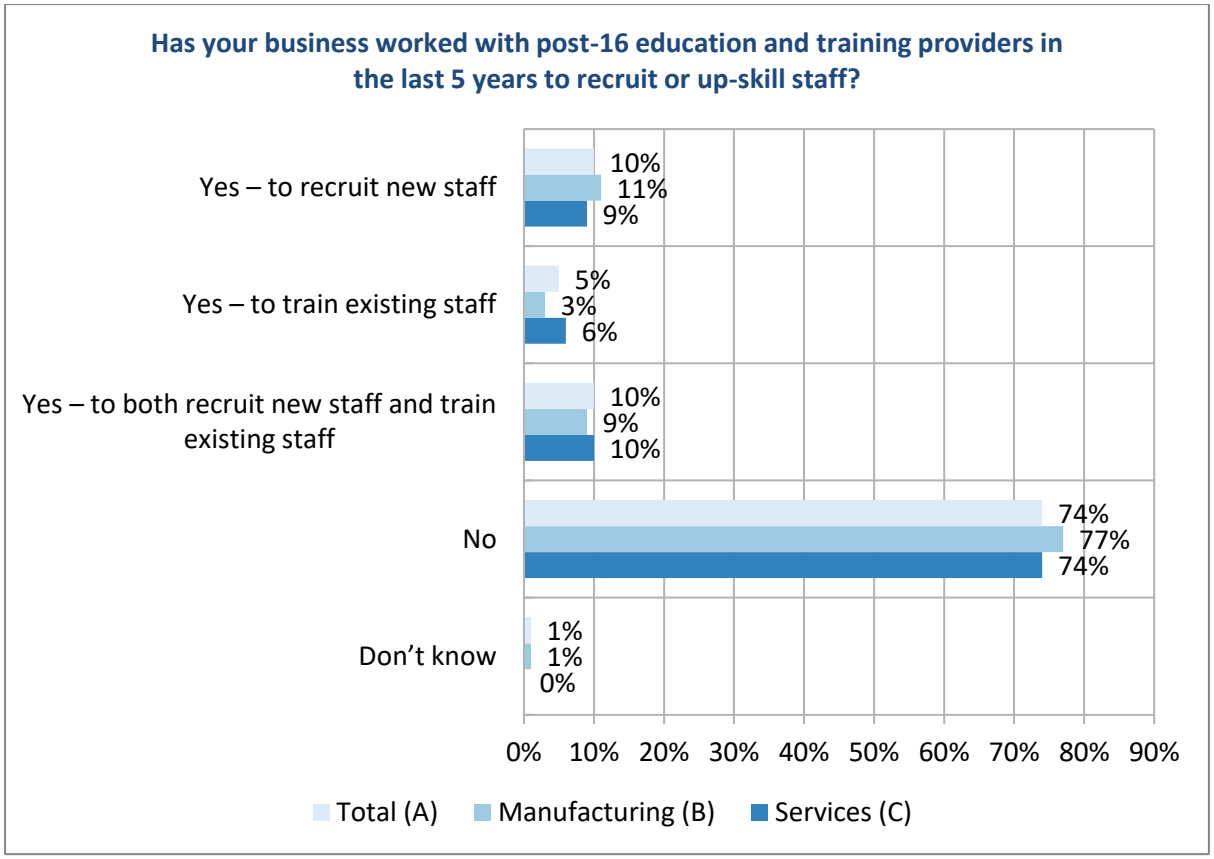


Overall, 75.6% of employers surveyed reported having a clear strategy or programme of support on providing training to employees, while 22.0% reported not having such.

Comparing broad sectors, while 76.7% of services sector firms indicated having a clear strategy or programme of support on providing staff training, this figure was significantly lower among manufacturers, at 67.9%. 29% of manufacturing sector businesses (compared to 22% of services sector firms) did not have a clear strategy or programme of support for providing training to employees.

Surveying collected contact details from respondents which reported not currently having such a plan for all employees, who would be interested in being contacted about support to develop a skills strategy for their business.

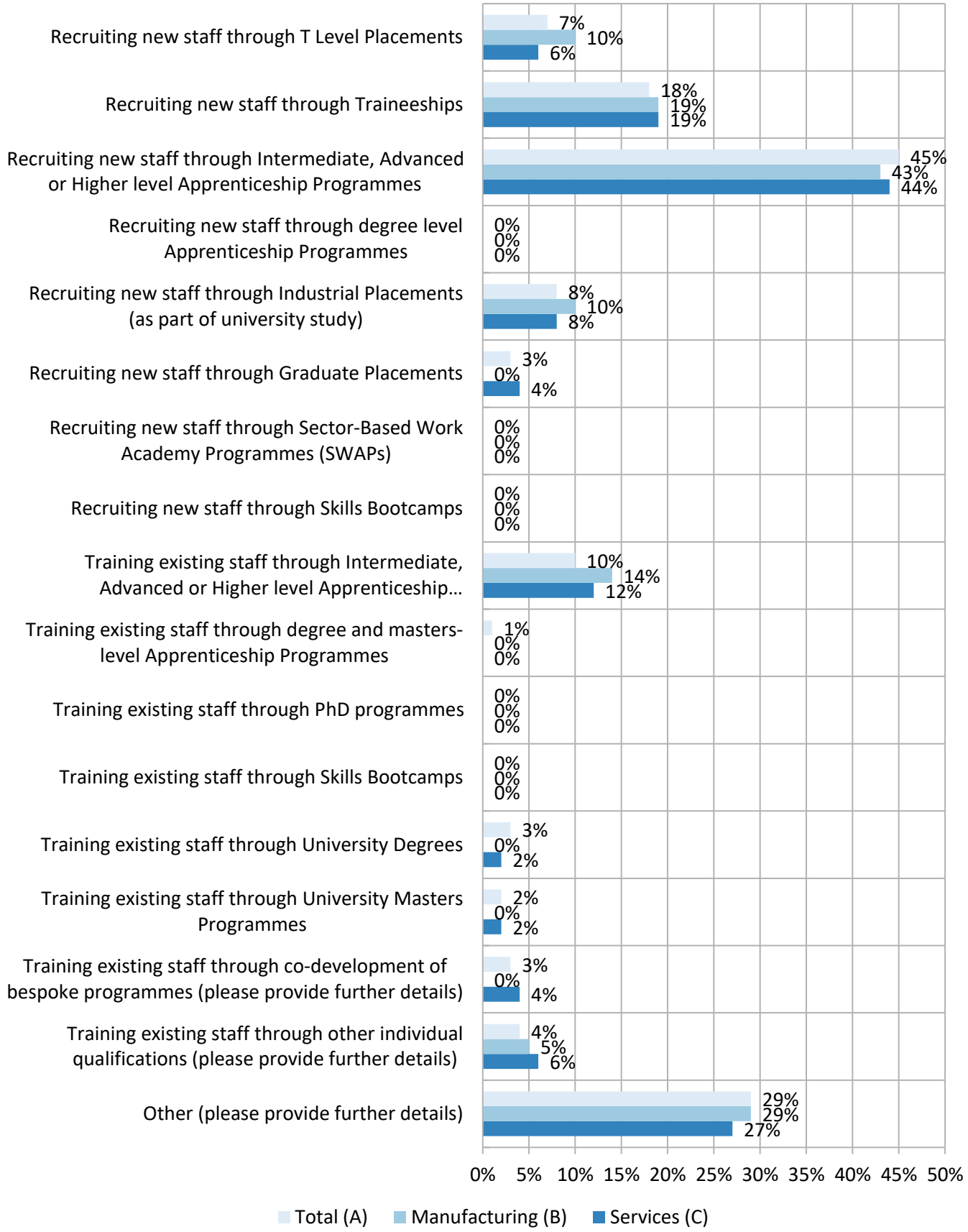
VI: Previous engagement with post-16 education and training



74% of employers surveyed by the WMW LSIP reported having not worked with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit or up-skill staff. This figure was slightly higher (77.0%) amongst manufacturing firms compared to services sector businesses (74.1%).

Where businesses had engaged with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years, they were more likely to have done so in order to recruit new staff (10% in total; 11% of manufacturers and 9% of services sector firms) than to train existing staff (5% in total; 3% of manufacturers and 6% of services sector firms).

[If yes] In what way has your business worked with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff?



Where businesses reported having worked with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff, they were asked in what way they had done so. However, it should be noted that due to a majority of respondents not having engaged with such organisations, the total response rate for this question was 105 employers. Due to the low response rate, comparisons between manufacturing and services sector firms must be made with caution.

Across both broad sectors combined, businesses that had engaged with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff most frequently reported having done so to recruiting new staff through Intermediate, Advanced or Higher level Apprenticeship Programmes (44.8%). Next most frequently reported was 'to recruit new staff through traineeships' (18.1%), followed by 'training existing staff through Intermediate, Advanced or Higher level Apprenticeship Programmes'.

Manufacturing sector businesses that had engaged with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff most frequently reported having done so to recruit new staff through intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (42.9%), recruit new staff through traineeships (19.0%) and train existing staff through intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (14.3%).

Services sector firms that had engaged with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff most frequently reported having done so to recruit new staff through intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (44.2%), recruit new staff through traineeships (19.2%) and train existing staff through intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (11.5%).

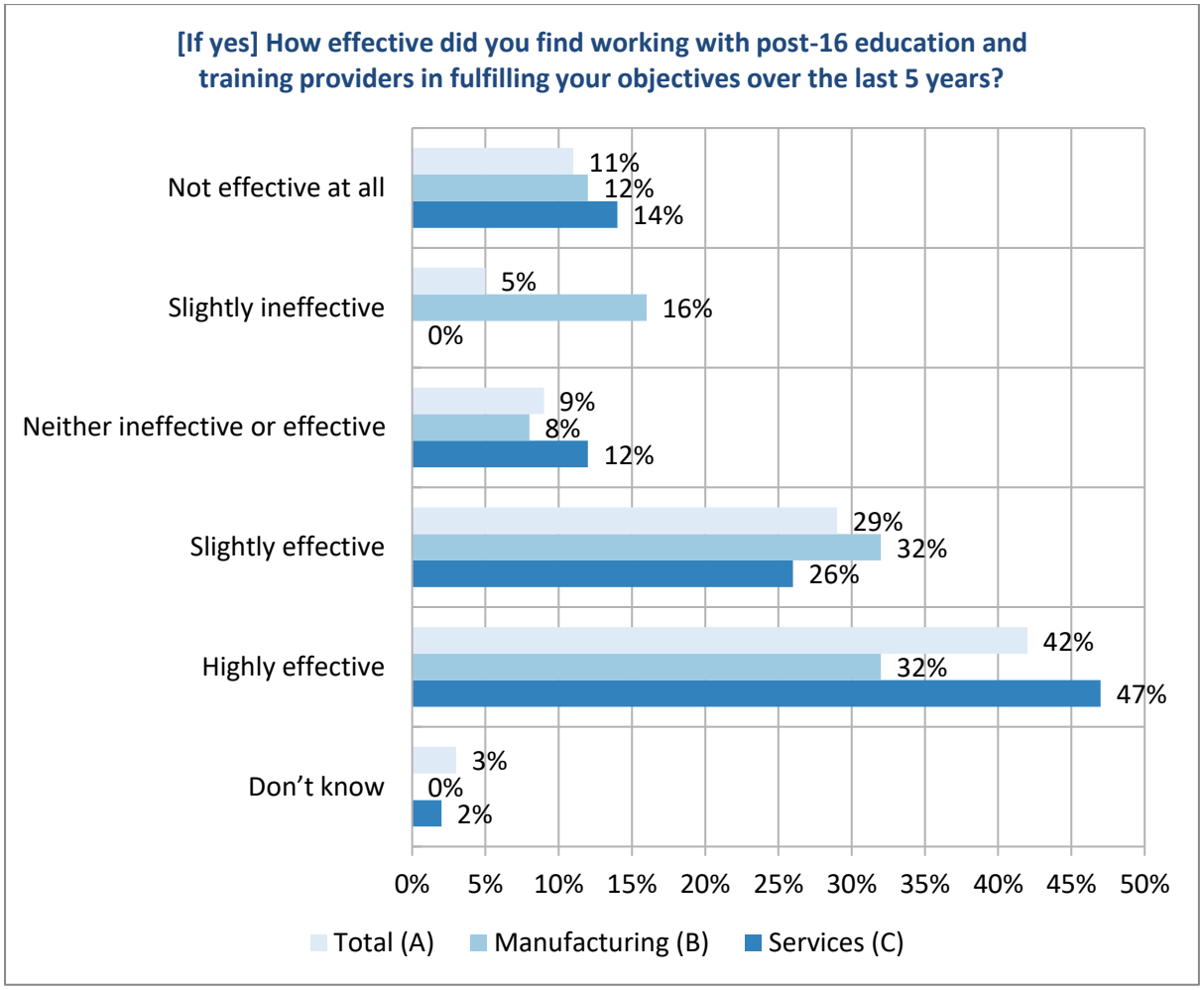
Training existing staff through other individual qualifications – further details include:

- Diploma In Dental Nursing
- Work Experience
- AAT Qualification

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Having a third party assist in recruiting post 16 education and training providers
1-9	Property	none	on the job training
10-49	Retail	none	Participated in the UK Government's Kickstart Programme
50-249	Education	none	diplomas and commercial training from us
1-9	I.T Software	none	Coventry & Warwickshire Enterprise Scheme
10-49	Manufacturing	Professional and financial services and supply chain	school leavers
10-49	Insurance	none	No
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Internal referrals
10-49	I.T	none	No
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	No
1-9	Membership Mason Organisation	none	City & Guilds Training
10-49	Art and culture	none	Low level apprentices and kick starter
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	Kick Start Scheme
10-49	supply and installation of raised flooring	none	existing staff on CITB training for admin and warehouse supervisor
1-9	Pet professional services	none	But it didn't work out via the Apprenticeship due to the role not being suitable
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Apprentices through MTC
10-49	accountants	none	accounting technician
10-49	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	none of the above other than LinkedIn on social media is our main referral
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	Heart Of England Training provider
10-49	Property	none	Not sure
1-9	Entertainment & Events Industry	none	extras at live events that come to us via networking
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing	not sure
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Creating an in house training program as well

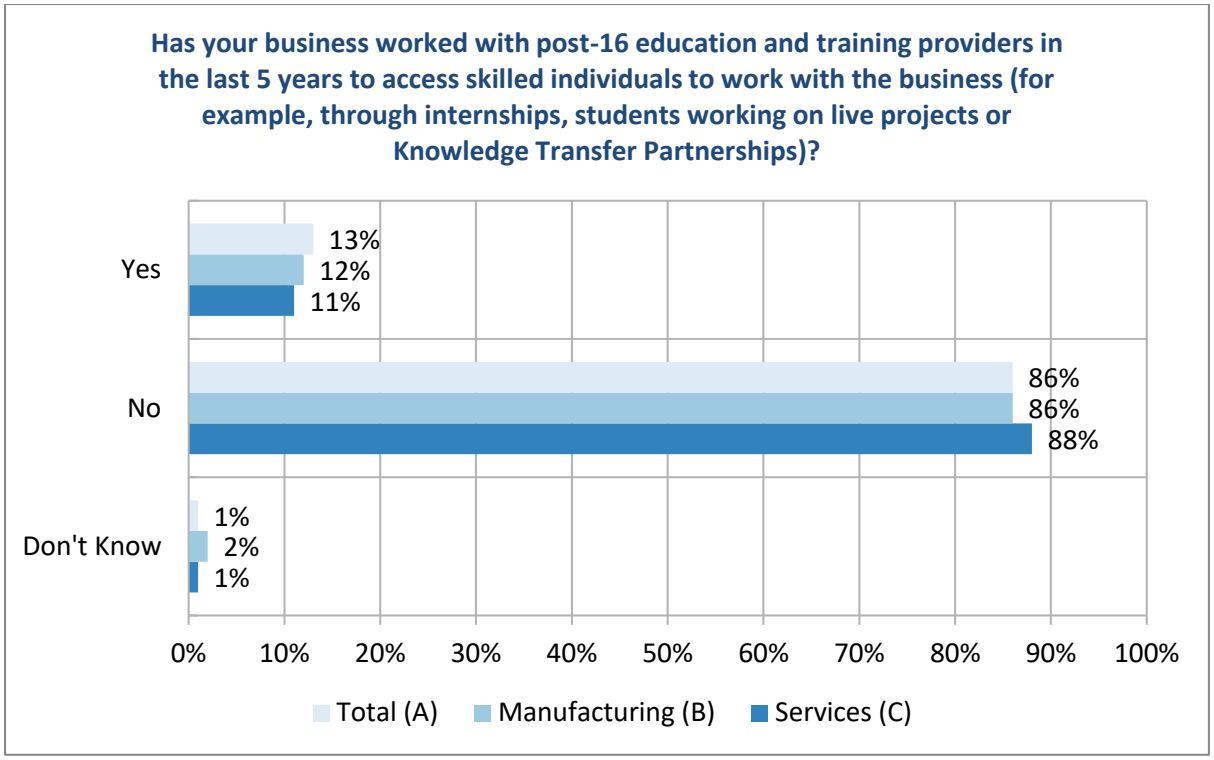
1-9	Retail	none	No
50-249	Management Training of Engineers	none	We currently looking for more referrals from organisations to allow us to train engineers in our business
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Professional and financial services and supply chain	online
10-49	Education	none	Recruiting new staff through level 2 and 3 Apprenticeship Programmes



A majority of businesses which reported having worked with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to recruit new staff and/or train existing staff indicated a positive experience of having done so; 70.9% of firms in total reported having found working with post-16 education and training providers slightly or highly effective in fulfilling their objectives over the past 5 years.

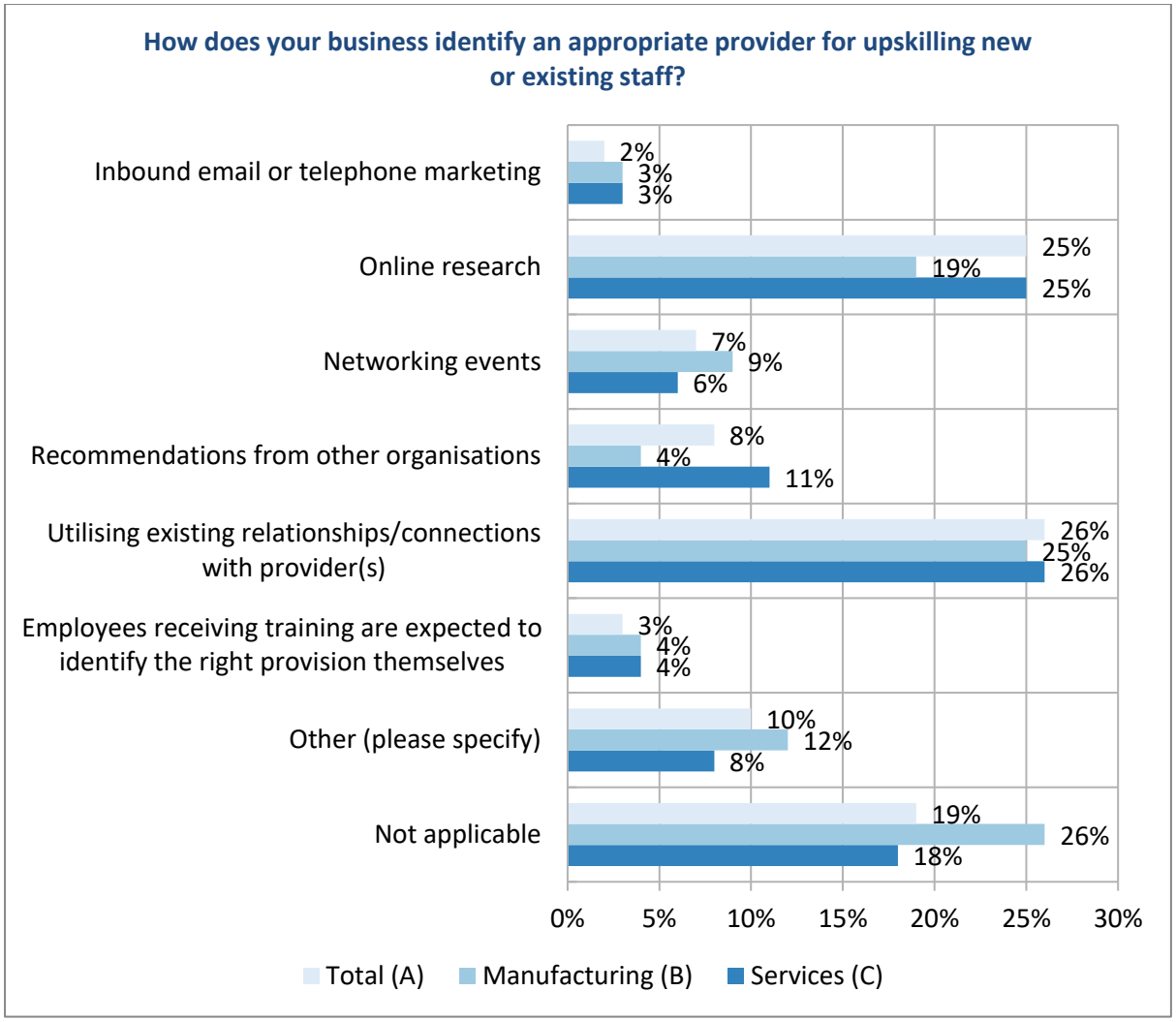
There was some distinction between broad sectors, however, as mentioned previously, given that a majority of overall survey respondents reported that they have not engaged with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years, the total response rate for this question was 117 employers. Due to the low response rate, comparisons between broad business sectors must be treated with caution.

