Skills Support for the Workforce Development Plan Employer Survey

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

March 2021

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Introduction

Research context

Serco ESE deliver a comprehensive range of skills, training and enterprise support programmes on behalf of local and central government. Their capabilities include vocational training and development, in-work training for businesses, leadership development for the education sector and programmes that target the specific needs of communities and the different growth needs of local businesses. Serco ESE are a business unit of Serco Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Serco Group plc.

Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) is a programme developed to upskill employees within small and medium businesses. Serco ESE are the Prime Contractor for the SSW programme and contracts out 100% of the delivery to a supply chain of training providers.

Serco ESE provide recognised accredited qualifications and bespoke training courses to enhance employees' skills, increase the competitiveness of businesses and boost local economies. They work with employers to develop bespoke training programmes relevant to their needs. As this programme is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the ESFA, a wide range of training can be accessed at no cost to business. SSW focuses on progress – helping to progress careers, education and business.

In 2019, Serco ESE entered a third period of delivering SSW, having successfully closed the second round of funding which ran from 2016 to March 2019. During the second stage, 15 contracts were managed across nine LEP areas with a total contract value of £40.5m. In the third period, Serco were awarded 17 SSW contracts across 15 LEP areas with a total contract value of £60.5m.

Research objective

The scope of this project relates specifically to The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). Supporting in the region of 15,300 businesses, the GBSLEP Transitional Area comprises the four local authority areas of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth. The objective of the research is to support the update of the areas of focus and needs of employers within the GBSLEP region, focusing on priorities for Advanced Level Skills. To support this overall objective, the areas to be included were:

- Organisation profile
- Advanced Level Skills profile
- Advanced Level Skills gaps
- Training activity
- Advanced Level Skills apprenticeships
- Workforce development support.

This insight will support GBSLEP in considering:

- Local skills gaps/needs and opportunities and how these are changing
- Employers' interest for employees to undertake Level 3+ qualifications and barriers to doing so
- Employment gaps where Level 3+ qualifications would support competitive advantage
- Interest in apprenticeships at this level and awareness of apprenticeship levy funding
- Employers' willingness to host work/experience/interns/placements.

To provide additional insight, the impact of BREXIT on local business was included within the research scope.

The research was to be started early in 2020 and completed by the mid-year.

Research process

The process for the research was for Ask for Research to conduct an online quantitative survey with employers with organisation sites located in the GBSLEP region. This was to be followed up by qualitative research to explore key points raised through the quantitative survey.

A comprehensive online quantitative questionnaire was designed to cover the specific areas required and was agreed at the initial project meetings:

- Organisation profile
- Advanced Level Skills workforce profile
- Recruitment and redundancies
- Training and development
- BREXIT impact.

The questionnaire survey link was to be promoted and distributed by local partner organisations to the local business community. It was also to be promoted on relevant websites through relevant social media channels.

At the time of the planned survey launch in March 2020, however, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the business community became apparent.

The impact of the first national lockdown running from March to June 2020 on business itself, and the necessary responses to health and safety responsibilities, generated a wide and significant range of impacts on all elements of the business community. This ranged from business closures and redundancies, for example in the hospitality sector, through to over stretched demand, for example in the health and care sector.

The range of COVID-19 impacts includes:

- Business closure (permanent and temporary)
- Staff reduction (redundancy, furlough and reduction in hours)
- Change to working practices (working from home, social distancing and remote delivery)
- Increase/change in skill requirements (IT/online working, lone working and time management)
- Change in demand for goods/services
- Supply chain issues
- Increased demand for staff
- Finance issues
- Staff absenteeism/reduction in hours (due to illness, caring and schooling responsibilities).

With employers facing and dealing with this range of unprecedented issues, it was decided to delay the launch of the research until a time when employers were less under pressure and responses could be considered and provided within a more stable operating environment.

The postponement of the survey launch however did enable the inclusion of an additional survey area to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on business and identify activities which would support organisations going forwards.

The survey was launched in July 2020 once the first national lockdown had ceased and it was felt that some business activity had resumed to an extent. The survey was promoted from July to December 2020 but generated only 7 completed responses. It was felt that employers' focus was still on addressing the direct needs of their business at this time which had resulted in the lower than anticipated response rate.

The sample base was therefore supported by the purchase of a panel of online respondents in January 2021 which generated an additional 105 completed interviews.

The total sample generated for the quantitative survey was therefore 112 organisations. This provides a standard error of +/-9.5 based on a confidence level of 95% and a 50% response.

Following the completion of the quantitative survey, a qualitative questionnaire was designed and agreed covering the following areas:

- Advanced Level Skills
- Impact of BREXIT on the workforce
- Impact of COVID-19 on the workforce
- Workforce support.

The continuing impact of COVID-19 on business activities meant that the planned method of face-to-face interviews and meetings for the follow on qualitative research was not possible, and the purchase of a panel of online respondents was identified as the most effective approach. The online qualitative survey was conducted in February 2021 and generated a total of 50 completed interviews.

As specified and agreed within the original research design, it is both acceptable and possible that a respondent could have completed both the quantitative and qualitative surveys.

The data from the surveys were downloaded and the quantitative elements of the research were analysed using SPSS. This allowed for analysis of frequencies and cross-tabulations where sample sizes and sub sample sizes were sufficient. These data are presented in graphs and tables. The qualitative elements of the research were analysed using Excel and are presented in word charts and lists.

Cross-tabulations have been undertaken to provide further depth to the analysis. The cross-tabulations which have been undertaken have been dictated by the size of the subsamples available for analysis from the quantitative survey.

Groupings for the cross-tabulations for the quantitative data have been applied based on maximising the opportunity for comparison as follows by generating a sample base of over 20 responses for each sub sample:

Cross-tabulation	Profiles for quantitative sub samples	Sub sample size (*)
Organisation size	Micro (under 10 employees)	31
	Small (10-49 employees)	33
	Medium (50+ employees)	47
Organisation type	Private sector organisation	64
	Public/voluntary/government organisation	40
Location	Cannock Chase	37
	East Staffordshire	46
	Lichfield/Tamworth Area	29

(*) Data where profile information provided

Testing for significant differences on the data has been taken based on a standard error of +/-10% and has been calculated on whole percentages.

Unless specified differently within the report, and for a specific reason, such testing has been undertaken where:

- There is over 5 percentage points difference in the findings being tested
- Each analysis is based on a minimum of a sample of 20 completed responses
- Only data where significant differences have been established at this level are referenced within the report.

Whilst providing a level of interpretation, caution does need to be applied and considered within the context of the limited sample sizes for the cross-tabulated data. The cross-tabulated analysis is therefore retained within the Main Report.

All data is rounded to the nearest whole percentage point. Where responses have been combined, this has been based on summing the absolute data and recalculating the percentages.

Some rounding of fractions has been applied in the Executive Summary.

Details regarding higher end recruitment and redundancies have been categorised using the organisation size profiles as defined for the cross-tabulation analysis.

Anonymity has been assured throughout the analysis and report.

All research has been conducted in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

Executive Summary

1. Adoption of Advanced Level Skills

Current adoption
Encouragingly, the vast majority of employers in the GBSLEP Transitional Area employ staff who are qualified to Advanced Level Skills.

There is however significant disparity in the proportion of the workforce who are qualified to this level within organisations, ranging from under 10% to 100% of the workforce having Advanced Level Skills.

Future focus
The breadth of employment of staff with Advanced Level Skills in the GBSLEP Transitional Area could be viewed as encouraging, regarding the proportion of organisations employing staff at this level.

It is the depth of employment however, regarding the proportion of employees qualified to this level within organisations, that could benefit from significant focus for development.

The aim would be to encourage a higher adoption level amongst employers rather than the need to encourage initial adoption.

2. Further adoption of Advanced Level Skills

Change in need
A barrier to encouraging further adoption for increasing the proportion of employees with Advanced Level Skills is that two thirds of employers within the GBSLEP Transitional Area do not have an increased need for Advanced Level Skills; the majority of these stating that need is remaining the same and a number that their need is decreasing.

Benefits of adoption
Promoting both the benefits of Advanced Level Skills and the support options available for this area of workforce development could help negate this barrier.

Just over one third of employers however do have an increasing need for Advanced Level Skills, illustrating the immediate potential need for internal workforce development and/or the recruitment of appropriately skilled candidates.

3. Recruitment and redundancy in meeting demand for Advanced Level Skills

Recruitment
The three fifths of employers with staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills who have recruited at this level illustrate the extent of activity and demand for such employees. The half of employers who had difficulty in doing so however illustrates the potential impact of insufficient candidates on employer operations within the GBSLEP Transitional Area.

Effective recruitment at this level is necessary to meet the requirement both of employers who need to increase Advanced Level Skills within the workforce through recruitment and those who do not necessarily have an increasing need for Advanced Level skills but need replacement at this level due to workforce turnover.

The breadth of recruitment difficulties ranges from administration to management, illustrating a disparate range of skill shortages. The reasons for such difficulty include both demand (employer and environment) and supply (candidate) considerations. A resultant negative impact of recruitment difficulties has been felt by virtually all businesses affected.

Impact of COVID-19

A further consideration is the impact of COVID-19 on recruitment at this level, with two fifths of employers anticipating this will make recruitment at Advanced Level Skills harder. This is nearly three times higher than the proportion of employers who feel COVID-19 will make recruitment at this level easier.

Redundancy

Within the context of demand for Advanced Level Skills is the extent of redundancy. Whilst a negative activity, it does have the potential to release workers who then may be able to meet requirements of organisations experiencing recruitment difficulties or skills gaps.

One quarter of employers have made redundancies at this level in the past 12 months. Regarding demand for support, one third of employers impacted or potentially impacted by COVID-19 on redundancy at any level would welcome assistance with such decisions.

4. Meeting demand for Advanced Level Skills

Skills gaps

Affecting the ability to meet the need for Advanced Level Skills is influenced from both within the current workforce and from recruitment at the level of appropriate skills.

Illustrating the potential impact on business within the GBSLEP Transitional Area is that one third of employers state there are skills gaps at this level. Covering a wide area, skills gaps include; IT, language, communication, management, business and general skills. The negative impacts which these shortages are having on business include business performance, workforce skills and capabilities and training.

Just over half of these employers would like further assistance with these skills gaps regarding specific skills, general help and training support.

Training provision

Training is an appropriate response to addressing both Advanced Level Skills recruitment difficulties and skills gaps.

Illustrating the adoption of training in the GBSLEP Transitional Area is that two thirds of employers have provided formal and/or informal training over the past 12 months. This leaves a notable one third of employers for consideration who have not provided any training for staff.

Just over half of employers who have provided training have provided training which leads to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills. The extent of this training is wide, covering trainee, assistant and managerial level. The areas covered range from basic to professional level occupations. Virtually all employers identify a positive impact of this training, with a range of impacts on business noted.

Future training
Providing an indication for potential demand for future training, and the impact this could have both on the level of Advanced Level Training Skills amongst the workforce within the GBSLEP Transitional Area and addressing recruitment difficulties and skills gaps, is that half of all employers feel that training at this level would benefit their business.

Whilst this is encouraging, virtually nine tenths of employers could identify a barrier to doing so. A wide range of barriers was identified, with no one barrier most significant and each barrier noted by less than one quarter of employers.

A further consideration is that just over one quarter of all employers state that COVID-19 has impacted on their Advanced Level Skills training provision.

5. Routes to Advanced Level Skills

Awareness of routes and support
With apprenticeships being a route to employees achieving an Advanced Level Skills qualification, it is of significant interest to note that two fifths of employers in the GBSLEP Transitional Area are unaware or are unsure of this route.

In addition, around half of employers are not aware or are unsure about apprenticeship levy funding, which would support these employers to train apprenticeships.

Potential for future adoption
The potential for promoting both of these opportunities amongst GBSLEP Transitional Area employers could impact significantly on awareness and hence consideration and take up of these areas of support. This in turn could directly impact on skills gaps and recruitment difficulties.

The extent of adoption of apprenticeships to meet Advanced Level Skills is illustrated in the two fifths of employers who state they are interested in this route to meet their training and qualification needs at this level. Intermediate and Advanced Skills are significantly the two levels of most interest.

Within this is the consideration that one fifth of all employers feel that COVID-19 will impact on their future use of apprenticeships as a route to qualification at Advanced Level Skills.

6. Workforce development and business support

Provision
Three fifths of employers have provided workforce development opportunities. This is most significantly work experience, which has been provided by one third of employers in the GBSLEP Transitional Area.

Future provision
Encouragingly, more employers are willing to provide any such workforce development opportunity in the next 12 months than have done so in the past 12 months.
Specifically, around one third of employers are willing to offer apprenticeships and work placements, both significantly higher than the proportions who have done so in the past 12 months.

Business support
Illustrating the potential demand for business support in the GBSLEP Transitional Area is that three fifths of employers would be interested in the GBSLEP business support projects for local employers. Specifically, over one fifths of employers are each interested in the GBSLEP Skills Hub and the GBSLEP Step Forward schemes.

7. External influences

BREXIT
Interestingly, whilst nearly three quarters of GBSLEP Transitional Area employers identified a concern about BREXIT, two thirds identified an opportunity. Both concerns and opportunities relate to the areas of trade, the business environment and business activity.

COVID-19
Nearly nine tenths of employers identify an impact of COVID-19 on their business, with one third identifying decreased sales and one quarter each identifying furloughing staff and supply chain problems.

Nearly three quarters of employers identify an immediate concern, with this relating to; finance, staff and business operations.

Whilst nearly one third of employers expect a decline in turnover, nearly one quarter of employers expect an increase in turnover as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months.

Virtually the same proportion of employers predict an increase in staffing levels as expect a decrease as a result of COVID-19, each just under one quarter of employers in the GBSLEP Transitional Area.

Survey Summary

1. Advanced Level Skills Profile

Workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills
The vast majority or organisations (93%) employ staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills. Just over one third of organisations (36%) have at least 70% of their workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills, with 14% having all of their workforce qualified to this level.

Changing need for Advanced Level Skills
Just over one third of organisations (36%) have an increase in the current need for staff with Advanced Level Skills. Just under one tenth of organisations (7%) have a decrease in this need and virtually three fifths (58%) have a stable need.

The main benefit which Advanced Level Skills bring is defined as "much/a lot". Specific benefits include; job knowledge, communication skills, teamwork, staff skills, problem solving, organisation skills and education.

2. Advanced Level Skills Recruitment

Recruitment of staff with Advanced Level Skills
Virtually three fifths of organisations with Advanced Level Skills staff (59%) have recruited staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills in the last 12 months, with 41% not having done so. Regarding the number of Advanced Level Skilled staff recruited by organisations:
- 70% recruited less than 10 Advanced Level Skilled staff
- 19% recruited 10-49 Advanced Level Skilled staff
- 11% recruited 50+ Advanced Level Skilled staff.

Recruitment difficulty
Just over half of organisations which had recruited staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills (51%) had particular jobs in which they had difficulty in recruiting staff at this level. The jobs where difficulties were experienced range from administrators to managers. Specific areas identified include; IT, business analysis, education, engineers, retail, warehouse and care staff.

The reasons for recruitment difficulties comprise both demand side considerations, such as COVID, finance and unpopular working environment and supply side considerations of high demand for staff, difficult qualifications and lack of candidates.

Impact of recruitment difficulties on organisation
Virtually all organisations which had experienced recruitment difficulties for certain occupations at Advanced Level Skills have experienced an impact of this recruitment difficulty. The main areas of impact include innovation, quality, increased workload and loss of business.

Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on recruitment
Nearly three fifths of employers (56%) anticipate that COVID-19 will impact on their ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills, with around three quarters of these anticipating this will make recruitment harder and one quarter anticipating COVID-19 will make recruitment easier. Restrictions and travel are factors making this harder and availability of people is a factor making this easier.

3. Advanced Level Skills Gaps

Advanced Level Skills gaps
Nearly one third of organisations with staff at Advanced Level Skills (31%) have skills gaps at this level in the form of staff who are not fully proficient at their job. The gaps comprise the skill areas of; IT, foreign language, communication, team working, management, customer, technical and literacy and numeracy skills.

Negative impacts of gaps in Advanced Level Skills
Responses relating to Advanced Level Skills gaps overall specify a declining level of workforce skills, and regarding negative impact:
- 14 comments relate to an impact on the business
- 10 comments relate to an impact on the workforce (skills/capability)
- 4 comments relate to an impact on training.

Approximately half of employers who identified these gaps would welcome further assistance with Advanced Level Skills gaps. The main areas of support relate to the three areas of; specific skill areas, much/all/any support and funding/online/learner support.

4. Redundancy (including Advanced Level Skills)

Redundancy of Advanced Level Skills
Just over one quarter of all organisations (26%) have made staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills redundant in the past 12 months. Occupations made redundant range from administration to management. With the sectors of skill, these range from IT, to care, to education, to business and to food.

The number of redundancies ranges from 1 employee to 50+ employees. The total number of redundancies is 322 employees, an average of 15 employees per organisation which has made redundancies. The median number of redundancies is 4 employees and the mode is 3 employees (6 employers). The numbers of redundancies made are:
- 81% of organisations have made under 10 employees redundant
- 14% of organisations have made 10-49 employees redundant
- 5% of organisations have made 50+ employees redundant.

Impact of COVID-19 on redundancies at any skill level
Just over two fifths of employers (42%) state that COVID-19 has or will have some impact on their need to make redundancies in staff at any skill level. In addition, nearly one fifth of employers (18%) are unsure, in that they are still considering whether there will be any impact.

Amongst all employers who stated an impact or who were considering an impact of COVID-19 on redundancies, and could identify a number of redundancies which would or could be impacted, a total of 1087 redundancies were identified.

This is an average of 22 redundancies per employer who has identified an impact/is considering the impact. The median number is 4 redundancies and the mode is 3 redundancies (8 employers). The number of redundancies ranges from 0 to 50+ redundancies:
- 69% of organisations report less than 10 redundancies
- 22% of organisations report 10-49 redundancies
- 8% of organisations report 50+ redundancies.

Assistance with redundancy decisions
Of employers impacted by or considering the impact of COVID-19 on redundancies and could state either way, 42% would like to be offered such further assistance in relation to this decision.

5. Training (including Advanced Level Skills)

Training
Two thirds of employers (66%) have provided or sponsored training for their staff at any level in the past 12 months, with just over one quarter of employers (27%) having provided training which leads to a formal qualification (including apprenticeships) and 43% having provided informal training which has not lead to a qualification.

Over half of employers (55%) who have provided training in the past 12 months have provided training leading to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills.

Employees who have received Advanced Level Skills training range from trainees to administrators to management, with sectors ranging from education to care to commercial to recruitment to retail, to engineering. The main areas of positive impact of providing this training are increased competitiveness, improved innovation and increased productivity.

Of all employers who could state either way, nearly three fifths (59%) state training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills would benefit their business.

Barriers to Advanced Level Skills Training
Nearly nine tenths of employers (87%) could identify at least one barrier to training at Advanced Level Skills. Each barrier was identified by less than one quarter of employers, with no one barrier identified by a significant majority of employers.

Around one fifth of employers identified; courses of interest are not available locally, no training available in relevant subject area, external courses are too expensive and all staff are fully trained/proficient/no need for training.

Impact of COVID-19 on training at Advanced Level Skills
Over one quarter of all employers (29%) state that COVID-19 has impacted on their training provision at Advanced Level Skills.

6. Advanced Level Skills Apprenticeships

Awareness of apprenticeships to Advanced Level Skills
Virtually two fifths of employers (58%) are aware of apprenticeships as a route to their employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills. Over one third of employers (36%) are unaware and 6% are unsure.

Awareness of apprenticeship levy funding
Just under half of employers (46%) are aware of apprenticeship levy funding, where the Government will provide 95% of apprenticeship fees for non-levy payers to enable these employers to train their staff with minimum investment. For levy payers, 100% of fees are covered, meaning no extra cost for these businesses. Nearly two fifths of employers (38%) are unaware of 16% are unsure.

Interest in apprenticeships to meet Advanced Level Skills needs
Where employers could state either way, 54% would be interested and 46% would not be interested in using or employing apprenticeships as a route to meeting their employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills.

Virtually three fifths of employers who would be interested in this route would be each be interested in Intermediate Level and Advanced Level. Nearly one quarter of employers would be interested at Higher level and just over one tenth would be interested at Degree level.

The occupations this would include range from manual workers to administrators to managers, with the range of activity ranging from IT to engineering to business to hospitality to recruitment to care to retail to fitness.

Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to Advanced Level Skills
Where employers could state either way, just over one quarter of employers (26%) state that COVID-19 will impact on the future use of apprentices as a route to qualification at Advanced Level Skills and nearly three quarters (74%) state this will not have an impact.

Approximately one quarter of employers stated that there are other incentives or methods of support that would encourage them to recruit an apprentice or use an apprenticeship to meet their employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills.

7. Workforce Development Support

Workforce development opportunities
Nearly three fifths of employers (58%) have provided some form of workforce development opportunity in the past 12 months.

Significantly the main type of workforce development opportunity is work experience, with one third of employers (33%) offering this opportunity. Just under one fifth of employers have each offered work placements and apprenticeships. Just over one tenth of employers have each offered graduate placements and interns.

Potential of development opportunities
70% of employers would be willing to offer workplace development opportunities over the next 12 months to 3 years. This is significantly higher than the 58% of employers who have provided such opportunities over the past 12 months.

Just over one third of employers (34%) are willing to offer apprenticeships. This is double, and significantly higher than, the 17% of employers who have provided apprenticeships in the past 12 months. 31% of employers are willing to offer work placements, which is significantly higher than the 17% of employers who have done so in the past 12 months.

Over one quarter of employers (28%) would be willing to offer work experience and nearly one fifth (19%) graduate placements. 15% of employers are willing to offer interns.

8. BREXIT

Concerns of impact of BREXIT
Nearly three quarters of employers (72%) could identify at least one concern they have for their business regarding the impact of BREXIT.

Regarding concerns about trade:
- 27% identify access to the European Market
- 21% increased import prices
- 18% increased paperwork/procedures
- 17% increased export prices
- 11% trade restrictions.

Regarding concerns about the business environment:
- 23% identify general business uncertainty
- 16% identify funding availability
- 15% identify political uncertainty
- 11% identify accessibility to relevant staff.

Regarding concerns about business activity:
- 18% identify increased competition
- 9% identify a fall in demand.

Opportunities from impact of BREXIT
Just over two thirds of employers (67%) could identify at least one opportunity for their business regarding the impact of BREXIT.

Regarding opportunities relating to trade:
- 21% identify an ease in paperwork/procedures
- 14% identify decreased import prices
- 10% identify trade opportunities
- 5% identify access to new markets
- 2% identify decreased export prices.

Regarding opportunities relating to the business environment:
- 14% identify accessibility to relevant staff
- 11% identify funding availability
- 7% identify general business positivity
- 6% identify political direction.

Regarding opportunities relating to business activity:
- 16% identify decreased competition
- 7% identify increase in demand.

9. Impact of COVID-19

Impact of COVID-19 on business
Nearly nine tenths of employers (86%) could identify a way in which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their business. Nearly one third of employers (32%) identify decreased sales, with one quarter (25%) identifying having to furlough staff and 23% identifying supply chain issues.

Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19
71% of employers have an immediate concern for their business as a result of COVID-19. 23% of employers have an immediate concern regarding cash flow and 21% an immediate concern regarding paying staff wages after furlough ends.

17% of employers have immediate concern regarding staff redundancies, 16% regarding productivity and 16% regarding possibility of closure. Just over one tenth of employers have current concerns regarding payment of rent and rates (12%) and paying sick pay (12%).

Impact of COVID-19 on turnover
Nearly one third of employers (31%) expect their turnover to decrease over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19; 17% expect a significant decrease and 14% expect a slight decrease.

Nearly one quarter of employers (23%) expect their turnover to increase over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19; 9% expect a significant increase and 14% a slight increase.

Impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels
Just under one quarter of employers (24%) expect staffing levels to decrease over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19, virtually the same proportion as the 23% of employers who expect an increase in staffing levels.

12% of employers expect a significant decline, and 12% a slight decline in staffing levels, with 7% expecting a significant increase in staffing levels and 17% a slight increase.

10. Business Support

GBSLEP business support
Just over three fifths of employers who could state either way (61%) would be interested in hearing more about any of the GBSLEP business support projects for local employers (including ones which are linked to COVID-19 impact and recovery), with 39% of employers not interested.

29% of employers are interested in hearing more about the GBSLEP Skills Hub which is related to apprenticeships skills and training, and 21% of employers are interested in hearing more about GBSLEP Step Forward schemes which aid business recovery which is CIOVID-19 related (including finance, support and digital skills.

15% of employers are interested to hear more about GBSLEP Apprenticeship and Employment Support Triage, which is COVID-19 related, and 14% are interested in GBSLEP advice on growing your business. 10% of employers would be interested to hear more about GBSLEP advice on funding and finance.

Support related to COVID-19 impact and recovery
Of employers who provided a response either way, just over one quarter (27%) identified there was such support that would be of interest.

