

# CHESHIRE & WARRINGTON

## LMI SUMMARY



**UKCES**

UK COMMISSION FOR  
EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

# ABOUT

This document provides a summary of key findings for the Cheshire and Warrington LEP area, based on findings from three major UKCES research products: Working Futures, the Employer Skills Survey (ESS) and the Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS).

Throughout the document, findings for the LEP area are compared with England or the UK as a whole.

For ESS and EPS differences are only reported when they are statistically significant; when figures are described as 'similar' or 'no different', this means that there is no statistically significant difference. Whilst the percentages may differ slightly between the figure for the LEP area and England/the UK, when we say 'similar' it means that we cannot be confident that the difference is due to anything more than chance. In the case of Working Futures statistical significance is a more complex issue, since the analysis is forward-looking. The published guidelines relating to the interpretation of this dataset have been followed.



## Working Futures

Working Futures uses robust sources of national data on demographics, education, employment and the economy to make projections of the UK labour market. Whilst not a crystal-ball, Working Futures moves beyond anecdotal guesses to provide rigorous, evidence-based projections through the application of proven models.



## Employer Skills Survey

The Employer Skills Survey is the UK's definitive source of intelligence on employer investment. Exploring the skills challenges that employers face, the levels and nature of training investment, recruitment of young people and the relationship between skills challenges and business strategy, the ESS gives us a reliable, timely and valuable insight into the skills issues employers face.



## Employer Perspectives Survey

The Employer Perspectives Survey provides insights into the thoughts and behaviour of UK Employers as they make decisions about how to engage with training providers, schools, colleges and individuals in the wider skills system, to get the skills they need.

# WORKING FUTURES

2012 - 2022

## Jobs and the economy

- The overall picture for the UK economy over the next decade (2012-2022) is one of gradual upturn, but with no quick return to long term trends as observed following previous recessions.
- Overall, the number of jobs in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area is projected to rise by around 26,000 over the next decade (2012-2022), an average annual rate of growth of 0.5 per cent. This is just slightly lower than the UK average rate (0.6 per cent).

## Sectors

- The sector profile of the LEP area is similar to the UK as a whole. However, the Cheshire & Warrington area is somewhat “over-represented”, relative to the UK, in professional services, agriculture and finance & insurance. It is “under-represented” in education, health & social work and public admin & defence.
- Private sector services as a whole are expected to contribute 83 per cent of the net job growth in the LEP area between 2012 and 2022, slightly higher than the UK average of 85 per cent.
- The leading sources of employment growth in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area (in absolute terms) are forecast to be health & social work (+8,000), professional services (+5,000), and information technology (+5,000).
- Public administration is projected to see a net decline in its level of employment between 2012 and 2022 in the LEP area (loss of 2,000 jobs, equivalent to a fall of 10 per cent); this decline is slightly higher than the overall UK average decline of nine per cent.
- Manufacturing (including engineering and food & drink manufacturing) is projected to see a continued decline in jobs (with a loss of 2,000 jobs – the equivalent of a fall of 5 per cent over the decade in the LEP area). This decline is slightly less than for the UK as a whole (-9 per cent).

## Occupations

- The Cheshire & Warrington LEP area has a lower representation of employment in higher skilled occupations, compared with the UK as a whole. In the LEP area, 39 per cent of employment is in the three high skilled occupational groups: managers, professionals and associate professionals. This compares with a UK average of 43 per cent. The figure is much higher in London (57 per cent).
- The proportion of employment in the three lowest-skilled occupations is slightly higher than the UK average. In the LEP area, 27 per cent of employment is in sales or customer service, plant/process operatives and elementary roles, compared with a UK average of 25 per cent.
- The proportion employed in middle-ranking occupations is also slightly higher than the UK average: jobs in administrative, skilled trades and caring/leisure roles account for 34 per cent of employment in the LEP area, compared with 32 per cent in the UK.
- As with the wider UK picture, Working Futures projections indicate job growth concentrated in higher level roles, as well as in lower level roles relating to care. The projections for the LEP area are for:
  - 31,000 additional high level jobs (for managers, professionals and associate professionals), with around half of these in professional roles. Higher skilled jobs are expected to grow at broadly the same rate as that in the UK as a whole (16 per cent in Cheshire & Warrington compared with 17 per cent in the UK over the course of the decade).
  - 12,000 fewer jobs in middle ranking administrative, secretarial and skilled trades occupations. Nevertheless, these areas of decline are expected to remain significant sources of employment by the end of the decade. For example, there are still expected to be around 63,000 administrative and secretarial jobs in 2022 in the LEP area, despite the loss of around 6,000 jobs in the previous decade.

- Around 11,000 additional jobs in caring or leisure roles.
- Women are expected to take almost three-quarters of the additional high level jobs created in the LEP area over the decade, as well as most of the additional jobs in caring roles. However, female workers will be hit by the losses noted above in sales, administrative and elementary jobs.