64.0% of manufacturing sector firms and 72.4% of services sector firms reported having found working with post-16 education and training providers slightly or highly effective in fulfilling their objectives over the past 5 years. Services sector firms most frequently reported their experiences to have been highly effective in fulfilling their objectives (46.6%, compared to 32.0% of manufacturers).



12.8% of businesses surveyed reported having worked with post-16 education and training providers in the last 5 years to access skilled individuals to work with the business (for example, through internships, students working on live projects or Knowledge Transfer Partnerships). This figure was slightly higher amongst manufacturers (12.4%) than services sector firms (11.3%).

VII: Identifying appropriate providers



Employers most frequently reported utilising existing relationships/connections with provider(s) (26.1%), online research (24.6%) and recommendations from other organisations (8.4%) to identify appropriate providers for upskilling new or existing staff.

While manufacturing firms were slightly more likely to utilise networking events than services sector businesses to identify providers (9% compared to 6%), services sector firms were slightly more likely to utilise existing relationships/connections with providers (26% compared to 25% of manufacturers), online research (25% compared to 19% of manufacturers) and recommendations from other employers (11% compared to 4% of manufacturers).

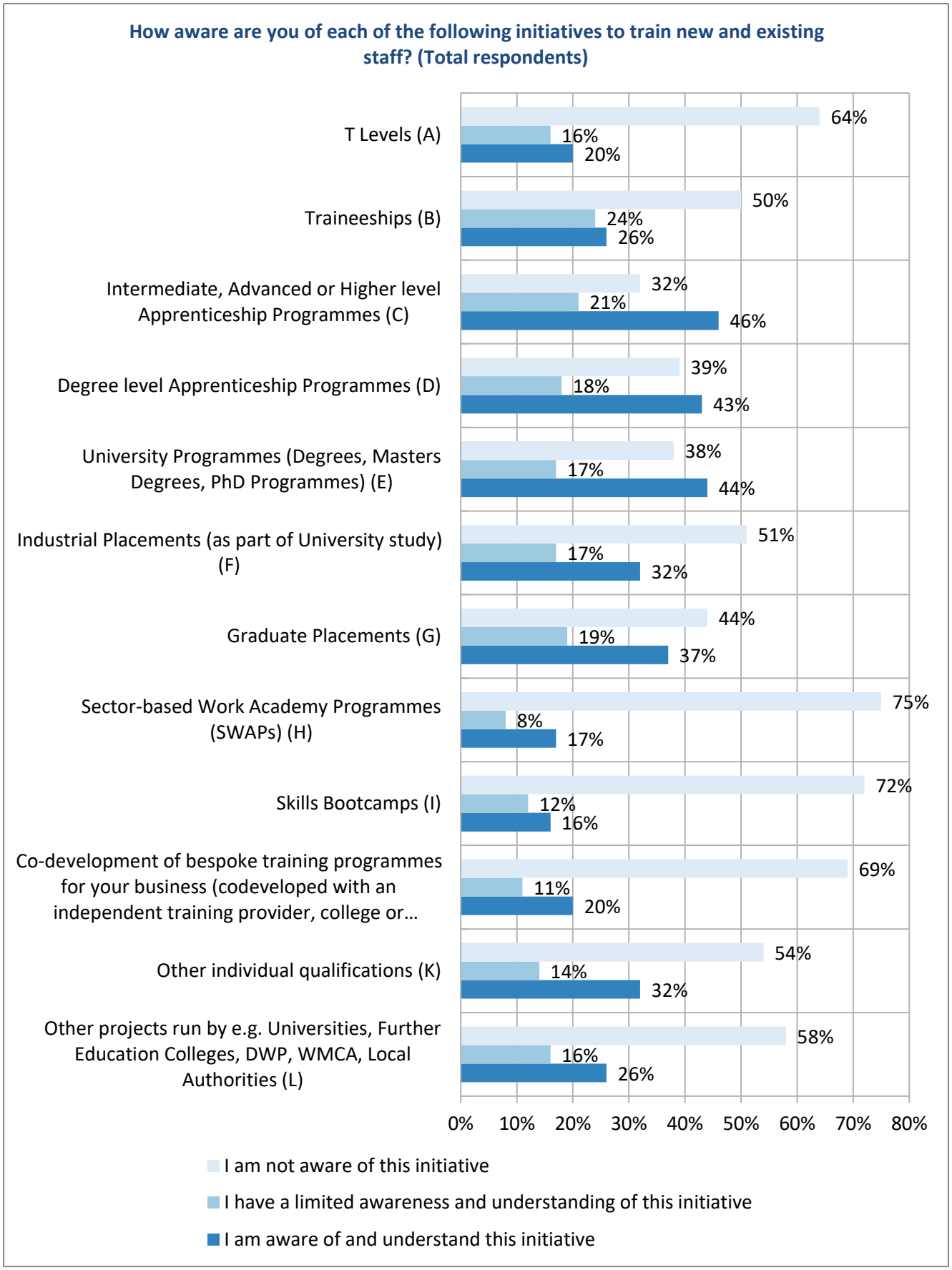
'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Had a third party call up the student to do the placement
1-9	Construction	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Inhouse training
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	In house
10-49	Property	none	went to the local college
1-9	Wedding & Other Events	none	word of mouth, social media and existing clients
10-49	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	in house
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution	CITB
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	RICS
10-49	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Agency we call upon for staff recruitment
1-9	Internet Technologies and mobile application	none	DWP and internal
10-49	Media	none	word of mouth
50-249	Manufacturing	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	Word of mouth
10-49	Insurance	none	Sales leads & networking
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	inhouse
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain	In house trained
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	In House
10-49	I.T	none	Word of mouth, social media and networking
10-49	Manufacturing	none	not looking we do on the job training as it's a simple business
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Relevant to their business requirements and needs
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Word of mouth
1-9	Retail	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution;	They provide our own in house training

		HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	in house
1-9	Wholesale	none	agency
10-49	Construction	none	We recruit via agencies
1-9	shopping centre management	none	depends on the skills gap
1-9	Pet professional services	none	Word of mouth
1-9	national charity	none	sector specific and trustee training
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	word of mouth
10-49	Wholesale	none	Internal training
10-49	Retail	Logistics & distribution	British safety council
1-9	Travel	none	Within company
1-9	wholesale	Logistics & distribution	word of mouth
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	In house
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Logistics & distribution	word of mouth
1-9	Manufacturing	none	In house
1-9	Make tow bars for vehicles	Logistics & distribution	Word of mouth and people that know us we been going 30 years as a business
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	in house
50-249	Health	none	Word of mouth
1-9	Property Maintenance	HealthTech and medtech	Referrals from the council
1-9	engineering	none	agency
1-9	Fit lifts on back of cars - Engineering	none	Word of mouth
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Using local colleges
1-9	Health	none	Word of mouth

1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Word of mouth

VIII: Awareness of initiatives to train new and existing staff



Surveying by the WMW LSIP found that a majority of businesses are unaware of or only have a limited awareness and understanding of all post-16 education and training initiatives listed in the above chart.

As illustrated above, respondents were most frequently unaware of Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) (74.5%), Skills Bootcamps (72.0%), Co-development of bespoke training programmes for your business (codeveloped with an independent training provider, college or university) (68.9%) and T Levels (63.7%).

While there are slight differences in figures between the two broad sectors , however these initiatives (SWAPs, Skills bootcamps, co-development of bespoke training programmes and T Levels) are those which businesses across both broad sectors are most frequently unaware of.

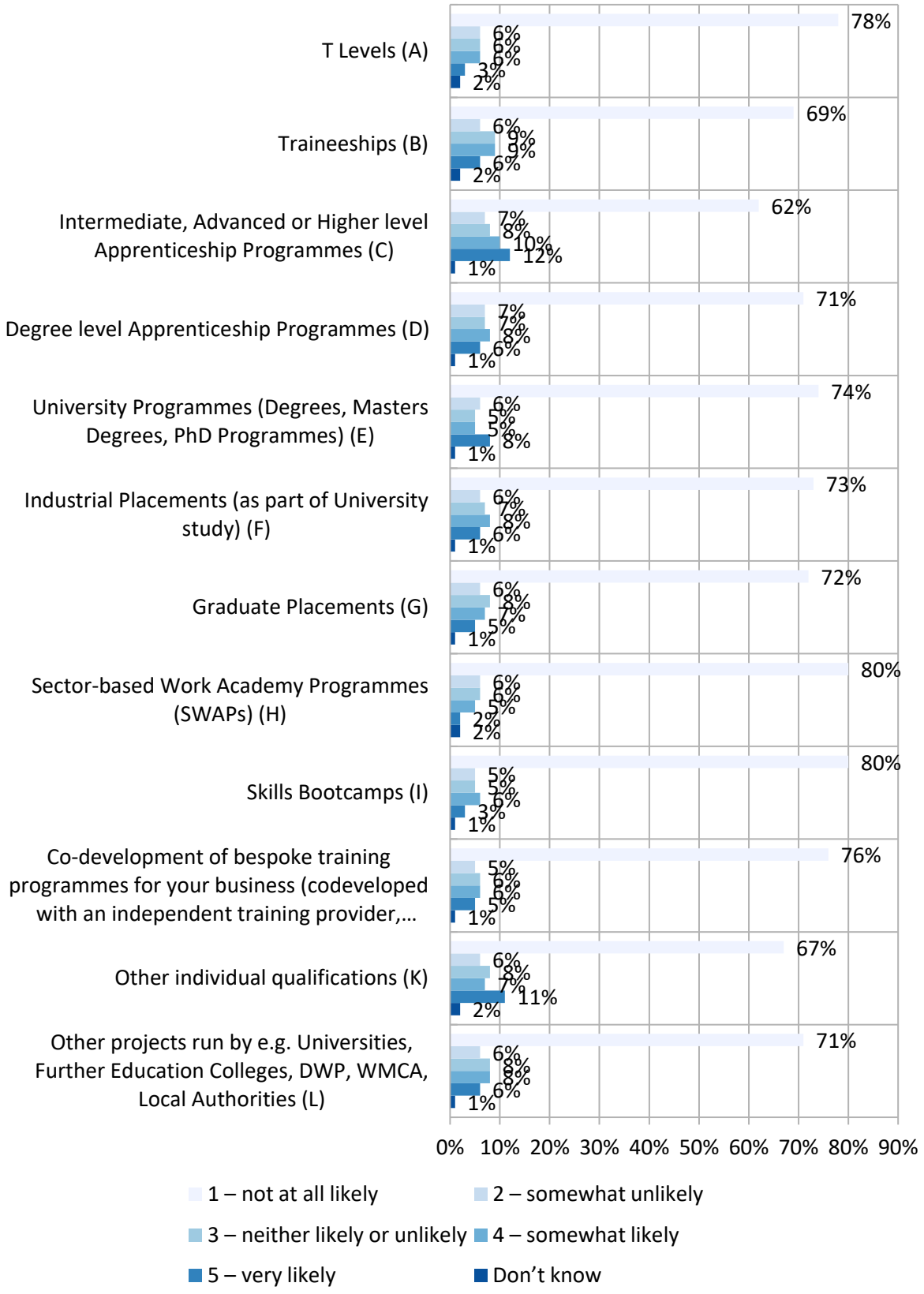
Overall, respondents were most frequently aware of and understood Intermediate, Advanced or Higher level Apprenticeship Programmes (46.3%), University Programmes (Degrees, Master's Degrees, PhD Programmes) (44.3%), and Degree level Apprenticeship Programmes (43%).

While the same three initiatives to train new and existing staff were among those manufacturing firms were most frequently aware of and understood, manufacturers were less frequently aware of an understood these; 35% of manufacturers reported awareness and understanding of intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes, and 30% were aware of and understood each of degree level apprenticeship programmes and university programmes (on a par with 30% of manufacturers being aware of and understanding 'other individual qualifications).

Intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes, degree level apprenticeship programmes and university programmes were also the three initiatives which services sector firms were most frequently aware of and understood (reported by 47%, 42% and 42% of services firms respectively).

IIX: Likeliness of utilising initiatives to train new and existing staff

On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to utilise each of the following initiatives to train new and existing staff in your business over the next 3 years? (Total respondents)



As illustrated in the above chart, a significant majority of the employers surveyed by the WMW LSIP do not anticipate being at all likely to utilise any of the listed initiatives to train new and existing staff in their business over the next three years.

The below chart represents the average likelihood of employers utilising each of the listed initiatives, and highlights distinctions between the two broad sectors.

On average, employers are most likely to utilise intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (with an average likeliness of 2.0), 'other individual qualifications' (1.9) and equally (each with an average likeliness of 1.7) traineeships, degree level apprenticeship programmes, university programmes, industrial placements, graduate placements and other projects run by e.g. universities, further education colleges, DWP, WMCA and Local Authorities.

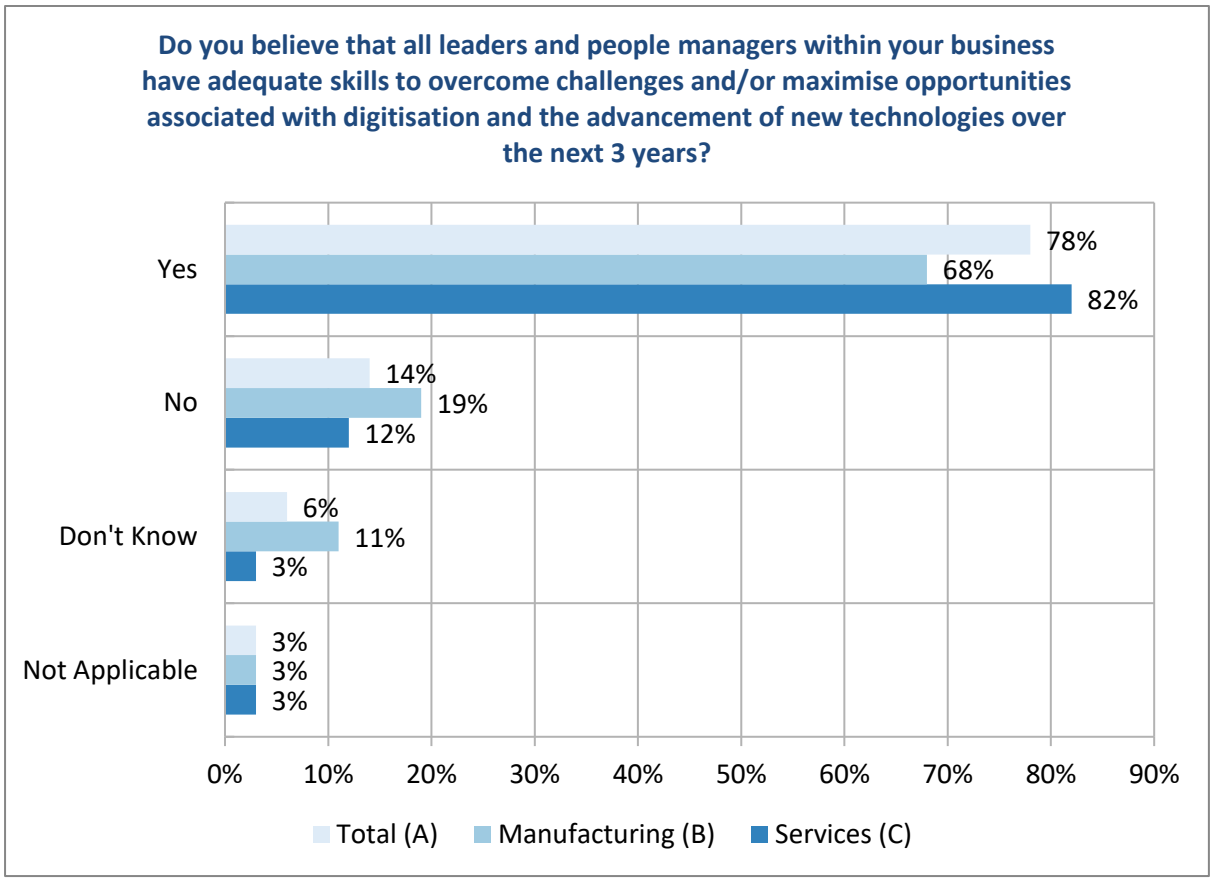
Comparing the two broad sectors, manufacturers are on average more likely to utilise all of the listed initiatives in the coming 3 years than their services sector counterparts. Manufacturers are most

likely to utilise intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (with an average likeliness of 2.1), traineeships (2.0) and 'other individual qualifications (1.9).

Services sector firms also reported on average being most likely to utilise intermediate, advanced or higher level apprenticeship programmes (1.9), followed by 'other individual qualifications' (1.8) and (each with an average likeliness of 1.6) traineeships, degree level apprenticeship programmes, university programmes, graduate placements, and 'other projects run by e.g. universities, further education colleges, DWP, WMCA and Local Authorities.'

Conversely, overall, businesses are least likely to SWAPs (average likeliness of 1.4), skills bootcamps (1.4) and T levels (1.5). Manufacturers are least likely to utilise T levels, graduate placements, SWAPs and co-development of bespoke training equally (each with an average likeliness of 1.6), while services sector firms are least likely to utilise SWAPs (1.3), followed by T levels, skills bootcamps and co-development of bespoke training (each with an average likeliness of 1.4).