Main Report

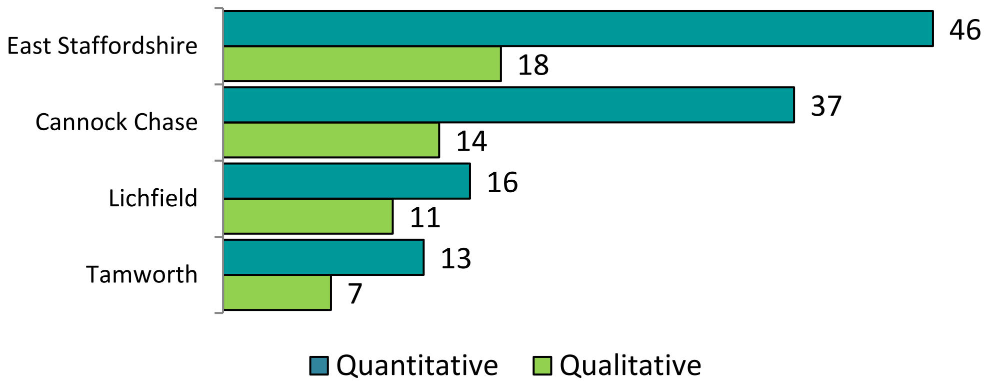
1. Organisation Profile

1.1 Location

The geography of Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) Transitional Area comprises the four local authority districts of; Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth. 46 organisations within the quantitative sample (41%) are located in East Staffordshire, 37 organisations (33%) are located in Cannock Chase, 16 (14%) are located in Lichfield and 13 (12%) are located in Tamworth.

18 organisations within the qualitative sample are located in East Staffordshire, 14 in Cannock Chase, 11 in Lichfield and 7 organisations are located in Tamworth.

Chart 1.1: Location of organisation

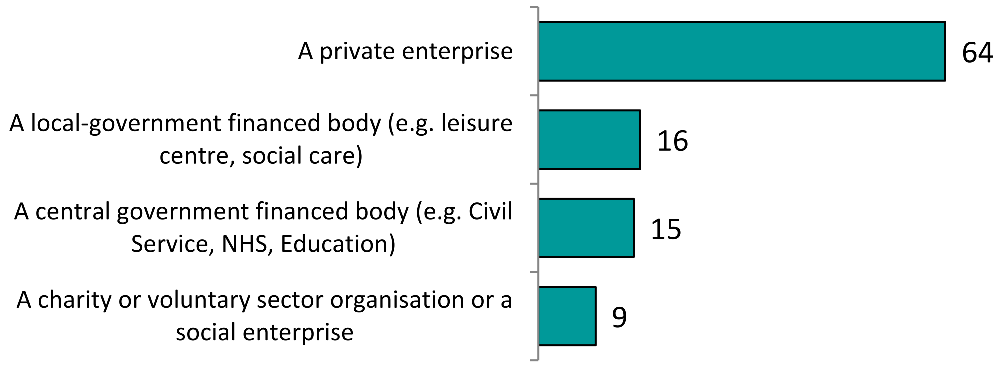


Sample base = 112, all employers, single response, quantitative survey
Sample base = 50, all employers, single response, qualitative survey
Data provided in absolutes

1.2 Organisation type

64 organisations (62%) in the quantitative sample operate as a private enterprise. 40 organisations (38%) operate as non-private organisations, with 16 local government organisations, 15 central government organisations and 9 third sector organisations.

Chart 1.2: Organisation type



Sample base = 104, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data provided in absolutes

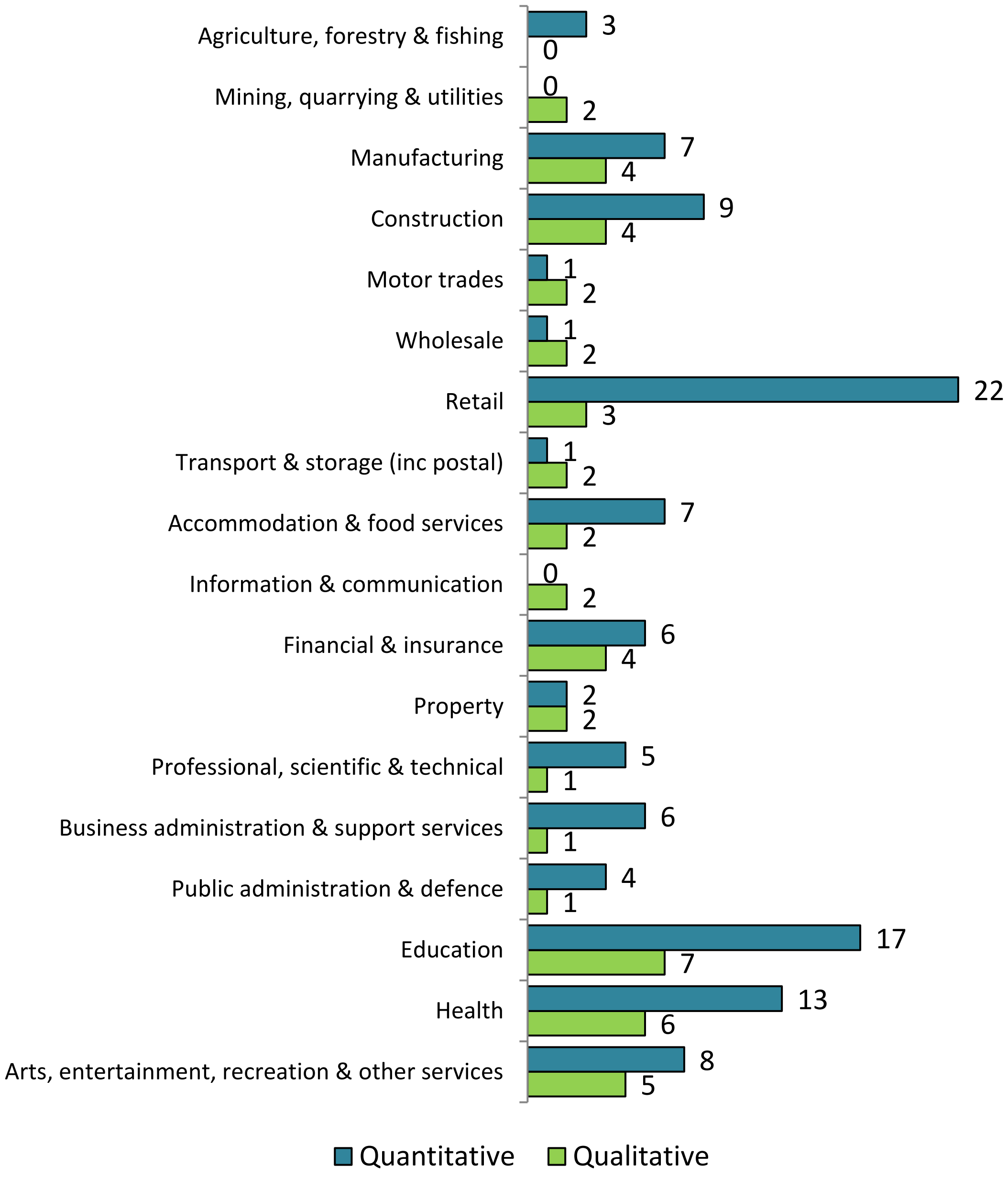
1.3 Industry

All of the 18 individual industry sectors are represented within the research.

16 of the 18 individual sectors are represented within the quantitative sample. 19 organisations (17%) operate in the manufacturing sector and 93 organisations (83%) operate in the services sector.

17 of the 18 individual sectors are represented in the qualitative sample. 10 organisations operate in the manufacturing sector and 40 organisations operate in the services sector.

Chart 1.3: Organisation industry



Sample base = 112, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Sample base = 50, all employers, single response, qualitative survey
Data provided in absolutes

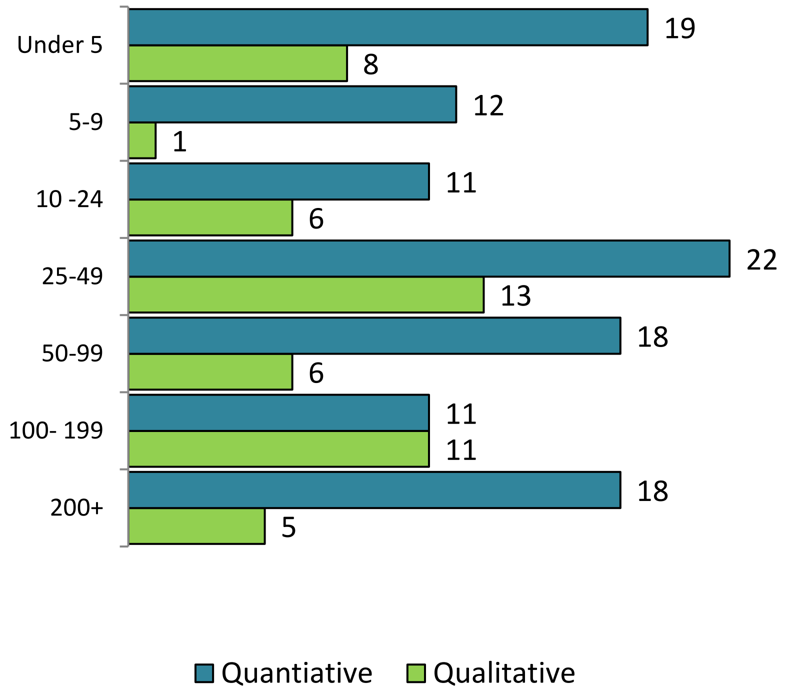
1.4 Organisation size

31 organisations (28%) of the quantitative survey sample are micro employers in that they employ 1-9 employees and 33 organisations (30%) are small employers in that they employ 10-49 employees.

47 organisations (42%) are in the largest size category for the survey in that they employ 50+ employees (referenced as "medium" for the purposes of this survey).

All organisation size bands were also represented within the qualitative survey. 9 are micro employers (1-9 employees), 19 are small employers (10-49 employees) and 22 organisations are in the largest category, employing 50+ employees.

Chart 1.4: Organisation size



Sample base = 111, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Sample base = 50, all employers who provided a response, single response, qualitative survey
Data provided in absolutes

2. Advanced Level Skills Profile

For the purposes of the survey, Advanced Level Skills were defined as:

"Skills and qualifications at NVQ Level 3 or equivalent and higher. (NVQ3 is equivalent to A Levels/City and Guilds Advanced Level/BTEC Level 3 or OND)."

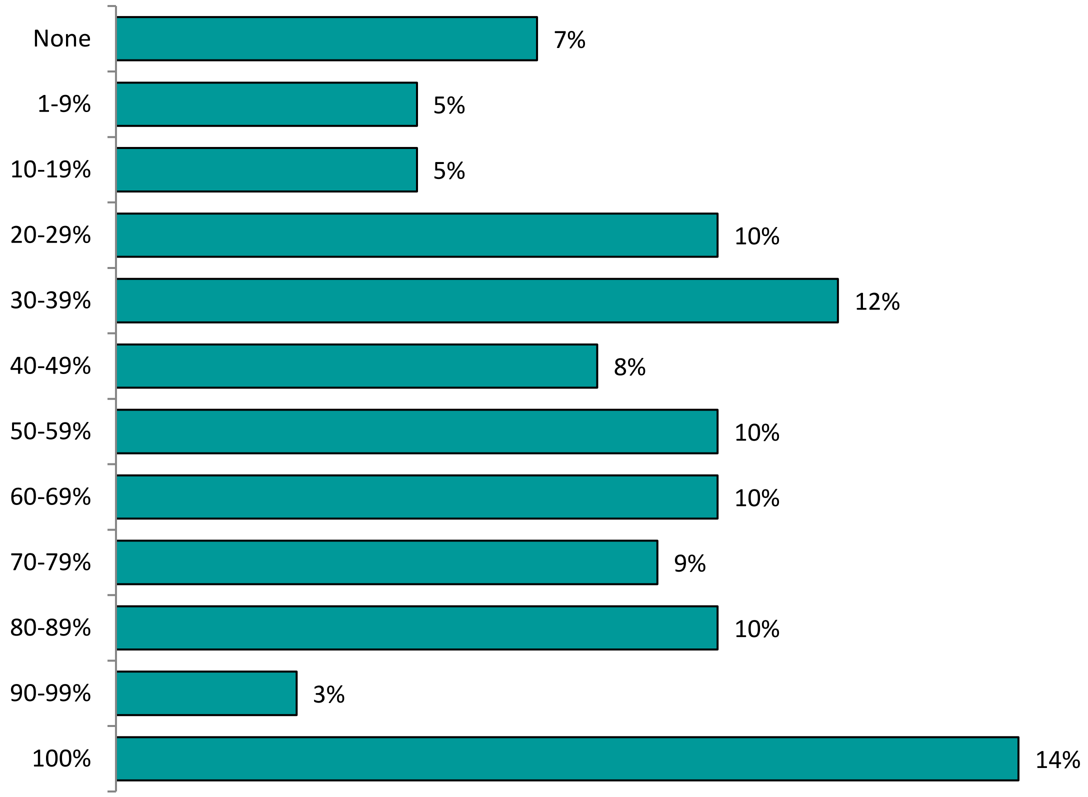
2.1 Workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills

The vast majority or organisations (93%) employ staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills; just 7% of organisations do not employ staff qualified to this level.

Nearly one fifth of organisations (19%) have 1-29% of their workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills, 19% have 30-49% of their workforce qualified to this level and 19% of the workforce have 50-69% of their workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills.

Just over one third of organisations (36%) have at least 70% of their workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills, with 14% having all of their workforce qualified to this level.

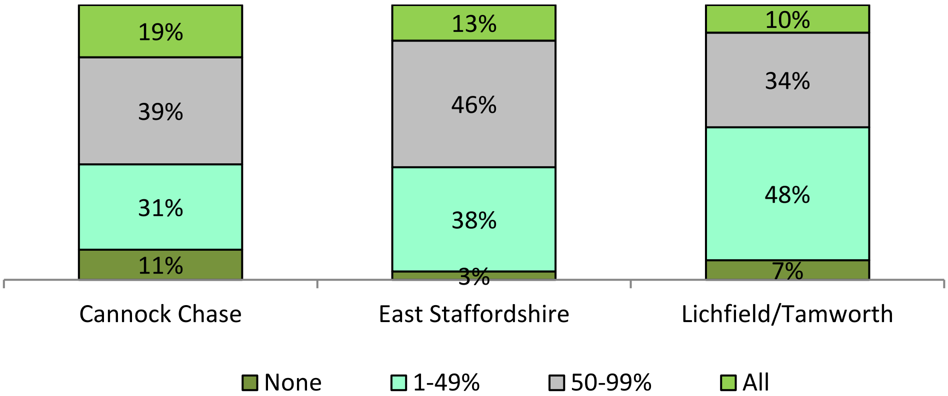
Chart 2.1: Proportion of workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 104, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Whilst data has been provided for interest, there are no significant differences in the data illustrated in Chart 2.1a regarding proportion of workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills and location of employer.

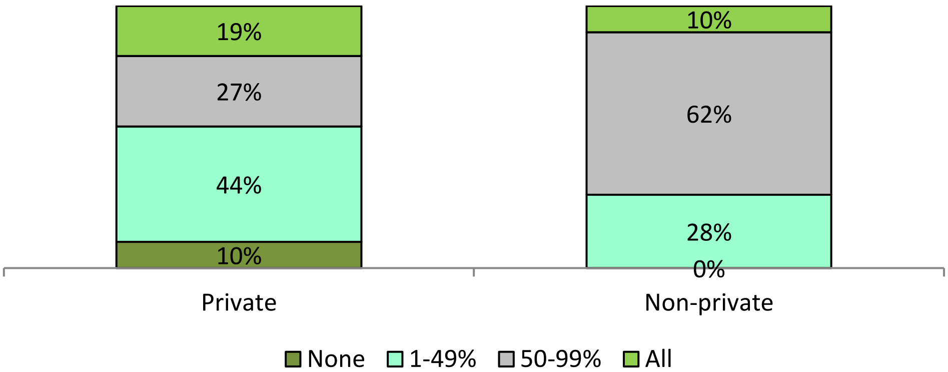
Chart 2.1a: Cross-tabulation - Proportion of workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills by location



Sample base = 36 Cannock Chase, 39 East Staffordshire, 29 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
No significant differences - data provided for interest and completeness – please refer to text for context

Private sector organisations (10%) are more likely to have no staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills than public sector organisations (0%). They are also more likely to have 1-49% of staff qualified to this level (44%) compared to 28% of non-private sector organisations. Non-private sector organisations (62%) are more likely to have 50-99% of staff qualified to this level than private sector organisations (27%).

Chart 2.1b: Cross-tabulation - Proportion of workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills by Organisation type

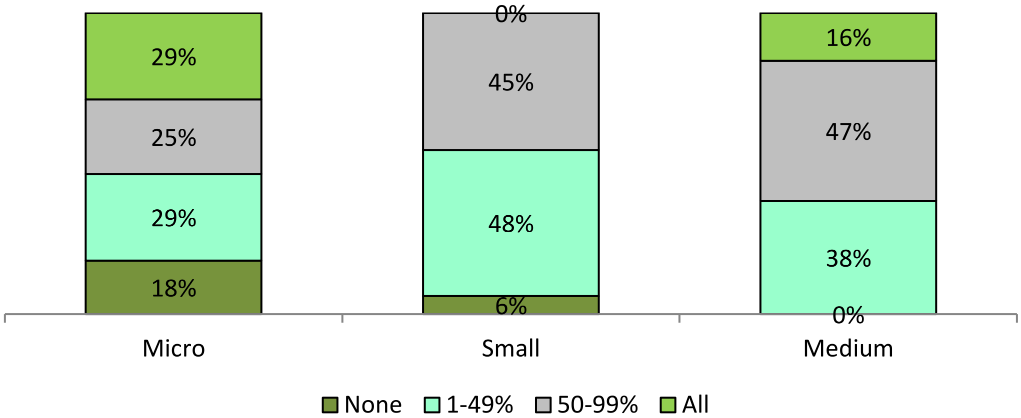


Sample base = 59 private sector, 39 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
All data provided for interest and completeness – please refer to text for significant differences

Micro employers (18%) are more likely to have none of the staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills than medium employers (0%). They are less likely (25%) to have 50-99% of their staff qualified to this level than both small employers (45%) and medium employers (47%).

Small employers (0%) are less likely to have all of their staff qualified to this level than either micro employers (29%) or medium employers (16%).

Chart 2.1c: Cross-tabulation - Proportion of workforce qualified to Advanced Level Skills by organisation size

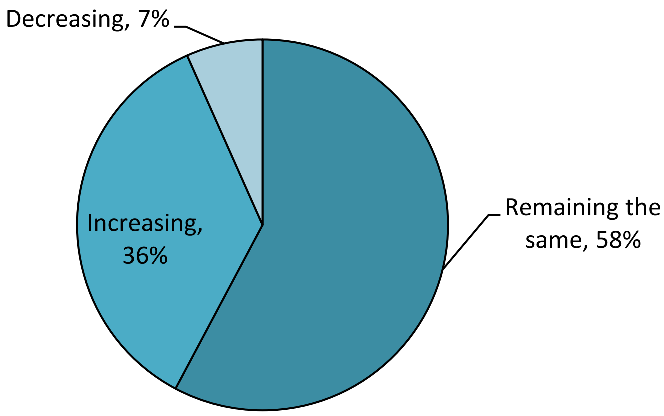


Sample base = 28 micro, 31 small, 45 medium
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
All data provided for interest and completeness – please refer to text for significant differences

2.2 Changing need for Advanced Level Skills

Just over one third of organisations (36%) have an increase in the current need for staff with Advanced Level Skills. Just under one tenth of organisations (7%) have a decrease in this need and virtually three fifths (58%) have a stable need.

Chart 2.2: Change in current need for staff with Advanced Level Skills



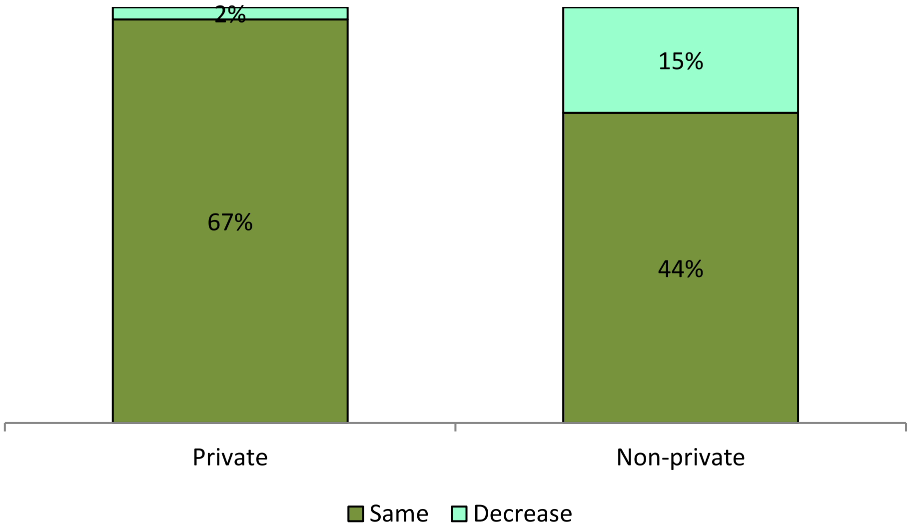
Sample base = 90, employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff and who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Ways in which need for Advanced Level Skills is increasing include:

- *Always looking for good people*
- *I am getting better education*
- *It just is*
- *Looking to expand the workload*
- *The job is getting advanced*
- *Want to do better*
- *Winning lots of work.*

Considering profile of organisation and change in the need for staff with Advanced Level Skills, a significant difference is only apparent for type of organisation.

Non-private sector organisations are more likely to be experiencing a decrease in current need (15% compared to 2%). Private sector organisations (67%) are more likely to have no change in need than non-private sector organisations (44%).

Chart 2.2a: Cross-tabulation - Change in current need for staff with Advanced Level Skills by organisation type



Sample base = private sector, 52 non-private sector, 34
Employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

2.3 Benefits of Advanced Level Skills

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what benefits do or would Advanced Level Skills bring to their organisation. The main response is that Advanced Level Skills bring much to the organisation. In coding the open comments, the following responses are provided more than once:
8: Much
3: Job Knowledge
3: Communication Skills
2: Teamwork
2: Staff Skills
2: Problem Solving
2: Organisation Skills
2: Educated.

Word chart 2.3 illustrates all coded words and List 2.3 illustrates examples of the responses generated.

List 2.3:Illustration of responses to benefits of Advanced Level Skills

- Better educated staff
- Better organisational skills in staff, better able to perform written tasks e.g. email communication with other businesses
- Communication and dignity of the individual
- Employee will have a basic knowledge before the job starts
- Further working skills
- Great benefits, helpful staffing
- Great communication skills
- Great for everyone
- Higher calibre of staff
- I would advance in skills
- I'm very level headed and can sort out problems
- Keep it running smoother and become more organised
- More knowledgeable in general, be able to practice quicker and more efficiently
- More people, more workforce trained
- New opportunities
- Qualified plumber
- The capability to deal with arising issues and support students more
- They would work more productively.

Word chart 2.3: Benefits which Advanced Level Skills do or would bring to organisation

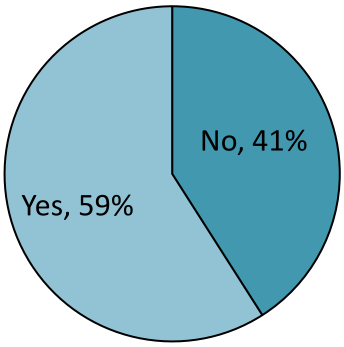
Sample base = 43 words, all 34 employers who provided a benefit, multiple response, qualitative survey
Refer to text for word representation; word size does not represent frequency
Source: https://www.wordclouds.co.uk/

3. Advanced Level Skills Recruitment

3.1 Recruitment of staff with Advanced Level Skills

Virtually three fifths of organisations with Advanced Level Skilled staff (59%) have recruited staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills in the last 12 months, with 41% not having done so.

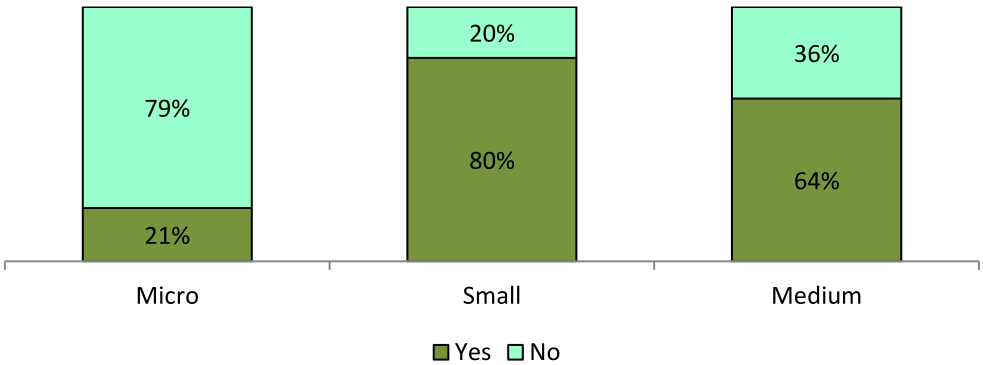
Chart 3.1: Recruitment of any staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills in the last 12 months



Sample base = 83, employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

Regarding significant difference by organisation profile, small employers (80%) and medium employers (64%) are more likely to have recruited staff to Advanced Level Skills than micro employers (21%).

