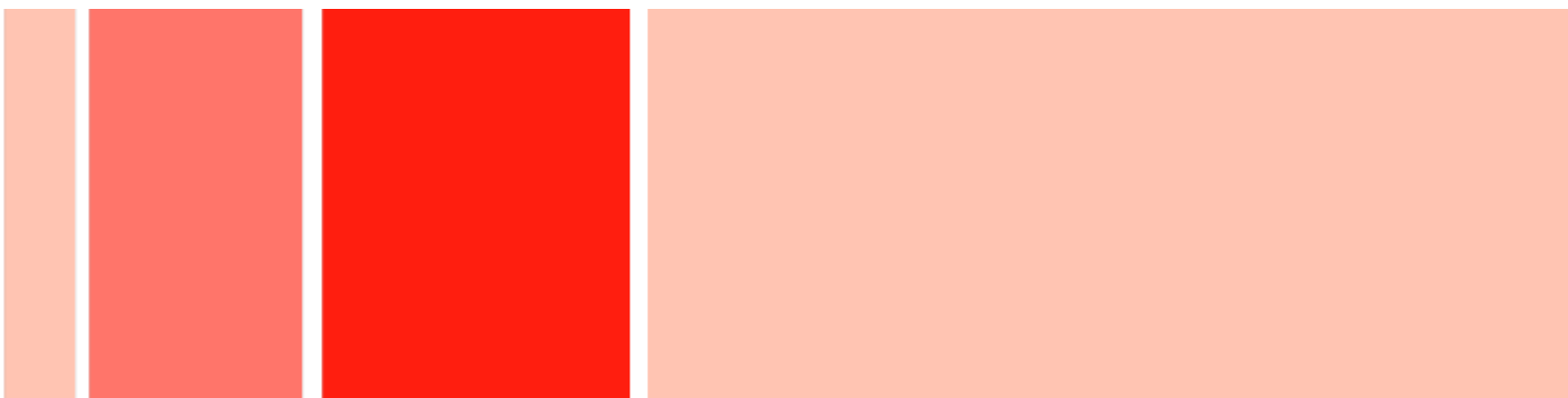


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Employer Skills Survey 2022: north Wales report



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Employer Skills Survey 2022: north Wales report

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of key findings among employers in North Wales from the Welsh Government and Department for Education's Employer Skills Survey (ESS 2022), a large survey of employers which provides a definitive picture of the extent, nature and impact of skills challenges faced by employers.

From 2010-2017, ESS sat alongside the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) to produce insights that complemented each other. The focus on EPS was primarily outward-looking, covering provision of an engagement with the wider skills system, while ESS was more inward-looking, assessing the current skills position and skills needs of employers. Since the 2019 survey, the EPS content has been incorporated into ESS (this is the second ESS in the series to include questions formerly asked in EPS). For further details about the methodology, please see the [Wales national report](#) or the [technical report](#).