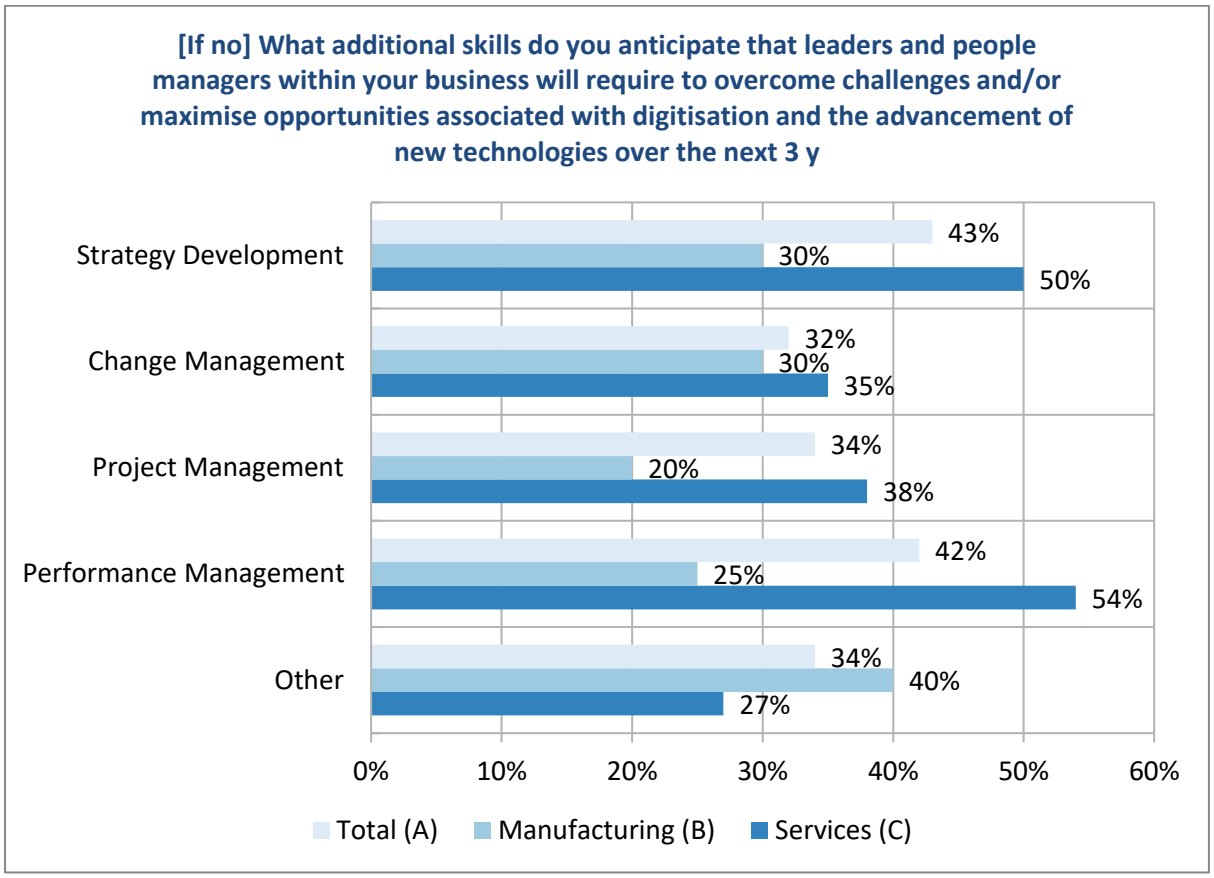
IX: Digitisation: overcoming challenges and maximising opportunities



Overall, 77.6% of businesses surveyed believe that leaders and people managers within their organisation have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies over the coming three years. This was higher among services sector firms (82.3%) than manufacturing businesses (67.9%).

However, 14.2% of firms overall, and 18.8% of manufacturing sector businesses (12.1% of services firms) do not believe that leaders and people managers within their organisation have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation an the advancement of new technologies over the coming three years. Manufacturing sector firms were

also most likely to express uncertainty regarding these skills (10.7%, compared to 3.0% of services sector firms).



Total respondents most frequently identified strategy development (43.1%), performance management (41.5%), and project management (33.8%) as additional skills required within their business to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies over the next 3 years.

Due to the 14.2% of respondents which (in the previous question) expressed that they do not believe that leaders and people managers within their business have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies over the next 3 years, the overall sample represented in the above chart is 65 businesses. Due to the relatively small sample size, comparisons between manufacturing and services sector firms must be treated with caution.

Services sector businesses most frequently identified performance management (53.8%), strategy development (50.0%) and project management (38.5%) as additional skills required within their business to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies over the next 3 years. Comparatively, manufacturers most frequently identified strategy development and change management (each identified by 30.0% of manufacturing respondents), and performance management (25.0%).

'Other' responses include:

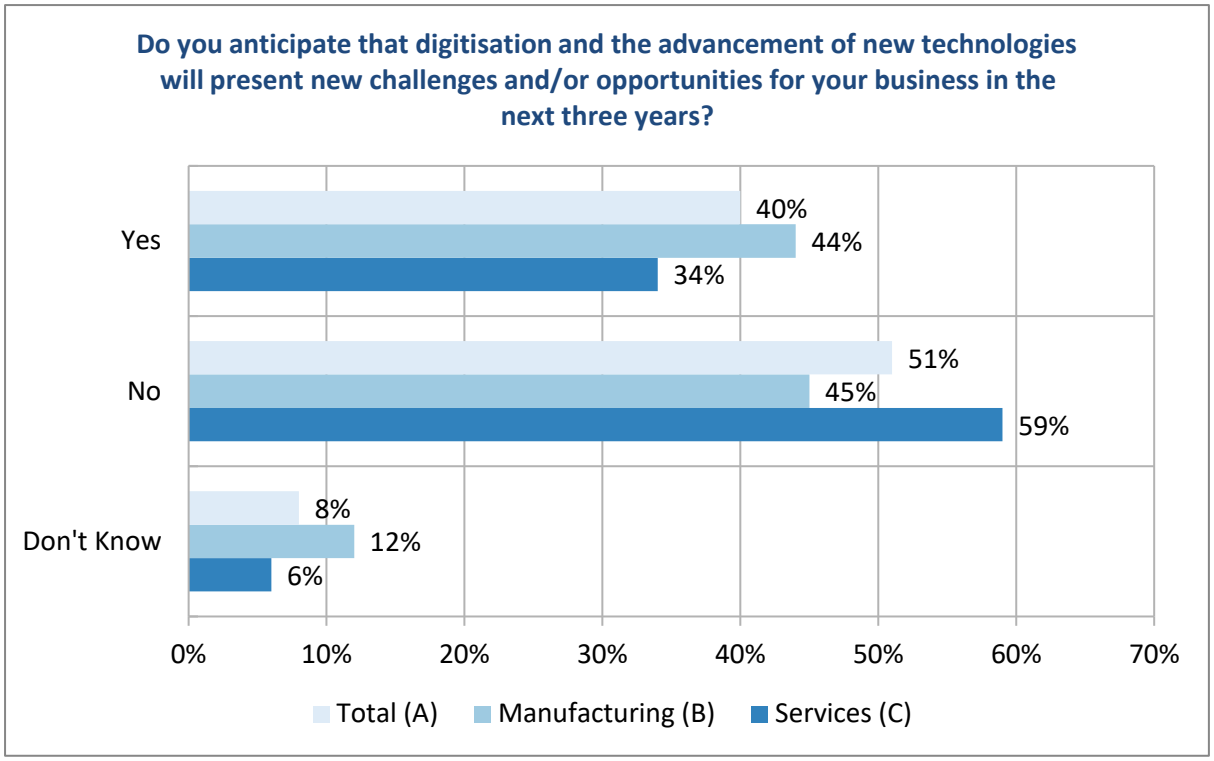
Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	No Idea
1-9	Community Centre	none	Social Media
1-9	Manufacturing	none	not looking to grow or advance in new tech
1-9	Manufacturing	none	none
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	not
10-49	Retail	none	Training
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	none
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Unknown
10-49	Manufacturing	Professional and financial services and supply chain	non
10-49	construction and architect	none	clear Government instruction
1-9	general engineering	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	n/a
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Not Applicable
1-9	Construction	none	advancement
1-9	Food Service/Retail	none	Not Applicable
50-249	Health	none	Training in IT Skills Technologies
1-9	electrical and mechanical engineering	Logistics & distribution	none
1-9	Construction	none	Social Media Awareness
1-9	making and selling radio equipment	none	digital skills
1-9	Manufacturing	none	none
1-9	Charity non for profit	none	Charity non for profit
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	We pay IT from outsource to look after out digital systems
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Professional and financial services and supply chain	motivation

Of the 14.2% of respondents overall expressing concerns that leaders and people managers within their organisation do not have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation an the advancement of new technologies over the coming three years, 42.4% report that their business currently has no plans to address this. Those businesses looking to address this most frequently report looking to do so through training in technical digital skills (24.2%).

Again, due to sample size, comparisons between manufacturing and services sector firms must be treated with caution. Given sample sizes, distinctions between the two broad sectors in response to this question are marginal. 46.2% of services sector firms and 38.1% of manufacturers have no plans to address these perceived gaps in leadership and/or people management capabilities, and among businesses looking to address these gaps, both sectors most frequently identified looking to do so through training in technical digital skills (as reported by 19.2% of services sector and 23.8% of manufacturing sector respondents).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	None	Not Applicable
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Not planned
1-9	Food Service/Retail	None	Not Applicable
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Support through veterinary industry
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Consultancy



40.4% of respondents surveyed anticipate that digitisation and the advancement of new technologies will present new challenges and/or opportunities for their business in the next three years, while just over half (51.5%) of total respondents do not anticipate such new challenges and/or opportunities arising in association with digitisation and advancement of new technologies in the coming three years. 8.2% of overall respondents were uncertain.

It should be noted that while a majority of services sector firms do not anticipate such new challenges and/or opportunities (59.5%, compared with 34.1% which do), the proportion of manufacturers anticipating these new challenges and/or opportunities is almost equal to the proportion not anticipating such (43.8% and 44.6% respectively). Manufacturers expressed uncertainty about potential new challenges and/or opportunities associated with digitisation and advancement of new technologies in the coming three years more frequently than their services sector counterparts (11.6% of manufacturers responded 'don't know', compared to 6.5% of services sector firms).

[If yes] What new challenges and/or opportunities do you anticipate that digitisation and the advancement of new technologies will present for your business in the next three years?

Responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Construction	none	Well you just have to deal with it don't you.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	More office based rather than on the manufacturing side. Building regulations maybe a key challenge to our business.
1-9	Property	none	Recently trained on car charging points
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Remote working, more efficient worker / quicker processing & production.
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Different knowledge on the newer software.
1-9	Community Centre	none	Embracing technology to become more digital.
1-9	Construction	none	the system we use its not working with us so we are looking for something easier
1-9	Education	none	Customers
10-49	Health	none	Compliance and demographics of the clients
1-9	repair vehicle	none	electric cars
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	There will be a number of opportunities for new technology with regards to their CRM system.
1-9	Motor Trades	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Modern and low carbon utilities	costly to change normal energy to electric - technology
10-49	Health	none	patient information easily accessed
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Understanding the use 3D printers
10-49	Hospitality	none	They have looked into installing electrical charging points for guests but it's proving complicated.
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	products used / sold in warehouse
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Channel shift like getting in touch with people now it’s using webchats and things like that. We do like technology but I don't really think it has changed for the better. It is easy just to pick up the phone
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	adjusting to new technology of learning the process and adapting
1-9	Kennels	none	Cost and infrastructure
10-49	Leisure	none; Don’t know	Good way

1-9	technical repair	none	well we bring people in and they will pass it on to us
10-49	Construction	none	Invest in more IT equipment.
1-9	metal stock holders	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech; Modern and low carbon utilities	lots
1-9	Wholesale	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Impacted by people for not using paper
10-49	service hire	none	We have a paper trail so trying to digitise this and the cost of it.
1-9	Construction	Modern and low carbon utilities	cost of implementing
10-49	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Zoom and Teams - not having to travel - environmental friendly
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Creative content production and gaming	New tech . that comes along for our customers - customer lead.
1-9	charities	none	looked into
10-49	Public Administration	none	After training it will improve everything. It will be a lot more efficient for the business.
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Opportunities to manufacture and provide more specialized chairs.
1-9	Retail	none	Adjusting to the requirements
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution	We will have challenges with the new builds and the preformed roofs.
1-9	Production	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	Going more online with Social Media.
1-9	Wholesale	none	they are office based so will be good for them to be fully digital
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	commerce
1-9	Construction	none	More is going online and less and less is being sent out via direct mail/post.
1-9	Internet Technologies and mobile application	none	Increasing costs on I.T technology
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Procession of application input into fertilization
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Keeping on top of Technology and the Knowledge.
10-49	Media	none	It will depend as the situation arises.

1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Reducing the carbon foot print, to reduce business costs associated with the lighting we use in the we are only a small opticians business.
10-49	Plant Hire & Tools Company	Logistics & distribution	Cost and new technology however we are working at the highest level in relation to the technology that we already have in place and confident we can adjust this as and when changes are needed over the next 3 years in our business.
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Finding the right people to help with the business
50-249	Manufacturing	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	More machinery to be more efficient and to beat off our competitors. Cost always a challenge.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Yes as we are already involved in social media we are always getting traction of referrals as well as getting enquiries from people knowing our business.
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	Making the customer experience an excellent one.
10-49	Construction	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	use all technology to make work more easy
1-9	Retail	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	Price increase due to restrictions and codes that they have to use.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	The installation of Smart Meters.
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain	New booking system
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Administration - Lots of paperwork in terms of delivery notes.
10-49	Wholesale	none	keeping up to date with IT
10-49	Pub	none	changing and updating
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Financially
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	new markets to adapt to
1-9	Food Service/Retail	none	Using other Food Platforms to Uber Eats.
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	The transition

1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	none	keeping up with the change
10-49	Manufacturing	none	financial implications
10-49	Construction	none	a lot of opportunities
10-49	Retail	none	small worries
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	An understanding from a training perspective.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	More opportunities. They are quite technical. Lighting control systems and energy saving.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Machinery and costs in relation to our lorries would be a challenge.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	There not sure as to what new technology will be available into the market or when its available . AI will be a challenge.
1-9	Charity	Don't know	Need to understand what is available for new customer for example the heat source pump, they need to know or be aware of what is available out there for property in energy efficiency. Training is required in these areas. He/she need to know the energy efficiency process and what to look out for.
1-9	Motor Trades	none	switching to electric
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	If there's new technology out there it will take time to train staff. This would be a new challenge for the company.
10-49	Construction	none	Financial
1-9	Wholesale	none	Upskilling
50-249	Health	none	locations are rural - run heating and water supply on kerosene - difficult to offset
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	new tech does enhance progression
10-49	Art and culture	none	Challenges in using new technology.
1-9	Printing	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain	skills shortages, and identifying what digitisation actually it means for our business.
1-9	Construction	none	They will be a lot more wire technology in terms of smart homes, they will need to upskilling to get these jobs but again its challenging due to lack of resources and funding.
1-9	Information &	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated	Write software to do it for their customers. Similar to the

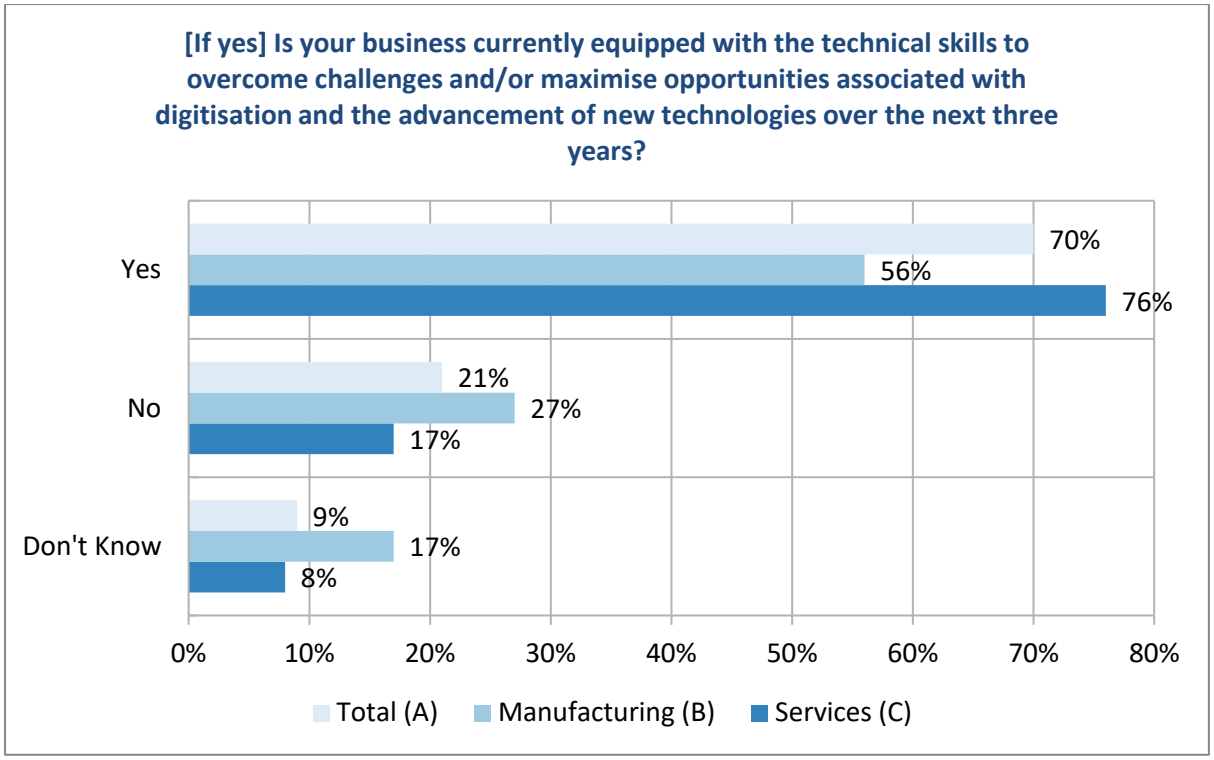
	Communication	battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution	above notes
1-9	graphic design	Professional and financial services and supply chain	opportunities - no examples
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Making sure all equipment and building s are in compliance.
10-49	supply and installation of raised flooring	none	Changing systems and the cost implications. We are taking on new software and its time spent training but we can see it will be beneficial.
1-9	MOT	none	lack of knowledge
10-49	solicitors	none	recruitment of staff
1-9	vehicle rentals	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	not sure if it's actually a challenge or an improvement
1-9	indoor bowling club	none	BT are going digital and we are having a problem with the line system and alarm systems. Technology is not easy to change over and update for older buildings.
50-249	Business Administration and Support Services	none	new learning AI advancement is an opportunity and to learn how we integrate it in the way we work
1-9	Construction	none	It will be the new phone systems that will have to be installed.
1-9	Construction	none	Being in a position to adapt to change.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	More clients are asking how green they are and what plans they have put in place to reduce carbon foot print.
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Challenges will be getting up to date with the technology, in regards to the opportunity, this will help working with new sector and increase in new contracts.
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Efficiency and opening up new arrears of business.
10-49	accountants	none	finding suitable solutions that are compatible with our clients. And training our staff.
1-9	exhibition	Creative content production and gaming	the funding
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	They are going more paperless as more content is stored in/on the cloud.
10-49	Information & Communication	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	unsure what lies ahead