Chart 3.1a: Cross-tabulation - Recruitment of any staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills in the last 12 months by organisation size



Sample base = 19 micro, 25 small, 39 medium
Employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences – please refer to text for detail

47 organisations provided the number of Advanced Level Skilled staff they had recruited. This totals 859 staff, an average of 18 members of staff per organisation which recruited at this level. The number of staff recruited ranges from 1 employee to 50+ employees. The median number of recruits is 5 members of staff and the mode is 2 members of staff (11 employers).

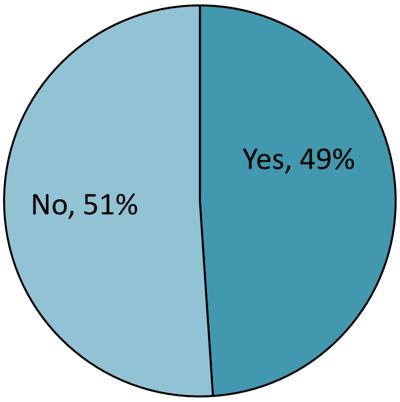
Regarding the number of Advanced Level Skilled staff recruited by organisations:

- 70% recruited less than 10 Advanced Level Skilled staff
- 19% recruited 10-49 Advanced Level Skilled staff
- 11% recruited 50+ Advanced Level Skilled staff.

3.2 Recruitment difficulty

Just over half of organisations which had recruited staff qualified to Advanced Level Skills (51%) had particular jobs in which they had difficulty in recruiting staff at this level, 49% of organisations did not experience such a difficulty.

Chart 3.2: Whether difficulty experienced in recruiting staff with Advanced Level Skills for particular jobs



Sample base = 47, employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff who recruited staff at this level and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

The jobs in which recruitment difficulties have been experienced are:

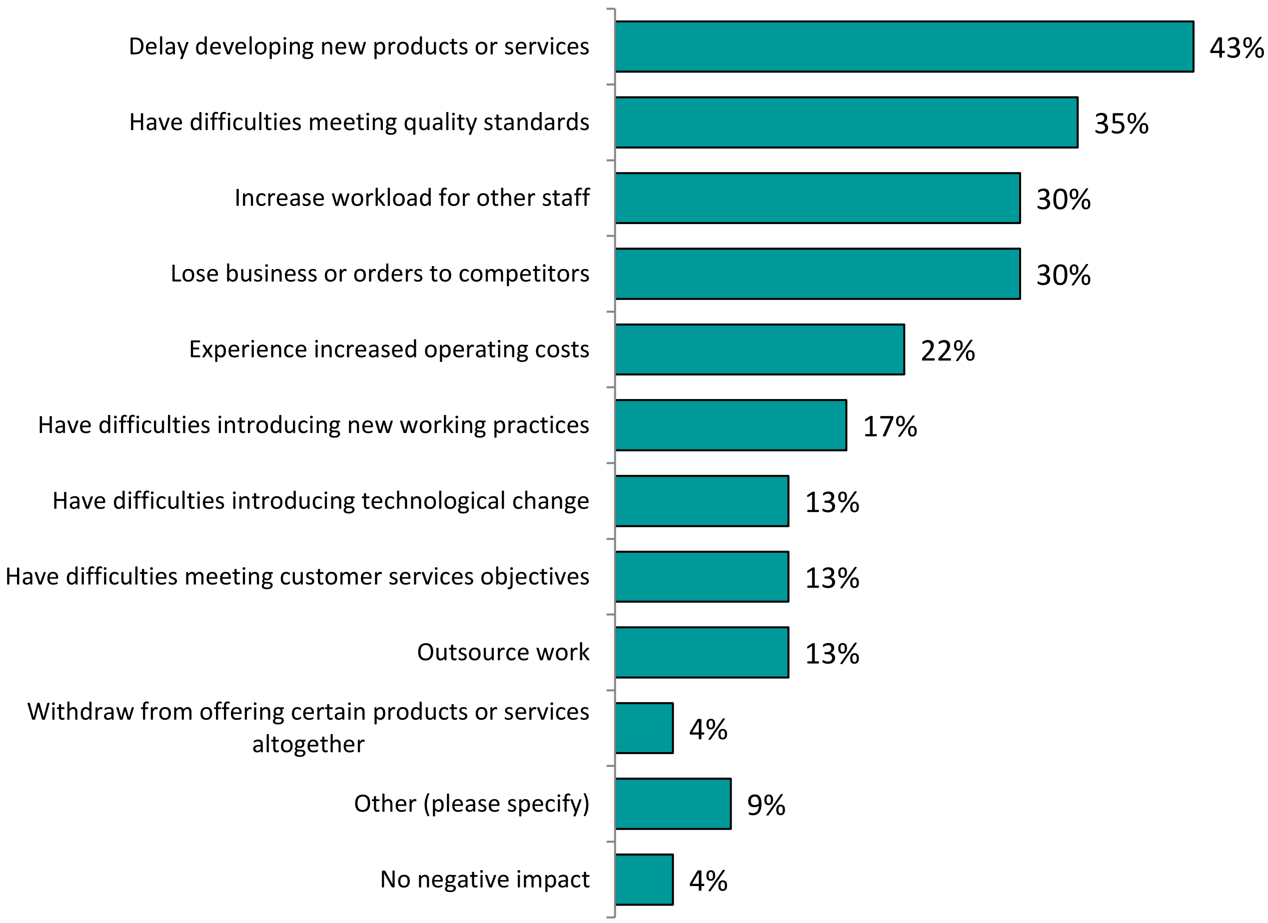
- Administration (4 employers)
- Manager (4 employers)
- IT Manager (2 employers)
- All staff
- Business Analysts
- Deputy Head
- Education
- Engineers
- Retail Assistants
- Section Leader of the warehouse
- Support Staff
- Late Night Care Staff.

The main reasons for organisations experiencing these recruitment difficulties are:

- Advanced skills and communication
- Because of money
- Cost of recruiting them
- COVID (5 organisations)
- Finding someone with experience and finding someone who wants to work
- Flexibility
- High demand for care staff due to COVID
- Lack of candidates
- Management and working under someone
- No one wants to work in there
- People don't work well
- Respect hygiene
- Seniors
- Unattainable qualification requirements.

3.3 Impact of recruitment difficulties on organisation

Chart 3.3: Impact on organisation of recruitment difficulties for certain occupations at Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 23, all employers who have experienced Advanced Level Skills recruitment difficulty for certain occupations, multiple response
Other not specified

Of the 23 organisations which have experienced recruitment difficulties for certain occupations at Advanced Level Skills, virtually all organisations (96%) have experienced an impact of this recruitment difficulty.

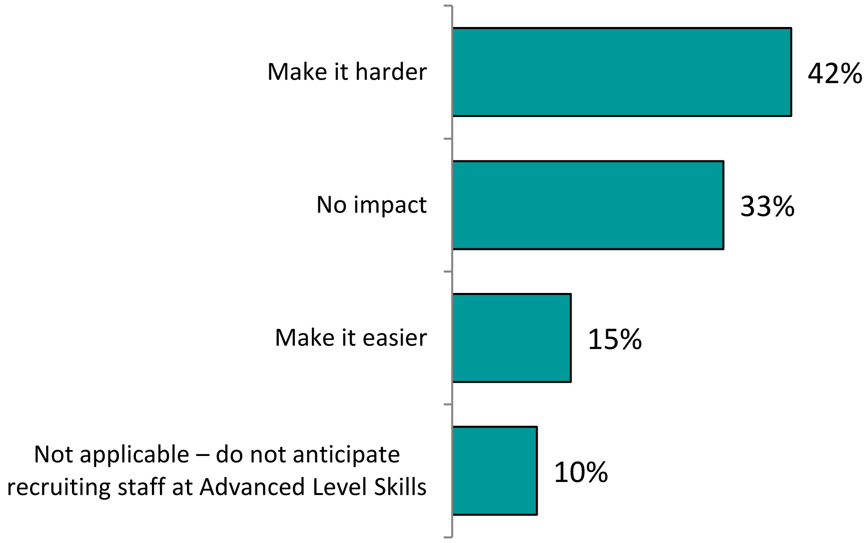
At least seven employers each identified the following as impacting on the business:
- Delay in developing new products or services
- Difficulties in meeting quality standards
- Increase workload for other staff
- Loss of business orders to competitors.

3.4 Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on recruitment

Nearly three fifths of employers (56%) anticipate that COVID-19 will impact on their ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills. Just over two fifths of employers (42%) anticipate this will make recruitment harder and 15% anticipate COVID-19 will make recruitment easier.

One third of employers (33%) anticipate that COVID-19 will not have any impact on their ability to recruit at Advanced Level Skills and one tenth of employers (10%) do not plan to recruit at this level.

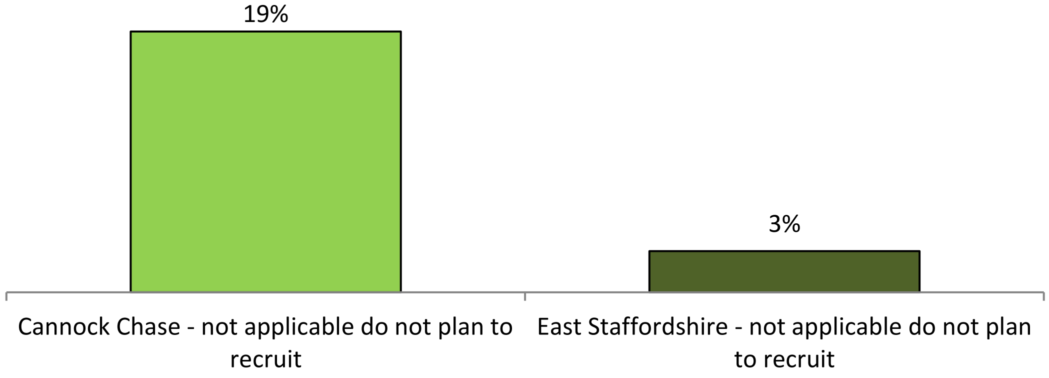
Chart 3.4: Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 96, employers who employ staff qualified at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Employers located in Cannock Chase (19%) are more likely to state that the impact of COVID-19 on recruitment of staff with Advanced Level Skills is not applicable as they do not anticipate recruiting staff at this level compared with employers located in East Staffordshire (3%).

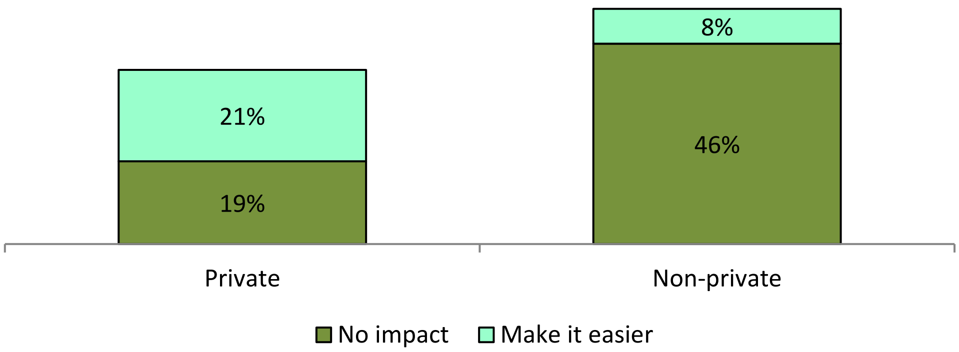
Chart 3.4a: Cross-tabulation - Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills by location



Sample base = 32 Cannock Chase, 37 East Staffordshire
Employers who employ staff qualified at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (21%) are more likely to state that COVID-19 will make this recruitment activity easier than non-private sector employers (8%). Non-private sector employers (46%) are more likely to state that COVID-19 will not have any impact on their ability to recruit staff at this level than private sector employers (19%).

Chart 3.4b: Cross-tabulation - Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills by organisation type

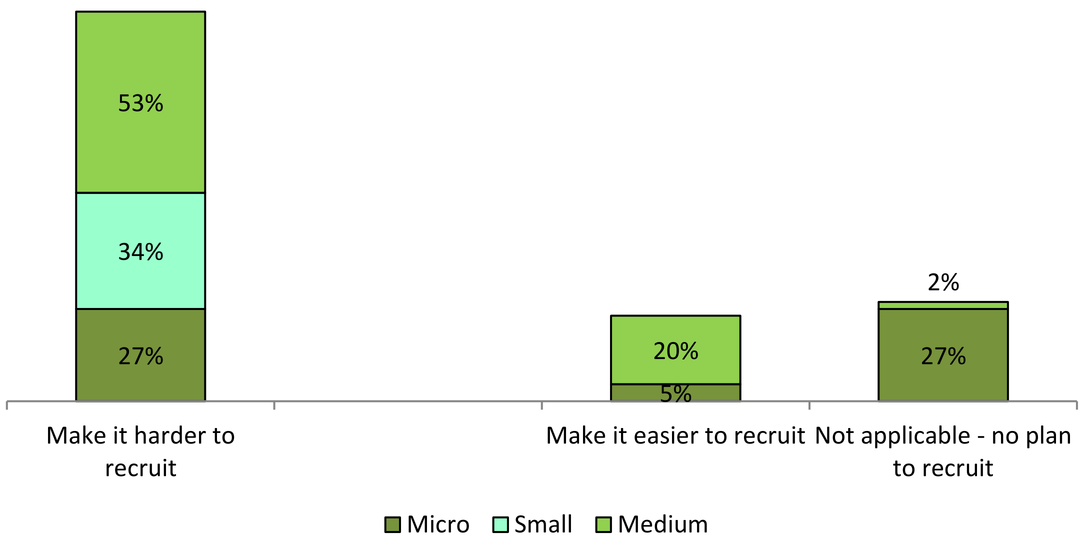


Sample base 52 private sector, 39 non-private sector
Employers who employ staff qualified at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Medium employers (53%) are more likely to state that COVID-19 will make it harder to recruit staff with Advanced Level Skills than both micro employers (27%) and small employers (34%).

Medium employers (20%) are more likely to state COVID-19 will make it easier to recruit than micro employers (5%). Micro employers (27%) are more likely to state this is not applicable as they do not anticipate recruiting staff at this level when compared with medium employers (2%).

Chart 3.4c: Cross-tabulation - Anticipated impact of COVID-19 on ability to recruit staff at Advanced Level Skills by organisation size



Sample base 22 micro, 29 small, 45 medium
Employers who employ staff qualified at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

The reason for COVID-19 having no recruitment impact:

- Only me here
- People can still get degrees.

The reason for COVID-19 making recruitment harder:

- Because it is a key worker role
- COVID making everything more difficult
- Harder to determine actual quality of candidate
- Having difficulties during pandemic
- I'm not sure
- Lower experience of people
- People can't travel
- People seem reluctant to move jobs, and also reluctant to start working within the school setting
- Restrictions
- There is an increased demand for skilled staff.

The reason for COVID-19 making recruitment easier:

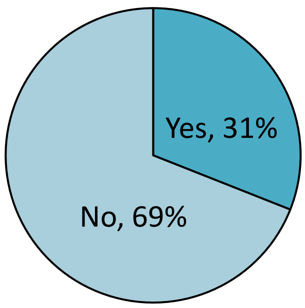
- Current perspective employees are more willing to take on any work, rather than look for something specifically suited to their education
- Many people lost jobs in other places
- More people are now searching
- More people to recruit
- People in other jobs might be let go and therefore looking for new employment
- There are a lot more people out there
- There will be more people looking for work.

4. Advanced Level Skills Gaps

4.1 Advanced Level Skills gaps

Nearly one third of organisations with staff at Advanced Level Skills (31%) have skills gaps at this level in the form of staff who are not fully proficient at their job, with just over two thirds of organisations (69%) not having any such skills gaps.

Chart 4.1.1: Skills gaps in workforce at Advanced Level Skills

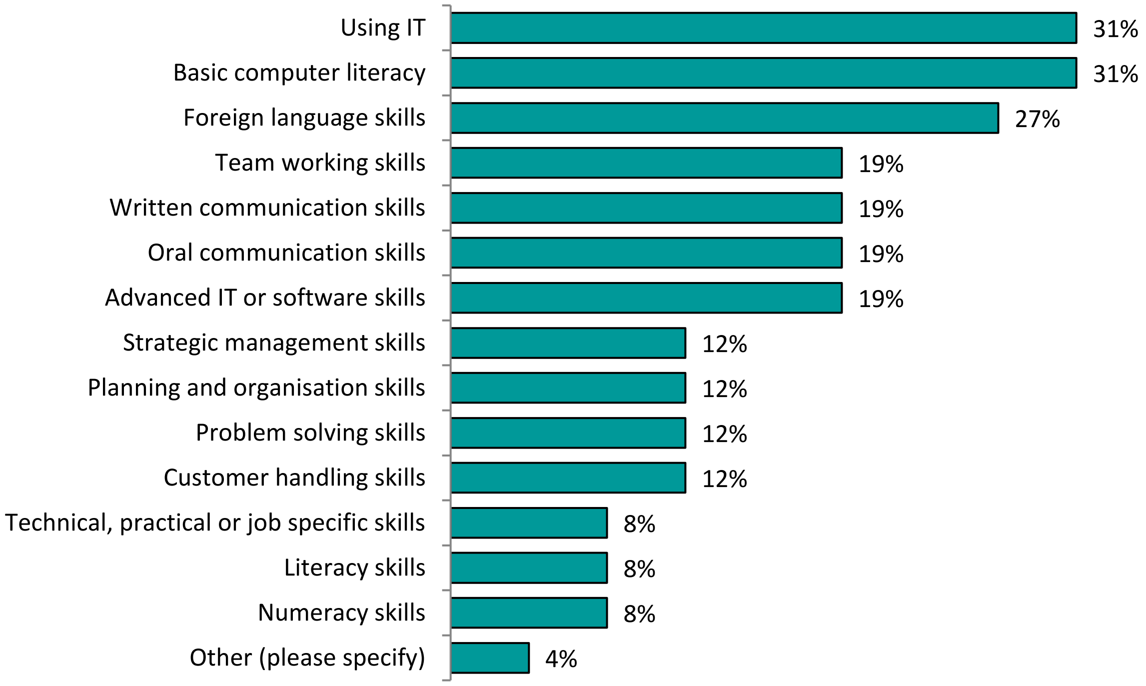


Sample base = 86, employers with Advanced Level Skilled staff and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

Of the 26 employers who identified the types of Advanced Level Skills gaps, over one in four identified:

- Using IT (8 employers)
- Basic computer literacy (8 employers)
- Foreign language skills (7 employers).

Chart 4.1.2: Types of Advanced Level Skills Gaps



Sample base = 26, employers who identified Advanced Level Skills gaps and provided a response, multiple response, quantitative survey
Other response – not specified

The main cause of skills gaps identified by employers are:

- No training
- COVID (2 employers)
- Customer service
- Financial problems
- Foreign Language Skills
- Lack in education
- Lack of time
- Money (2 employers)
- Not enough knowledge
- Not enough skills
- Short of people in company
- Testing
- They're old.

4.2 Negative impacts of gaps in Advanced Level Skills

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what negative impacts does or would any gaps or shortage in Advanced Level Skills have on their organisation. Responses relate overall to a declining level of workforce skills. In coding the open comments:

- 14 comments relate to an impact on the business
- 10 comments relate to an impact on the workforce (skills/capability)
- 4 comments relate to an impact on training.

Word chart 4.2 illustrates all coded words and List 4.2 illustrates examples of the responses generated.

List 4.2:Illustration of responses regarding negative impact of gaps in Advanced Level Skills

- Extra learning time
- Higher cost of training and development
- It would bring it down considerably
- It would give us a lack of work due to trying to solve problems
- Lack of professionalism
- Less capable staff
- Less educated staff
- Less profit
- Less support available for students both academic and pastoral
- Less workers
- More reliance on the staff that do have these skills
- No communication skills
- Not enough people putting applications in
- Selling in retail
- They would be crowded and not as efficient
- Time to train. Difference in quality of work
- You may lag a bit behind and need extra training.

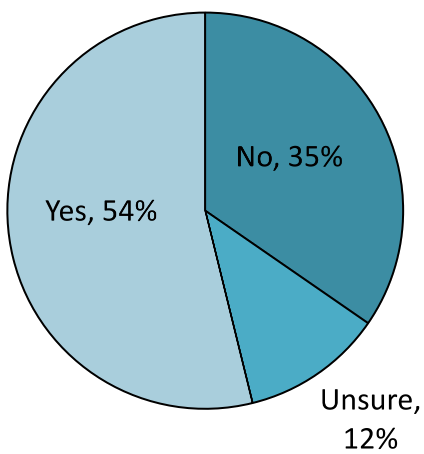
Word chart 4.2: Negative impacts of gaps in Advanced Level Skills

Sample base = 28 words, all 22 employers who provided a negative impact, multiple response, qualitative survey
Refer to text for word representation; word size does not represent frequency
Source: https://www.wordclouds.co.uk/

4.3 Assistance with Advanced Level Skills gaps

Of the 26 employers who identified Advanced Level Skills gaps and provided a response, just over half of employers (54%) would like further assistance with Advanced Level Skills gaps.

Chart 4.3: Whether employers would like further assistance with Advanced Level Skills gaps



Sample base = 26, employers who identified Advanced Level Skills gaps and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what business support relating to Advanced Level Skills would they would be interested in.

Of the 22 employers who responded:

- 10 employers identified specific skill areas
- 7 employers stated general help such as much/all/any support
- 6 employers stated help with funding/online/learner support.

(Multiple response, coded from open responses)

All coded responses are provided in Word chart 4.3.

Specific skill areas identified are:

- Business Management
- Education
- Engineers
- Gas Certificate
- Higher Achievers
- Internet Marketing
- Leadership
- Marketing
- Mental Health
- Retail.

All responses are detailed within Word chart 4.3.

Word chart 4.3: Business support to assist Advanced Level Skills

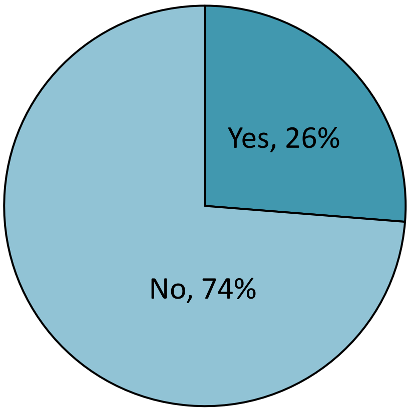
Sample base = 23 words, all 22 employers who identified support, multiple response, qualitative survey
Refer to text for word representation; word size does not represent frequency
Source: https://www.wordclouds.co.uk/

5. Redundancy (including Advanced Level Skills)

5.1 Redundancy of Advanced Level Skills

Just over one quarter of all organisations (26%) have made staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills redundant in the past 12 months, with 74% of organisations not having made such redundancies.

Chart 5.1: Redundancy of staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills in past 12 months



Sample base = 99, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Reasons for redundancies include:

- *Because of work dropping off due to COVID*
- *Cost*
- *COVID impacted the business to start with*
- *High profile*
- *Job no longer needed.*

21 employers provided the number of redundancies they had made regarding staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills.

The number of redundancies ranges from 1 employee to 50+ employees.

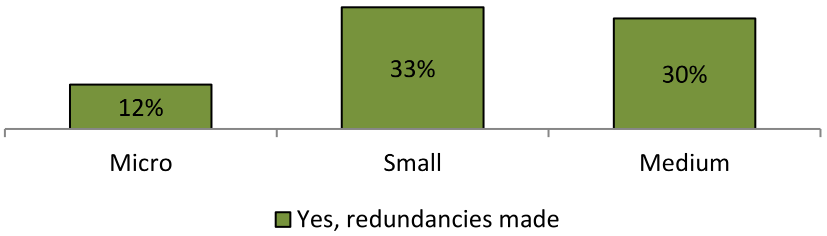
The total number of redundancies is 322 employees for the 21 organisations providing this data, an average of 15 employees per organisation. The median number of redundancies is 4 employees and the mode is 3 employees (6 employers).

The number of redundancies made are:

- 81% of organisations made under 10 employees redundant
- 14% of organisations made 10-49 employees redundant
- 5% of organisations have made 50+ employees redundant.

Small employers (33%) and medium employers (30%) are more likely to have made redundancies of staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills in the past 12 months than micro employers (12%).

Chart 5.1a: Cross-tabulation - Redundancy of staff qualified with Advanced Level Skills in past 12 months by organisation size



Sample base = 26 micro, 30 small, 43 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Occupations with Advanced Levels Skills made redundant:

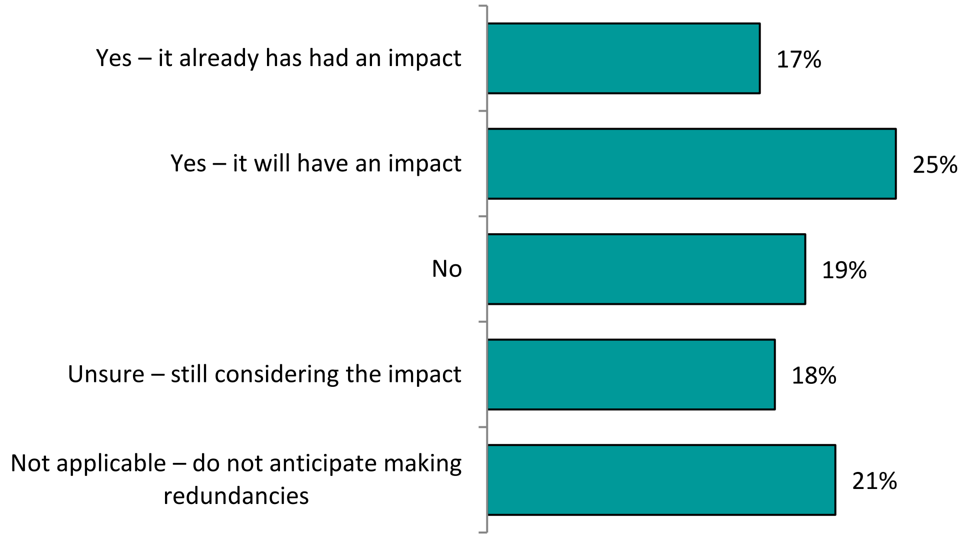
- Administration (2 Employers)
- Assistant Teacher
- Business
- Care Assistant
- Commercial
- Community Officer
- Cook
- IT Support Staff
- Junior Manager
- Key Workers
- Management
- Nursery Nurse
- Operations
- Operative
- Recruitment Consultant
- Social Care
- Supervisor
- Support Worker
- Team Leaders
- Technicians
- Volunteer.