Recruitment and external challenges

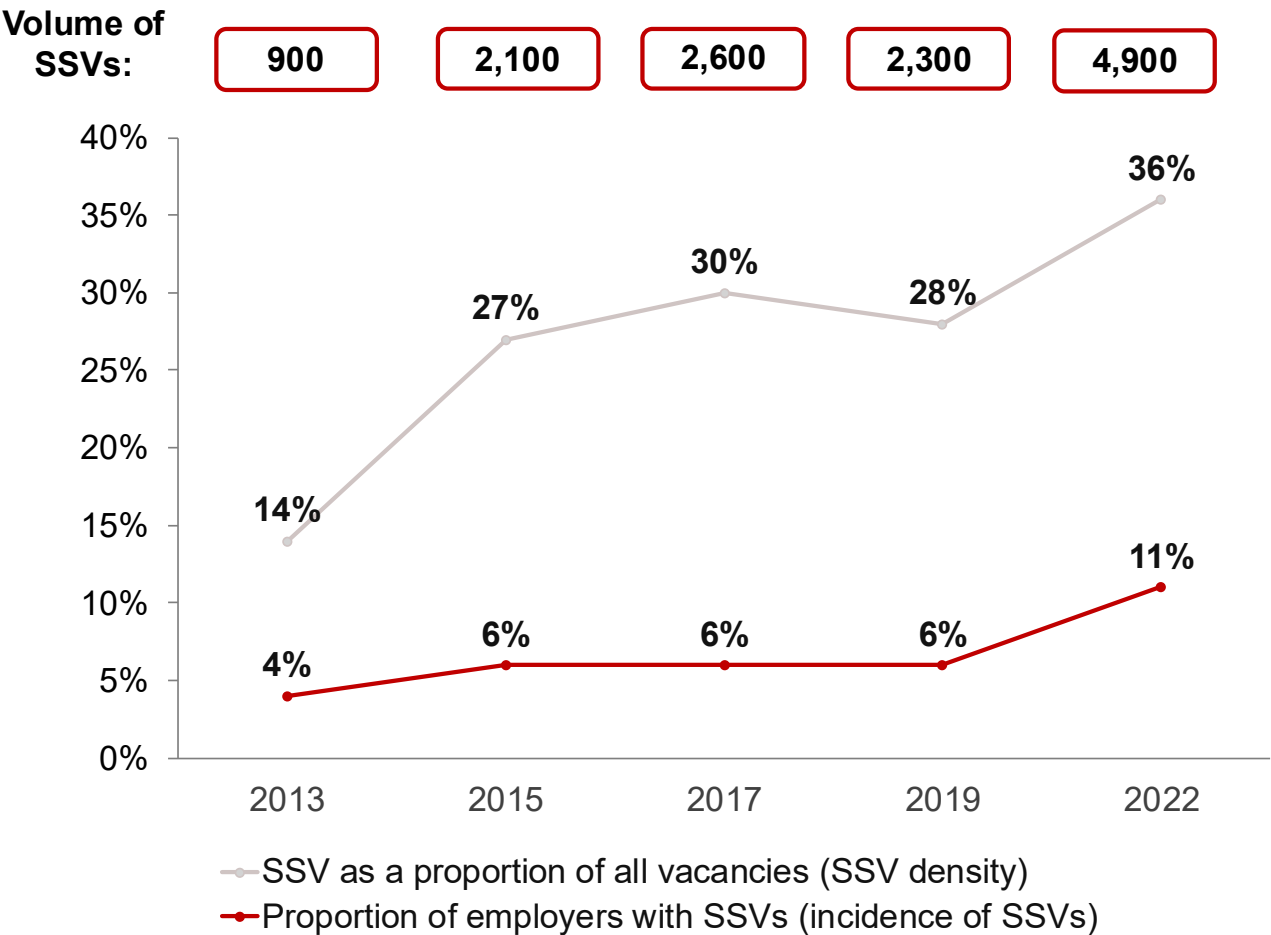
Around one in five (23%) employers in North Wales had vacancies at the time of the survey, which is similar to the proportion in Wales overall (22%). Compared with 2019, the proportion of employers with vacancies in North Wales had increased (23% versus 16%).

The vacancy density (vacancies as a proportion of employment) in North Wales was around one vacancy for every twenty employees (4.7%), which matches the overall picture in Wales (4.7%) but represents an increase in vacancy density compared with 2019 (2.9%). This was due to an increase in the overall number of vacancies (from 8,400 in 2019 to 13,400 in 2022).

More than one in ten employers (11%) in North Wales reported having hard-to-fill vacancies due to applicants lacking the required skills, qualifications, or experience (skill-shortage vacancies, or 'SSVs'). This was similar to the proportion in Wales overall (10%), although there was an increase in the proportion of employers with SSVs compared with 2019 (6%).

More than one third (36%) of vacancies were SSVs in North Wales, in line with the overall Wales result (35%) but an increase from 2019 (28%). There were around 4,900 SSVs in North Wales in 2022, compared with around 2,300 in 2019 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Incidence, density, and volume of SSVs over time in North Wales



Description: Figure 1 shows the proportion of establishments with skill-shortage vacancies (SSVs), SSVs as a proportion of all vacancies (SSV density), and the volume of SSVs for the years 2013 to 2022. The proportion of employers with SSVs increased from 6% in 2019 to 11% in 2022. SSV density increased from 28% in 2019 to 36% in 2022. The total number of SSVs in 2022 was 4,900, the highest in the time series.