1-9	Retail	none	Getting the staff up to speed and understand how in works with training
50-249	Construction	none	we use cloud based management system to improve the running of the company
1-9	Structural Steels, Fabrication Services & Material Handling	none	Choosing the technology and having the right skills set and finding these skills.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Vehicles are old will need to upgrade the fleet.
1-9	Construction	none	The past-pace technology is currently going through.
1-9	Motor Trades	none	Environmental issues
1-9	Charities	Creative content production and gaming	Training required for net zero to make the best of it.
1-9	relocation insurance - if furniture was damaged in a move	Logistics & distribution; Modern and low carbon utilities	opportunities - this company uses an app - perceived advantage over competition - using digital surveys and inspectors
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Taxi meters are becoming more complicated.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Increased Tachograph to track how our fleet lorries are driven/any faults that may occur.
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Challenge would become more time consuming - an administrative burden.
10-49	I.T software	none	We were awarded carbon neutral status and that is the key to maintaining it over the next 3 years.
1-9	Wholesale	none	Keeping up with changes that happen regularly.
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	HealthTech and medtech	software programmes
10-49	sports	none	challenges - old building - a lot of investment needed
1-9	Events Venue	none	We organise and book events such as weddings and hosting other events.
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	software and costs associated with
1-9	Charity non for profit	none	New technology v cost as we are a charity and rely on funding.
1-9	wholesale	Logistics & distribution	integrate into system train on it too.
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including	develop new work

		manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Modern and low carbon utilities	
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Trying to keep everyone up to date with changes.
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	It depends on how it all work.
1-9	Day centre for homeless and drug and alcohol abuse	none	the operational side of things and the physical set up
1-9	Retail	none	new products of services will be launched and this will be a challenge to keep up to date with.
10-49	Property	none	Keeping up to speed with new technology and cost over time with inflation would be a challenge to our property business.
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	Train people
1-9	Manufacturing	none	skill in market place
10-49	supply promotional products	none	both opportunities and challenges - coming up with new ways to reduce carbon footprint
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	new machinery so more efficient hence increase productivity
1-9	Community Centre	none	Challenges - keeping up to date with the new technologies - they are competent though
10-49	Motor Trades	none	Improve their online presence.
10-49	legal	none	new systems new platforms
1-9	Property	none	Different changes.
1-9	engineering	none	unknown
1-9	historical gardens	none	resources and costs
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	The progress and telecommunications. Changing- if its forced it will be an uphill struggle but if it makes order processes simpler its beneficial.
10-49	Retail	none	Need to choose what's right and see what worse.
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Looking at a new heating system to reduce our waste materials
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Has a management process in place. Has not received any help or support from the Government in regards to this.
1-9	Energy assessors	Modern and low carbon utilities	opportunities
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc	none	Finance is the issue would love to have electric vehicles to

	Postal)		transport to long distances
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	develop website and epos system
10-49	Retail	none	becoming efficient, advertising through different social platforms .digital payments
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Different software systems and costs.
1-9	Health	none	Just trying to reduce our carbon footprint is one thing such as going paperless and increasing our LED lights in our buildings is another in what we are doing.
50-249	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	New system have to learn it.
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Training on new processes
50-249	Management Training of Engineers	none	Trying to reduce carbon footprint in relation to going paperless and reduce lighting in our buildings is ongoing and could be better.
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Updating the building to modernise carbon foot
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Improving IT infrastructure as well as sourcing this at times is a challenge.
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Using more solar panel to filter our waters when window cleaning and getting concessions in buying electric vehicles for our equipment to store and get by to our customers would help, as well as continuing to go paperless which we are doing.
1-9	Entertainment	none	advanced technology such as replacing payment methods
1-9	Haulier business	Logistics & distribution	We only use temporary buildings as we are a haulier firm so do not have any digital technologies, everything is operated from our contractor head office.
10-49	Public House	none	Technology always changes. Card machines are the biggest challenge for me.
1-9	Public House	none	Increased competition from our competitors.
10-49	Engineering for an Internet service provider	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	Learn about new initiatives wherever that is i.e. Government support/Business Enterprise.
1-9	We make glass to be fitted in cars that those are	Logistics & distribution	Cost is a factor and as we have struggled in recent times, it does present a challenge, particularly competing with our

	wanting to be mobile i.e. homes		competitors so the advancement in the digital world is a huge challenge what we do in the window vehicle sector.
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	New I.T and new technology would be a problem in terms of cost as we are only a small business.
10-49	Air Conditioning	none	Cost and soaring prices in relation to the digitisation will present us challenges over the next 3 years.
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Cost and understanding requirements
1-9	Information & Communication	none	How to communication with other businesses and providers.



69.6% of firms anticipating that digitisation and the advancement of new technologies will present new challenges and/or opportunities for them in the next three years reported that they are currently equipped with the technical skills to overcome these challenges and/or maximise these opportunities, compared with 20.9% which did not, and 9.4% which were uncertain.

There were significant differences between manufacturing and services sector firms however. Though over three quarters (75.6%) of services sector employers report they are currently equipped with the necessary skills to overcome these challenges and/or maximise these opportunities (and just 16.7% believe they are not), this figure was significantly lower among manufacturers. 56.3% of manufacturers surveyed believe they are equipped with the necessary skills, while over a quarter 27.1% believe they are not. Again, there was also particularly high uncertainty among manufacturing sector respondents – 16.7% expressed that they weren't sure whether they were currently equipped with the skills they'd need to overcome new challenges and/or maximise new opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies in the coming three years, a figure which was notably lower (7.7%) among services sector businesses.

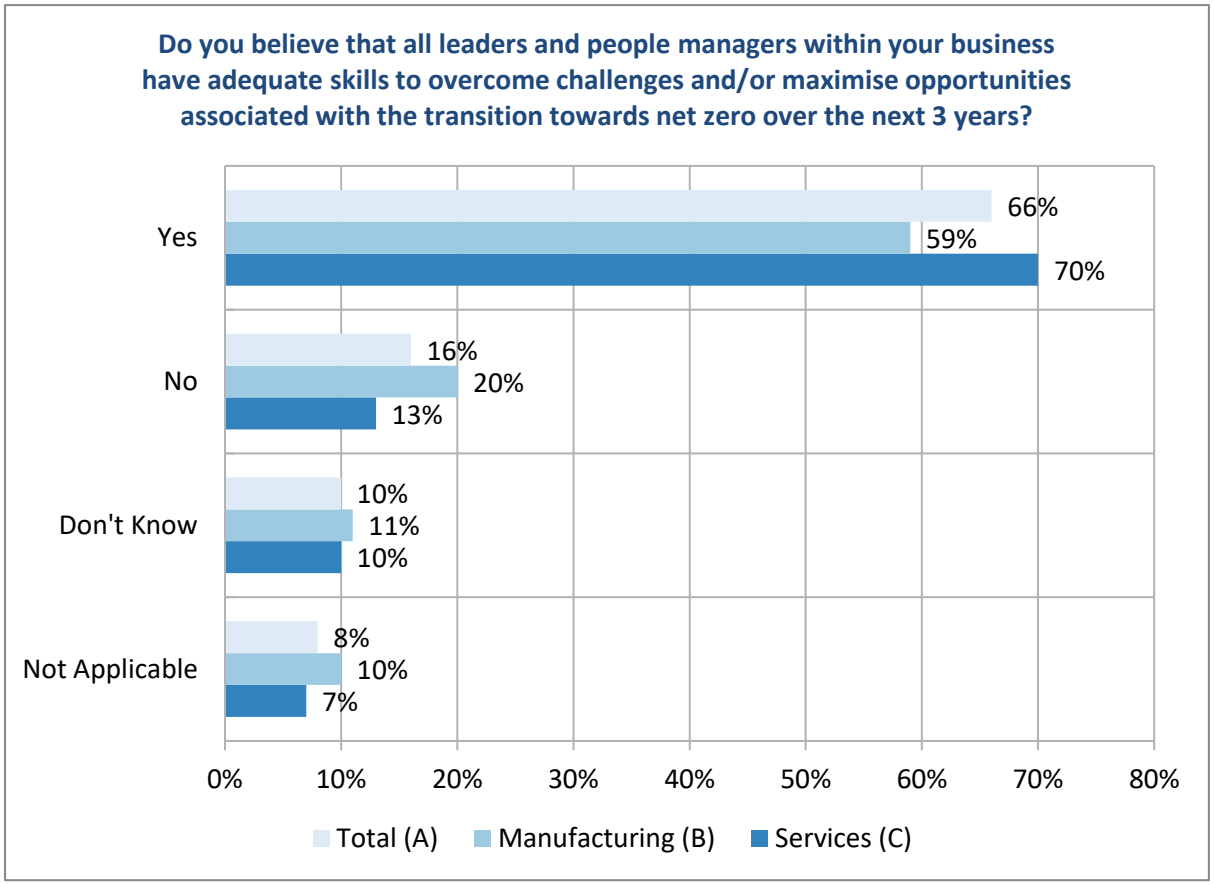
[If no] What additional technical and/or other skills do you anticipate your business will require to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with digitisation and the advancement of new technologies over the next three years?

Responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Community Centre	none	Knowledge and training.
10-49	Health	none	support and instructions
10-49	Hospitality	none	EPOS Systems (Till/Cash Register).
10-49	Retail	none	More training.
10-49	Construction	none	Recruit more IT people.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	Possibly will need training
1-9	Wholesale	none	they know organization who will help
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Product Training from Manufacturers'.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	No clue
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	change to digitizing we still use landlines we need a quick turnaround to change the system and not using paper.
10-49	Construction	none	Training
1-9	Road Transfer and Storage	Logistics & distribution	Brexit caused transport challenges
50-249	Health	none	no idea
1-9	Construction	none	We are working towards new skills, as its becoming a challenge for the company due to lack of resources and funding.
1-9	MOT	none	more info and knowledge
50-249	Health	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	Further training still required
1-9	Construction	none	More Digital and IT training
1-9	making and selling radio equipment	none	doing Digital marketing skills training at the moment
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Training and what type of technology will be introduces to their sector
10-49	accountants	none	We need someone to implement it it's like trial and error, the work we do is so specific and the software we use is bespoke. We need a manager to oversee it as it's so niche.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Effective use of smart phones.
1-9	Day centre for homeless	none	money for training and equipment

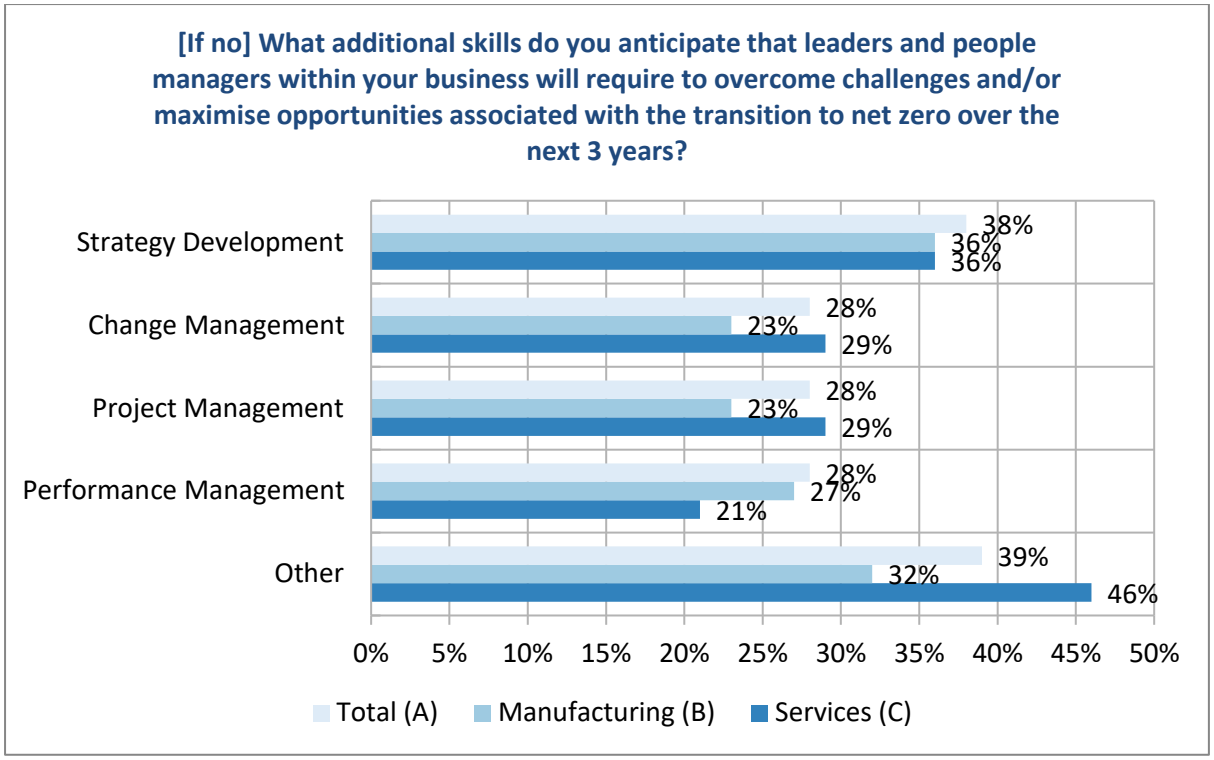
	and drug and alcohol abuse		
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Brushing up on Digital/IT Skills
1-9	historical gardens	none	cost
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	not sure
1-9	Public House	none	Competition in digital marketing maybe a challenge for us as a public house as we have been operating over 30 years, so just trying to survive is what we really focusing on.
1-9	We make glass to be fitted in cars that those are wanting to be mobile i.e. homes	Logistics & distribution	Going green in terms of ideally have electric vehicles as well as putting in more LED lights in our buildings and to eventually to go more paperless.
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	Keeping up to date with new technology, but costs is a factor which we don't have.

X: Environmental sustainability: overcoming challenges and maximising opportunities



In total, 66.4% of businesses surveyed believe that leaders and people managers within their business have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition towards net zero over the next 3 years. This was significantly higher amongst services sector firms (69.8%) than their manufacturing counterparts (59.3%).

Conversely, however, 15.9% of firms overall – 20.4% of manufacturers and 12.9% of services sector businesses do not believe that leaders and people managers within their business have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition towards net zero over the next 3 years. Between both sectors, there was also notable uncertainty about whether leaders and managers had adequate skills for these purposes (reported by 10.0% of firms overall; 10.6% of manufacturers and 9.9% of services sector businesses).



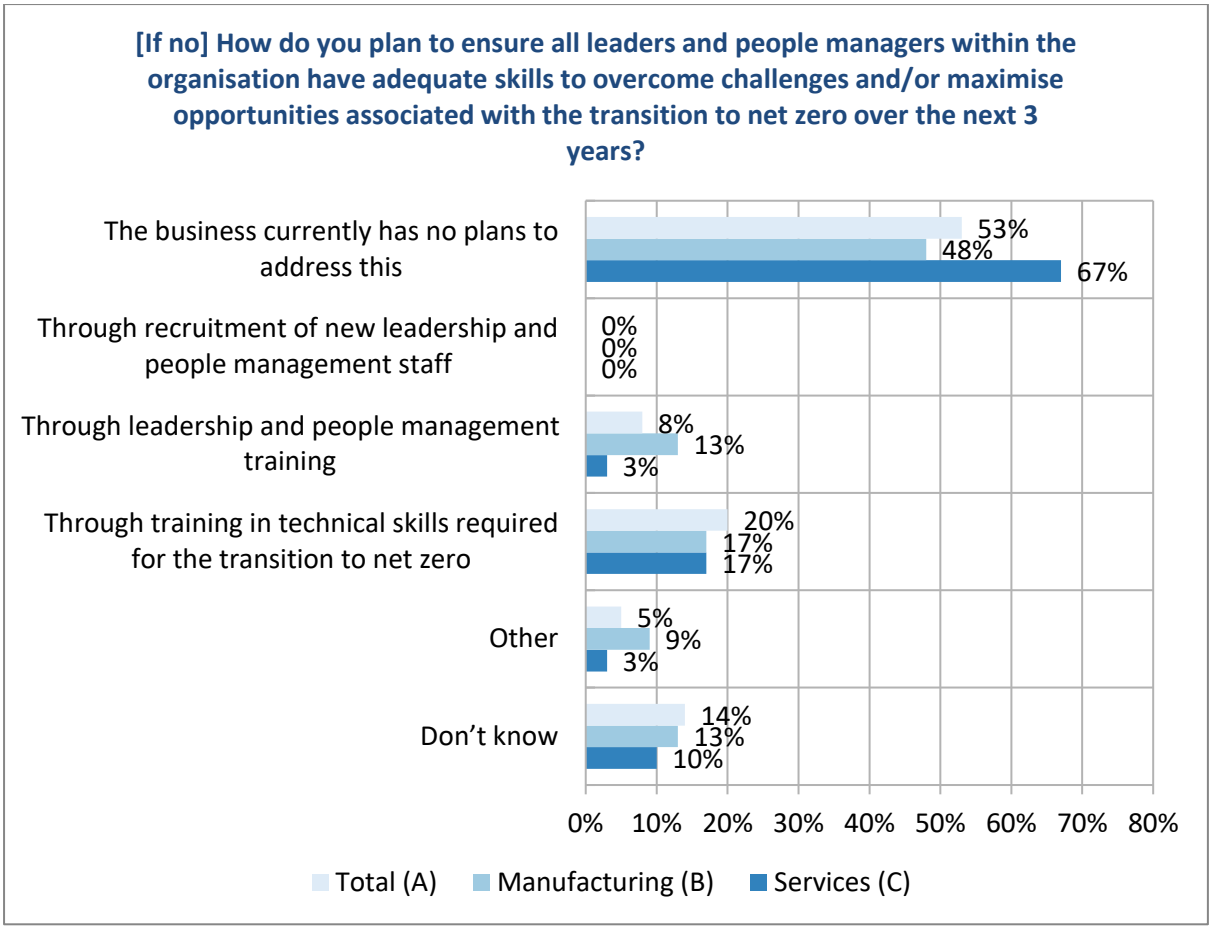
Total respondents most frequently identified strategy development (37.5%), followed by change management, project management and performance management (each reported by 27.8% of respondents) as additional skills required within their business to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition to net zero over the next 3 years.

Due to the 15.9% of respondents which (in the previous question) expressed that they do not believe that leaders and people managers within their business have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition to net zero over the next 3 years, the overall sample represented in the above chart is 72 businesses. Due to the relatively small sample size, comparison of manufacturing and services sector firms must be treated with caution.

Distinctions between the two broad sectors – particularly given the small sample size – in response to this question are marginal. Both manufacturing and services sector firms most frequently identified strategy development (36.4% of manufacturers, 35.7% of services sector businesses). Manufacturers then identified performance management (27.3%) and change and project management equally (each identified by 22.7% of manufacturing respondents) as the next most frequent additional skills required within their business to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition to net zero over the next 3 years, while services sector businesses identified change and project management equally (identified by 28.6% of services sector firms).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	No
1-9	Community Centre	none	Training
1-9	Retail	none	we are just a shop so we don't need this
1-9	Manufacturing	none	we are downscaling, aluminium is recyclable
1-9	Wholesale	Professional and financial services and supply chain	none
1-9	horticulture	Logistics & distribution	not applicable, we are a small business and we don't really need these things
1-9	Motor Trades	none	Not Applicable
1-9	Mechanic	none	Resource required
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Manufacturers Product Training
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Need money to invest
10-49	Health	none	none
10-49	Manufacturing	none	have no plans as they don't have the resources
10-49	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	none
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Specific Training
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Haven't thought about it
50-249	Health	none	no idea
1-9	Construction	none	Environmental Training; Change Management
10-49	Business Administration and Support Services	none	None
1-9	Construction	none	Training
1-9	Charitable/Third Sector	none	Not Applicable
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Not Applicable
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Education
1-9	Charity	none	None
1-9	Fast Food Take Away	none	Not Applicable
10-49	Retail	none	A lot of gaps and no time



Of the 15.9% of respondents overall expressing concerns that leaders and people managers within their organisation do not have adequate skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with the transition to net zero over the coming three years, 52.6% report that their business currently has no plans to address this. Those businesses looking to address this most frequently report seeking to do so through training in the technical skills required for the transition to net zero (19.7%). A notable percentage of respondents (14.5%) reported not knowing how their business planned to ensure leaders and people managers had the skills necessary for these purposes over the next 3 years.