5.2 Impact of COVID-19 on redundancies at any skill level

Just over two fifths of employers (42%) state that COVID-19 has or will have some impact on their need to make redundancies in staff at any skills level. Nearly one fifth of employers (18%) are unsure in that they are still considering whether there will be any impact.

Just over two fifths of employers (41%) state that COVID-19 has had no impact on their need to make redundancies, with 19% stating there is no impact and 21% stating it is not applicable as they do not anticipate making any redundancies.

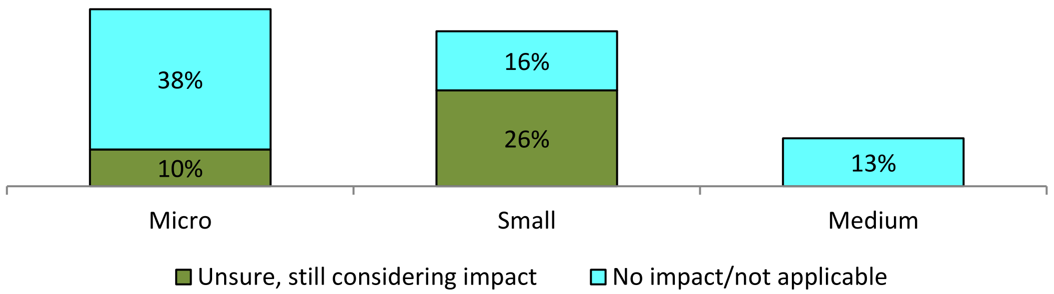
Chart 5.2: Impact of COVID-19 on redundancies of staff at any skill level



Sample base = 108, employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

Small employers (26%) are more likely than micro employers (10%) to be unsure, in that they are still considering the impact of COVID-19 on redundancies. Micro employers (38%) are more likely than both small employers (16%) and medium employers (13%) to state there is no impact/not applicable as redundancies are not anticipated.

Chart 5.2a: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on redundancies of staff with Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 29 micro, 31 small, 47 medium
Employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Amongst all 49 employers who stated an impact or who were considering an impact of COVID-19 on redundancies and could identify a number of redundancies which would or could be impacted, a total of 1087 redundancies are identified.

This is an average of 22 redundancies per employer who has identified an impact/is considering the impact. The median number is 4 redundancies and the mode is 3 redundancies (8 employers).

The number of redundancies ranges from 0 to 50+ redundancies:
- 69% of organisations report less than 10 redundancies
- 22% of organisations report 10-49 redundancies
- 8% of organisations report 50+ redundancies.

Amongst the 35 employers who have identified any impact, the total number of redundancies is 1023, ranging from 0 to 50+ redundancies.

The average number of redundancies impacted is 29, the median is 5 redundancies and the mode is 3 redundancies (7 employers).

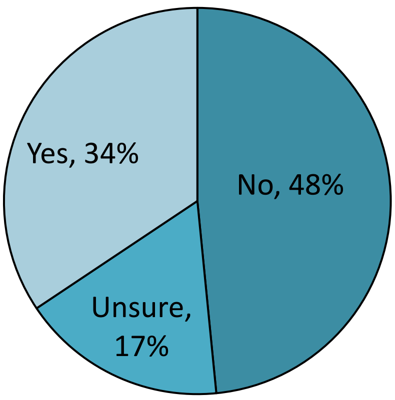
The number of redundancies is:
- 22 organisations making less than 10 redundancies
- 9 organisations making 10-49 redundancies
- 4 organisations making 50+ redundancies.

Amongst the 14 employers who are still considering the impact, the total number of redundancies is 64, ranging from 0 to 10-49 redundancies. The average number of redundancies impacted is 5, the median is 2 redundancies and the mode redundancies is 0 (5 employers).

The number of redundancies being considered are:
- 12 organisations making less than 10 redundancies
- 2 organisations making 10-49 redundancies.

5.3 Assistance with redundancy decisions

Chart 5.3: Interest in further assistance relating to decision about redundancies



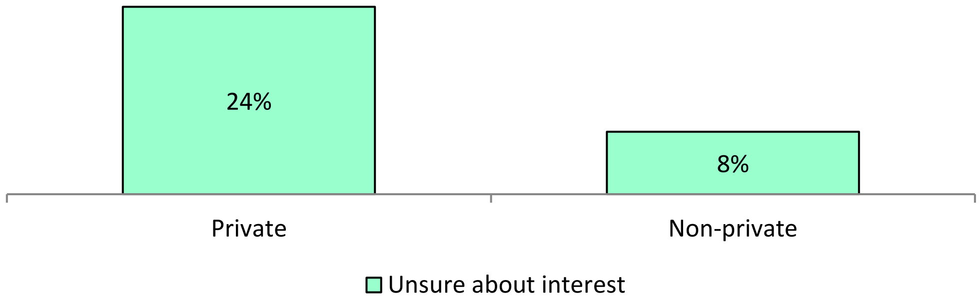
Sample base 64, = employers who identified or are considering impact of COVID-19 on redundancies and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Just over one third of employers (34%) impacted or considering the impact of COVID-19 on redundancies would like to be offered or provided with further assistance in relation to their decision about redundancies. Virtually half of employers (48%) would not like to be offered such assistance and just under one fifth of employers (17%) are unsure.

Of employers who could state either way, 42% would like to be offered such assistance and 58% would not want to be offered assistance in relation to their decision about redundancies.

Employers in private sector organisations (24%) are more likely to be unsure about whether they would want to be offered such assistance when compared to employers in non-private sector organisations (8%)

Chart 5.3a: Cross-tabulation - Interest in further assistance relating to decision about redundancies by type of organisation



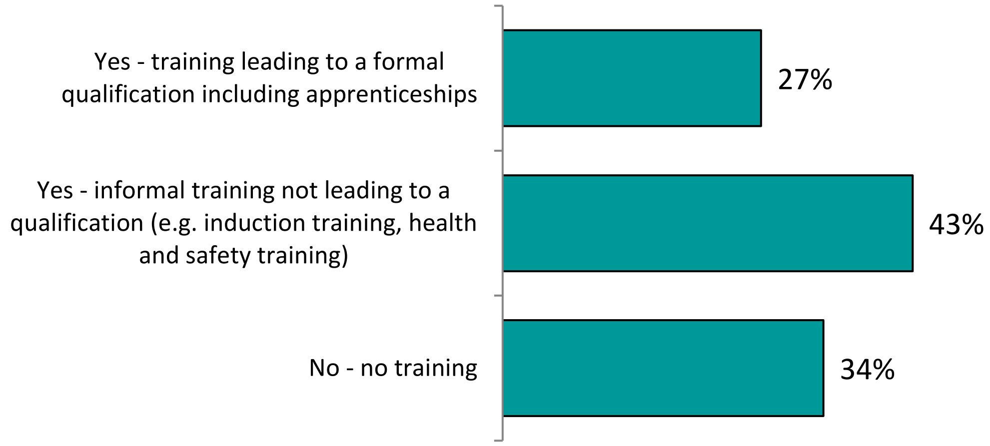
Sample base = 34 private sector, 24 non-private sector
Employers who identified or are considering impact of COVID-19 on redundancies and provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

6. Training (including Advanced Level Skills)

6.1 Training for all staff

Two thirds of employers (66%) have provided or sponsored training for their staff in the past 12 months. Just over one quarter of employers (27%) have provided training which leads to a formal qualification (including apprenticeships) and 43% have provided informal training which has not lead to a qualification.

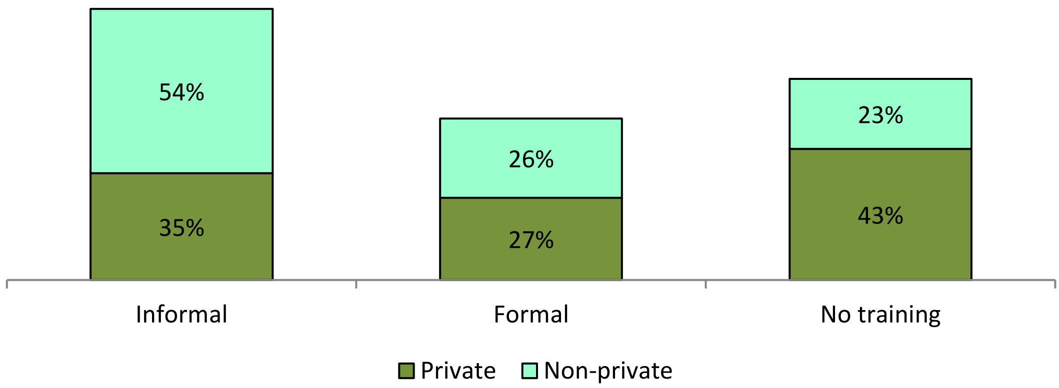
Chart 6.1: Provision or sponsoring of training for staff in the last 12 months



Sample base = 106, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

Non-private sector organisations (77%) are more likely to have provided any training than private sector organisations (57%) to have provided any training over the past 12 months. Non-private sector organisations (54%) are more likely to have provided informal training than private sector organisations (35%). Interestingly, they are as equally likely to have provided formal training which leads to a qualification.

Chart 6.1a: Cross-tabulation - Provision or sponsoring of training for staff in the last 12 months by organisation type

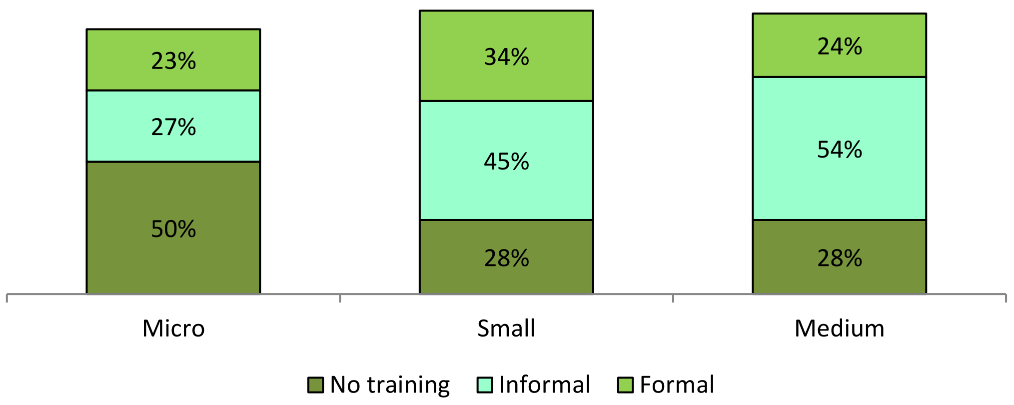


Sample base = 60 private sector, 39 non-private sector,
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
All data provided for interest and completeness – please refer to text for significant differences

Small employers (72%) and medium employers (72%) are more likely to have provided any training when compared to micro employers (50%).

Medium employers (54%) are more likely to have provided informal training than micro employers (27%).

Chart 6.1b: Cross-tabulation - Provision or sponsoring of training for staff in the last 12 months by organisation size

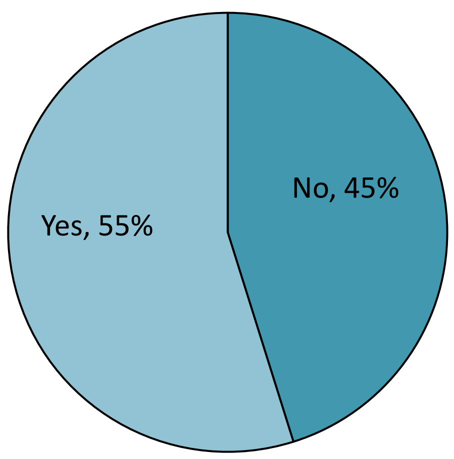


Sample base = 30 micro, 29 small, 46 medium,
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
All data provided for interest and completeness – please refer to text for significant differences

6.2 Advanced Level Skills training

Over half of employers (55%) who have provided training in the past 12 months have provided training leading to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills.

Chart 6.2: Training leading to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills



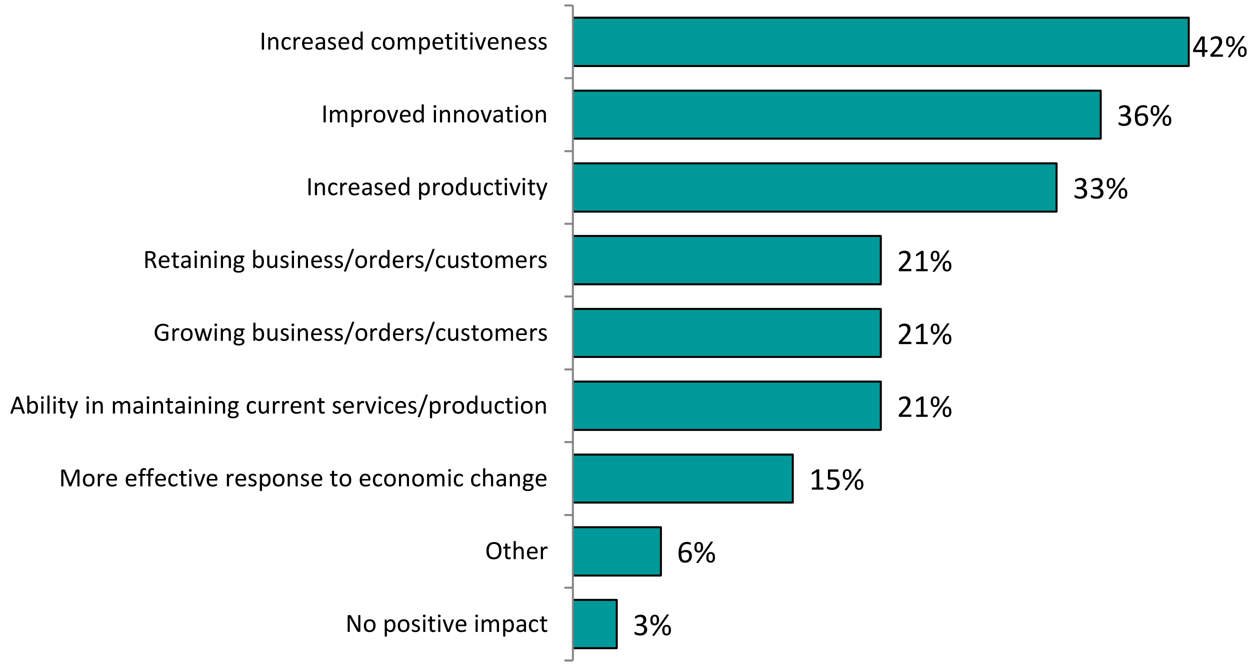
Sample base = 62, employers who have provided any training in the past 12 months and provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
NB: 16 employers who stated only providing informal training at 6.1 stated they have provided training leading to an Advanced Level Qualification at 6.2

Employees which have received Advanced Level Skills training include:

- Manager/s (3 Employers)
- Teachers (2 Employers)
- Tutor (2 Employers)
- Administrative Assistant
- Base Level Staff
- Care Workers
- CI Engineer
- Colour Specialist
- Commercial Staff
- IT
- Money Administration
- Most Workers
- Programme Management Office
- Quality Manger
- Recruitment Consultant
- Residential Care Staff
- Retail Shop Assistant
- Sales Manager
- Senior Management
- Support Workers
- Team Leader
- Trainees.

6.3 Benefits of Advanced Level Skills training

Chart 6.3.1: Positive business impacts from training staff to Advanced Level Skills

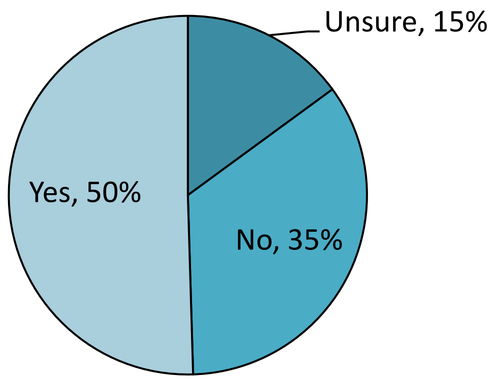


Sample base = 33, employers who have provided training leading to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, multiple response, quantitative survey
Other: More confidence and knowledge to do the job

Of the 33 employers who have provided training leading to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills and provided a response, at least one in three identified the following as being positive impacts on their business of doing so

- Increased competitiveness
- Improved innovation
- Increased productivity.

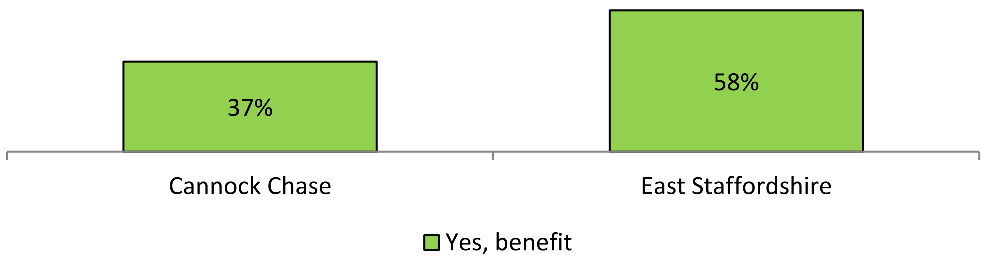
Chart 6.3.2: Business benefit of training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 107, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

All staff were asked whether training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills would benefit their business. Half of all employers (50%) state training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills would benefit their business, just over one third (35%) that it wouldn't have any benefit and 15% are unsure. Of employers who could state either way, 59% state there is a benefit and 41% that there is no benefit of doing so.

Chart 6.3a: Cross-tabulation - Business benefit of training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills by location

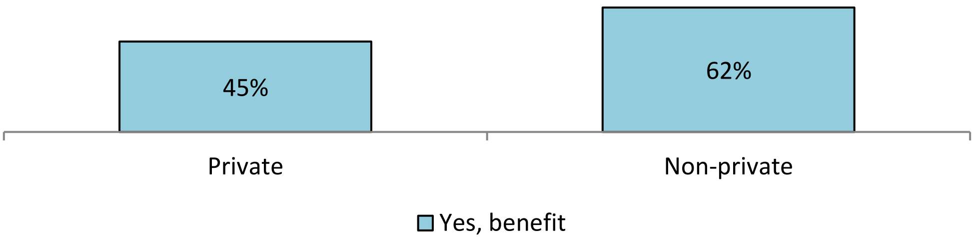


Sample base = 35 Cannock Chase, 45 East Staffordshire
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Employers located in East Staffordshire (58%) are more likely to feel that training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills would benefit their business when compared to employers located in Cannock Chase (37%).

Non-private sector employers (62%) are more likely to feel that such training would benefit their business when compared to private sector employers (45%).

Chart 6.3b: Cross-tabulation - Business benefit of training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills by organisation type

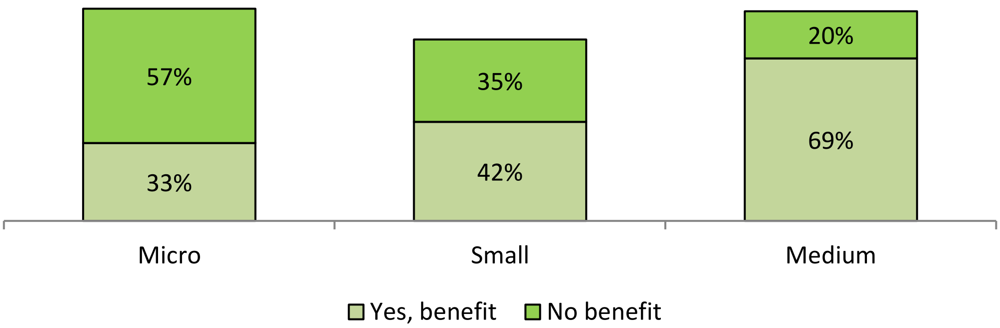


Sample base = 60 private sector, 39 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Medium employers (69%) are more likely to state that such training would have a benefit to their business than both small employers (42%) and micro employers (33%).

Micro employers (57%) are more likely than both small employers (35%) and medium employers (20%) that there are no business benefits of such training.

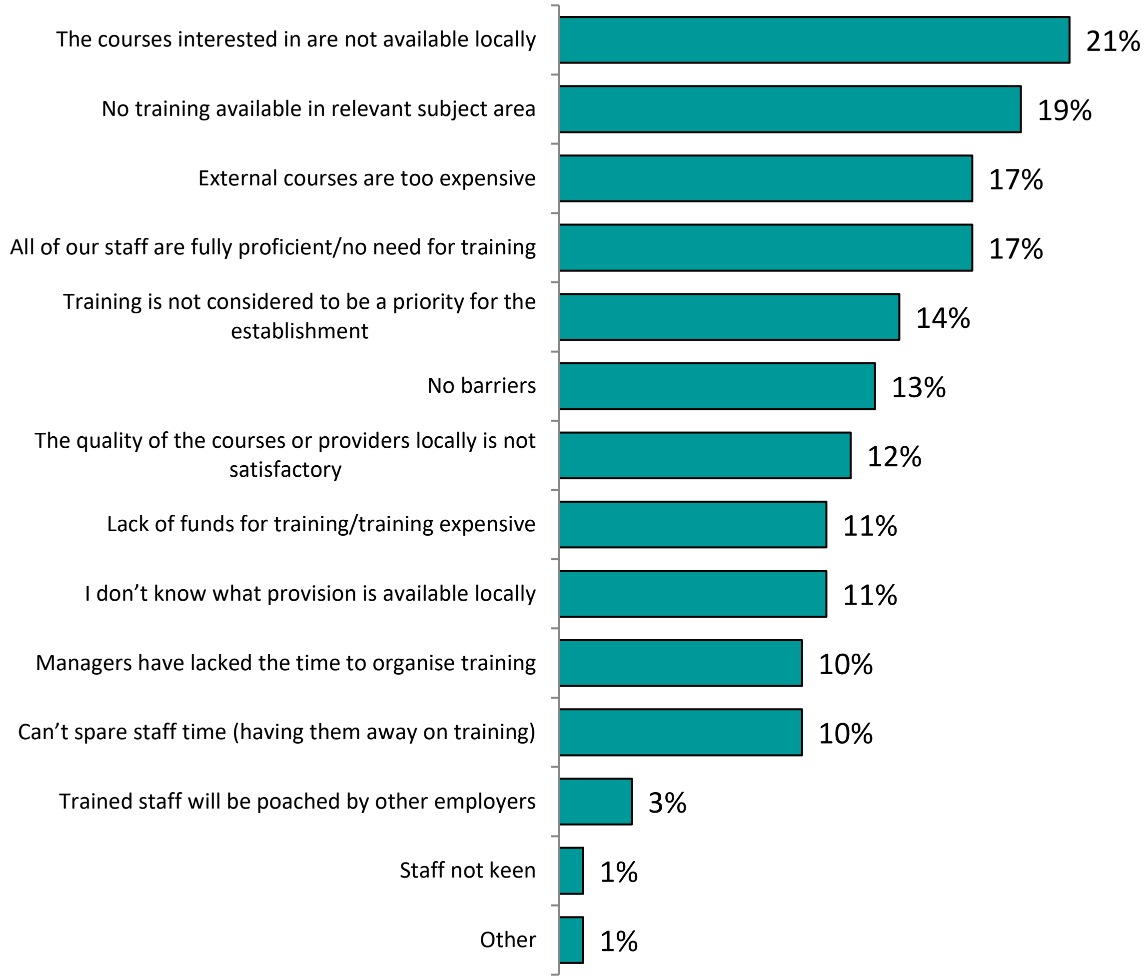
Chart 6.3c: Cross-tabulation - Business benefit of training any (more) staff to Advanced Level Skills by organisation size



Sample base = 30 micro, 31 small, 45 medium
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

6.4 Barriers to Advanced Level Skills Training

Chart 6.4: Barriers to providing staff with training at Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 100, All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Other = Expensive, very, very expensive.

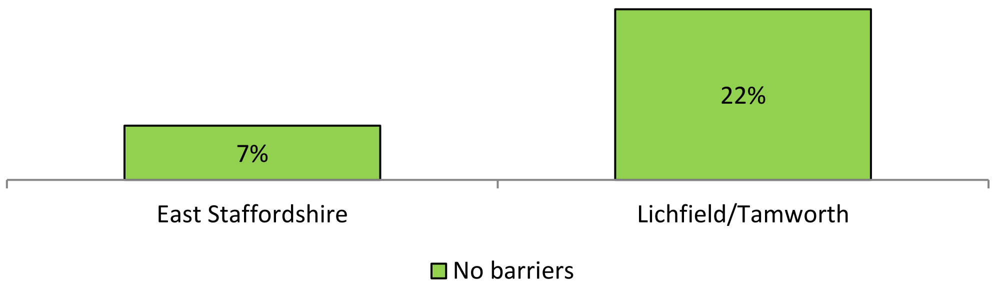
Nearly nine tenths of employers (87%) could identify at least one barrier to training at Advanced Level Skills.