Base for incidence of skill-shortage vacancies: All establishments in North Wales: 2022 (1,193); 2019 (1,666); 2017 (1,584); 2015 (1,528); 2013 (1,580). Base for density of skill-shortage vacancies: All establishments with vacancies: 2022 (406); 2019 (373); 2017 (349); 2015 (308); 2013 (294).

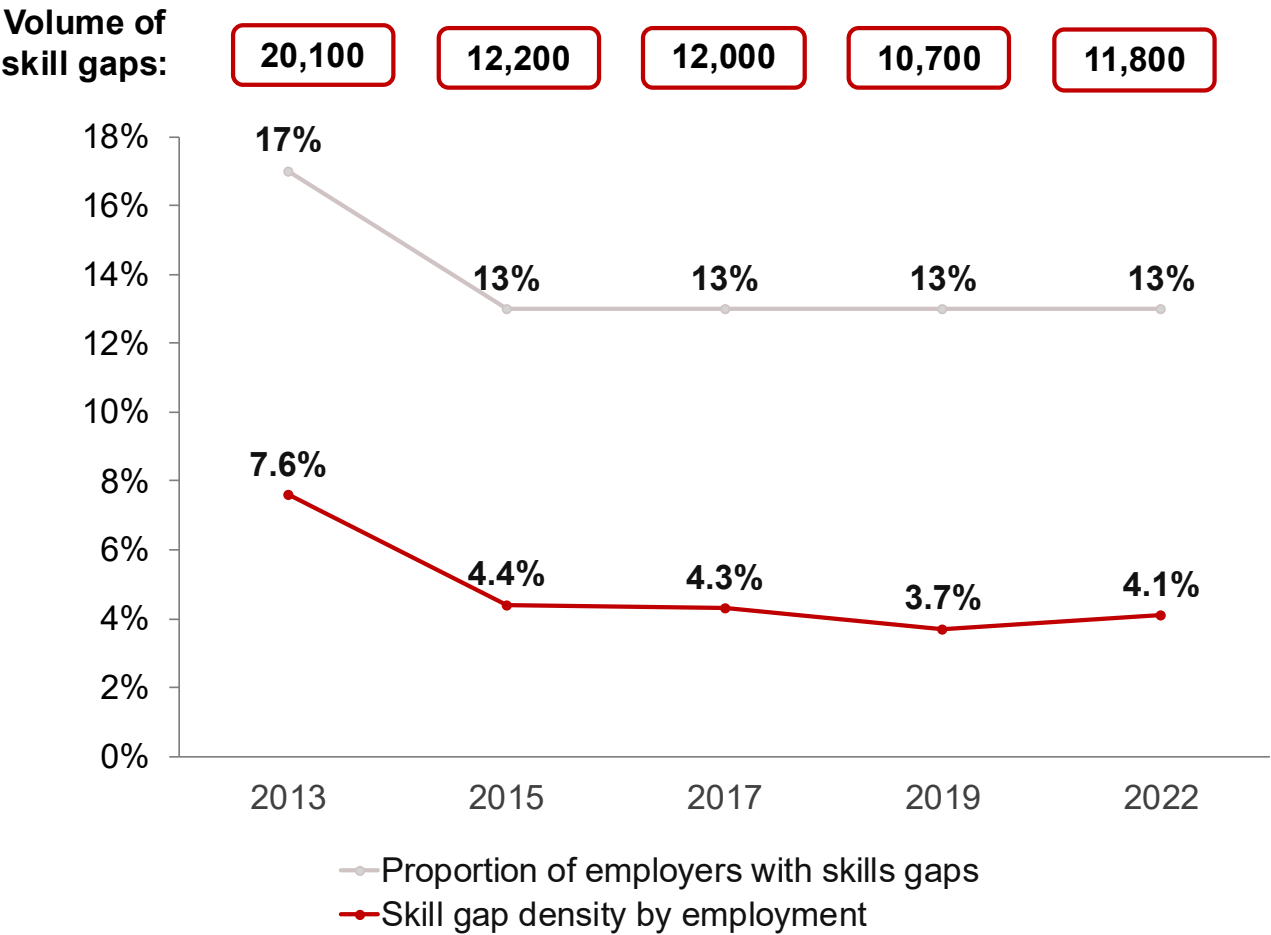
The most common skill that employers found lacking among applicants in North Wales, as in 2019, was specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role (contributing to 58% of SSVs), followed by the ability to manage time and prioritise tasks (47%).