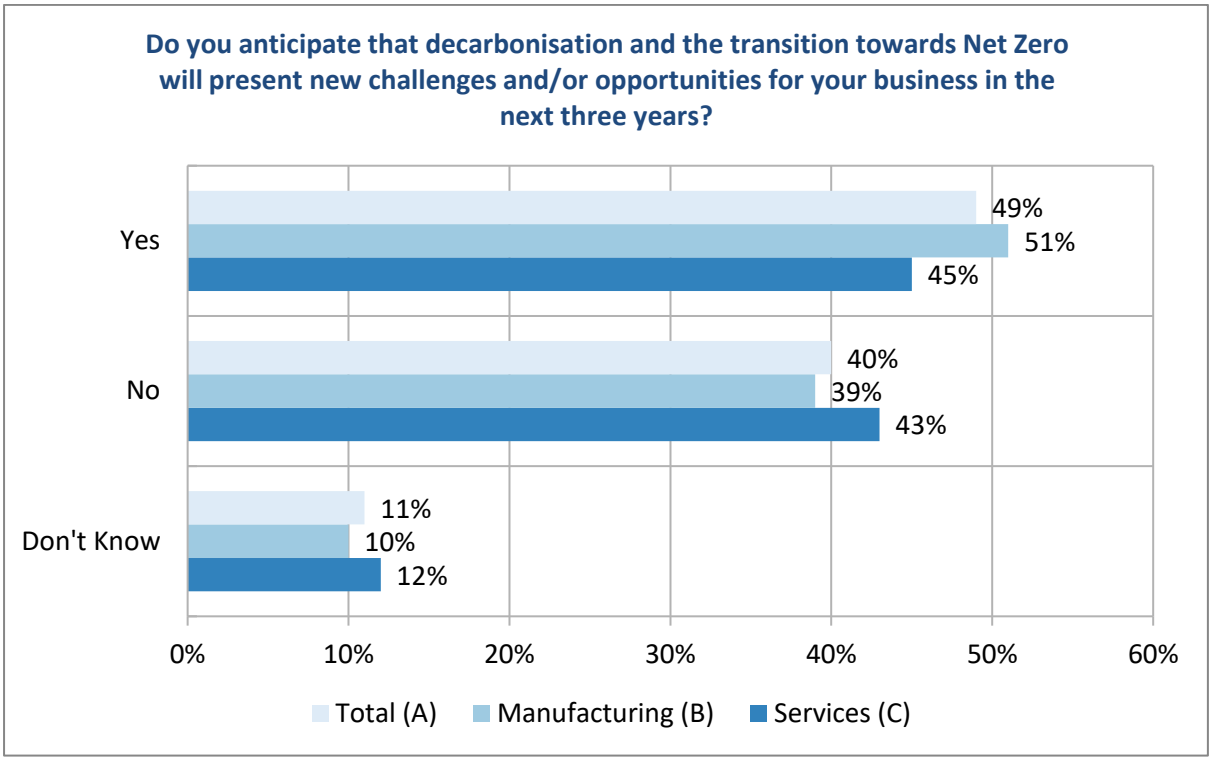
Again, due to sample size, comparisons between manufacturing and services sector firms must be treated with caution.

Disparities between the two broad sectors are also minor in regards to this question. Both manufacturing and services sector respondents report their business currently having no plans to address the reported gaps in leadership and people management capability (47.8% of manufacturing sector respondents and 66.7% of services sector respondents). Where businesses reported seeking to address these, both most frequently reported looking to do so through training in the technical skills required for the transition to net zero (17.4% of manufacturing respondents and 16.7% of services respondents).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response

10-49	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	None	We are looking at this over the coming months
1-9	Manufacturing	None	Not Applicable
10-49	Retail	None	Deal with situation when it changes



Almost half (48.6%) of all survey respondents anticipate that decarbonisation and the transition to net zero will present new challenges and/or opportunities for their business in the next three years; 51.3% of manufacturers and 44.8% of services sector businesses.

Again, there was a significant proportion of respondents reporting uncertainty in response to this question (11.1% in total, 9.7% of manufacturers and 12.1% of services sector firms).

40.3% of survey respondents do not anticipate new challenges or opportunities in their organisation as a result of decarbonisation and the transition to net zero over the next three years (38.9% of manufacturers and 43.1% of services sector businesses).

[If yes] What new challenges and/or opportunities do you anticipate that decarbonisation and the transition towards Net Zero will present for your business in the next three years?

Responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Construction	none	cost implications
1-9	engineering	none	work in fusion and atomic industry
1-9	Property	none	different resources to use instead of gas for heating
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	No opinion, but keen to learn
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Forklifts changing to green.
1-9	Community Centre	none	Their business may have to adapt and change.
10-49	Construction	none	Financial and staffing levels
1-9	Social Club	none	Education on recycling
1-9	Retail	none	Disposal of kitchen waste but I've not really thought about it.
10-49	Business Administration and Support Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	we have 2 directors enrolled onto courses so we will be able to advise clients
1-9	Construction	none	looking to expand and we have a lot of drivers. I'm not sure the managers are putting things in place so we are just waiting for instruction.
1-9	Education	none	Cost
10-49	Health	none	the waste and hygiene and sterilising
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	It is getting easier the more they become familiar with the changes.
1-9	Motor Trades	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Modern and low carbon utilities	challenges energy
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Creative content production and gaming	in process of looking at those
10-49	Health	none	everything they use is disposable
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Finding an alternative fuel to coal and generating interest
10-49	Hospitality	none	They don't have enough of an understanding of what is required.
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	working energy efficiently
10-49	Property	none	Energy performance needs to be reduced as a legal requirement so we are looking into that.

10-49	Retail	none	It is more with their manufacturers trying to go Carbon Neutral.
10-49	national Governing body	none	horse boxes use diesel so possibly yes
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	The company uses vast amount of energy so therefore more greener or maybe go into hydro energy.
1-9	Motor Trades	none	Our motorcycles are good with carbon footprint but when travelling to events that needs to be looked at.
1-9	Kennels	none	Costs
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	fuel efficiency
1-9	Wholesale	none	Depends on legislation
1-9	metal stock holders	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech; Modern and low carbon utilities	huge but can't say
10-49	service hire	none	The vehicles. We will have to change the infrastructure to change to electric vans which has cost implications.
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Use of paper - Business is required to store paper records for x12 years.
1-9	Wedding & Other Events	none	As we are surviving as a business, covid has took a hit and costs soaring is a challenge for us in trying to contribute to reducing carbon footprint. Using LED lights is something we are doing.
1-9	Construction	Modern and low carbon utilities	Impact in a positive way to increase production
1-9	Wholesale	none	Storage
1-9	charities	none	transport
50-249	Education	none	not sure
10-49	Leisure Centre	none	Because of being a listed building
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Finance
1-9	Retail	none	They will have to absorb any additional increased cost.
10-49	Public Administration	none	It will be challenging because of the age of their building. There are various financial implications. It will cost a lot to become net zero.
10-49	Health	HealthTech and medtech	They need to erase all single-use plastic.
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	might take staff on

10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Massive challenge to upgrade the vehicles
1-9	Retail	none	Being fully aware of requirement
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Challenges would be getting everyone on board. Opportunity would be to save money and increase profit margins.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Products that are used
1-9	Retail	none	Deliveries
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution	transport and the vehicles we use
1-9	Production	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	For them it would be transport - they import and export a lot.
1-9	Wholesale	none	n/a
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	There might be a waste issue with disposing old septic tanks.
1-9	Construction	none	The truck industry is changing from diesel to electric, therefore the requirement for lorry loaders that require a hybrid technology will change.
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Fuel to reduce input and further fuel consumption reduction.
1-9	horticulture	Logistics & distribution	I grow plants in greenhouses and there are fuel costs
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Cut carbon, reduce waste and reduce energy usage.
10-49	Media	none	Not going paperless in the near future as of yet.
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Using less lighting when not using the rooms in my business.
10-49	Plant Hire & Tools Company	Logistics & distribution	We are paperless, and use LED lighting in the building. Going electric in our vehicles we are working on as well.
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Financially
1-9	Retail	none	Transport and sourcing products
10-49	Insurance	none	Using LED lights and recycling old PC's with a local council
10-49	landscaping and ground maintenance	none	Vehicles. I don't think an electric vehicle would warrant what we do.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	In the future we are looking to go electric vehicles moving away from diesel.

10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	Opportunities in our exhibitions , low carbon agriculture and recycling are things we are doing.
1-9	Retail	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	Due to the type of product that he sells it will be difficult for the manufacturers to reduce the emission.
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Unsure at the moment
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	HealthTech and medtech; Creative content production and gaming	Challenges nothing drastic
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	The phasing out of gas boilers with the replacement of ground and air-source heat pumps.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	I don't know where to start.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Solar panels which aren't as efficient as they are being made out to be.
10-49	Wholesale	none	Financial cost of switching to electric vehicles
1-9	Promotion Of Products	Professional and financial services and supply chain	change of product services
1-9	Retail	none	Think it is almost impossible
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Creative content production and gaming	Finance
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Costing
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Cover enough miles to deliver goods ! battery van range to low.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Can’t afford to buy an electric car and can’t charge in a block of flats
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Difficult within the business
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	getting people in to manage it
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	none	how to be more efficient
10-49	Manufacturing	none	financial challenges
1-9	Industrial Electric Motor Repairs	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	There will be more need for recycling.
10-49	Construction	none	sourcing products

10-49	Retail	none	knowledge of what to do
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Challenges more than opportunities to meet Net Zero quotas.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Challenges - getting materials from China and shipping costs. Opportunities - they are more in LED lighting so this is an advantage for them.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Continue to use LED lights, looking to go paperless but not yet, we have reduced a bit though.
10-49	Information & Communication	none	Filming off setting that way and working around how they do it. Equipment usage. They are a hybrid working facility need to work their way around they have to figure out using energy and reducing energy while working 24 hours.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Reducing carbon foot print. Everything they use is electric, they are doing as much as they can to reduce carbon foot print and are 98 percent paperless.
1-9	Charity	Don't know	Energy advice is needed due to energy efficiency as this will be a challenge in the future.
1-9	events management	none	We have to import electrical equipment
1-9	Health	none	none
1-9	Membership Mason Organisation	none	Reducing your utilities in our new building.
1-9	Music	none	A lot of addition alterations and building structure change will be a challenge, due to the age of the building.
10-49	Construction	none	financial
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Accepting changes may difficult
1-9	Retail	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels);Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Depends on new challenges.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Any Government changes will have an impact
50-249	Health	none	locations are rural - run heating and water supply on kerosene

			- difficult to offset
10-49	Art and culture	none	Looking at new methods of art handling and display of art handling.
1-9	Creative and Marketing agency	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming; none	more infrastructure from council. e.g. There is nowhere to charge cars near our business so if we wanted to go electric there is nowhere to charge.
1-9	electrical and mechanical engineering	Logistics & distribution	disposal of oils and scrap
1-9	Printing	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Trying to identify the areas where we need to find reductions and looking for alternatives.
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	The vehicles we use but we are looking into this.
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	not sure
1-9	Information & Communication	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution	Customers are likely to need all sorts of reports, detailed facts about products, what they do on waste, plastic waste and carbon savings, this will be required by the Government and they will have to develop a software that can do this.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Stream line logistic that will be a challenger for the company.
10-49	supply and installation of raised flooring	none	Cost implications and it's an ongoing price tag
50-249	Health	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	Use of incontinences pads, reduced latex glove use & recycling.
1-9	vehicle rentals	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	moving to electric vehicles is a slow process
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Have to use electricity
1-9	shopping centre management	none	Financial challenges
1-9	indoor bowling club	none	Its an old building and not very energy efficient we try to reduce energy cost but its difficult.
50-249	Business Administration and Support Services	none	overall we need to learn more about it. there will be new regulations and we need to adapt accordingly
1-9	Construction	none	Not that she is aware of.
1-9	Pet professional services	none	Nice to find what we could do with excess dog hair as I work with a lot of dogs and hair gets wasted.

1-9	Retail	none	Cutting down cost of it and being more economical.
1-9	Charity	none	Around housing
1-9	Construction	none	Using different environmentally-friendly and sustainable materials which will make them more commercially attractive for obtaining new business.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	Reducing carbon footprint and recycling will be a challenge. Increase in reliance on transport structure.
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	We ship things from the continent and the environmental implications this has with fuel.
10-49	Manufacturing	none	It will bring in new challenges as they are located in a very old building and it's not a lot they can do in terms of net zero.
10-49	Landscaping	none	Trucks that we use and the carbon emissions.
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	Not sure at the moment we deal with it as it will arise.
10-49	Business Administration and Support Services	none	Financial and training of staff
1-9	Health	none	just the change and updating within the practice
1-9	exhibition	Creative content production and gaming	funding changing vehicles looking at solar power for the building
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	cost
1-9	Construction	none	The events industry is a disposable industry producing lots of waste within 3 days of an event taking place.
1-9	Retail	HealthTech and medtech	Challenge will be the cost of replacing special UV filament lights.
10-49	Information & Communication	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	investment verses benefit
1-9	Retail	none	Achieving it would be a challenge and having a more sustainable product
10-49	Industrial heating. Waste Oil Heater and Workshop Heater.	Logistics & distribution	cost implications and time implications
1-9	Retail	none	Cost implications

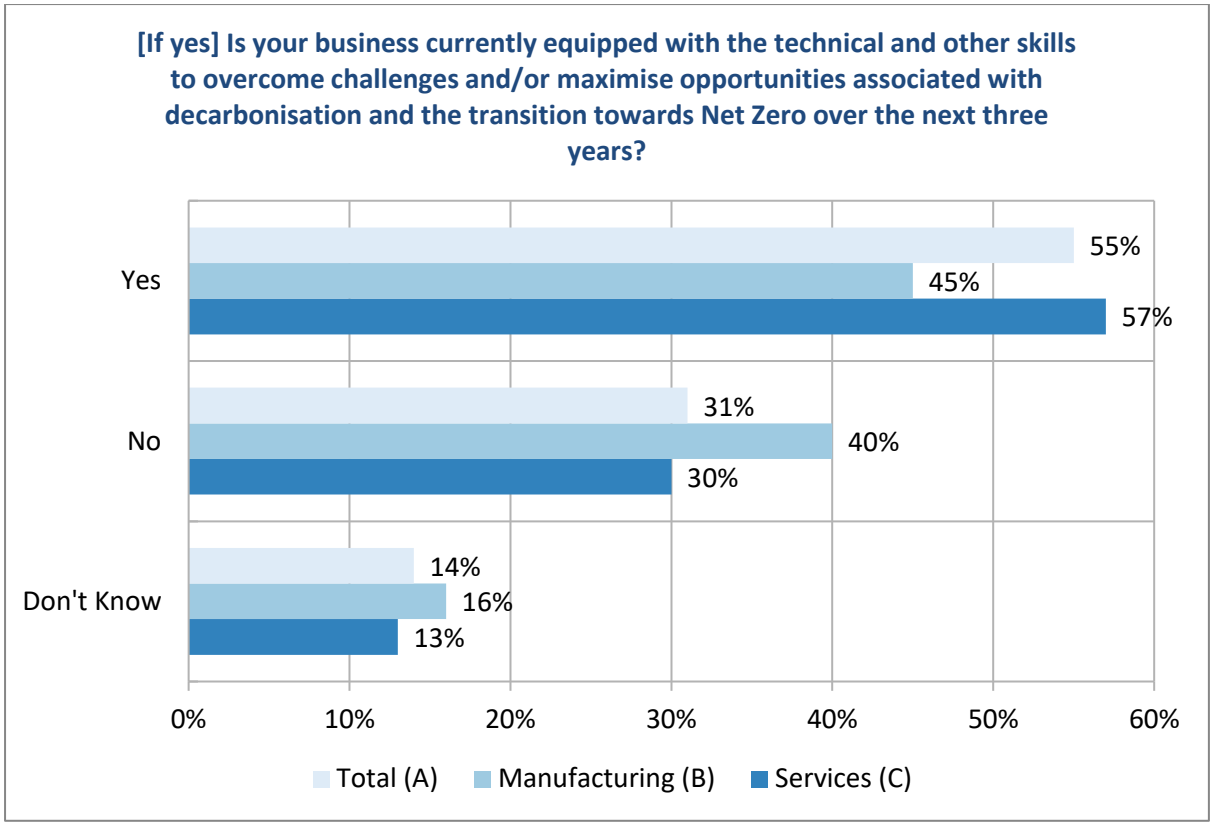
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Current financial state of the world
1-9	national charity	none	we can't control insulation and the source of fuel
50-249	Construction	none	everyone is this industry is working towards net zero and helps if we can partner with them to share best practice
1-9	Structural Steels, Fabrication Services & Material Handling	none	Legislations and just keeping on top of them.
10-49	Manufacturing	none	High energy product supply of materials. There is a problem with the steel cost and price increase of material.
50-249	Manufacturing	none	It costs more. The more changes there are means the customers ask for more things. But that's not always a bad thing.
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	cost
1-9	Wholesale	none	wholesaler of jewellery. jewellery comes in plastic bags so can't use anything else other than a plastic bag.
10-49	Manufacturing	none	he doesn't know
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Vehicles are old will need to upgrade the fleet.
1-9	Wholesale	none	Building is very old which will present a lot of challenges.
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Having to use different products.
1-9	Construction	none	They will have more opportunities in replacing old equipment with new equipment.
10-49	Wholesale	none	Look at Hybrid and electric vehicles as replacements.
1-9	Motor Trades	none	Environmental issues
1-9	Charities	Creative content production and gaming	Opportunity to make theatre work in sustainable ways
1-9	Charitable/Third Sector	none	Short-term cost but long-term saving.
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	possibly
1-9	relocation insurance - if furniture was damaged in a move	Logistics & distribution; Modern and low carbon utilities	opportunities - this company uses an app - perceived advantage over competition - using digital surveys and inspectors
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc	Logistics & distribution	Reducing wastage as we travel miles on road in our lorries.

	Postal)		
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Logistics & distribution	Try to reduce lighting on my business, trying to reduce the livestock of my animals where possible.
10-49	I.T software	none	Supporting deforestation internally, work from home and not in the office.
1-9	Wholesale	none	Keeping up with the world and the changes that are happening around them.
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Energy costs and provisions using a more a green provider
10-49	Online Retail	none	He can't think of any.
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	HealthTech and medtech	challenges - buy vehicles that are
10-49	sports	none	challenges - old building - a lot of investment needed
10-49	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	none	Reducing lighting on farmers premises where possible however this is an area that is not easily maintained from the farmers we support-so carbon footprint is a continued process.
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	We are working on this going paperless, using less lighting where possible.
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Due to clients spread around the country. Having to find ways of reducing carbon foot print by using other ways to communicate with clients without traveling to clients location.
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Costs and trying to respond to the environment and Government regulation makes it harder.
1-9	Day centre for homeless and drug and alcohol abuse	none	it’s an old building so making it greener in terms of energy
10-49	Property	none	Going paperless is definitely that will benefit.
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Logistics & distribution	Use the wood for heating instead of oil.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	uncertainty
10-49	supply promotional products	none	both opportunities and challenges - coming up with new ways to reduce carbon footprint
1-9	Fast Food Takeaway	none	Better equipment and fans in our extractors.