Each barrier was identified by less than one quarter of employers, with no one barrier identified by a significant majority of employers. Around one fifth of employers identified:

- Courses of interest are not available locally (21%)
- No training available in relevant subject area (19%)
- External courses are too expensive (17%)
- All staff are fully trained/proficient/no need for training (17%).

Employers located in East Staffordshire (93%) are more likely to identify a barrier to training at Advanced Level Skills than employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (78%).

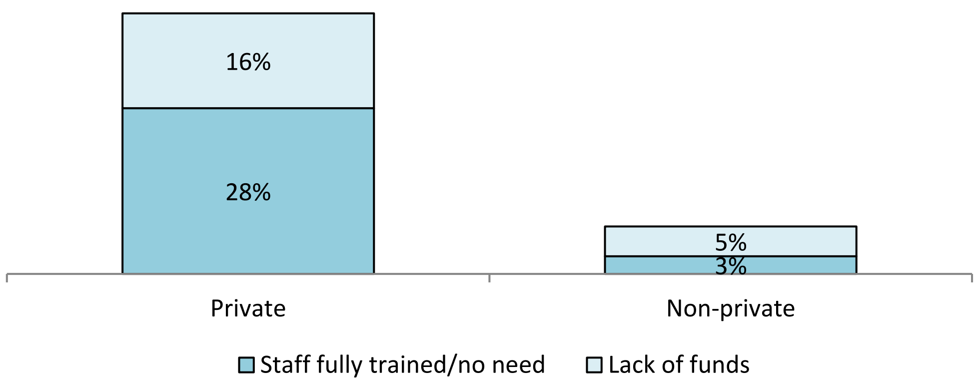
Chart 6.4a: Cross-tabulation - Barriers to providing staff with training at Advanced Level Skills by location



Sample base = 41 East Staffordshire, 27 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (28%) are more likely to identify staff being fully trained/no need than non-private sector employers (3%) as a barrier. They are also more likely to identify a lack of funds (16%) compared to non-private sector employers (5%) as a barrier to providing training at Advanced Level Skills.

Chart 6.4b: Cross-tabulation - Barriers to providing staff with training at Advanced Level Skills by organisation type



Sample base = 58 private sector, 37 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

There are a number of differences when considering organisation size and barriers to training at Advanced Level Skills:

Micro employers:

- Micro employers (0%) are less likely to identify managers having lacked the time to organise training as a barrier compared to small employers (11%) and medium employers (16%)

- Micro employers (31%) are more likely than medium employers (9%) to identify all staff being fully trained/no need for training.

Small employers:

- Small employers (100%) are more likely to identify a barrier when compared to both micro employers (90%) and medium employers (77%).

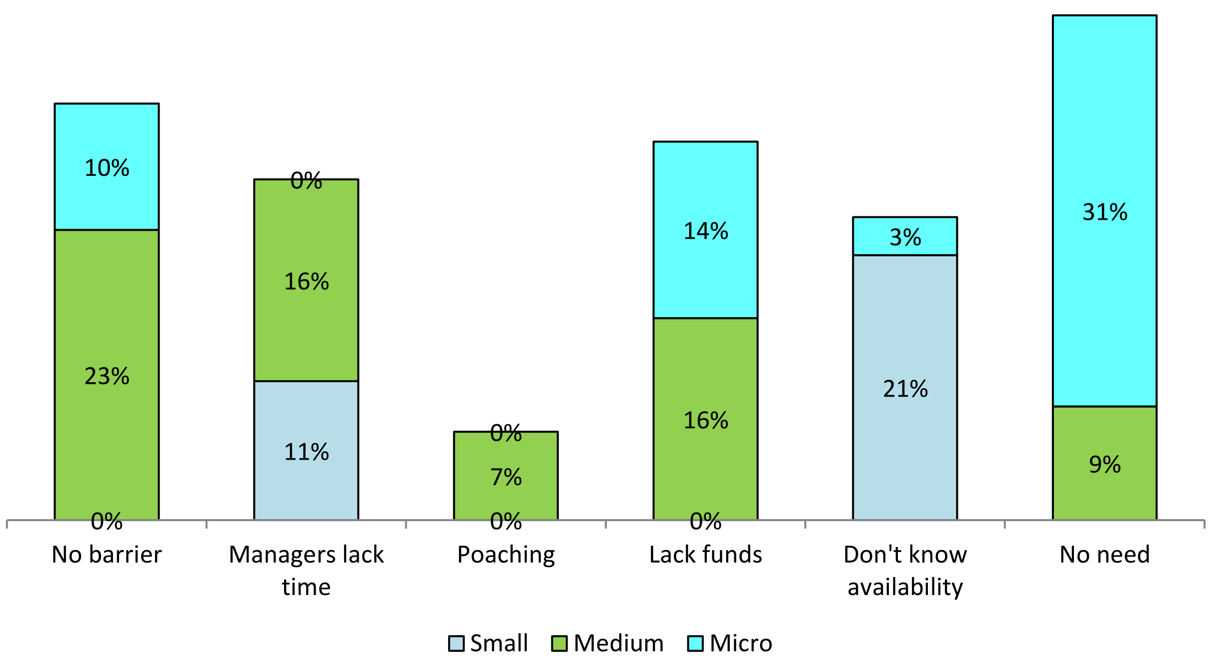
- Small employers (21%) are more likely to identify not knowing what provision is available locally than micro employers (3%)

- Small employers (0%) are less likely to identify a lack of funds for training/training being expensive than both micro employers (14%) and medium employers (16%).

Medium employers:

- Medium employers (7%) are more likely than both micro employers (0%) and small employers (0%) to identify staff being poached by other employers as a barrier.

Chart 6.4c: Cross-tabulation - Barriers to providing staff with training at Advanced Level Skills by organisation size

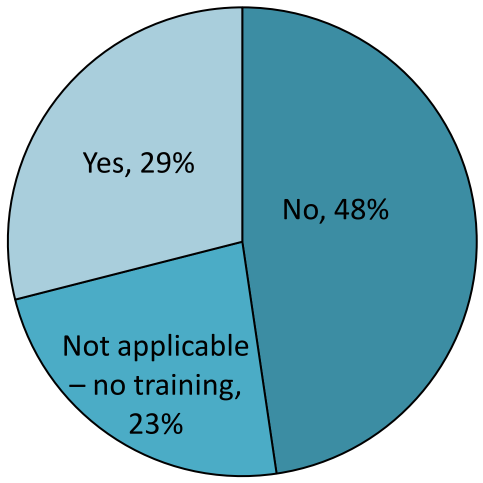


Sample base = 29 micro, 28 small, 43 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

6.5 Impact of COVID-19 on training at Advanced Level Skills

Over one quarter of all employers (29%) state that COVID-19 has impacted on their training provision at Advanced Level Skills, virtually half (48%) have stated there has been no impact and nearly one quarter (23%) state this is not applicable due to no training being provided at Advanced Level Skills.

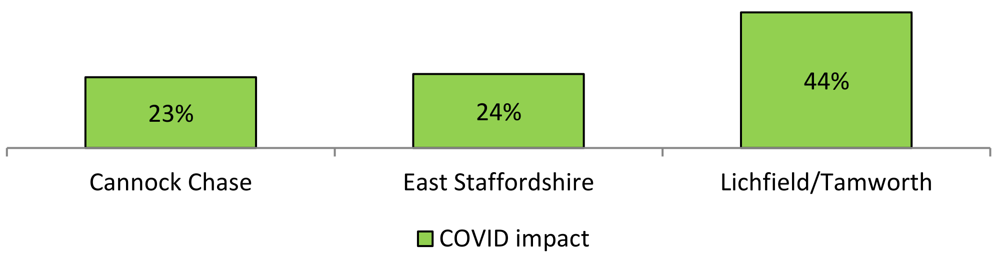
Chart 6.5: Impact of COVID-19 on training provision at Advanced Level Skills



Sample base = 107, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Employers located in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (44%) are more likely than employers in both Cannock Chase (23%) and East Staffordshire (24%) to state that COVID-19 has had an impact on their training provision at Advanced Level Skills.

Chart 6.5a: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on training provision at Advanced Level Skills by location

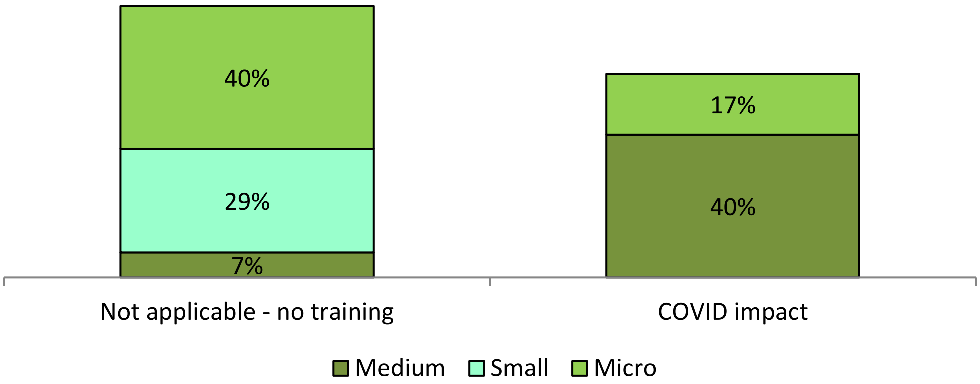


Sample base = 35 Cannock Chase, 45 East Staffordshire, 27 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Medium employers (40%) are more likely to state COVID-19 has impacted on training at this level when compared with micro employers (17%).

Medium employers (7%) are less likely to state that impact is not applicable as there is no training at this level when compared to micro employers (40%) and small employers (29%).

Chart 6.5b: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on training provision at Advanced Level Skills by organisation size



Sample base = 30 micro, 31 small, 45 medium
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

The impacts of COVID-19 on training at Advanced Level Skills include:

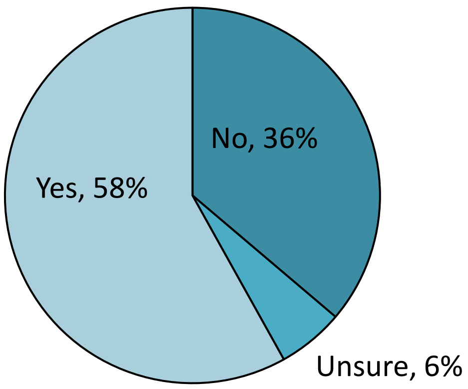
- Cannot get assessors out to trainees during lockdown
- Hard to do intended courses due to restrictions
- Having difficulties in schedules
- Lockdown
- No trainers can visit the workplace and staff self-isolating
- Not getting assignments signed off
- Social distancing
- Training is now mostly virtual rather than face to face
- We have stopped sending people for training.

7. Advanced Level Skills Apprenticeships

7.1 Awareness of apprenticeships to Advanced Level Skills

Virtually two fifths of employers (58%) are aware of apprenticeships as a route to their employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills. Over one third of employers (36%) are unaware and 6% are unsure.

Chart 7.1: Awareness of apprenticeships as a route to employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills

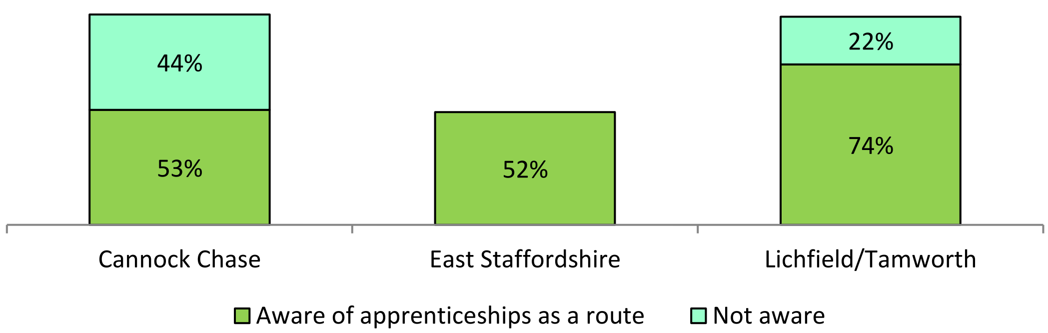


Sample base = 105, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (74%) are more likely to be aware of apprenticeships as a route to employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills than employers in either Cannock Chase (53%) or East Staffordshire (52%).

Employers in Cannock Chase (44%) are more likely to not be aware of apprenticeships as a route when compared with employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (22%).

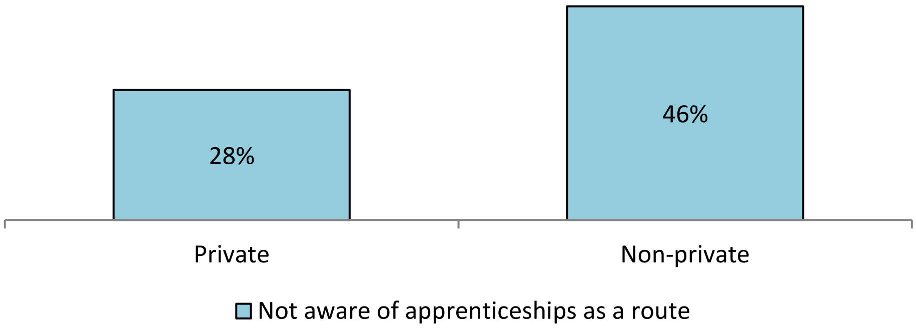
Chart 7.1a: Cross-tabulation - Awareness of apprenticeships as a route to employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills by location



Sample base = 34 Cannock Chase, 44 East Staffordshire, 27 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Non-private sector employers (46%) are more likely to not be aware of apprenticeships as a route to employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills when compared to private sector employers (28%)

Chart 7.1b: Cross-tabulation - Awareness of apprenticeships as a route to employees achieving a qualification at Advanced Level Skills by organisation type



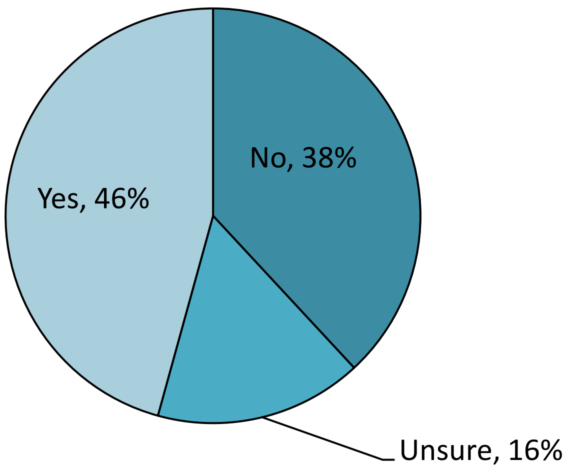
Sample base = 60 private sector, 37 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

7.2 Awareness of apprenticeship levy funding

Just under half of employers (46%) are aware of apprenticeship levy funding, where the Government will provide 95% of apprenticeship fees for non-levy payers to enable these employers to train their staff with minimum investment. For levy payers, 100% of fees are covered, meaning no extra cost for these businesses.

Nearly two fifths of employers (38%) are unaware of 16% are unsure.

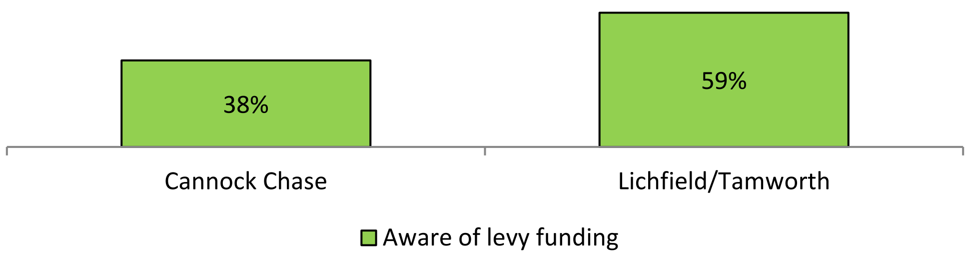
Chart 7.2: Awareness of apprenticeship levy funding



Sample base = 105, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (59%) are more likely to be aware of the apprenticeship levy funding than employers located in Cannock Chase (38%).

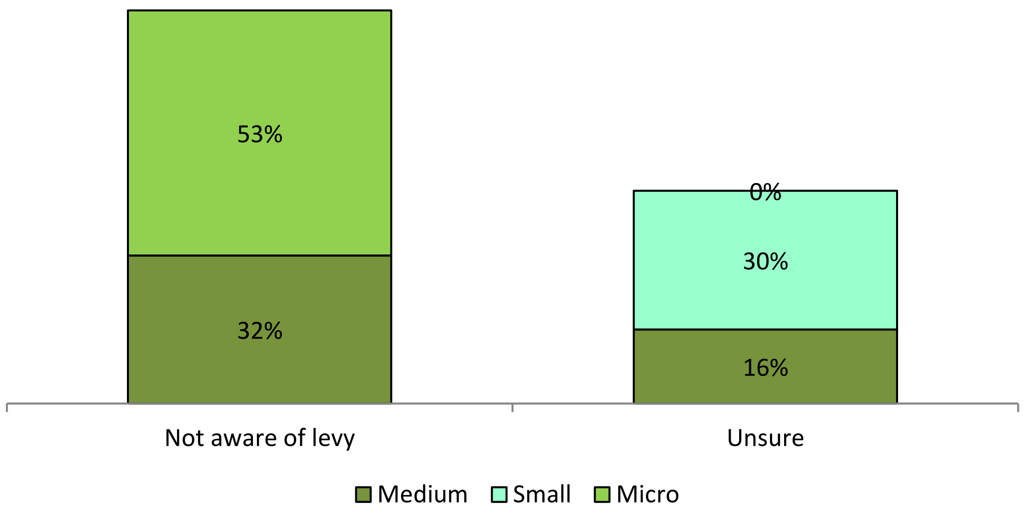
Chart 7.2a: Cross-tabulation - Awareness of apprenticeship levy funding by location



Sample base = 34 Cannock Chase, 27 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Micro employers (53%) are more likely to not be aware of the levy funding than medium employers (32%). Small employers (30%) and medium employers (16%) are more likely to be unsure regarding awareness when compared to micro employers (0%).

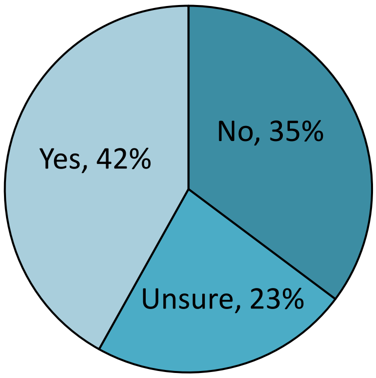
Chart 7.2b: Cross-tabulation - Awareness of apprenticeship levy funding by organisation size



Sample base = 30 micro, 30 small, 44 medium
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

7.3 Interest in apprenticeships to meet Advanced Level Skills needs

Chart 7.3.1: Interest in apprenticeships as a route to meeting employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills and above



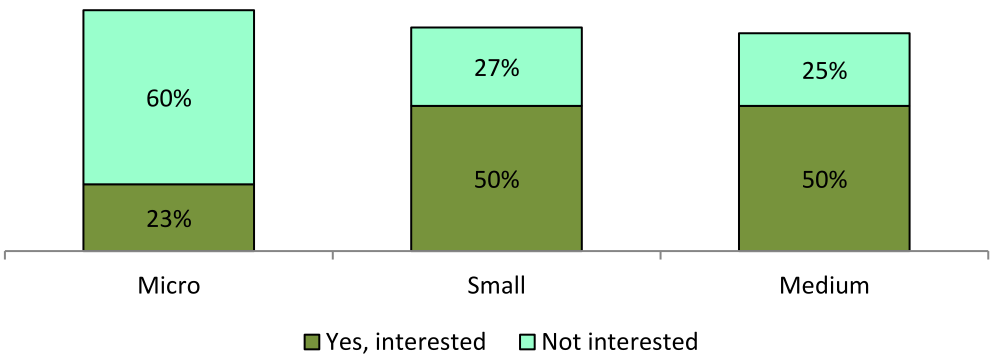
Sample base = 105, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey

Just over two fifths of employers (42%) would be interested in using or employing apprenticeships as a route to meeting their employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills. Just over one third of employers (35%) would not be interested and just under one quarter (23%) are unsure. Where employers could state either way, 54% would be interested and 46% would not be interested.

Micro employers (23%) are less likely to be interested in using or employing apprenticeships as a route to meeting their training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills and above when compared to both small employers (50%) and medium employers (50%).

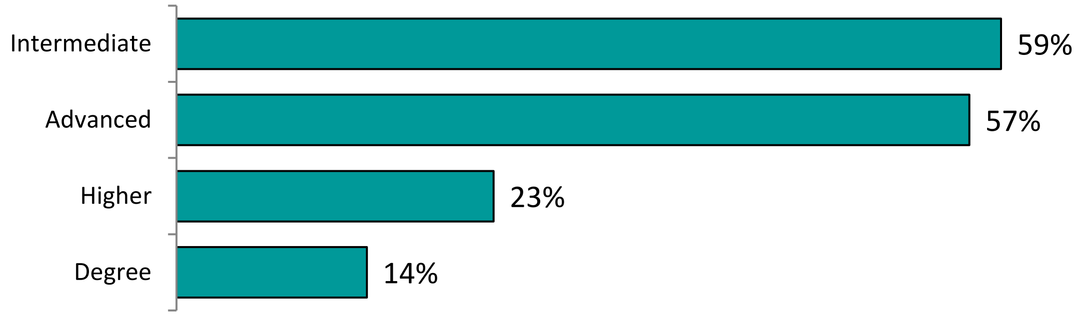
Micro employers (60%) are more likely to state they are not interested in this route when compared to both small employers (27%) and medium employers (25%).

Chart 7.3a: Cross-tabulation - Interest in apprenticeships as a route to meeting employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills and above by organisation size



Sample base = 30 micro, 30 small, 44 medium
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Chart 7.3.2: Advanced Skill Levels of interest in apprenticeship route



Sample base = 44, employers who would be interested in this route, multiple response, quantitative survey

Virtually three fifths of employers who would be interested in this route would be interested in Intermediate Level (59%) and Advanced Level (57%). Nearly one quarter of employers (23%) would be interested at Higher level and 14% would be interested at Degree level.

The occupations which this would include are:

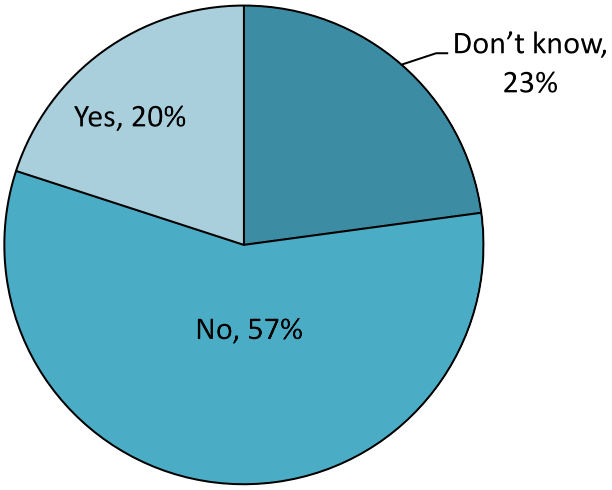
- Manager (6 Employers)
- Administration (4 Employers)
- Customer Service (2)
- Entry Level Accountancy
- All
- Army
- Customer Support Worker
- Engineering
- Ground Worker
- Head Of Department
- Hospitality
- IT (2 Employers)
- IT Management
- Deputy Manager
- Office Executives
- Operation Engineering
- Procurement Department
- Project Management
- Recruitment
- Sales Administration
- Senior
- Social Care
- Sports Coach
- Development Manager
- Sports Development Team Manager
- Support Worker
- Teachers
- Teaching
- Team Lead
- Travel and Tourism.

7.4 Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to Advanced Level Skills

One fifth of employers (20%) state that COVID-19 will impact on the future use of apprentices as a route to qualification at Advanced Level Skills. Nearly three fifths of employers (57%) state this will not have an impact and nearly one quarter of employers (23%) are unsure.

Where employers could state either way, just over one quarter of employers (26%) state that COVID-19 will impact on the future use of apprentices as a route to qualification at Advanced Level Skills and nearly three quarters (74%) state this will not have an impact.