The most common impact of SSVs was increasing the workload of existing employees (88%), as was the case in 2019 (82%) and Wales overall (87%). Other impacts included experiencing increased operating costs (49%) and having difficulties meeting customer services objectives (47%).

The internal skills challenge

Over one in ten (13%) establishments in North Wales reported that they had skills gaps (at least one member of staff not fully proficient in their role), the same proportion as in 2019 (13%) and similar to Wales overall (14%) (Figure 2). The proportion of the workforce in North Wales not considered fully proficient (the skills gaps density) was the same as Wales overall (4.1%) and broadly in line with levels going back to 2015, though a slight increase on 2019 levels (3.7%). There was also an increase in the volume of staff with skills gaps with this increasing from around 10,700 in 2019 to 11,800 in 2022.

Figure 2: Incidence, density, and volume of skills gaps over time in North Wales



Description: Figure 2 shows the proportion of establishments with skills gaps (incidence), the proportion of employees with skills gaps (skills gap density), and the volume of skills gaps for the years 2013 to 2022. The proportion of employers with skills gaps in 2022 remained the same as 2019 (13% in both years). There was a slight increase in skills gaps

density as it increased from 3.7% in 2019 to 4.1% in 2022. The total number of skills gaps increased from 10,700 in 2019 to 11,800 in 2022.

Base: All establishments in North Wales: 2022 (1,193); 2019 (1,666); 2017 (1,584); 2015 (1,528); 2013 (1,580).

Over three quarters (77%) of skills gaps were caused in part by factors that can be considered 'transient' causes – causes that will naturally ease over time, such as being new to the role or training only being partially completed, which is consistent with 2019 (also 77%). The proportion of skills gaps attributed to transient causes only was lower than in 2019 (14% compared to 19% in 2019). Individually, training being only partially completed contributed to 65% of skills gaps and staff being new to the role contributed to 62%, making them by far the most common specific causes of skills gaps.

The skills most commonly lacking and contributing to skills gaps were the ability of staff to manage their own time and prioritise tasks (54%), specialist skills or knowledge required to perform the role (49%) and team working (49%). These were also some of the most commonly lacking skills in 2019. There were particularly large reductions in the proportion of skills gaps attributed in part to a lack of customer handling skills (36% compared with 48% in 2019) and staff lacking the ability to persuade or influence others (26% compared with 38% in 2019).

The most common impact of skills gaps mentioned by employers was increased workloads for other staff (56%), in line with Wales overall (56%) and 2019 (53%). Other impacts included higher operating costs (35%), difficulties meeting quality standards (26%) and difficulties introducing new working practices (26%).

Nearly two fifths (38%) of employers had staff with qualifications and skills more advanced than required for their current jobs, the same proportion as in Wales overall. The proportion of staff who were under-utilised in North Wales was 9.3% compared with 8.8% across Wales.

Training and workforce development

Nearly six in ten (59%) employers in North Wales arranged or funded training for their staff in the last 12 months, which is in line with the rest of Wales (60%) but lower than 2019 (63%) (Table 1). On-the-job training was more common than off-the-job training (49% compared with 37%). While the prevalence of on-the-job training remained in line with 2019 (48% in 2019), the prevalence of off-the-job training had decreased (from 46% in 2019).

The proportion of staff that received training in the last 12 months in North Wales was slightly lower than in Wales overall (65% compared with 63% in Wales) and compared with 2019 (68%).

For those employers who had not provided training in the last 12 months or so, by far the main reason for not doing so was that staff were already considered to be fully proficient (65%), though the proportion of employers mentioning this had reduced compared with

2019 (72%). Reasons relating to COVID-19, including suspension of courses and staff being reluctant to attend them, were mentioned by 9% of employers that did not train.