1-9	Make tow bars for vehicles	Logistics & distribution	Increased costs and keeping up against our competitors although it's getting more difficult. We are striving to use LED lights in our building and aiming to go paperless as well.
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	a lot of the packaging will need to change which will increase cost thus increase pricing for customers
1-9	Motor Trades	Logistics & distribution	customers
1-9	Manufacturing	none	They would probably have to close.
1-9	Hospitality - Events	none	Doesn't know at the moment.
1-9	Entertainment & Events Industry	none	Go paperless and reduce lighting where possible in our premises.
1-9	Community Centre	none	challenges - heavy gas and electricity users
10-49	legal	none	restructure
50-249	Health	none	We work different sites, we are always compliant to reducing carbon footprint with the chemicals we use for our cleaning business
1-9	Charity	none	Identify all different areas that they are producing carbon foot. Getting up to date on how to reduce it.
1-9	Property Maintenance	HealthTech and medtech	Going paperless and reducing lighting utilities as well as reducing cost of supplies from our suppliers.
	Manufacturing	none	To continue to go paperless.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing	fuel usage and costs
1-9	historical gardens	none	cost of replacing the items that will no longer be viable
1-9	Fit lifts on back of cars - Engineering	none	Using LED lights in our buildings and going paperless which we are achieving 90 percent to date.
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Working on going paperless and if we can afford it over time to go green in having electric vehicles.
1-9	Energy assessors	Modern and low carbon utilities	opportunities
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Going paperless and using less lighting where possible in our buildings
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	change with in the business
10-49	Retail	none	people who come to use the facilities use their cars so they don't know how they will tackle that.
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc	Logistics & distribution	Electric transport would help if I can support on funding.

	Postal)		
1-9	Health	none	We are trying to get some electric vehicles for our business via our directors
50-249	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	electric range
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Digital marketing very crucial to my business in relation to compliance practices.
1-9	Property	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	Cost
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	cost implications
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Improvement on how things are made
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	Going paperless, using 50 percent LED lights, building very old which the landlord will not authorise or do.
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Costs in terms of materials and trying to maintain this for our business is never easy.
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Continue to use solar panel for our filtration of our water and electric vehicles would help as well if we could afford it- Government support would help.
10-49	Health	none	The building is very old and the maintenance is very important and saving ways of energy.
1-9	Haulier business	Logistics & distribution	Euro 6 engines we have in place to deal with Net Zero.
10-49	Public House	none	Rising gas or beer prices, delivery drivers on strike,
1-9	Public House	none	Lighting utilities in our pub we want to minimise.
10-49	Engineering for an Internet service provider	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	The more investment in energy sector for our business the better to help our internet provider customers.
1-9	Wholesale	none	Practical challenges implementing without causing harm to business
1-9	We make glass to be fitted in cars that those are wanting to be mobile i.e. homes	Logistics & distribution	We only use electric in our buildings, no gas, we are trying to use LED lights as well as paperless.
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	If the congestion charge was to continue we would close as a business in the long run.

10-49	Air Conditioning	none	Recycling and going paperless and going onto electric cars from diesel cars will be changes we are doing or looking to do.
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Designing buildings to meet standards required
10-49	Property	none	investment into technology viability
10-49	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	they need a lot of trucks
1-9	Construction	none	opportunities to make house more carbon efficient
10-49	Education	none	Reducing the cost of utilities bill.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	Change of vehicles would be a challenge.
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	make people aware of how to do it
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Don’t know	Lessons and learning to become digital



Of the 48.6% of all survey respondents anticipating that decarbonisation and the transition to net zero will present new challenges and/or opportunities for their business in the next three years, 55.2% report that their business is currently equipped with the technical and other skills to overcome these challenges and/or maximise these opportunities.

Services sector businesses appear to be significantly more confident of this than their manufacturing sector counterparts however; while 56.7% of services sector businesses believe that they are equipped with the necessary skills, this figure is notably lower among manufacturers, at 44.8%.

30.6% of total businesses anticipating new challenges and/or opportunities associated with decarbonisation and the transition to net zero report that they do not believe they're currently equipped with the technical and other skills to overcome these challenges and/or maximise these opportunities. This is higher amongst manufacturing firms (39.7%) than services sector businesses (29.8%).

Again, the level of uncertainty among respondents is relatively high, with 14.2% overall (15.5% of manufacturers and 13.5% of services sector firms) reporting that they do not know whether their business has the necessary skills to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with decarbonisation and the transition to net zero.

[If no] What additional technical and/or other skills do you anticipate your business will require to overcome challenges and/or maximise opportunities associated with decarbonisation and the transition towards Net Zero over the next three years?

Responses include:

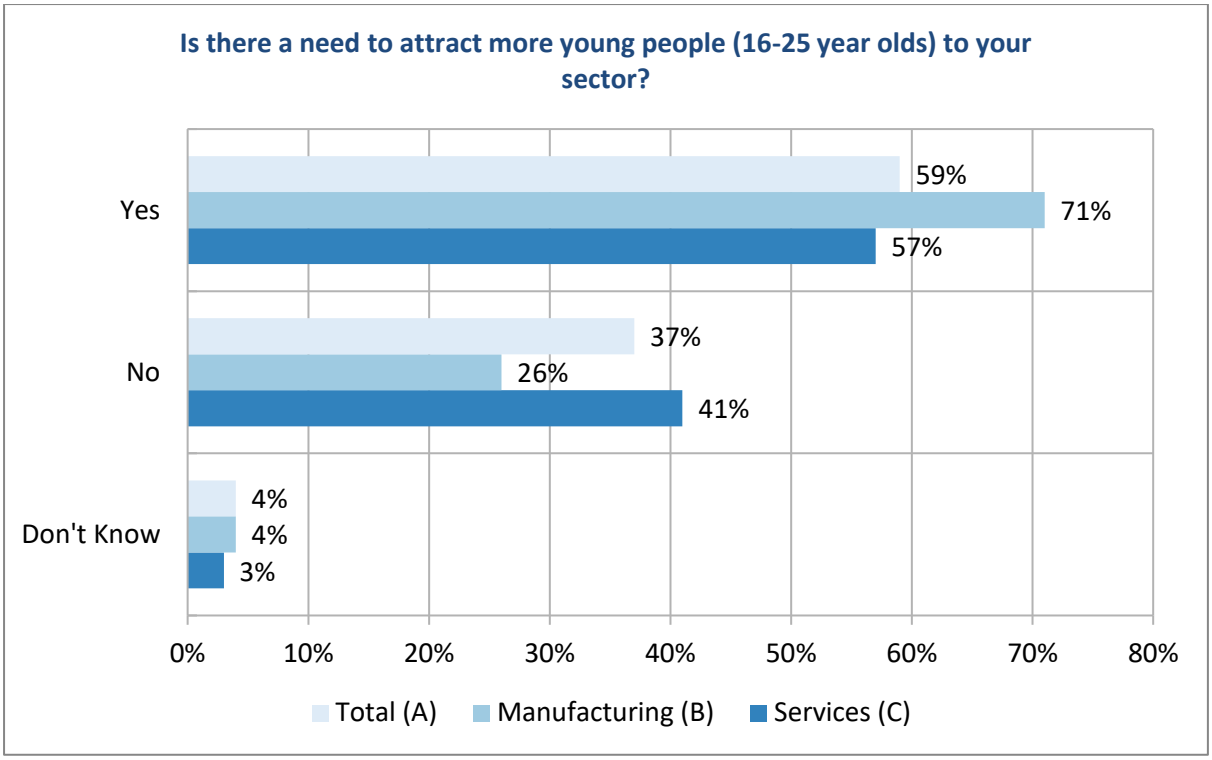
Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Construction	none	not sure until I'm actually faced with it I don't really know
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Don't know
1-9	Community Centre	none	More information and knowledge to advise my local community.
10-49	Construction	none	Financial and staffing levels knowledge
10-49	Business Administration and Support Services	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing	increase our personnel
1-9	Motor Trades	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Modern and low carbon utilities	solar panels - battery retainers for ovens
10-49	Hospitality	none	More training
1-9	Motor Trades	none	don’t know yet that’s what we are working on now we need to figure that out
1-9	Construction	none	Not a lot. Just more information and knowledge.
10-49	Public Administration	none	All training
1-9	Retail	none	Understanding the requirements
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Further training for all staff.
1-9	horticulture	Logistics & distribution	What we are told to do and what we anticipate are 2 different things. No one helps our industry, agriculture get lots of support but not our sector.
1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	More support from organisations that will assist my business i.e. grants from West Midlands Combined Authority & Local Authority.
1-9	Retail	none	Funding
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	Don't have specialists in our business to do this and would love someone to come onboard to support us.
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Going on new courses to become familiar with new products from manufacturers.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Cost of utilising electric vehicles
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Need tech people to place charging pints and install recycle bins to manage
1-9	Professional, Scientific &	none	Nature of the business

	Technical		
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	not having the time to put things in place
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	none	impossible to answer
1-9	Industrial Electric Motor Repairs	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	Not sure
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Don't Know
1-9	Charity	Don’t know	Funding for new training of staff in technical skills
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Having the time to focus on net zero
1-9	Creative and Marketing agency	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming; none	Not sure , we are aware but we don't have a clear idea so we would need more information and guidance.
1-9	Printing	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech; Professional and financial services and supply chain	not sure at the moment
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	not sure
50-249	Health	Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	Staff training & facilities in business more recycling.
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Understanding Requirements
1-9	indoor bowling club	none	Also being able to charge cars electronically in the car park
1-9	Construction	none	They don't know the specifics, someone needs to tell them how to upskill in specific areas.
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	More knowledge and information
10-49	Manufacturing	none	not sure
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	We will take it in board as it comes to us.
10-49	Business Administration and Support Services	none	Financial
1-9	exhibition	Creative content production and gaming	using manual hiring outer vehicles
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; HealthTech and medtech	Electric charging point
50-249	Construction	none	ISO 1401 environment standard continuing improvement and training of higher management to achieve the standard

1-9	Structural Steels, Fabrication Services & Material Handling	none	More information and more direction.
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Being a small company it's not something that they can do a lot about.
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Modern and low carbon utilities	Not Applicable
10-49	Manufacturing	none	Don't Know
1-9	Charities	Creative content production and gaming	Training for net zero
1-9	Charitable/Third Sector	none	They would need to get some information on it first.
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Logistics & distribution	Don't know
10-49	I.T software	none	Reducing low carbon footprint as a whole is important, more of a knowledge to know where our footprint is-administration style is what is needed.
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Understanding what is and isn't allowed and what's required.
1-9	Information & Communication	none	uncertainty
10-49	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution	more training in Net Zero and understand what is required of the business to become carbon neutral
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing	not sure
1-9	historical gardens	none	resource and costs
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	I'm not interested
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	We lease our vehicles and that is the only way at the moment so I cannot think of anything in relation to the question at this time as we are just trying to survive as a business.
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Not sure at the moment and we can't use solar panels on this building
10-49	Engineering for an Internet service provider	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels); HealthTech and medtech	More learning of where the opportunities to increase efficiency, learn new products.
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	Increased fuel costs and electric vehicles that are not affordable would be a challenge and issue.

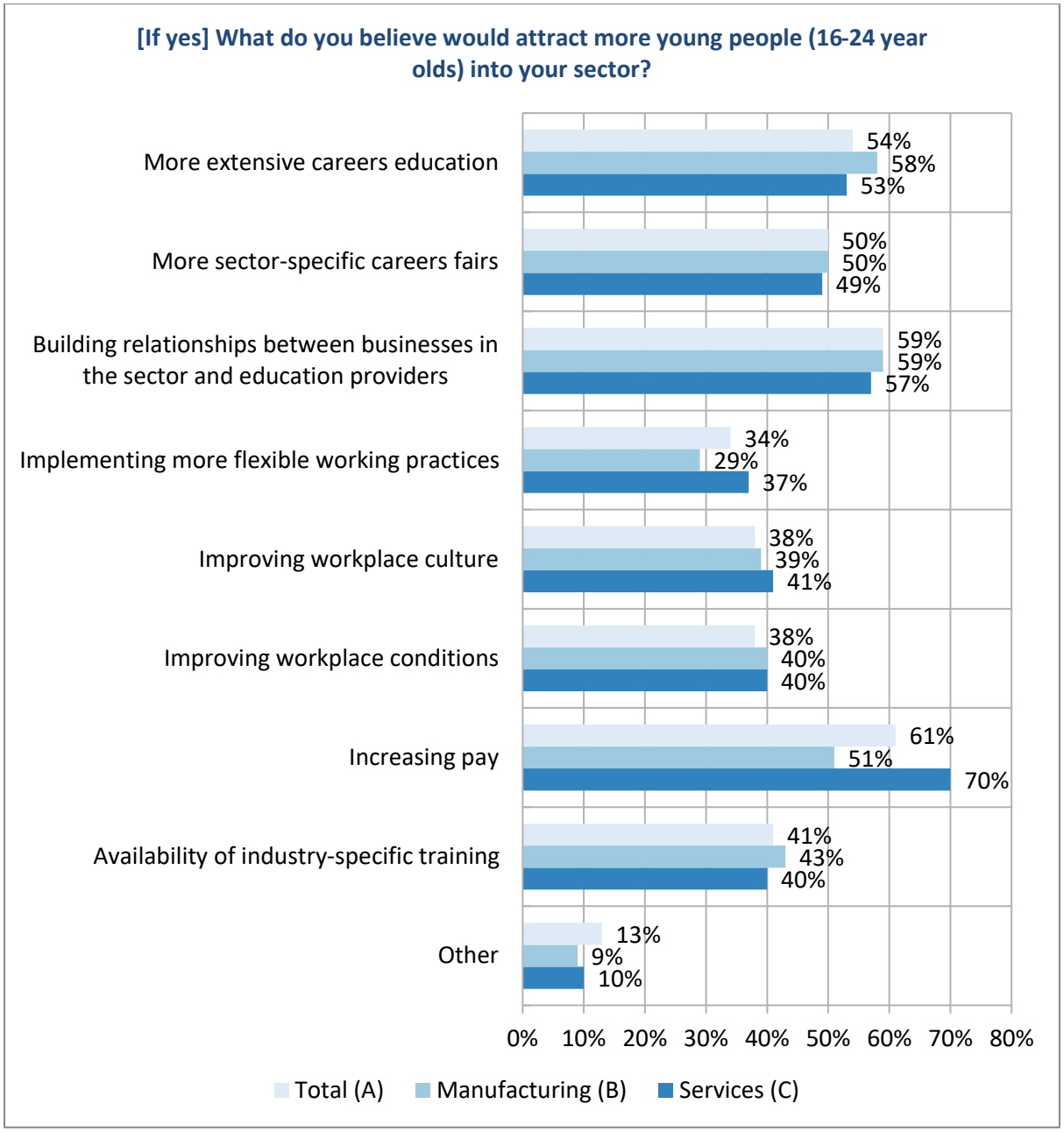
1-9	Construction	none	Our business doesn't create much carbon
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	need to train

XI: Attracting young talent



59.1% of businesses surveyed believe that there is a need to attract more young people (16-25 year olds) to their sector.

This figure is significantly higher among manufacturing sector firms (70.8%) than services sector businesses (56.7%).



Businesses most frequently identified 'increasing pay' (61.4%), 'building relationships between businesses in the sector and education providers' (59.3%) and 'more extensive careers education' (54.3%) as changes which would attract more young people (16-24 year olds) into their sector.

Services sector firms were significantly more likely to identify 'increasing pay' than manufacturers (69.8% and 51.3% respectively), making this the broad sector's most frequent response, followed by 'building relationships between businesses in the sector and education providers' (56.6%) and 'more extensive careers education' (52.7%).

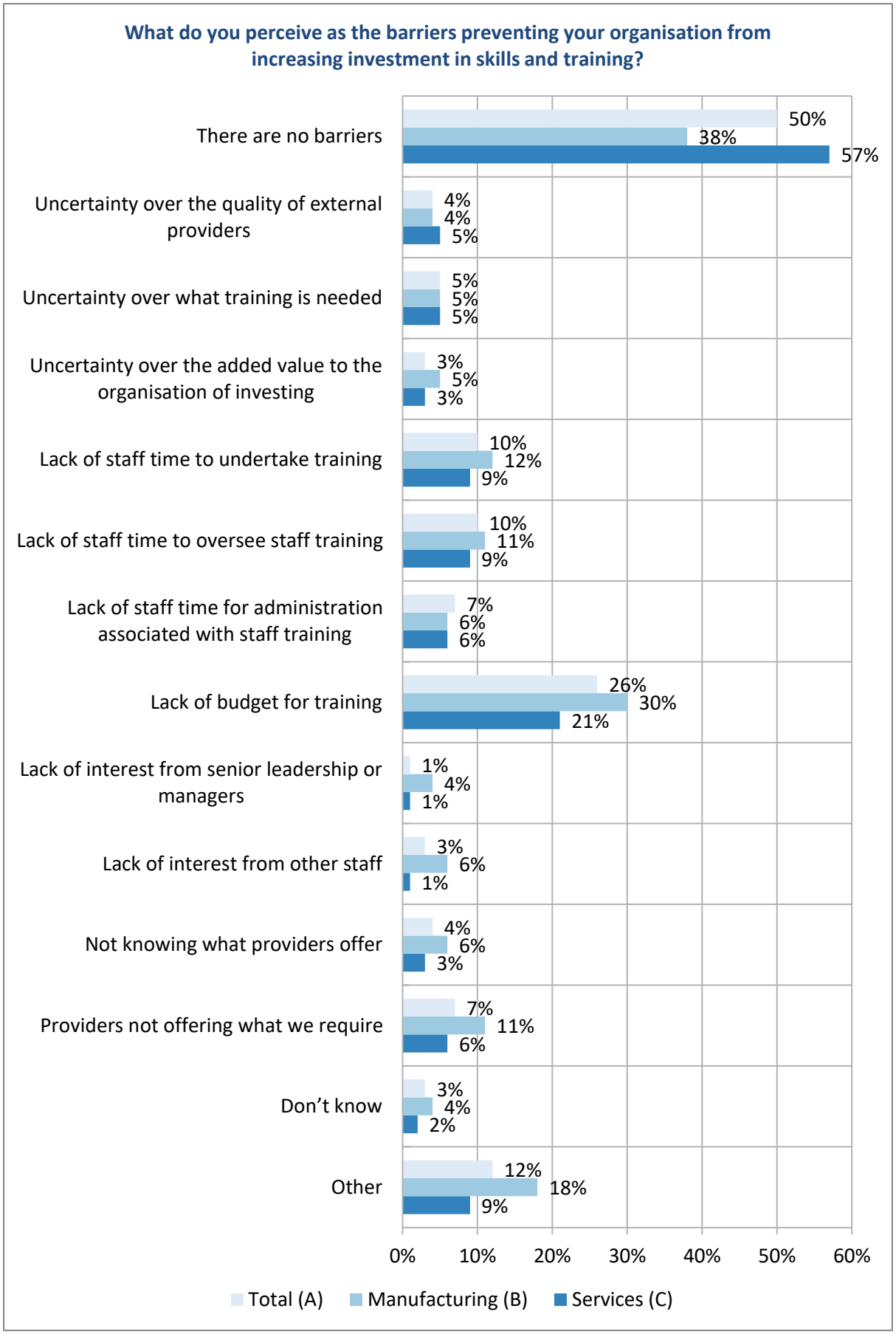
Manufacturers most frequently identified 'building relationships between businesses in the sector and education providers' (58.8%), 'more extensive careers education' (57.5%) and then 'increasing pay' (51.35).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
10-49	Health	none	mentoring
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Trying to attract the right people for the right skills in our business
1-9	engineering	none	promote attractiveness
1-9	Motor Trades	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Modern and low carbon utilities	costly and time consuming for skilled individuals
1-9	Wedding & Other Events	none	Apprenticeship has helped us before
10-49	Public Administration	none	Work Experience
10-49	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Flexible Training
1-9	selling edm machines - spares and services	Logistics & distribution	raising awareness to benefits of sector
1-9	Internet Technologies and mobile application	none	Using our existing referrals such as internal, apprenticeship students we have already done
10-49	Media	none	Word of pay
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Social media and our website
10-49	Construction	none	apprenticeship programs
10-49	marketing	none	Interest
1-9	Membership Mason Organisation	none	More apprenticeships
50-249	Health	none	skills shortage
1-9	Pet professional services	none	People that want to work with animals
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Economy and a new Government
10-49	Online Retail	none	Nothing
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	HealthTech and medtech	promoting awareness
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	none	Skill level
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Mindset
1-9	Entertainment & Events Industry	none	We get clients that are freelancers

1-9	Community Centre	none	Promoting Or Raising Awareness
10-49	Motor Trades	none	They need to have a passion for classic and vintage cars
1-9	engineering	none	lack of actual work
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	We recruit via colleges and friends we know
10-49	Telematics and Tracking	Logistics & distribution	Really don't know
10-49	Air Conditioning	none	Having the right calibre of candidates that are suitable in our Air Conditioning sector

XII: Skills and training: overcoming barriers



50.0% of overall respondents do not perceive there to be barriers preventing their organisation from increasing investment in skills and training, however, where barriers were identified by respondents, these were most frequently 'lack of budget for training' (25.7%), 'lack of staff time to oversee training' (10.5%) and 'lack of staff time to undertake training' (9.6%).