Chart 7.4: Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to qualification at Advanced Level Skills

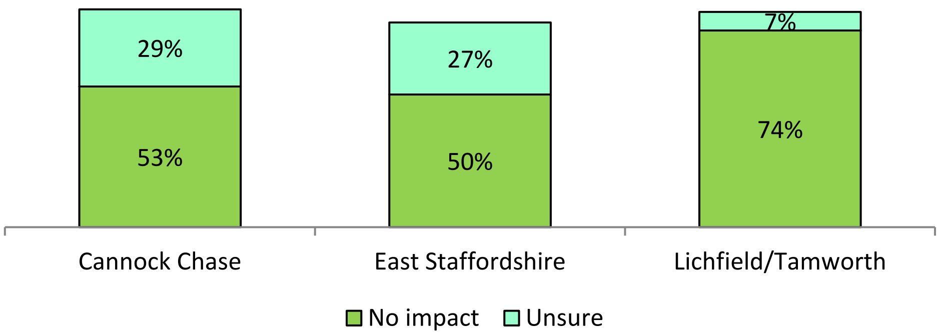


Sample base = 105, all employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Impact includes:
- *DAS account only allows 10 per employer*
- *Harder to find people when in lockdown*
- *It stops everything*
- *Yes, due to lockdown.*

Employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (74%) are more likely to state that COVID-19 has had no impact on this future use of apprenticeships when compared to employers in Cannock Chase (53%) and East Staffordshire (50%).

Employers in Cannock Chase (29%) and East Staffordshire (27%) are more likely to be unsure regarding any future impact when compared with employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (7%).

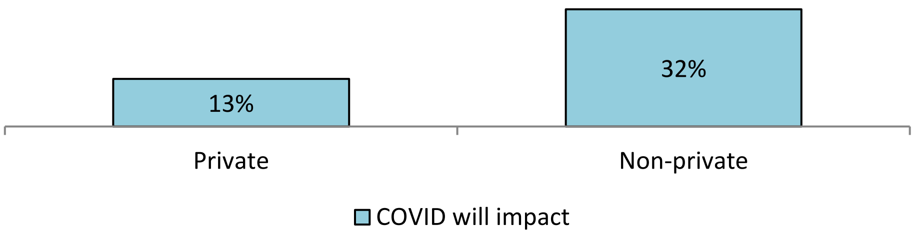
Chart 7.4a: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to qualification at Advanced Level Skills by location



Sample base = 34 Cannock Chase, 44 East Staffordshire, 27 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Non-private sector employers (32%) are more likely to think COVID-19 will have an impact on the future use of apprenticeships to a qualification at Advanced Level Skills than private sector employers (13%).

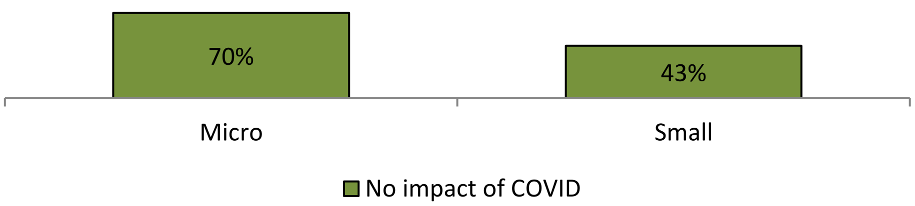
Chart 7.4b: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to qualification at Advanced Level Skills by organisation type



Sample base = 60 private sector, 37 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Micro employers (70%) are more likely to state COVID-19 will not have an impact on the future of apprenticeships in this way when compared with small employers (43%)

Chart 7.4c: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on future use of apprenticeships to qualification at Advanced Level Skills by organisation size



Sample base = 30 micro, 30 small
All employers who provided a response, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

7.5 Support of apprenticeship recruitment to meet Advanced Level Skills needs

Over one quarter of all of the 99 employers who provided a response to the open ended question (28%) stated that there are other incentives or methods of support that would encourage them to recruit an apprentice or use an apprenticeship to meet their employees' training and qualification needs at Advanced Level Skills.

The type of support identified by employers includes:

- Basic
- Better basic salary
- Better, well structured, advertisements.
- Funding
- Funding for qualifications is key
- Help with boxing and delivery
- If employees had more motivation to better themselves
- If this allowed me to gain extra funding, or if it brought a lot more interest to the role and the company (i.e. many more applications, providing much greater pool to choose from)
- If we knew they would stay with the business once the apprenticeship has finished
- It would be cheaper
- Money
- More funding
- More info on this
- More money
- More time and money put into it
- Move the restriction to more than 10 per employer
- Paid placements
- Retention payment 18 months later
- Staff bonding after COVID
- Support
- Support on wage payments through the apprenticeship
- That all apprenticeships should take a student to get a degree at least
- Training
- With government funding it would reduce staffing cost.

8. Workforce Development Support

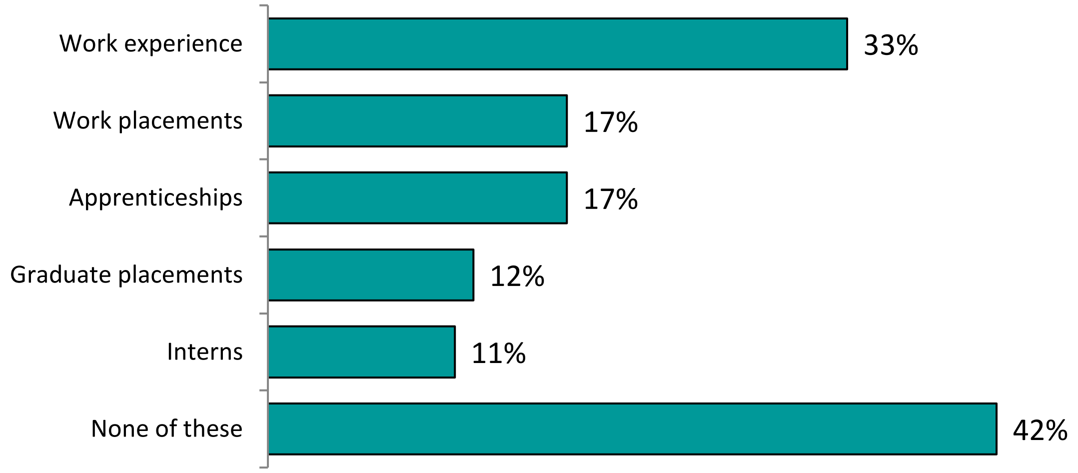
8.1 Workforce development opportunities

Nearly three fifths of employers (58%) have provided some form of workforce development opportunity in the past 12 months, with 42% not having done so.

Significantly the main type of workforce development opportunity is work experience, with one third of employers (33%) offering this opportunity.

Just under one fifth of employers have each offered work placements (17%) and apprenticeships (17%). Just over one tenth of employers have each offered graduate placements (12%) and interns (11%).

Chart 8.1: Development opportunities offered in the past 12 months



Sample base = 93, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

Employers in Cannock Chase (13%) and East Staffordshire (17%) are more likely to have offered interns than employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (0%).

Employers in Cannock Chase (25%) are more likely to have offered work placements than employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (8%).

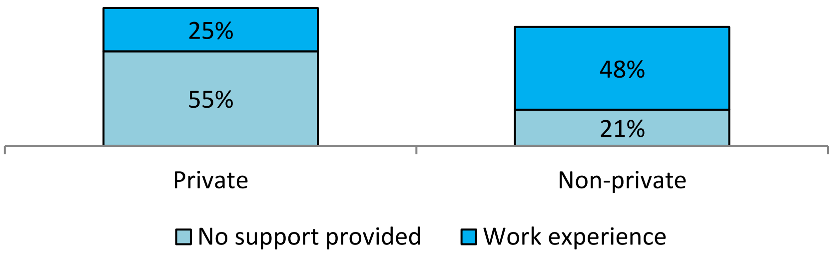
Employers in East Staffordshire (44%) are more likely to have offered work experience than employers in Cannock Chase (22%).

Chart 8.1a: Cross-tabulation - Development offers made in the past 12 months by location

Sample base = 32 Cannock Chase, 36 East Staffordshire, 25 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Non-private sector employers (79%) are more likely to have offered any form of workforce development support than employers in the private sector (45%). They are also more likely to have offered work experienced (48%) compared to employers in the private sector (25%).

Chart 8.1b: Cross-tabulation - Development offers made in the past 12 months by organisation type



Sample base = 53 private sector, 33 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

There are a number of significant differences when regarding organisation size:

Micro employers:

- Micro employers (68%) are less likely to have provided any workforce development support when compared with both small employers (32%) and medium employers (28%).

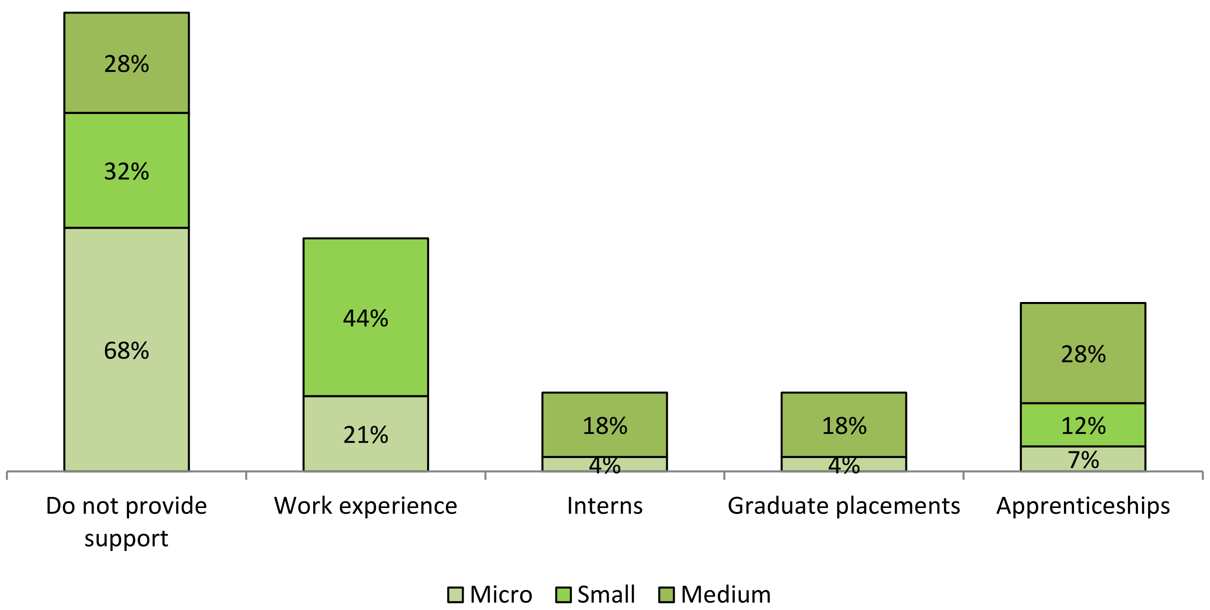
Small employers:

- Small employers (44%) are more likely to have offered work experience than micro employers (21%).

Medium employers:

- Medium employers (18%) are more likely to have offered both interns than micro employers (4%) and graduate placements (also 18% compared to 4% of micro employers).
- Medium employers (28%) are more likely to have offered apprenticeships than either micro employers (7%) or small employers (12%).

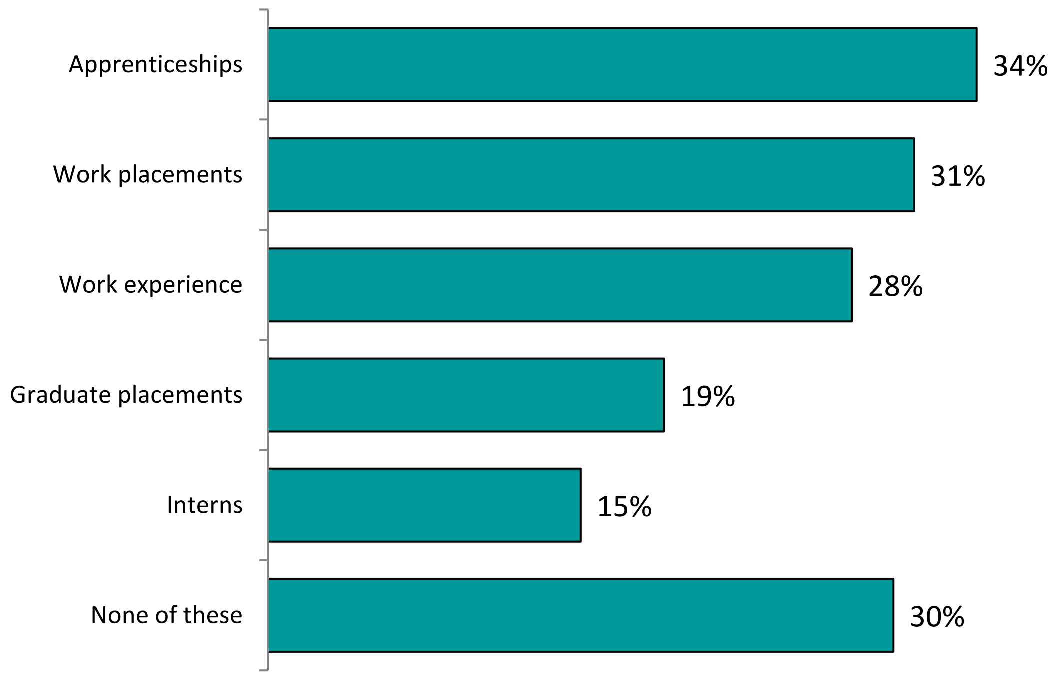
Chart 8.1c: Cross-tabulation - Development offers made in the past 12 months by organisation size



Sample base = 28 micro, 25 small, 39 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

8.2 Potential of development opportunities

Chart 8.2: Willingness to offer development opportunities in next 12 months



Sample base = 88, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

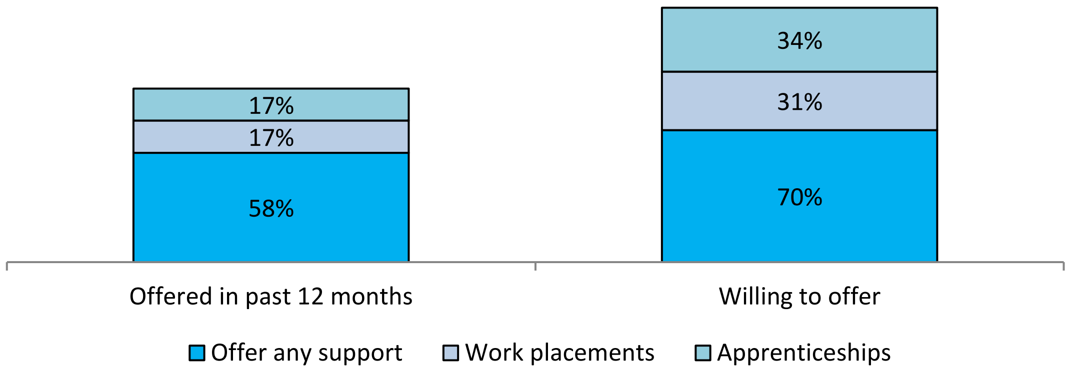
70% of employers would be willing to offer workplace development opportunities over the next 12 months to 3 years. This is significantly higher than the 58% of employers who have provided such opportunities over the past 12 months.

Just over one third of employers (34%) are willing to offer apprenticeships. This is double, and significantly higher than, the 17% of employers who have provided apprenticeships in the past 12 months.

31% of employers are willing to offer work placements, which is significantly higher than the 17% of employers who have done so in the past 12 months.

Over one quarter of employers (28%) would be willing to offer work experience and nearly one fifth (19%) graduate placements. 15% of employers are willing to offer interns.

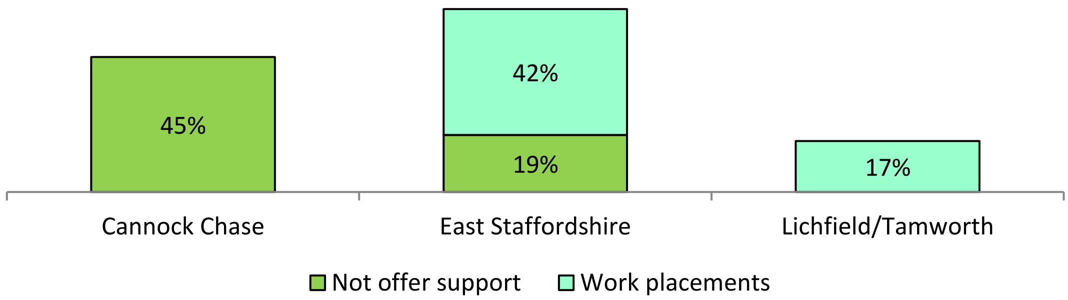
Chart 8.2a: Cross-tabulation – Development opportunities offered in past 12 months and willingness to offer development opportunities in next 12 months



Sample base = 93 offered in past 12 months, 88 willing to offer over next 12 months to 3 years
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Employers in East Staffordshire (81%) are more willing to offer any development opportunities when compared with employers In Cannock Chase (55%). Employers in East Staffordshire (42%) are more willing to offer work placements when compared to employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (17%)

Chart 8.2b: Cross-tabulation – Willingness to offer development opportunities and location



Sample base = 29 Cannock Chase, 36 East Staffordshire, 23 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

There are a number of differences regarding organisation size:

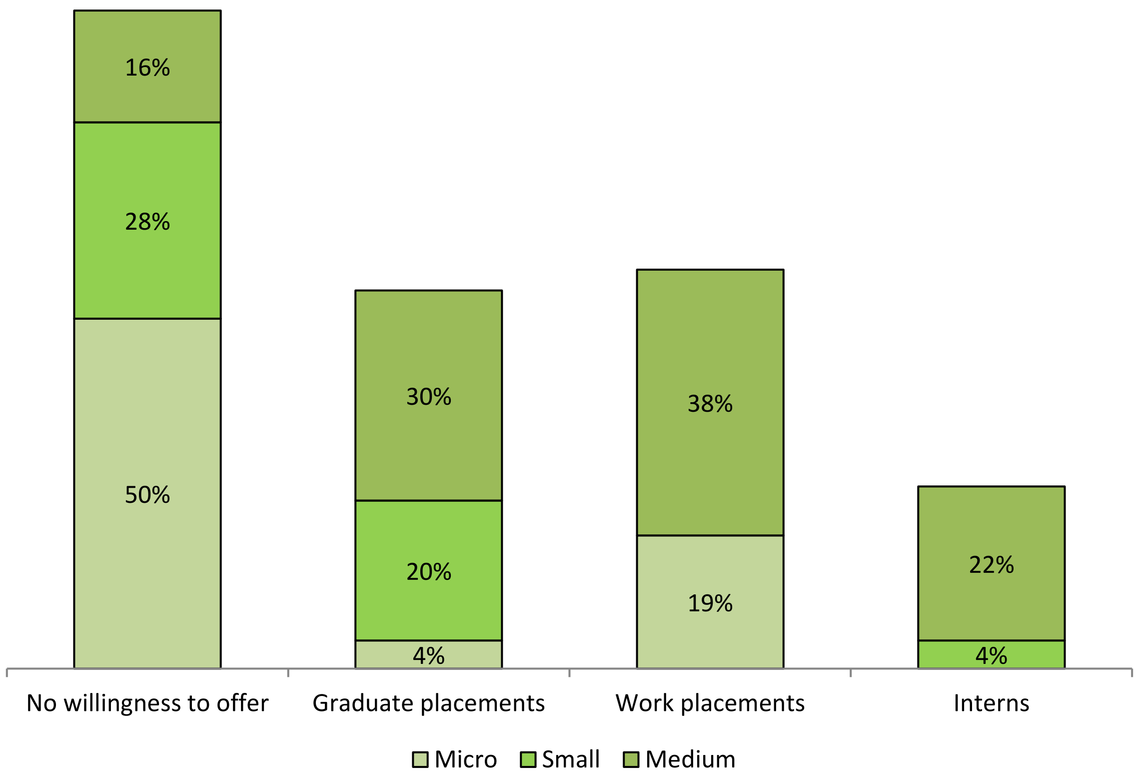
Micro employers:
- Micro employers (50%) are less likely than small employers (72%) and medium employers (84%) to be willing to offer any development opportunities in the next 12 months to 3 years.

- Micro employers (4%) are also less likely to be willing to offer graduate placements compared with small employers (20%) and medium employers (30%).

Medium employers:
- Medium employers (22%) are more likely than small employers (4%) to be willing to offer interns.

- Medium employers are more likely than micro employers to be willing to offer work placements (38% compared with 19% of micro employers).

Chart 8.2c: Cross-tabulation – Willingness to offer development opportunities and organisation size



Sample base = 26 micro, small 25, medium 37
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

9. BREXIT

9.1 Concerns of impact of BREXIT

Nearly three quarters of employers (72%) could identify at least one concern they have for their business regarding the impact of BREXIT.

Regarding concerns about trade:

- 27% identify access to the European Market
- 21% increased import prices
- 18% increased paperwork/procedures
- 17% increased export prices
- 11% trade restrictions.

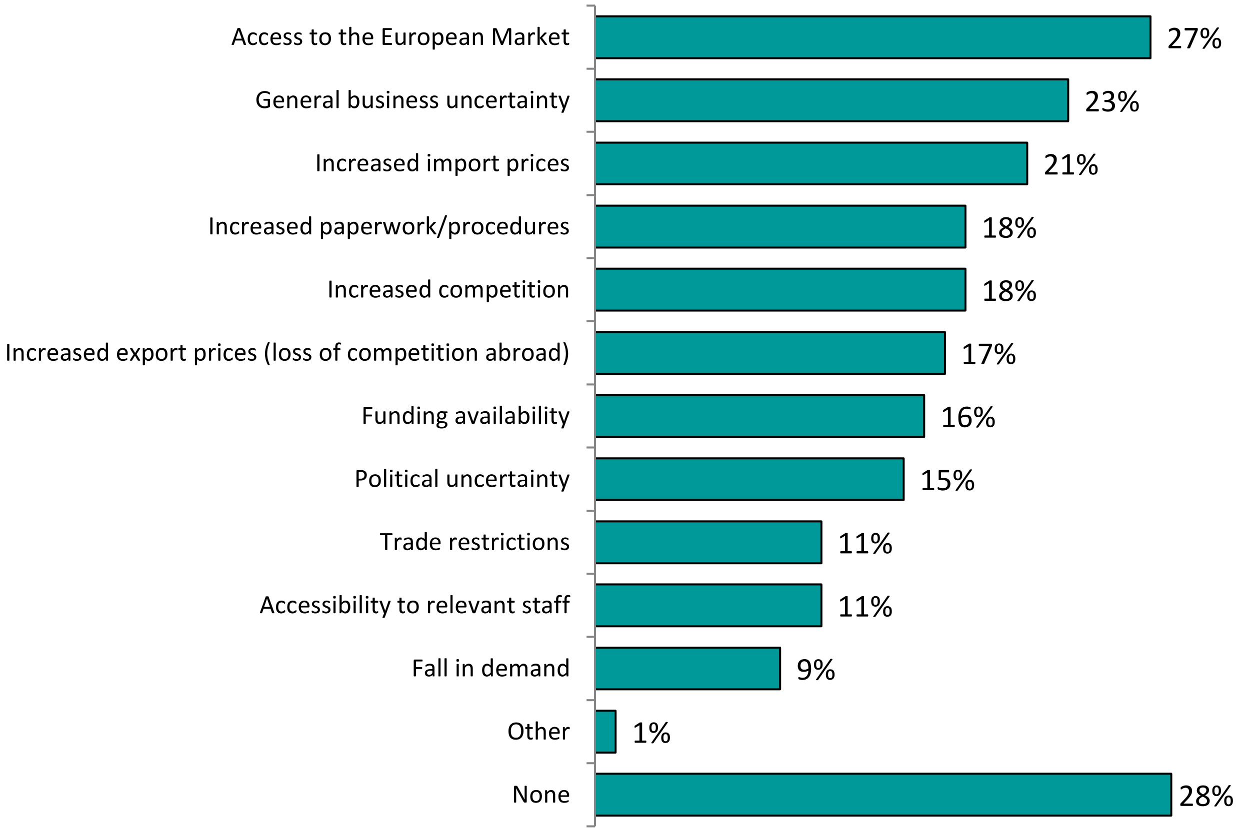
Regarding concerns about the business environment:

- 23% identify general business uncertainty
- 16% identify funding availability
- 15% identify political uncertainty
- 11% identify accessibility to relevant staff.

Regarding concerns about business activity:

- 18% identify increased competition
- 9% identify a fall in demand.

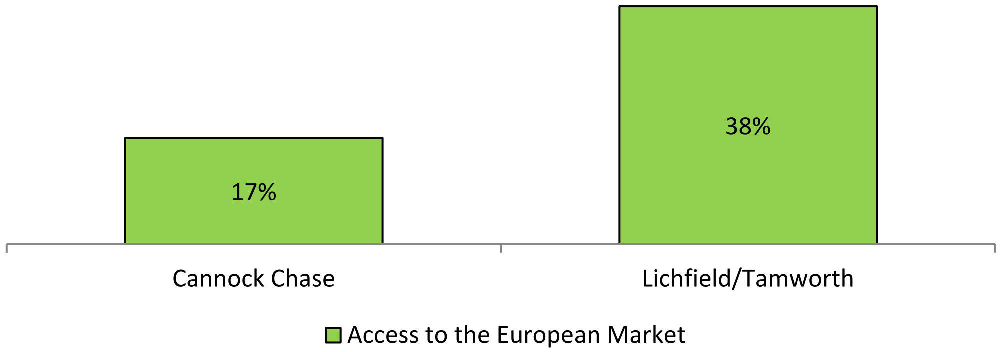
Chart 9.1: Concerns for business regarding impact of BREXIT



Sample base = 82, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

Employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (38%) are more likely to identify access to the European Market as a concern when compared with employers from Cannock Chase (17%).