Table 1: Proportion of employers that trained staff and the proportion of staff trained over the previous 12 months in Wales and North Wales since 2013

	2013		2015		2017		2019		2022	
	Wales	North Wales	Wales	North Wales	Wales	North Wales	Wales	North Wales	Wales	North Wales
% of employers that trained staff over the last 12 months	62	61	63	66	62	61	62	63	60	59
% of staff trained over previous 12 months	62	69	64	60	58	55	65	68	63	65

Base: All establishments 2022: Wales (4,825); North (1,193); 2019: Wales (6,773); North (1,666); 2017: Wales (5,913); North (1,584); 2015: Wales (6,027); North (1,528); 2013: Wales (5,996); North (1,580)

In North Wales, around 188,000 staff were trained for a total of 1.3 million training days. This equated to 6.9 days of training days per person trained per year ('per trainee'), and 4.5 days per employee (similar to 6.8 days per trainee and 4.2 days per employee in Wales overall). The results represent increases from 2019 levels, when 5.5 training days were provided per trainee per year and 3.7 days per employee.

Similar to 2019, the most common type of training offered to employees was job specific training (83% of employers that train), followed by health and safety or first aid training (71%) and basic induction training new staff (62%). These results are similar to the national picture and also to North Wales results in 2019.

Nearly six in ten (56%) employers reported that they were in 'training equilibrium', meaning they undertook the amount of training over the previous 12 months that they wanted, which is consistent with Wales overall (57%) but less than in 2019 (60%). This means that 44% of employers wanted to deliver more training than they had done over the last 12 months.

Apprenticeships

One in ten (10%) employers had apprentices as employees at the time of the survey, while 7% offered apprenticeships but did not have any apprentices. Overall, nearly one in five (18%) employers in North Wales had apprentices or offered apprenticeships, similar to 2019 (14%).

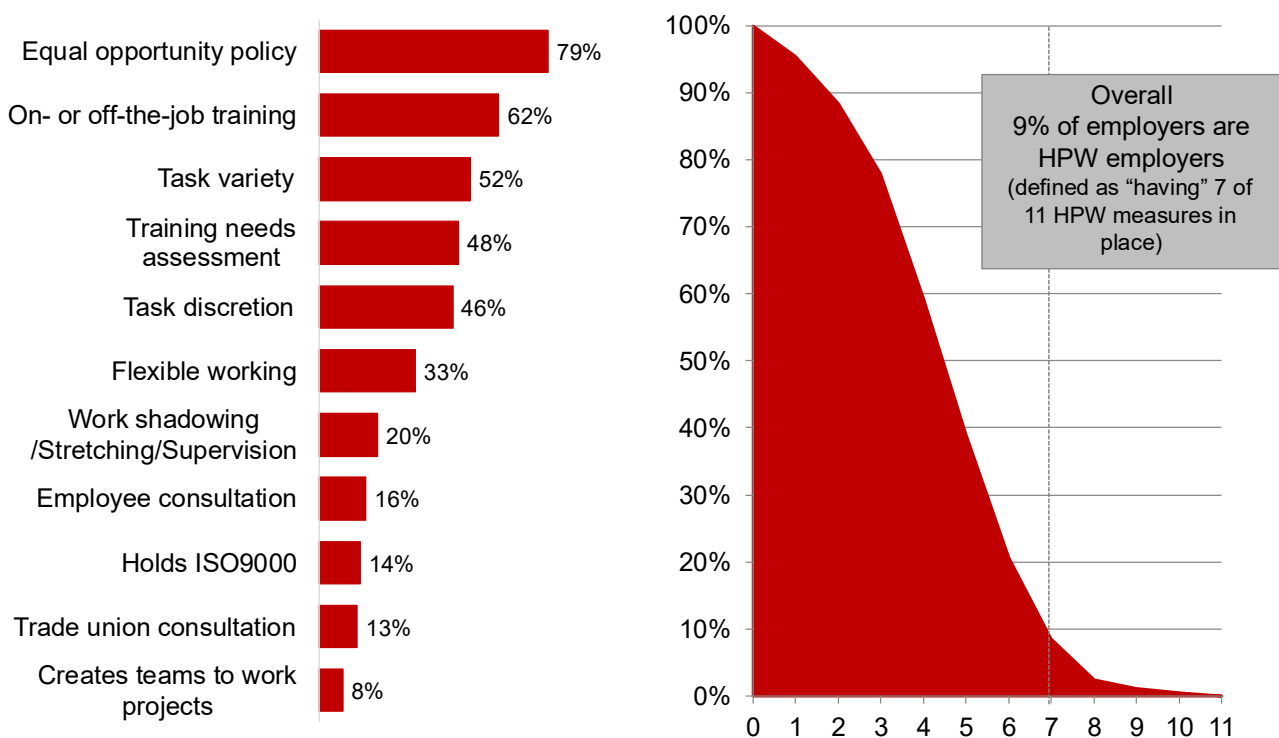
The most common reason for not offering apprenticeships was because employers were not looking to recruit new staff (17%), followed by not needing apprentices due to all current staff being fully skilled (15%), and apprenticeships not being suitable due to the size of the establishment (10%). These were also the three main reasons across Wales overall (17%, 15% and 11% respectively). The top reasons were also similar when compared to 2019 (22%, 16% and 16% respectively).