Services sector firms (56.7%) were significantly more likely than manufacturers (38.1%) to report that there are no barriers. Where they did identify barriers, these were most frequently 'lack of budget for training' (20.8%), followed by 'lack of staff time to oversee training' and 'lack of staff time to undertake training' equally (each identified by 8.7% of services sector respondents).

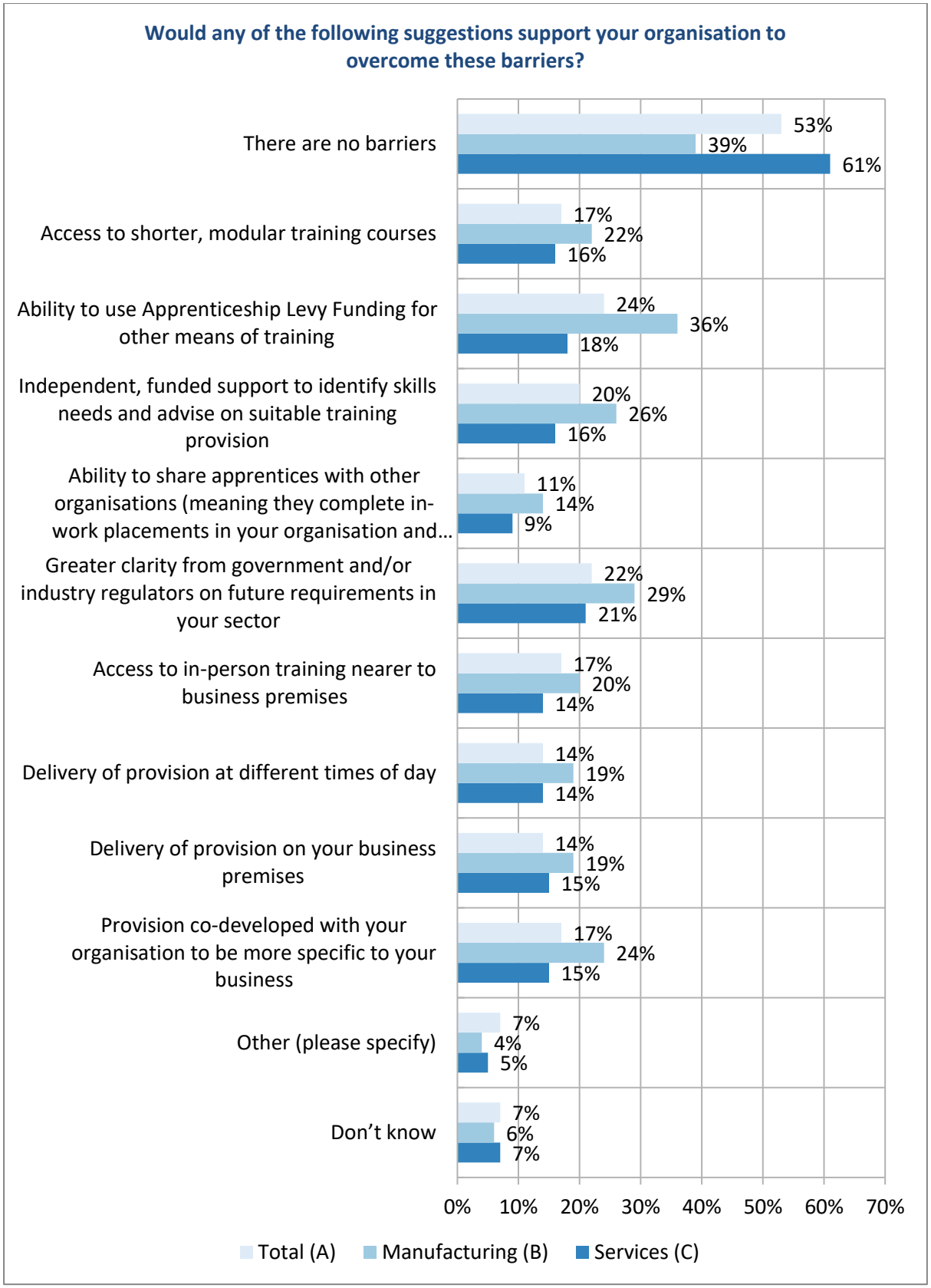
Manufacturing sector businesses most frequently identified 'lack of budget for training' (30.1% - a figure significantly higher among manufacturers than services firms), 'lack of staff time to undertake training' (11.5%) and 'lack of staff time to oversee staff training' and 'providers not offering what we require' equally (each identified by 10.6% of manufacturing sector respondents) as barriers preventing their organisation from increasing investment in skills and training. Manufacturing sector respondents were also notably more likely to identify a 'lack of interest from senior leadership' (3.5%) and 'lack of interest from other staff' (6.2%) than their services sector counterparts (0.9% and 1.3% respectively).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	engineering	none	lack of people
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Cost
1-9	Construction	Professional and financial services and supply chain	all done in house
1-9	Manufacturing	none	finding people who are interested in this sector
1-9	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	all training done in house
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	too busy to invest the time
50-249	Education	none	trying to retain staff and keep them going
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Must be regulated RICS
1-9	I.T Software	none	Lack of funding
10-49	Media	none	Depends near the time what challenges are at the time
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	Cost is the issue
10-49	construction and architect	none	recession
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Experience in Design Services
1-9	Membership Mason Organisation	none	No providers for apprenticeship in our business
1-9	electrical and mechanical engineering	Logistics & distribution	nothing available within a 50 mile radius
10-49	Construction	none	Lack of people getting into the industry
1-9	Information & Communication	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Logistics & distribution	lack of need
1-9	Manufacturing	none	skilled staff required in this sector
1-9	MOT	none	not enough people coming into the industry
1-9	Information & Communication	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Economic uncertainty
1-9	Tourism	none	No local institute for training

1-9	Health	HealthTech and medtech	No sufficient funds
1-9	Construction	none	Lack of Apprenticeship Schemes for their sector
1-9	Information & Communication	none	profitability
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Make the job offer attractable- as the job can be unsociable
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Professional and financial services and supply chain	Small Size/Scale of his Business
10-49	Motor Trades	Logistics & distribution	council related
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	HealthTech and medtech	Lack of affordable warehouse spaces
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	Quality of candidates available lacking knowledge of the property industry
1-9	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	No one interested in my sector anymore, everything is more digital
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Not enough interest in the sector
1-9	Community Centre	none	Lack of budget
1-9	Construction	Don’t know	Lack of people coming into the trade
	Manufacturing	none	We have sub-contractors currently
1-9	engineering	none	Lack of actual work for apprenticeships
10-49	Retail	none	No courses for antique selling
1-9	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	getting right person to right thing
1-9	Manufacturing	Logistics & distribution; Manufacturing of future housing; Creative content production and gaming	Recession is a barrier at the moment
1-9	Manufacturing	none	No longer do an Apprenticeships in this trade
10-49	Construction	Manufacturing of future housing	Just having the right clients that want to work in the role of our business is never easy
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Commitment of people to work in the cold in our business is a challenge
1-9	Haulier business	Logistics & distribution	We only have a yearly contract
1-9	We make glass to be fitted in cars that those are wanting to be mobile i.e. homes	Logistics & distribution	Its having the right calibre of clients in our business and we have reduced our staffing in recent years so getting the right individual is not easy

10-49	Wholesale	Logistics & distribution	pragmatism
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Don’t know	No address so can't hire an apprentice



Similarly to the previous question, a majority of total respondents (53.3%), 61.0% of services firms 38.9% of manufacturers indicated that there are no barriers to increasing their investment in skills and training in response to this question.

However, where respondents (from each of the broad sectors combined) identified suggestions which would support them to overcome the aforementioned barriers to their firm increasing investment in skills and training, these were most frequently 'ability to use Apprenticeship Levy Funding for other means of training' (23.6%), 'greater clarity from Government and/or industry regulators on future requirements in your sector' (22.2%) and ''Independent, funded support to identify skills needs and advise on suitable training provision' (19.7%).

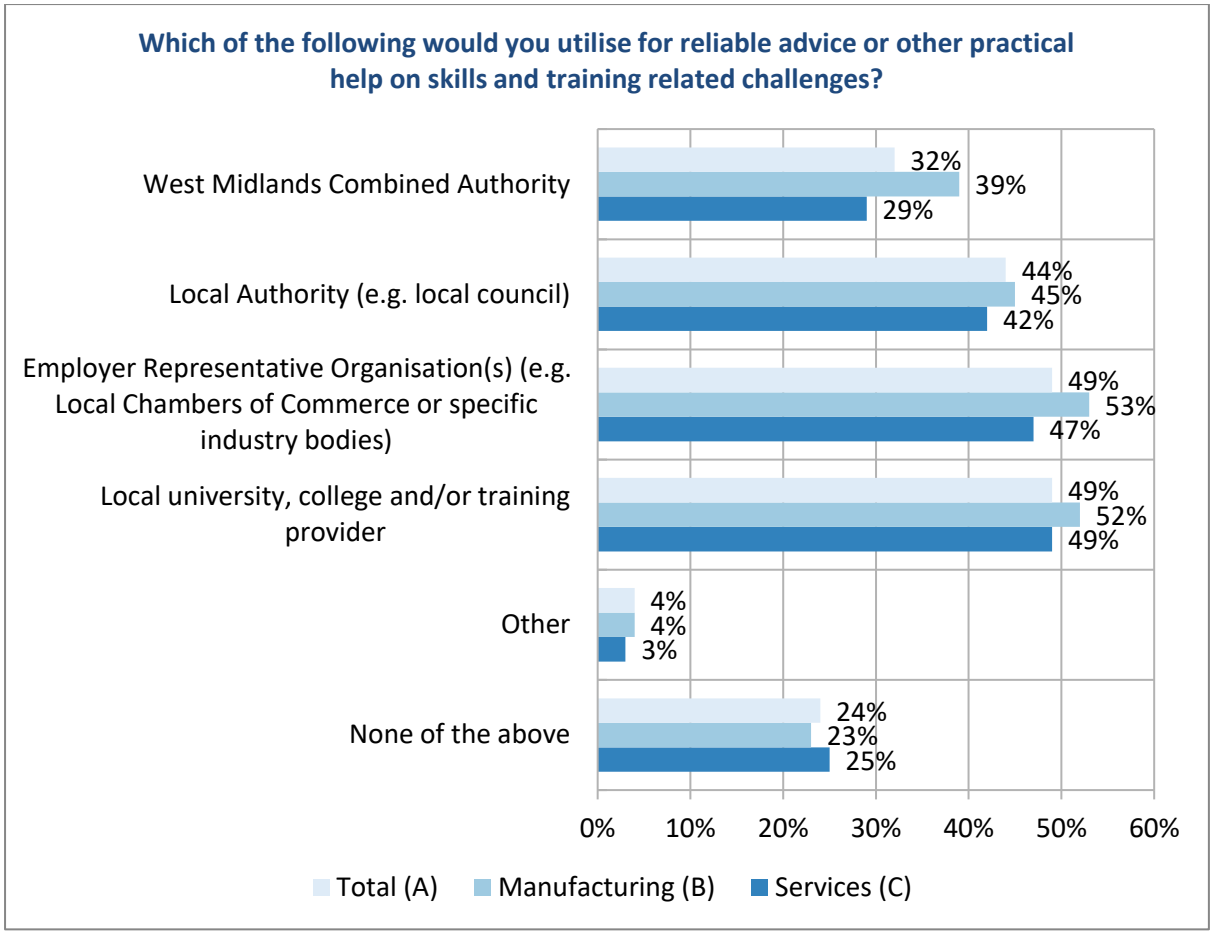
Services sector firms most frequently identified 'greater clarity from Government and/or industry regulators on future requirements in your sector' (20.8%), 'ability to use Apprenticeship Levy Funding for other means of training' (17.7%) and 'independent, funded support to identify skills needs and advise on suitable training provision' (16.5%).

Manufacturing sector businesses most frequently identified 'ability to use Apprenticeship Levy Funding for other means of training' (identified by over a third of manufacturing firms; 36.3%), followed by ' greater clarity from Government and/or industry regulators on future requirements in your sector' (identified by almost a third of manufacturers; 29.2%) and 'Independent, funded support to identify skills needs and advise on suitable training provision' (identified by over a quarter of manufacturers; 25.7%).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Manufacturing	none	It is still the issue of getting the right people for the training as we area skilled profession and its difficult getting the right people
10-49	Retail	none	All of the above
1-9	charities	none	help from the church
1-9	Internet Technologies and mobile application	none	We currently use apprenticeships but any other help is always helpful to my business
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	The training is not tailored right for the job that they are doing
10-49	Equestrian Events Business	none	We already have assisted with graduate students onto our events business
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution	Only want to use CITB
1-9	Food Service/Retail	none	Financial Implications
1-9	Health	none	none
1-9	Information & Communication	none	none
1-9	exhibition	Creative content production and gaming	technical skill costing
10-49	Industrial heating. Waste Oil Heater and Workshop Heater.	Logistics & distribution	provision at different times of year
1-9	Charitable/Third Sector	none	None
10-49	I.T software	none	Training and pay would pay from 3rd parties
10-49	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	HealthTech and medtech	affordable warehouse spaces
1-9	Charity non for profit	none	Funding is needed
1-9	Retail	Logistics & distribution	More time
1-9	Community Centre	none	More funding and grants
1-9	car body repairs	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ;Don’t know	better funding
	Manufacturing	none	We have mostly sub-contractors so don't anticipate any more staff at this stage
1-9	historical gardens	none	would like to get help with more funding

1-9	Fit lifts on back of cars - Engineering	none	Getting more apprenticeships in the Engineering sector
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	none	Comes down to cost for our business
1-9	Transport & Storage (inc Postal)	Logistics & distribution	Not looking at the moment due to just surviving in the business
1-9	Manufacturing	none	Apprenticeships
1-9	Window Cleaning & Guttering Business	none	Competition
10-49	Pet Services Business	none	Don't have enough funds
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices ; Professional and financial services and supply chain	when staff go on training they need to provide staff to cover their work
1-9	Accommodation & Food Services	none	Only two staff so no time



Survey respondents most frequently reported that they would utilise employer representative organisations (49.5%), local universities, colleges and/or training providers (48.6%) and local authorities (43.8%) for reliable advice or other practical help on skills and training related challenges.

Manufacturing firms were more likely to utilise each of the listed bodied for reliable advice or other practical help on skills and training related challenges, and most frequently identified that they would utilise employer representative organisations (52.7%), local universities, colleges and/or training providers (51.8%) and local authorities (44.6%).

Services sector firms surveyed most frequently identified that they would utilise local universities, colleges and/or training providers (48.9%), employer representative organisations (46.8%) and local authorities (42.0%).

'Other' responses include:

Size	Sector	Priority Growth Cluster (if applicable)	Response
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Manufacturing of electric light vehicles and associated battery storage devices	Depends who has the information
1-9	industry import a brand and sell to industries that require	Logistics & distribution	It depends what's available
10-49	Manufacturing	Manufacturing of future housing	Not Sure
10-49	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Professional and financial services and supply chain	RICS FrICS regulator body
10-49	Health	HealthTech and medtech	Private Independent Training Providers
1-9	Motor Trades	none	RMI - Retail Motor Industry Federation
10-49	Construction	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	CITB only
1-9	Construction	Logistics & distribution; Professional and financial services and supply chain	Only interested in CITB
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	HealthTech and medtech; Creative content production and gaming	Vendor specific
1-9	general engineering	Aerospace (including manufacturing alternative fuels)	Don't know where to start
1-9	Food Service/Retail	none	Black Country Growth Hub
1-9	Manufacturing	Modern and low carbon utilities	Accountant
1-9	making and selling radio equipment	none	Online research
10-49	sports	none	Members
1-9	Property	Manufacturing of future housing	Federation of Small Business is helpful
1-9	Entertainment & Events Industry	none	Formal training is not an attraction and we would not need the organisations listed above as we network which gets our business
1-9	Haulier business	Logistics & distribution	We are bound by our contractor and would not benefit from the agencies as we would be out of work if we did not adhere to the contract
1-9	Finance & Insurance	Don’t know	AAT, Chartered

Meaningful Engagements

Sample and Methodology

Throughout March 2023, all three Chambers involved in the WMW LSIP (Coventry and Warwickshire, Greater Birmingham and the Black Country Chambers of Commerce) also gathered further qualitative data from employers across all sectors and sizes through 386 'meaningful engagements'; one to one conversations, with senior representatives of businesses operating in the West Midlands and Warwickshire, based on existing relationships.

These conversations are framed by a selection of questions, designed by the Chambers of Commerce with support from the WMW LSIP Operational Board. They gather rich, high-quality insights from employers that supplement the findings of the quantitative surveying.

The below tables present some of the substantive responses received to each of the meaningful engagement questions which reflect the key themes of the overall research.

Analysis

What strategic ambitions do you have for your business over the next three years?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
10-49	Manufacturing	Our ambition is to grow through acquisition, in which case, we will grow the team by hiring more directors and promoting senior staff
10-49	Construction	To reduce manufacturing cost, by revisiting our design and streamlining on material used.
50-249	Arts and Culture	To become a training theatre where we offer progression and development opportunities within our internal workforce and beyond into the wider city, tapping into new diverse talent pools and engaging with young talent across the city to educate and encourage careers in theatre
1-9	Manufacturing	The company would like to focus on increasing exports through broadening its retail presence overseas. Key countries the interviewee has in mind include the USA, which is the business' main customer base outside of the UK, Germany due to their strong economy that could help to lessen the effect of a slump in EU trade post-Brexit, Switzerland with a view to selling the products in department stores and to creatives looking to purchase high-quality products on the premium market. The company also has a trade agreement with Singapore and are looking to diversify product ranges such as producing white label goods (products without logos).