## Qualifications

- As a result of supply and demand factors, the qualification profile of employment is expected to shift markedly in the LEP area:
  - The proportion of jobs held by people qualified at a higher level (level 4 and above) is projected to increase from 38 per cent to 49 per cent between 2012 and 2022.
  - Workers with low qualifications (below level 2) are expected to decline from 20 per cent to 13 per cent of the total workforce over this period.

## Replacement Demands

- We estimate that replacement demands (i.e. job openings created by people leaving the labour force temporarily or permanently) will contribute almost eight times as many job openings as net job growth over the next decade: 196,000 openings compared with 26,000.
- Replacement demands mean that there will be a need to recruit suitably skilled people across all broad occupational groups, including those projected to decline:
  - For some occupational groups (mostly higher skilled ones), we expect to see strong net growth in the number of jobs, supplemented by large replacement demands. For example, net growth of 16,000 jobs in professional roles is projected to be supplemented by 35,000 job openings arising from replacement demands.
  - For those occupational areas in which we expect to see a net decline in the number of jobs, replacement demands mean that we can still expect a strong supply of job openings. For example, in administrative occupations it is projected that a net loss of around 1,000 jobs will be more than offset by 23,000 job openings resulting from replacement demands.

# EMPLOYER SKILLS SURVEY

## 2013

### Skill shortages

- In total, 17 per cent of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area reported vacancies at the time of the survey (March to July 2013). This is similar to the proportion in England as a whole (15 per cent).
- While in most cases demand for skills is met through successful recruitment, around two fifths of vacancies in the LEP area (42 per cent) are reported to be hard-to-fill. This is quite a lot higher than the rate found across England as a whole (28 per cent).
- When asked (without prompting) about the main reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies in their establishment, the low number of applicants with the required skills is seen as the main reason (57 per cent) in the Cheshire & Warrington area. This was higher than the corresponding figure across England as a whole (41 per cent). Employers in the LEP area also reported a lack of applicants with the work experience the company demands as the second highest reason for the existence of hard to fill vacancies.
- Overall, 'skill-shortage' vacancies represent 33 per cent of all vacancies in the LEP area, which is again higher than the England-wide figure of 22 per cent.

### Skill gaps

- Most employers say that they have a proficient workforce with no skill gaps. The proportion reporting skills gaps is the same in the LEP area to that in England as a whole: 15 per cent. This represents five per cent of the total workforce in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area, and is again the same figure as that for the whole of England.
- In most cases, proficiency problems are due at least in part to employees being new in their roles and/or still in training for their roles. These factors account at least in part for 79 per cent of all skills gaps in the LEP area, slightly higher than in England as a whole (75 per cent). In addition, employers in the LEP area also attribute workforce proficiency problems to being unable to recruit people with the right skills, and this factor features more strongly in the LEP area than in England generally.
- In the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area, and in England more widely, the main impact of proficiency problems is an increased workload for other staff.
- In the LEP area, (internal) skills gaps are most prominent for machine operatives and sales & customer service roles, while the greatest density of (external) skill shortages are among skilled trades occupations, professionals and administration & clerical roles. In England as a whole, (internal) skills gaps are also focused on elementary staff as well as sales and customer services; however, the England-wide picture for (external) skill shortages is somewhat different, with skill shortages most acute for skilled trades.
- In general, employers tend to be challenged either in terms of having inadequate skills among some of their existing workforce or struggling to find new recruits with the skills that the vacant positions require. It is very rare for employers to be challenged from both directions; just two per cent of all employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area experience both skill-shortage vacancies and skills gaps; this is higher than the one per cent in England as a whole.
- Just over half of employers in the LEP area (51 per cent) report skills under-use (i.e. they have staff who are over-skilled and over-qualified for the jobs that they are currently doing); this is slightly higher than both the North West region and the England-wide figures, which stand at 48 per cent and 47 per cent respectively.

### Training and Workforce Development

- Most employers fund or arrange training for their staff: in the LEP area; two-thirds had done so over the previous 12 months (68 per cent). This was broadly the same as the figure found across England as a whole (66 per cent).

- Half of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area provide off-the-job training (51 per cent), while one in six offer on-the-job training only (16 per cent). These proportions are similar to the England-wide average figures (48 per cent and 17 per cent respectively).
- The number of staff receiving training in the LEP area (59 per cent) was slightly lower than that found in England generally (62 per cent). The number of days training per trainee was, however, very similar to that found nationally. Each person trained received an average of 6.6 days training over the previous 12 months, compared with 6.7 days on average in England.
- While most employers could be described as being in 'training equilibrium' having been able to provide all the training that they wanted over the previous 12 months, two-fifths of all employers in the LEP area (41 per cent, including non-trainers that had not delivered any) wanted to provide more training than they had been able to do. The proportion in England as a whole was very similar at 42 per cent.

## Recruitment of Young People

- Around a quarter of employers in the LEP area (27 per cent) recruited at least one education leaver in the two to three years preceding the survey. This was the same as the rate found England-wide. Specifically:
  - Nine per cent had recruited a 16 year-old school leaver (similar to the England average of eight per cent);
  - 12 per cent had recruited a 17-18 year-old school leaver (similar to the England-wide figure of 11 per cent);
  - 12 per cent had recruited a 17-18 year old college leaver (the same as the England-wide figure);
  - 14 per cent had recruited someone from a university or HEI (again, the same as the England figure).