Chart 9.1a: Cross-tabulation - Concerns for business regarding impact of BREXIT by location

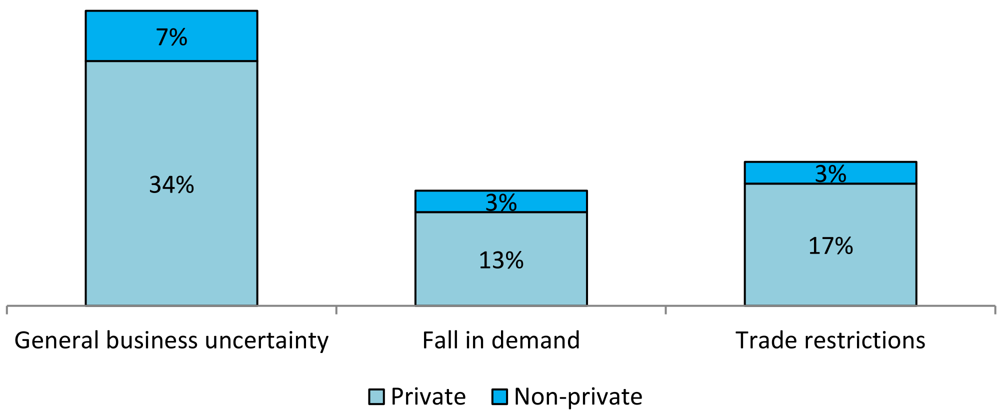


Sample base = 30 Cannock Chase, 21 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (34%) are more likely to identify general business uncertainty as a concern than non-private sector employers (7%).

Private sector employers are also more likely to identify a concern regarding fall in demand (13% compared with 3% of non-private sector organisations) and trade restrictions (17% compared with 3% of non-private sector organisations)

Chart 9.1b: Cross-tabulation - Concerns for business regarding impact of BREXIT by type of organisation



Sample base = 47 private sector, 29 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

There are a number of differences when considering organisation size:

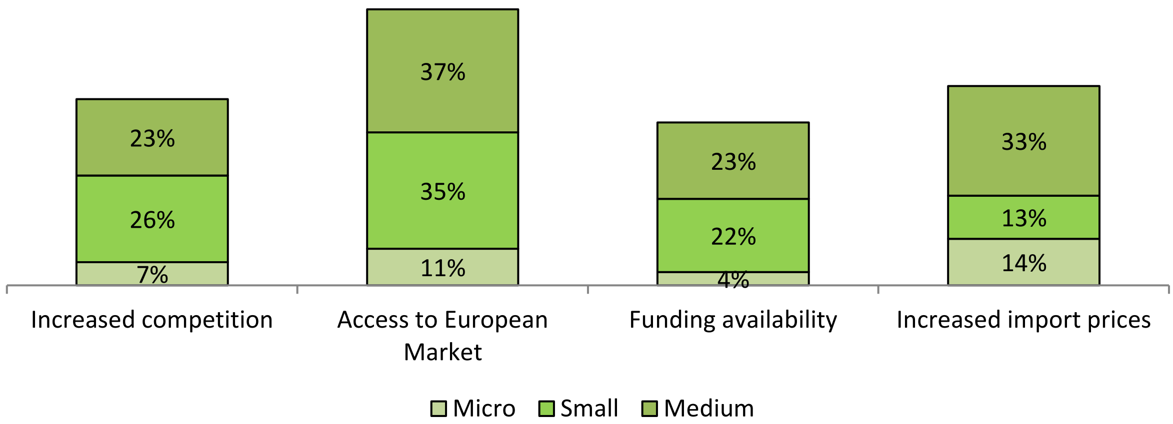
Micro employers:

- Micro employers (7%) are less likely than small employers (26%) and medium employers (23%) to identify increased competition.
- They are also less likely (11%) to identify access to the European Market as a concern compared with small employers (35%) and medium employers (37%).
- Micro employers (4%) are less likely to be concerned regarding funding availability than either small employers (22%) or medium employers (23%)

Medium employers

- Medium employers (33%) are more likely to identify increased import prices as a concern when compared with micro employers (14%) and small employers (13%).

Chart 9.1c: Cross-tabulation - Concerns for business regarding impact of BREXIT by organisation size



Sample base = 28 micro, 23 small, 30 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what negative impacts, if any, BREXIT will have on their organisation:

- All of them
- Difficulty increased
- Expensive holidays
- Expensive materials
- Higher costs to importing goods for sale
- Less international workers
- Less money
- More expensive import/export
- More paperwork
- Profit will be less
- Slower trade
- Sourcing products from abroad, i.e. fresh food
- The pricing of items
- There is loads
- Won't be able to fly in goods.

9.2 Opportunities from impact of BREXIT

Just over two thirds of employers (67%) could identify at least one opportunity for their business regarding the impact of BREXIT.

Regarding opportunities relating to trade:

- 21% identify an ease in paperwork/procedures
- 14% identify decreased import prices
- 10% identify trade opportunities
- 5% identify access to new markets
- 2% identify decreased export prices.

Regarding opportunities relating to the business environment:

- 14% identify accessibility to relevant staff
- 11% identify funding availability
- 7% identify general business positivity
- 6% identify political direction.

Regarding opportunities relating to business activity:

- 16% identify decreased competition
- 7% identify increase in demand.

Chart 9.2: Business opportunities regarding impact of BREXIT

Sample base = 81, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response

Employers in Cannock Chase (14%) are more likely to identify increase in demand as a business opportunity than employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (0%).

Employers in Cannock Chase (11%) are more likely to identify political direction than employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (0%).

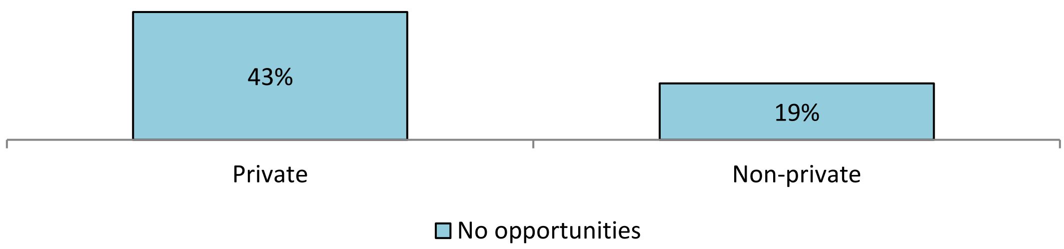
Employers in East Staffordshire (18%) are more likely to identify trade opportunities than employers in Cannock Chase (4%).

Chart 9.2a: Cross-tabulation - Business opportunities regarding impact of BREXIT by location

Sample base = 28 Cannock Chase, 33 East Staffordshire, 20 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Non-private sector employers (81%) are more likely to identify an opportunity as a result of BREXIT when compared with private sector employers (57%).

Chart 9.2b: Cross-tabulation - Business opportunities regarding impact of BREXIT by organisation type



Sample base = 42 private sector, 32 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

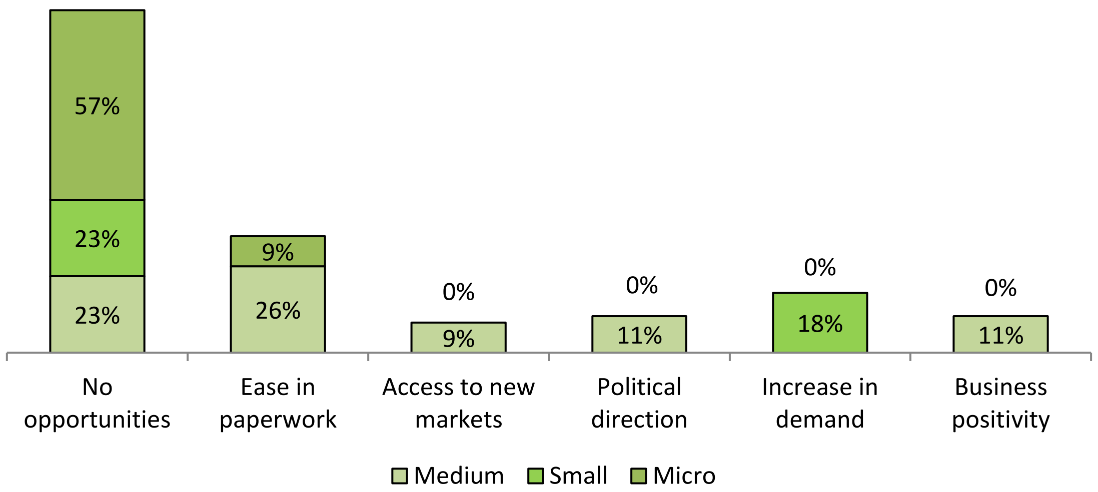
There are a number of differences when considering organisation size:

Micro employers:
- Micro employers are (43%) are less likely to identify any opportunity than either small employers (77%) or medium employers (77%).

Small employers:
- Small employers (18%) are more likely to identify an increase in demand than micro employers (0%).

Medium employers:
- Medium employers (11%) are more likely than small employers (0%) to identify general business positivity as an opportunity.
- Medium employers (26%) are more likely to identify an ease in paperwork/procedures than micro employers (9%).
- They are also more likely to identify access to new markets (9%) than micro employers (0%).
- Medium employers (11%) are more likely to identify political direction as an opportunity when compared with micro employers (0%).

Chart 9.2c: Cross-tabulation - Business opportunities regarding impact of BREXIT by organisation size



Sample base = 23 micro, 22 small, 35 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

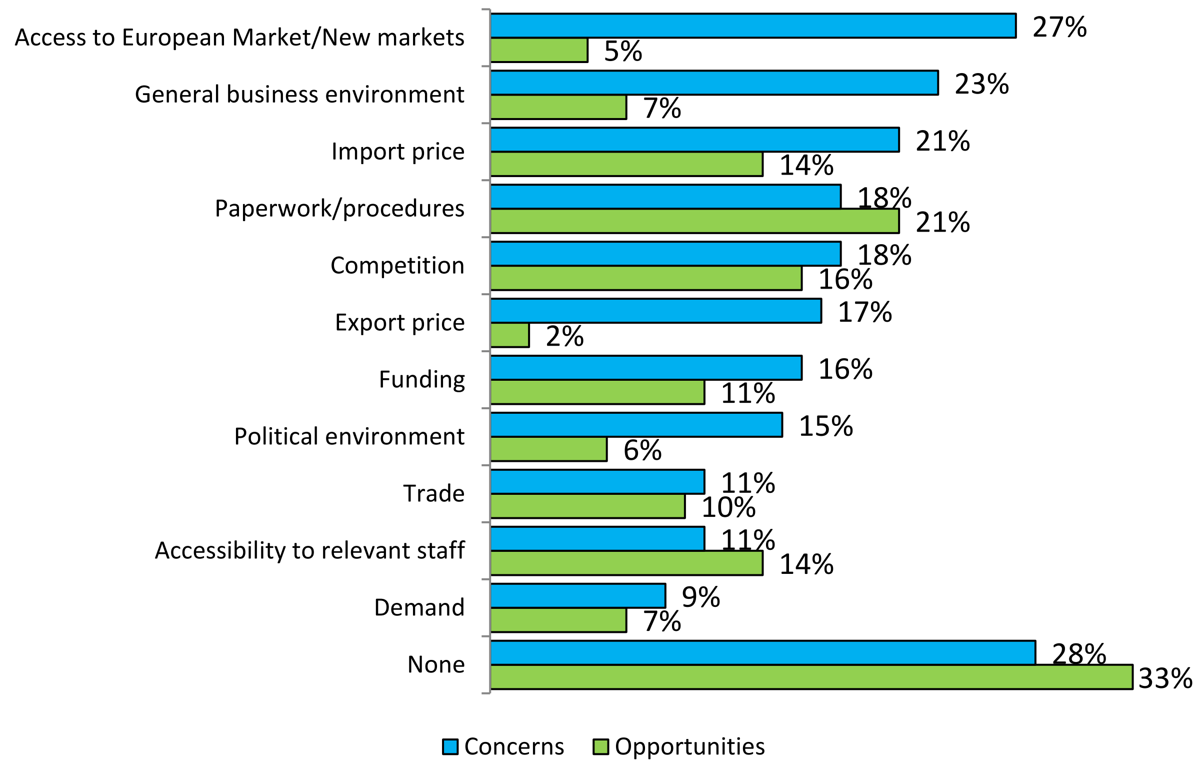
Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what positive impacts, if any, has or will BREXIT have on their organisation:
- Easier money to provide
- Europe
- Extra trade deals
- Good trade
- Less EU citizens will be trying to get education free
- Prices go up
- We will focus on our own needs.

9.3 Concerns versus opportunities from impact of BREXIT

Employers are significantly more likely to identify access to the European Market as a concern (27%) than they are to identify access to new markets as an opportunity (5%). The 23% of employers who view the general business environment as a concern is significantly higher than the 7% who view this as an opportunity.

Employers are more likely to view export pricing as a concern (17%) than an opportunity (2%). They are also more likely to view the political environment as a concern (15%) than an opportunity (6%).

Chart 9.3: Comparison of concerns and opportunities from impact of BREXIT



Sample base = 82 concerns, 81 benefits, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response
Please refer to text for significant differences

Employers were asked in the qualitative survey, what business support relating to BREXIT would they be interested in:

- Any business
- Anything/all
- Everything
- Extra pay for extra hours of shipping
- Foreign imports
- Funding and training to deal with extra red tape
- Growth
- More advertising abroad
- Politics
- Retail (2 employers)
- Tax breaks to buy local supply chain
- Understanding movement.

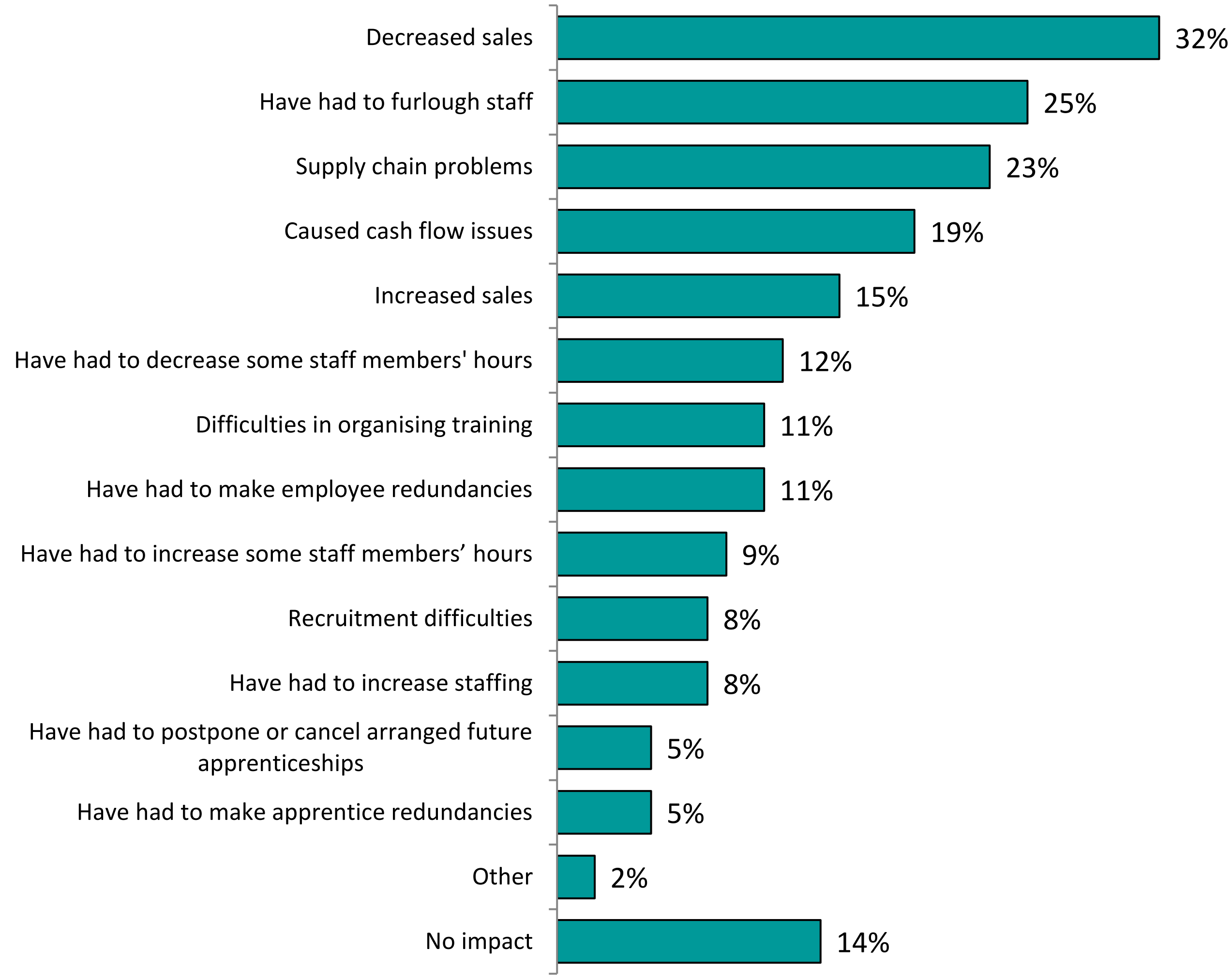
10. Impact of COVID-19

10.1 Impact of COVID-19 on business

Nearly nine tenths of employers (86%) could identify a way in which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their business.

Nearly one third of employers (32%) identify decreased sales, with one quarter (25%) identifying having to furlough staff and 23% identifying supply chain issues.

Chart 10.1: Impact of COVID-19 on business



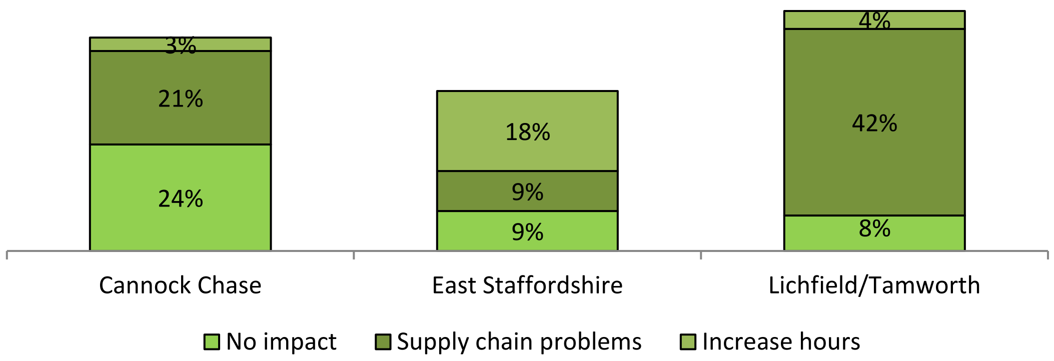
Sample base = 93, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Other includes:
- *Training for online delivery*
- *More work.*

Employers in Cannock Chase (76%) are less likely to identify an impact when compared with employers in East Staffordshire (91%) and in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (92%).

Employers in East Staffordshire (18%) are more likely to have increased some staff members' hours than employers in Cannock Chase (3%) and the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (4%).

Employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (42%) are more likely to have been affected by supply chain problems than employers in either Cannock Chase (21%) or East Staffordshire (9%).

Chart 10.1a: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on business by location



Sample base = 33 Cannock Chase, 34 East Staffordshire, 26 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (34%) are more likely to have been affected by furloughing staff than non-private sector employers (12%). Private sector employers (17%) are also more likely to have been affected by having to make employee redundancies when compared to non-private sector employers (0%).

Chart 10.1b: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on business by organisation type

Sample base = 53 private sector, 34 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

There are a number of differences when considering organisation size:

Micro employers:

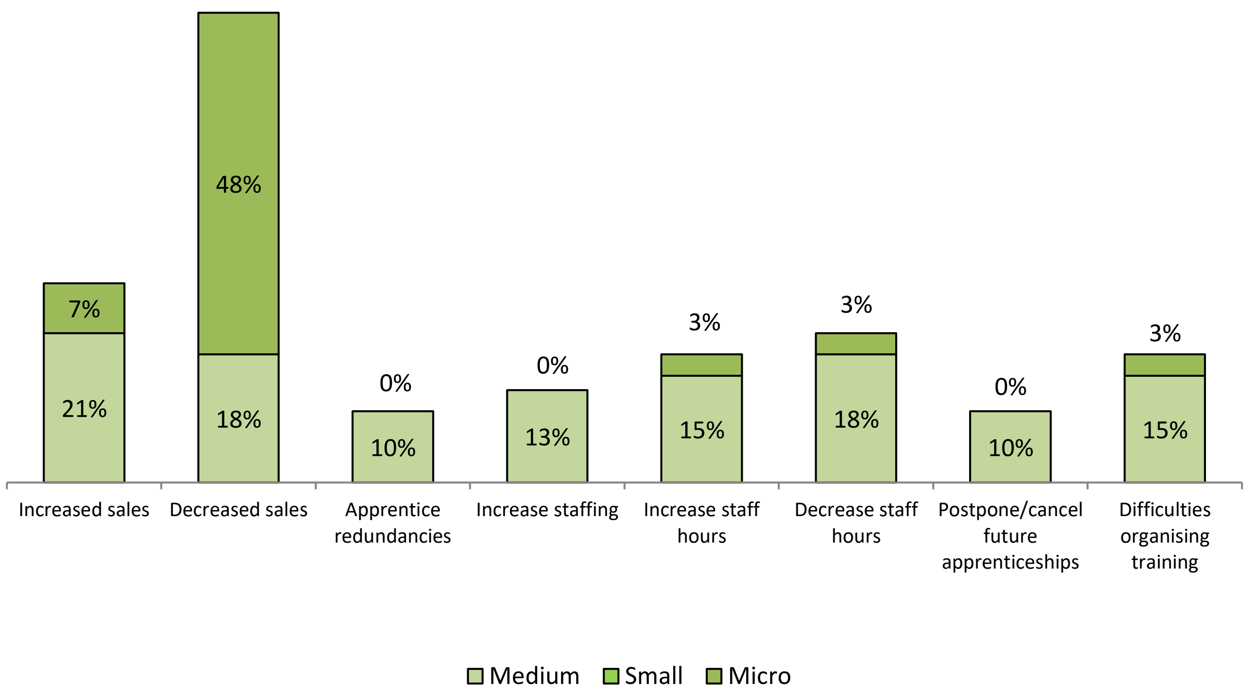
- Micro employers (48%) are more likely to been affected by decreased sales than medium employers (18%).

Medium employers

- Medium employers (10%) are more likely than small employers (0%) to have been affected by having to make apprentice redundancies.
- Medium employers (21%) are more likely than micro employers (7%) to have been affected by increased sales.

- Medium employers are also more likely than micro employers to have been affected by:
    - Increased staffing (13% compared with 0%)
    - Increasing staff hours (15% compared with 3%)
    - Decreasing hours (18% compared with 3%)
    - Postponing/cancelling future apprenticeships (10% compared with 0%)
    - Difficulties in organising training (15% of medium employers compared with 3% of micro employers.).

Chart 10.1c: Cross-tabulation - Impact of COVID-19 on business by organisation size



Sample base = 29 micro, 25 small, 39 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked, what positive impacts, if any, has or will COVID-19 have on their organisation:

- Be able to redo the store
- Cost saving with employees working from home
- Family time
- Lots
- More deliveries required as people shopping more online
- More remote work
- More safe and protected
- People tend to work online a lot. There's a big demand in online learning. Suits us fine
- Trust from clientele
- We have changed the way the students mix; they now are greeted by head of year and welcomed into school in year groups. They all wash their hands more and we have less problems as they mix less
- We have moved a lot of interface online.

Employers in the qualitative survey were also asked what negative impacts, if any, has or will COVID-19 have on their organisation. Of the 33 coded responses from 26 employers who identified a negative impact:

- 13 employers identified a business/trade related impact
- 10 employers identified staff/workforce related impact
- 7 employers identified finance related impact
- 3 employers identified much/many impact.

Multiple response (Coded from open responses)

Open responses are illustrated in List 10.1 and the coded responses are illustrated in Word chart 10.1.

Word chart 10.1: Negative impacts of COVID-19 on organisation

Sample base = 33 words, all 26 employers who identified a negative impact, multiple response, qualitative survey
Refer to text for word representation; word size does not represent frequency
Source: https://www.wordclouds.co.uk/

List 10.1: Negative impacts of COVID-19 on organisation

- A lot
- Difficulty in work and economy
- Financial struggles with little support
- Furloughed staff
- I had to temporarily close during lock down.
- Less able to support students' needs both academic and pastoral
- Less business and less profit
- Less customers
- Less education
- Less interaction and team atmosphere with staff
- Less money, can't go to work, less interaction
- Less outdoor times
- Less people can work
- Less staff
- Literally everything

- Loss in profits
- Loss of income
- Loss of staff and less money circulating
- Lots
- Massive downturn in clients
- Money, workforce
- No children in schools
- Not as much work
- People earn less, or might be not capable of paying us what we want
- Reduced turnover
- Staff isolation unpredictable.