50-249	Manufacturing	Growth through acquisition, adoption of new technologies (including electric and hydrogen fuel cell transportation) and organic growth in current market. We also want to obtain Investors in People (IIP) Gold Standard (we're currently at Silver) and implement a succession plan so I can retire.
50-249	Finance and insurance	Organic growth, strengthen brand, Improve competency levels of staff
10-49	Accommodation and food services	Recover from the covid lockdowns
250+	Professional, Scientific & Technical	We have a clear strategy to take us to 2025 to be a leader in client experience, innovation, people experience, sectors and markets and achieve more together
50-249	Manufacturing	Sustainability is vital for our industry's business and world's future. As an organisation we are committed to emissions reduction and net zero journeys under the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), by setting ambitious targets in line with what climate science tells us is necessary - and to being held accountable to them. We started by developing both near-term emissions reduction and longer-term net zero targets with the help of SBTi guidance, with a view to officially submitting our targets for approval and start measuring our performance against them in 2023.
250+	Retail	1. Delivering on our capital investment and asset maintenance programme (to ensure our assets are fit for purpose and can deliver our services over the next 5-7 years) 2. Continuing to deliver on our net-zero carbon delivery plan (by 2030) 3. Deliver our operational delivery commitments agreed with OFWAT (reducing leakage, sewer flooding, improving river quality) 4. Continuing to grow and invest in our biodiversity agenda
10-49	Education	Increase the breadth of our delivery expanding the range and level of courses offered in line with regional and national priorities. To use test and learn programmes to enter new marketplaces i.e., Welfare to Work, Health and Wellbeing and Primary Education
50-249	Manufacturing	We have pledged to reduce our global carbon footprint meaningfully, measurably, and in a way that reflects the urgency of the climate crisis. By signing up to emissions reduction and net zero journeys under the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), we are committing to setting ambitious targets in line with what climate science tells us is necessary - and to being held accountable to them.

10-59	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Continue to grow and increase the cloud services we offer to customers
10-49	Finance and insurance	Increase social investment and capital raising. Train and develop staff. Double staff and turnover. Own own premises.
1-9	Manufacturing	Maintaining the turnover that we currently have and keeping the clients we have. I'm not looking to grow, expand, take on new employees or anything like that. In three years' time if we are trading like we are today I will be happy
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	We are not necessarily looking for growth, more maintaining the clients we have and to continue offering good quality service
10-49	Property	There is no long term plans in place at the moment; the business has been currently struggling since covid, which has lead us to temporarily close for a short period, due to lack of demand. Our current difficulties are being driven by the current financial crisis, which is why our focus is on the short term at the moment.
1-9	Retail	We have been in survival mode since covid, and the rise in cost of raw materials is really affecting us. Therefore we don't have any plans looking ahead at the moment.
1-9	Retail	To explore overseas markets; to see what suppliers we can work with so we can ultimately bring in new products to increase turnover. Increase consumer sales via online purchases, so improve the website and increase traffic to the online portal.
1-9	Accommodation and food services	We are a charity that provides emergency food & toiletries to the community, so we would love to be able to grow and offer a service to meet the needs of more people, but we are dependent on funding, and unless that improves then the main aim is to keep things as much as they are at the moment so we can continue to provide a much needed service in the community.
1-9	Motor Trades	Our strategy for the next three years is to find a way to survive! I think we will mainly achieve this by accessing training for new skills and technology.
1-9	Accommodation and food services	We do not really have one, and honestly it would really be about surviving at the moment, what with the way things are with the economy. Energy prices are up for us, and also the brewery put their costs up for the same reason, and that obviously impacts on us. We only have five staff, but we have had to reduce their hours down to about 15 hours a week now, whereas before it would have been 20-25 hours. I do plan to do some renovations, some decorating, in the pub and put in a private outdoor seating area for customers. There is also the minimum wage going up in April, and that will put my prices up again, and the customer will only accept so much.
1-9	Transport and Storage (inc. Postal)	I want to expand UK wise in the next 2-4 years and then in next 6-7 years go into Europe, that's what my ambition is.

Do you see an opportunity or a need to decarbonise within your business?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
10-49	Information and communication	Yes, we aim to become a B Corp
1-9	Manufacturing	Day to day, decarbonisation is on the Founder's mind in the sense that they encourage colleagues to be mindful of their electricity usage during the working day and they would like to look into reducing energy consumption of their IT systems. In terms of the manufacturing process, energy usage is as minimal as it can be currently, with many components of bags and aprons being handmade or using manual machinery.
50-249	Construction	Yes, we are trialling electric vans
50-249	Retail	We are already on a net zero journey and comply to ISO14001 for Energy Management and ISO50001 for Sustainability
50-249	Manufacturing	We've already got accreditation from Planet Mark for the last two years, and have an ESG committee tasked with looking at this, which is now three years old.
10-49	Manufacturing	Yes where we invest in new technology to improve productivity.
1-9	Information and communication	Planting a tree for every laptop we sell
10-49	Manufacturing	There is a need to due to rising energy costs. The business itself is not energy intensive however use of solar panels and renewable energy needs to be considered.
250+	Manufacturing	Yes, we see both opportunities and a need. We are working on electrified vehicle powertrains in line with the Government's Net Zero targets. We aim to achieve net-zero at our manufacturing facilities by 2030, and net-zero across our supply chain by 2039. These goals are guided by and will be independently assessed by the Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi), which sets a global standard for businesses aiming for net-zero.
50-249	Finance and Insurance	The business rents offices so do not feel the need to be concerned with decarbonising their premises as they believe this is the responsibility of the landlord.
1-9	Manufacturing	It probably is something that is needed, but how that happens I don't know. If I was honest I'd say I don't know enough about

		the subject to even try and implement the changes that would be needed. I just don't know sorry
1-9	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	I am looking into solar panels and battery backups. However, the cost to implement these technologies is currently too high for me, with all the rising costs at the moment.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	That is not really something that can reasonably be done, just due to the nature of the work and industry we are in. We have to use plastic products, there is no way around that, and realistically we cannot have something like an electric van as where we go there are no charging points, and aside from that we do not do enough miles to justify the outlay. We have to have onsite diesel generators as well, as there often is no mains supply where we go, and electric generators would not be as practical to use.
250+	Health	No we do not see an opportunity to decarbonise, this does not apply to us at the moment.
50-249	Manufacturing	We are currently going through a zero carbon strategy but it's not going to happen overnight. We have specific partners involved who advise us on how to approach the subject and also the best ways from an engineering prospective of how we can decarbonise the processes we use, we are currently investigating a number of options which are energy usage, we use gas and electric primarily, we are looking at a way we can reduce the gas usage to electrifying process, we are looking at self-generation of electricity

Are there opportunities to make products or provide services as part of your business outputs that are conducive to net zero technologies?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
10-49	Finance and insurance	The business can help businesses raise capital to finance their net zero related endeavours
1-9	Wholesale	We can use dead stock and can begin recycling fabrics to create clothing and homeware.
50-249	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Not really. The only thing we could do is, where we're using cloud services and data centres, make sure we proactively choose ones that are net neutral or as close as possible. It's mainly about looking at our purchasing decisions.
1-9	Engineering	Yes - their whole business strategy is based upon EV technology, they provide parts for electric vehicles so lots of net zero related activity
10-49	Education	We have tendered for a number of contracts that will be facilitated partly online thus reducing the need to travel to venues cutting down both our own and our learners carbon emissions

250+	Manufacturing	Yes – Vehicles with electrified powertrains manufactured in the UK.
50-249	Finance and insurance	We're also looking at how we can support to educate others on decarbonisation and support customers with resources and products such as sustainable loans.
1-9	Manufacturing	That's out of my hands really as that would be up to the aircraft industry we supply, we supply specific components to that industry exclusively so I don't think we as a small cog in the chain can do anything
1-9	Wholesale	Yes, we could change our packaging materials, we are operating with manufacturers at the minute to change this.
50-249	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	Yes, as the business develops we will strive to reduce our carbon footprint accordingly across all aspects of the business. I think it's a must

Do you see an opportunity or a need to digitally upskill staff in your business?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
50-249	Construction	Yes! We use a diary to programme works - we need to make this electronic , also all HR files need to be made electronic .We also would like to trial QR codes for staff tags, and implementing electronic job sheets
50-249	Construction	Many courses are now available online instead of classroom based, this does bring its own problems as a lot of our operatives are not very comfortable with using technology. A basic digital skills training course would probably be of benefit.
250+	Health	Yes all the time. We have digital systems from patient records to back office clinical management, and then extra cybersecurity stuff. As a consequence, all staff undergo far more training than ever before in systems that are on their computer. This is mostly done in house. We have an internal IT department who deliver some of this, and pockets of training with external suppliers.
1-9	Logistics and Supply Chain	The clients we work with struggle to secure candidates with digital skills. In particular, we find it hard to find supply chain and operational managers
1-9	Aerospace	The industry produces high tech products but supply chain management and manufacturing processes aren't necessarily high tech - they're utilising the same tools to make same parts as when the parts were designed in the 1950s; there are huge opportunities to increase productivity through use of new technologies but this requires new products to be developed.
10-49	Manufacturing	We actually require old fashioned manual skills, like traditional joiners.

1-9	Accommodation and Food Services	Not really, we don't utilise the IT that's available now
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Not something that we've thought of as fairly new. If we develop and hopefully grow this may be something we need to consider
1-9	Retail	Yes, it's something we need to do. Ideally, we will do this with in house training.
1-9	Education	We are already doing this through apprenticeship programmes.
50-249	Agriculture, Fishing & Forestry	Health and safety is a big part of our team training and that will be done now digitally as well as practical elements.
1-9	Motor Trades	There is definitely an opportunity to digitally upskill staff, it would be great if we could access some free training courses.
1-9	Property	There is a current need for staff to enhance their skills in Microsoft office, especially excel.
10-49	Retail	Yes 100%, we require/need people with social media and strategic marketing skills to use social media platforms.

What additional skills do you anticipate requiring within your workforce to achieve the strategic ambitions you have for the next 3 years?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
10-49	Finance and Insurance	Need to improve on cloud accounting
10-49	Finance and Insurance	Some appear to lack the numerical skills required for high-level careers in finance, and social media is contributing to poor communication skills, which is something that impedes functioning in the workplace
50-249	Education	Digital skills, business engagement/networking, commercial awareness, innovation
1-9	Professional, Scientific, Technical	Social media marketing
10-49	Manufacturing	Multilingual digital marketing and design engineering
250+	Professional, Scientific, Technical	Cyber, digital (especially AI, analytics, automation)

10-49	Marketing and events	Upskilling operatives & supervisors to deal with the public
1-9	Accommodation and food services	Accounting and SEO
50-249	Manufacturing	Skilled factory staff
250+	Health	sustainability wasn't really a role until recently when net zero targets are now being made public. In the past, energy management was probably given to a maintenance manager with no time or budget. We're currently looking for an energy manager but now the issue is that the industry outside of the NHS pays so well and there is a dynamic market for sustainability roles, meaning its tough competition to fill jobs. We're currently looking for an energy manager but now the issue is that the industry outside of the NHS pays so well and there is a dynamic market for sustainability roles, meaning its tough competition to fill jobs.
1-9	Information and Communication	Collaborative communications skill, Empathy & Emotional Intelligence, Team working skills.
250+	Professional, Scientific, Technical	Paralegals and trainees - we have so much work to go at just not enough skilled people to do it! In the business support side data and digital skills are vastly needed across all business areas. We also need to invest more in the ESG function of the business as this will only keep growing.
1-9	Business Administration and Support Services	As a result of Brexit, we're facing a lack of roofers and trades. In renewable energy specific skills there's an even bigger gap. Because the solar installation sector involves many professions, from roofers to central heating engineers, electricians and potentially other skills as well – e.g. financial product development – all must be scaled up to meet Government ambitions on solar.
10-49	Manufacturing	Expansion through acquisition means we will need more leadership and management skills.
1-9	Waste Broker	There are no plans to hire new staff, however the business owner is willing to explore outsourcing certain tasks to freelancers, such as app developers to aid with the business' digital presence and operations.
1-9	Information and Communication	To achieve the growth we would need experienced engineers with good customer facing skills
1-9	Property	I need staff with experience and training in facilities management, or education up to degree level.
10-49	Retail	We need to look for people with social media experience, and how to leverage the platform to help promote our business.

1-9	Manufacturing	It's a niche skill, blacksmithing, basically there are not a lot of people skilled in doing it and very few people interested in learning!
1-9	Professional, Scientific, Technical	We are not looking to recruit any new staff roles, just trying to get in more of the types of people that we already have, and that would most likely be to get people in who can take on management roles.

How do you anticipate meeting the skills needs of your business over the next three years? (e.g. through recruitment of skilled individuals, by up-skilling existing staff, investing in up-skilling new staff)

Size	Sector	Response
10-49	Finance and insurance	Upskilling existing staff is the most low-risk strategy since the business has some very talented individuals who are great role models, so there is no need to risk investing in hiring someone who might not be a good fit for the company and the existing tight-knit team
1-9	Wholesale	bring someone in for SEO and web development to save costs
250+	Health	80% in our estates department are in some sort of education to develop, retain and engage talent. We are also starting to build schemes now with local partners where our apprentices go to contractor companies and vice versa so we are able to develop better breadth of knowledge.
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Have recruited my first intern (paid) who has good digital and interpersonal skills already. I will foster a culture of continuous development.
1-9	Technology	We will need to recruit new staff, but we tend to find there aren't ready made people with the skills we need out there. We recruit more based on potential ability and soft skills then invest in up-skilling
50-49	Manufacturing	Minimising the skills gap through recruiting skilled individuals and upskilling the staff in conjunction with the local authority through an online, easy to access forum and training resources applicable to varied group of people.
250+	Manufacturing	Our main choice point is between doing training in-house or buying into training from third party vendors. The ideal scenario would be to invest in physical equipment and training curricula to be able to up-skill existing staff. These staff can then continuously develop their skill set, build upon the existing knowledge across the company, further disseminating their additional knowledge training. In certain areas, recruitment of specialist individuals will be required but a comprehensive re/up-skilling programme will be an important investment in our existing workforce and also help with staff retention.

1-9	Manufacturing	Through ongoing recruitment of apprentices.
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Ideally through recruiting, but that is hard. I feel that a lot of people have left the hospitality trade during the pandemic.

How could existing provision for post-16 technical education be adapted to better suit the needs of your business?		
Size	**Sector**	**Response**
10-49	Finance and insurance	More training on financial advice business, and dealing with individuals and money.
1-9	Information and Communication	Reduction in off the job time.
10-49	Charity	Better understanding of industry needs; closer links between schools and industry; better STEM provision
250+	Education	A simpler apprenticeship system that enables candidates to take on roles that support the operation of our schools, e.g. administration, catering, grounds maintenance
50-249	Construction	What I want from a college is usually generic skills (e.g. basic mechanical engineering) and then we can hone specific skills. However with new skills (e.g. manufacturing of EVs) there needs to be a contribution more from companies into the college curriculum. The business community is not contributing enough but when they do, some providers put up a lot of bureaucratic barriers.
10-19	Manufacturing	Through a closer working relationship between Education and Employers.
1-9	Logistics and supply chain	Their clients have been positive about working with training providers and see the benefit it brings to upskilling staff
10-49	Education	Independent training providers require better access to funding streams to produce better T-Level programs that reflect the needs of the educational sector i.e. the development of a train the trainer T level to get facilitate entry in to tutoring as an option for young people.
250+	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Clear pathways in to Law - you don't have to have a degree there are so many other options. Also law firms don't just want lawyers! Also the focus on academic ability is for me misplaced - it doesn't matter as much these days. If you have a passion drive and talent this is more important than the difference between a C and an A in maths!

50-249	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Need to think about the locations where they offer training courses at colleges. It's difficult to give staff day release if the course is miles away
10-49	Education	Independent training providers require better access to funding streams to produce better programs that reflect the needs of the educational sector
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	As a professional services business it would be of value to ensure that post - 16 technical education incorporated soft skills such as letter writing, answering phone, etiquette in working in an office.
10-49	Education	The current provision requires 20 hours, individuals have day jobs, so it would be helpful if they could reduce time requirements to 10 hours a week.
10-49	Construction	We would be interested in taking on internships for short-term trial contracts. It would be great if they could encourage an interest in this area of work.
1-9	Property	It should have a more flexible delivery, with a more blended-learning approach as opposed to primarily classroom learning.
1-9	Construction	I think its fine at the moment. They spend some time at the technical college and some time on-site. I don't think you can do better than that.

What additional support would you like to see from regional and national stakeholders (e.g. WMCA, Local Authorities, Government) to facilitate a pipeline of skilled talent in the labour market over the next three years?

Size	Sector	Response
50-249	Education	We need to have more grants to encourage recruitment of apprentices which can alleviate budgetary constraints of accommodating them
10-49	Manufacturing	More information on how to train apprentices in the manufacturing sector
10-49	Media	Additional support for time & finance to get the relevant candidates to a skill level where they can integrate into the business seamlessly without causing an adverse effect.
1-9	Trade association	More flexibility to use the apprenticeship levy money
50-249	Hospitality	Need more chef training provision

50-249	Construction	Creation of bespoke courses allowing employers to mould an individual's training to the business needs
1-9	Construction	More grants for employers to train existing employees
1-9	Construction	Grants for apprenticeship schemes
10-49	Marketing	Better interview technique and cv writing
250+	Finance and insurance	Empowerment over levy funds. Continuation of driving the importance of these agendas.
250+	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Mandate apprentices and wider inclusive routes to employment through Social Value procurement measures. Walk the talk too by engaging in apprentice recruitment from diverse backgrounds, including care leavers.
1-9	Logistics and Supply Chain	Would be good to see the WMCA/LAs introduce a Mentoring scheme for entry level staff
1-9	Travel Agency	An injection of funds and some kind of mentoring programme where bigger businesses could assist smaller organisations to navigate funding and upskill talent with the limited resources available.
1-9	Professional, Scientific & Technical	Develop One-Stop-Shop Start-Up Team (to provide real and practical support for new Directors comprising business mentor, marketer, web-designer, sales professional)
250+	Manufacturing	Funding to support re-skilling and development of new essential skills for the transformation of the automotive industry to electric vehicles. Funding to support companies in creating Technical Centres of Excellence and curricula, co-located with design and manufacturing sites, would allow industry standard specific training and development to be delivered straight from the factory to the community in the region. Create Technical Centres of Excellence as they see them as value add bring more business to the region for their supplies and customers (Circular Economy).
1-9	Information and Communication	General management training to a high level (we are behind many countries in terms of productivity, and management plays a high part in this).
10-49	Education	Funding for recruitment fees rather than the salary as its very difficult and time consuming for SME's to find the right talent via basic job websites
1-9	Wellbeing Coaching	The business owner would benefit from a grant to kickstart the business and to relieve the pressure of start-up costs. They need expert advice with intellectual property and trade marks.

10-49	Retail	Keeping the high street shops open
10-49	Construction	Better signposting for SME's like us. We are not aware of the connectivity, it's difficult for us to join, I'm sure there are a lot of initiatives out there but we don't know what is going on, so connectivity and signposting.
1-9	Construction	I guess communication of what's on offer we do not really hear anything or receive communication from regional stakeholders.
1-9	Accommodation and Food Service	I would like there to be more transparency and clarity on how to get apprentices, so any help in those areas would be greatly received.

High Level Curriculum Mapping

	Warwickshire College Group	Coventry College	North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College	Solihull College and University Centre	Birmingham Metropolitan College	City of Wolverhampton College	Dudley College of Technology	Halesowen College	Walsall College	South and City College Birmingham	Sandwell college	University College Birmingham	Fircroft College
Engineering and Manufacturing													
T Levels	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x	
Apprenticeships	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Adult short courses	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	
Other sector specific provision	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Construction													
T Levels	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Apprenticeships	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Adult short courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
Other sector specific provision	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	
IT, Cyber, Digital													
T Levels	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Apprenticeships	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	
Adult short courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
Other sector specific provision	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x
Logistics and Distribution													
Apprenticeships			x										
Adult short courses		x	x				x		x				
Other sector specific provision			x										
Health and Social Care													
T Levels	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	

Apprenticeships	x		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Adult short courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Other sector specific provision	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Business and Professional Services													
T Levels	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	
Apprenticeships	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Adult short courses	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Other sector specific provision	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x

Contact Us

For queries related to the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan, please contact:

Rajpal Kaur
LSIP Project Manager
Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
E: rajpalk@cw-chamber.co.uk