High Performance Working practices

Nearly one in ten employers (9%) in North Wales qualified as High Performance Working (HPW) employers, meaning they adopted seven out of the 11 High Performance Working practices that were included in the survey (Figure 3). This was the same proportion as in Wales overall.

The most common HPW practice implemented by employers was having an equal opportunity policy (79%). Other common HPW practices implemented included on- or off-the-job training (62%) and task variety (52%).

Figure 3: Prevalence of High Performance Working practices in North Wales, 2022



Description: Figure 3 shows the proportion of employers that have implemented each 'High Performance Working' practice in their workplace. The most common HPW practice to have been implemented was having an equal opportunity policy (79%), followed by on or off-the-job training (62%). The least common practices to implement were creating teams of people who don't usually work together to work on projects (8%) and having trade union consultation (13%). Overall, 9% of employers adhered to seven or more HPW practices.

Base: All establishments in North Wales (Module D) (288)

Conclusions

North Wales saw an increase in the proportion, density, and volume of vacancies in 2022, reflecting a tightening of the labour market, which was also experienced in Wales and the UK more generally. Difficulties filling vacancies were attributed to skills shortages among applicants more than they ever have been before in the UK-wide ESS series. In terms of internal skills challenges, the proportion of employers experiencing skills gaps remained consistent with recent years, though there was a slight uptick in the proportion of employees affected by these skills gaps, bucking the trend of declining rates of skills gaps density seen previously. These skills challenges, both in terms of recruiting suitably skilled staff and the proficiency of current employees, has a detrimental impact on employers and puts pressures on staff workloads.

Training and workforce development can be a means of addressing skills challenges, however these skills challenges have been accompanied by reductions in the proportion of employers arranging or funding training for staff and the overall proportion of employees trained (though more training days are being received among those who are trained). There has been a marked reduction in the provision of off-the-job training specifically.

Compared with 2019, fewer employers reported that they were in 'training equilibrium' (they wanted to provide more training than they had done over the previous 12 months), and although still the main reason for not training, fewer employers said they had not provided training because staff were fully proficient. These results indicate that employers may be facing more substantive barriers to training than they had previously. It is therefore important that employers can easily access the training their organisation needs to help address the skills challenges discussed. Furthermore, it will be important to make sure employers understand the benefits of investing in training and workforce development.

Main findings

		North Wales	Wales
	2019	2022	2022
Vacancies and skill-shortage vacancies (SSVs)			
% of establishments with any vacancies	16	23	22
% of establishments with any hard-to-fill vacancies	8	17	15
% of establishments with SSVs	6	11	10
% of all vacancies that are SSVs	28	36	35
Number of vacancies	8,400	13,400	58,900
Number of skill-shortage vacancies	2,300	4,900	20,600
Skills gaps			
% of establishments with any staff not fully proficient	13	13	14
Number of staff not fully proficient	10,700	11,800	51,500
% of staff not fully proficient	3.7	4.1	4.1
Training			
% of establishments training any staff over the last 12 months	63	59	60
% of establishments providing off-the-job training in the last 12 months	46	37	36
% of workforce trained	68	65	63
Total days training	1.1m	1.3m	5.3m
Training			
Training days per trainee	5.5	6.9	6.8
Training days per employee	3.7	4.5	4.2
Apprenticeships			
Currently have apprentices on site or offer apprenticeships	14	18	17
% of employers planning to offer apprenticeships in the future	25	32	35

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.