## High Performance Working practices and Product Market Strategies

- High Performance Working (HPW) is defined by the UK Commission as 'a general approach to managing organisations that aims to stimulate more effective employee involvement and commitment in order to achieve high levels of performance' (UKCES 2009).
- The survey identifies a minority of employers –16 per cent in the LEP area – who are "HPW employers" in the sense that they adopt a number of HPW practices. This is higher than the proportion in England as a whole (12 per cent).
- Product Market Strategies (PMS) are defined within the survey by aggregating responses to a series of questions exploring pricing strategies, approaches to innovation and the nature of the product market (the extent to which the market attracts a "premium" and the extent of customisation of products and services in the market).
- Aggregating these responses classifies almost half (47 per cent) of private sector employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area as having a high or very high product market strategy, indicating that their competitive success is not dependent on price, they pursue innovation, they compete on quality and/or that they offer customised goods or services. This is similar to the 45 per cent found in England as a whole.

# EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES SURVEY 2014

## Employer Perspectives on Recruitment

- Half (50 per cent) of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area recorded at least one vacancy in the 12 months preceding the survey. This was identical to the proportion found across England as a whole.
- Relevant work experience was rated by three-quarters of recruiting employers in the Cheshire & Warrington area (75 per cent) as being a critical or significant factor looked for in candidates. This was significantly higher than the finding across England at 66 per cent. Having at least GCSE Maths and English A\*-C followed next, rated as critical or significant by 65 per cent of recruiting employers. Around three-fifths (58 per cent) rated academic qualifications as critical or significant which is significantly higher than found across England (49 per cent). Almost half of recruiting employers rated candidates having relevant vocational qualifications as critical or significant (48 per cent) as compared with 50 per cent England-wide. Overall, these priorities reflect the wider picture across England. Over time, the survey as a whole has seen an increasing importance placed on both academic and vocational qualifications by recruiting employers.
- Overall, 29 per cent of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area had taken on someone under the age of 25 in the previous 12 months. This was similar to the 31 per cent seen across England as a whole. At the other end of the age spectrum, roughly one in eight employers had taken on someone aged 50 years or older (12 per cent as compared to 13 per cent in England as a whole).

## Employer Perspectives on Work Experience

- Just under half of employers in the LEP area (46 per cent) had provided individuals with work placements in the previous 12 months, while 25 per cent had conducted 'work inspiration' activities with people in education (such as mock interviews, delivering talks and holding site visits for students). Both of these findings were significantly higher than the figures seen across England (38 per cent for work placements and 18 per cent for 'work inspiration').
- EPS 2014 canvassed employers' awareness of Traineeships and found that two-thirds of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area (66 per cent) had heard of the scheme, similar to the figure for England. However, the survey as a whole indicated that many of these employers had limited knowledge of the scheme.

## Employer Perspectives on People Development

- Just under half of employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area offered external training (45 per cent), although internal training provision was more common (69 per cent). The LEP figure for external training is identical to that found across England, however, the figure for internal training is significantly higher (69 per cent as opposed to 58 per cent).
- Employers most commonly look to private providers (private sector training firms or third sector providers) when they are looking outside of their own organisation to deliver training: 43 per cent of all employers in the LEP area engaged the services of private providers (broadly in-line with the England-wide figure of 41 per cent), while eight per cent used FE Colleges, which is identical to the finding across England. When it comes to higher education providers, just two per cent of local employers had used them to deliver training, similar to the England-wide figure. Nationally, the survey as a whole indicates that the gap between use of private and public provision has widened in recent years.
- Around a third of establishments in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area (34 per cent) offered training that is designed to lead to a vocational qualification (significantly higher than the figure for the whole of England – 26 per cent).

- Around one in four employers in the LEP area (27 per cent) had worked with other employers to access, develop or share expertise on skills and training. This is significantly higher than the proportion for England as a whole (17 per cent). In general, the survey found that the nature of these relationships was equally likely to be formal or informal/ad hoc.
- One third of establishments in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area (34 per cent) had sought external information, advice or other practical help on skills and training-related issues in the last 12 months. This is similar to the England-wide figure.
- National Occupational Standards (NOS) specify the standard of performance an individual must achieve when carrying out a function in the workplace, together with the knowledge and understanding they need to meet that standard consistently. Broadly speaking, there was some awareness of the standards: around two-fifths of all employers in the LEP area (42 per cent) had heard of National Occupational Standards; this was broadly similar to the proportion in England generally, where the figure was 39 per cent.

## Employer Perspectives on Apprenticeships

- Almost one-fifth of employers in the LEP area (18 per cent) offered formal Apprenticeships (following a framework and designed to lead to a nationally recognised qualification), similar to the England-wide figure of 15 per cent.
- At the time of the survey, almost two-fifths of all employers in the Cheshire & Warrington LEP area were expecting to offer formal Apprenticeships in the future (37 per cent, which is broadly in line with the figure of 35 per cent for England as a whole).







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