10.2 Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19

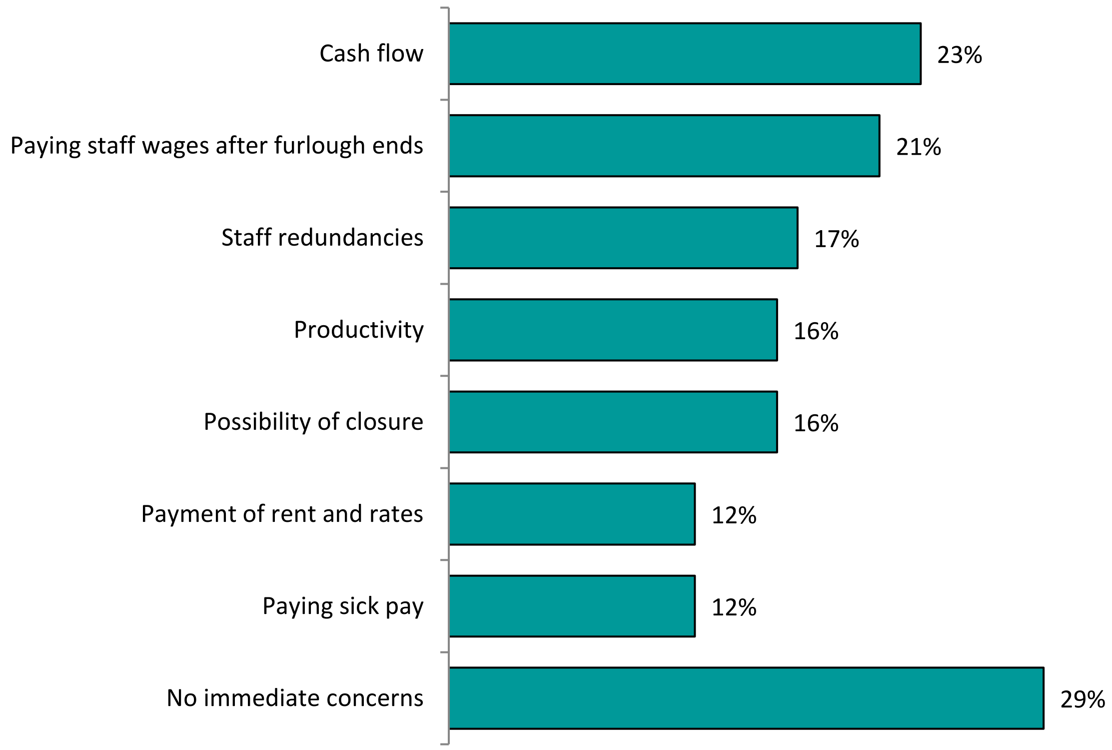
71% of employers have an immediate concern for their business as a result of COVID-19.

23% of employers have an immediate concern regarding cash flow and 21% an immediate concern regarding paying staff wages after furlough ends.

17% of employers have immediate concern regarding staff redundancies, 16% regarding productivity and 16% regarding possibility of closure.

Just over one tenth of employers have current concerns regarding payment of rent and rates (12%) and paying sick pay (12%).

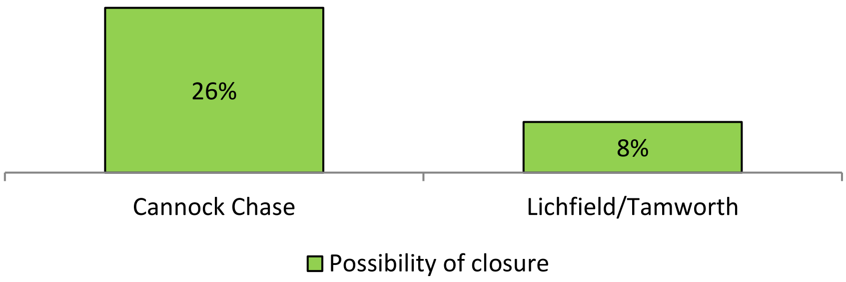
Chart 10.2: Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19



Sample base = 94, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

Employers in Cannock Chase (26%) are more likely to state an immediate concern being the possibility of closure when compared with employers in the Lichfield/Tamworth Area (8%).

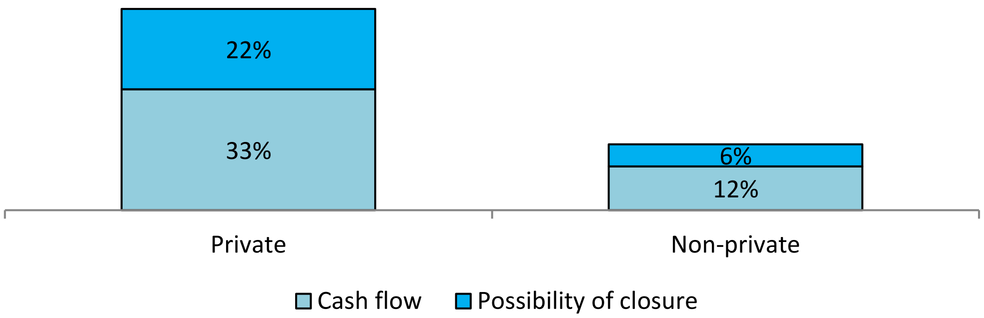
Chart 10.2a: Cross-tabulation - Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19 by location



Sample base = 31 Cannock Chase, 26 Lichfield/Tamworth Area
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (33%) are more likely to identify cash flow as an immediate concern when compared with non-private sector employers (12%). They are also more likely to identify possibility of closure as an immediate concern (22%) when comparted to non-private sector employers (6%).

Chart 10.2b: Cross-tabulation - Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19 by organisation type



Sample base = 54 private sector, 34 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

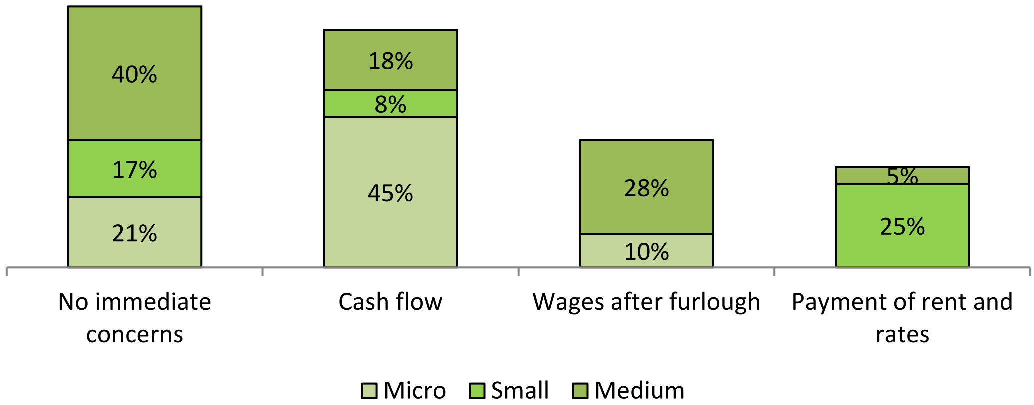
Medium employers (60%) are less likely to have an immediate concern as a result of COVID-19 when compared with micro employers (79%) and small employers (83%).

Medium employers (28%) are more likely to have paying staff wages after furlough ends as an immediate concern when compared with micro employers (10%).

Small employers (25%) are more likely to have payment of rent and rates as an immediate concern when compared with medium employers (5%).

Micro employers (45%) are more likely to identify cash flow as an immediate concern when compared with both small employers (8%) and medium employers (18%).

Chart 10.2b: Cross-tabulation - Immediate business concerns as a result of COVID-19 by organisation size



Sample base = 29 micro, 24 small, 40 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

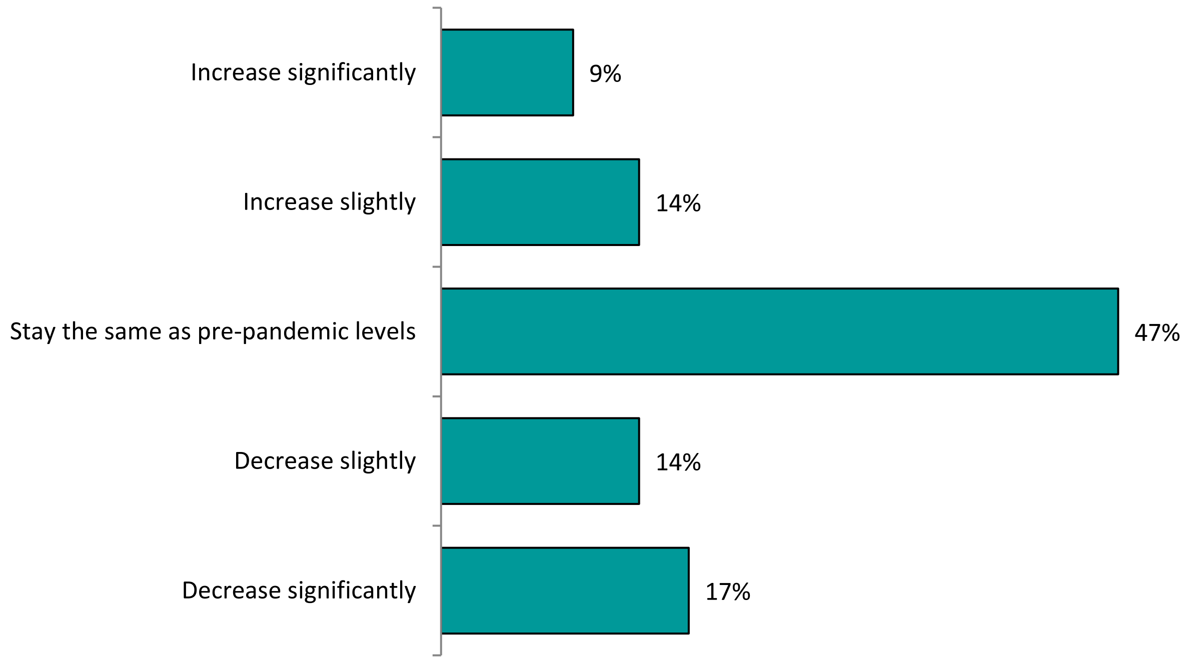
10.3 Impact of COVID-19 on turnover

Nearly one third of employers (31%) expect their turnover to decrease over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19; 17% expect a significant decrease and 14% expect a slight decrease.

Nearly one quarter of employers (23%) expect their turnover to increase over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19; 9% expect a significant increase and 14% a slight increase.

Virtually half of employers (47%) expect their turnover to remain the same as pre-pandemic levels when considering any impact of COVID-19.

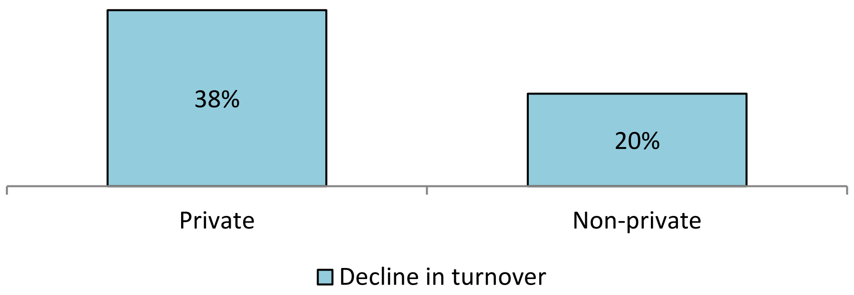
Chart 10.3: Expectation of change in turnover as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months



Sample base = 88, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

Private sector employers (38%) are more likely to identify a decrease in turnover compared with non-private sector employers (20%).

Chart 10.3a: Cross-tabulation - Expectation of change in turnover as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months by type of organisation

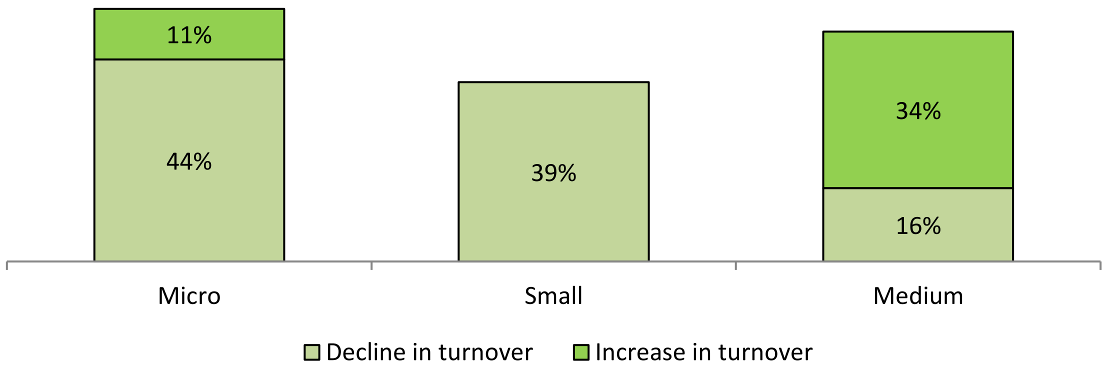


Sample base = 53 private sector, 30 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Medium employers (16%) are less likely to predict a decline in turnover compared with both micro employers (44%) and small employers (39%).

Medium employers (34%) are more likely to predict an increase in turnover compared with micro employers (11%).

Chart 10.3b: Cross-tabulation - Expectation of change in turnover as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months by organisation size



Sample base = 27 micro, 23 small, 38 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

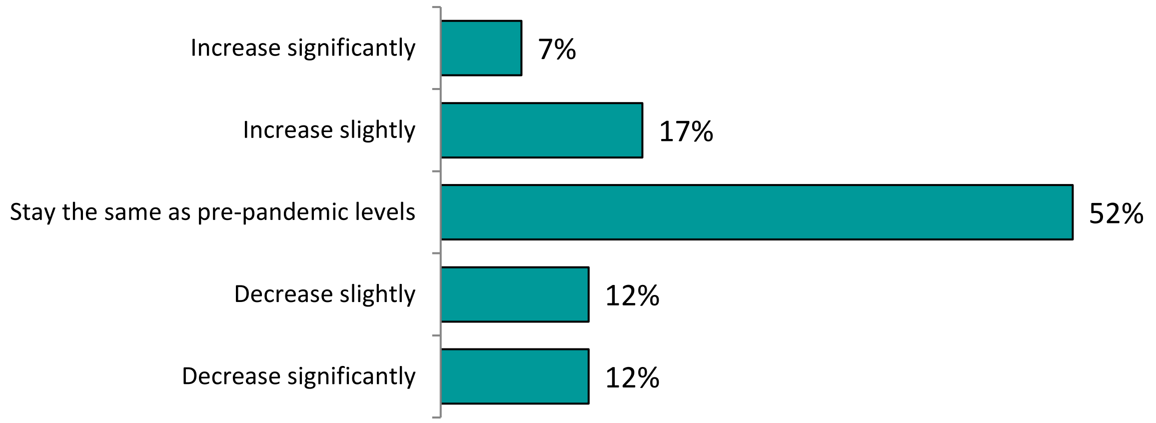
10.4 Impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels

Just under one quarter of employers (24%) expect staffing levels to decrease over the next 12 months as a result of COVID-19, virtually the same proportion as the 23% of employers who expect an increase in staffing levels.

12% of employers expect a significant decline, and 12% a slight decline in staffing levels, with 7% expecting a significant increase in staffing levels and 17% a slight increase.

Just over half of employers (52%) expect staffing levels to remain the same as pre-pandemic levels when considering the impact of COVID-19.

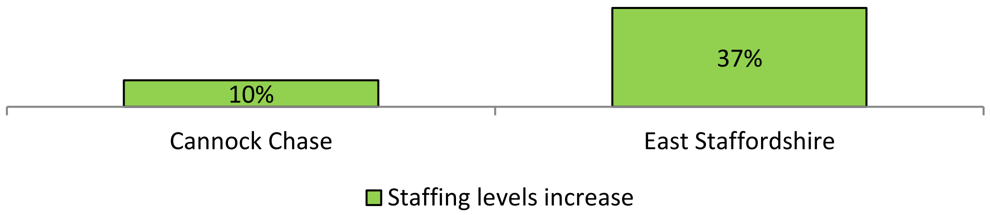
Chart 10.4: Expectation of change in staffing levels as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months



Sample base = 90, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey

Employers in East Staffordshire (37%) are more likely to predict an increase in staffing levels when compared with employers in Cannock Chase (10%).

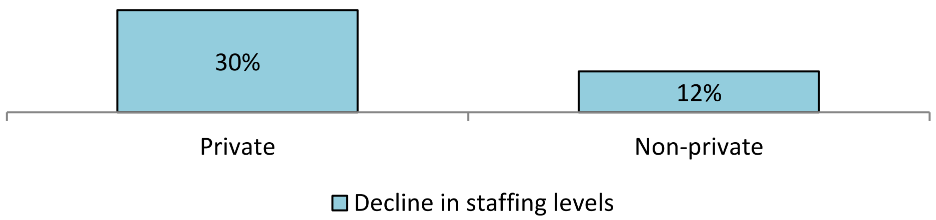
Chart 10.4a: Cross-tabulation - Expectation of change in staffing levels as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months by location



Sample base = 29 Cannock Chase, 35 East Staffordshire
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Private sector employers (30%) are more likely to expect a decline in staffing levels when compared with non-private sector employers (12%)

Chart 10.4b: Cross-tabulation - Expectation of change in staffing levels as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months by organisation type



Sample base = 53 private sector, 33 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Medium employers (33%) are more likely to expect an increase in staffing levels when compared with micro employers (14%).

Chart 10.4c: Cross-tabulation - Expectation of change in staffing levels as a result of COVID-19 over the next 12 months by organisation size

Sample base = 28 micro, 40 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, single response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

11. Business Support

11.1 GBSLEP business support

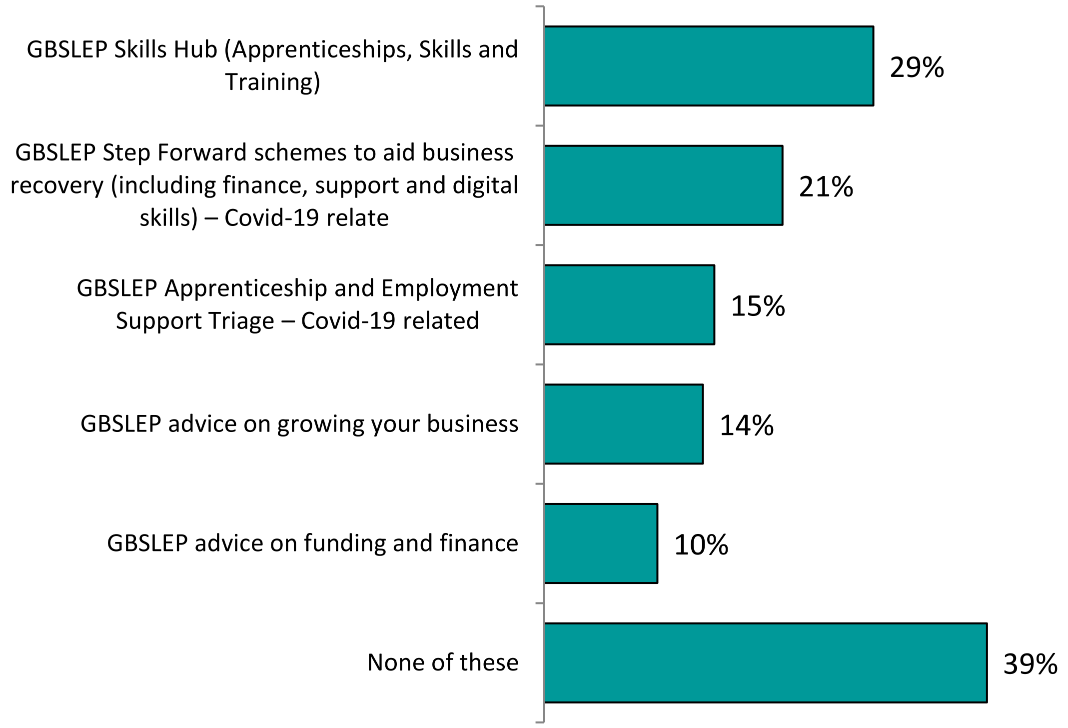
Just over three fifths of employers (61%) would be interested in hearing more about any of the GBSLEP business support projects for local employers (including ones which are linked to COVID-19 impact and recovery), with 39% of employers not interested.

29% of employers are interested in hearing more about the GBSLEP Skills Hub which is related to apprenticeships skills and training.

21% of employers are interested in hearing more about GBSLEP Step Forward schemes which aid business recovery which is CIOVID-19 related (including finance, support and digital skills.

15% of employers are interested to hear more about GBSLEP Apprenticeship and Employment Support Triage, which is COVID-19 related, and 14% are interested in GBSLEP advice on growing your business. 10% of employers would be interested to hear more about GBSLEP advice on funding and finance.

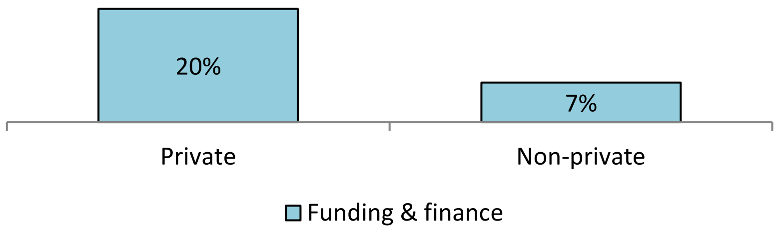
Chart 11.1: Interest in GBSLEP business support projects for local employers



Sample base = 84, all employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey

Private sector employers (20%) are more likely to be interested in GBSLEP advice regarding funding & finance than non-private sector employers (7%)

Chart 11.1a: Cross-tabulation - Interest in GBSLEP business support projects for local employers by organisation type

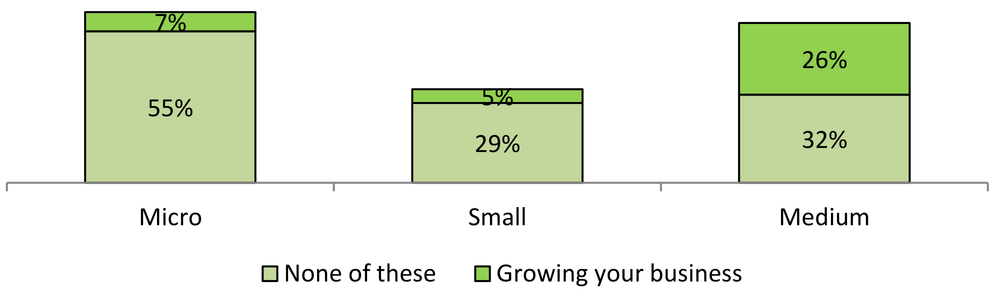


Sample base = 49 private sector, 30 non-private sector
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant difference - please refer to text for detail

Micro employers (45%) are less likely to be interested in hearing more about GBSLEP's services to support local employers than either small employers (71%) or medium employers (68%).

Medium employers (26%) are more likely to be interested in advice on growing their business than either micro employers (7%) or small employers (5%).

Chart 11.1b: Cross-tabulation - Interest in GBSLEP business support projects for local employers by organisation size

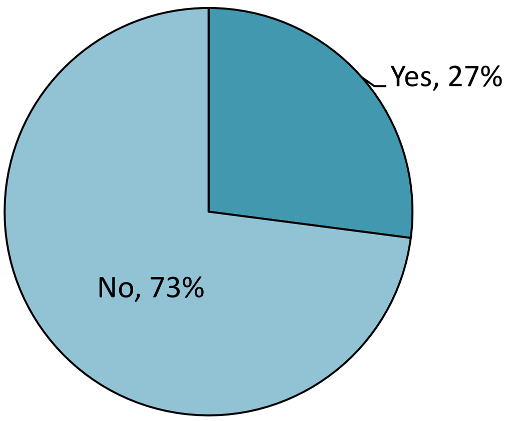


Sample base = 29 micro, 21 small, 34 medium
All employers who provided a response, excludes employers who were unsure, multiple response, quantitative survey
Data where significant differences - please refer to text for detail

11.2 Support related to COVID-19 impact and recovery

As an open response question, employers were asked whether there was any support that they would like to be provided with in relation to COVID-19 impact and recovery. Of employers who provided a response either way, just over one quarter (27%) identified there was such support that would be of interest.

Chart 11.2: Support of interest in relation to COVID-19 impact and recovery



Sample base = 85, employers who stated yes or no to open response question, single response, quantitative survey (quantification of open response)

List 11.2: Type of support in relation to COVID-19 impact and recovery of interest to employers

- Business run from home so qualified for nothing
- Clarity and foreign opportunities
- Extra funding for small businesses
- Financial assistance for new businesses registered before January 2020 but have no Earnings/NIC/Tax history
- Financial discounts/tax relief
- Financial help
- Government should launch more schemes to support small businesses
- Help with recruiting apprentices
- I am concerned about the longevity of my business
- Just clear information
- Monetary support
- Money
- Money
- More information
- Needing help with grants and more financial support
- No our business has to carry on as we need to continue to provide care to people
- Recovery plan
- Staffing and billing support
- There should be more help for the self-employed. It should also be mapped out so businesses can plan at least for the short term
- Update rules regulations
- Yes ...people will lose job so need something to boost up their depression.

Employers in the qualitative survey were asked what business support relating to COVID-19 they would be interested in:

- Advertising
- All of them
- Any support in COVID would be useful
- Anything and everything
- Funding
- Funding or free PPE
- Health
- Job
- Lots
- Maybe certain financial aspects
- Money support
- More grants
- NHS
- NHS
- Rent breaks
- Retail
- Self-employment grant, however this has already been applied for
- Testing
- Universal Credit.

With regard to general areas for business support:

- Customer service
- Global economic
- IT
- Mining
- More Ofsted
- Retail
- Sports
- Support with mental health issues for students and staff.

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