



# Skills Funding Agency

## **FE Choices Employer Satisfaction Survey National report 2013 to 2014**

### **Introduction**

This report provides a national overview of the findings of the FE Choices Employer Satisfaction Survey 2013 to 2014. The survey asked employers to rate their providers on learning delivered in 2013/14. More than 265,000 employers received training funded by the Skills Funding Agency during this period.

FE Choices provides consistent and comparable information for employers and learners to help them make informed choices about publicly funded education and training. It also provides consistent management information on key performance indicators. FE Choices comprises a set of performance indicators that cover aspects of a college or provider's provision including success rates; learner destinations and satisfaction levels of learners and employers. This report focuses on the Employer Satisfaction Survey results only.

The Employer Satisfaction Survey 2013 to 2014 took place between April and May 2014. The survey was administered using multi-mode: postal, online and telephone. Over 52,000 employers (20% of employers receiving funding) took part in the survey and gave their views on the training their employees received: 61% completed the survey online, 27% used paper questionnaires and 11% by telephone. The employers that took part in the survey were representative of the 265,005 employers that received training funded by the Skills Funding Agency in 2013 to 2014 in terms of workplace industry sector and size, and provider type. As a result the findings are unweighted. This report only comments on subgroup differences that are statistically significant.

The survey explores training funded by the Skills Funding Agency and delivered by 737 providers which included General Further Education (FE) Colleges, private sector providers, other public-funded organisations and Special Colleges.

### **The characteristics of employers delivering public-funded learning**

The majority of employer-respondents work in small workplaces (78% in workplaces with 1-49 employees); 16% were in medium workplaces (50-249 employees) and 6% in large (250+ employees). A diverse range of industry sectors were represented, with the largest groups of employer respondents in the "human health and social work" and "wholesale and retail trade" sectors (17% and 13% respectively).

Reflecting the high representation of small workplaces, over three quarters of employer-respondents (77%) had between 1-4 learners undertaking training funded by the Skills Funding Agency.

Overall 23% of employer-respondents had made a financial contribution towards the cost of the training. As in the 2012 to 2013 survey, medium and large employers were



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more likely than smaller workplaces to have made a financial contribution (31% and 45% respectively compared with 20% of workplaces with 1-49 employees).

Over nine in ten employer-respondents (92%) were using providers to deliver apprenticeships, predominantly in four sector subject areas: Business, Administration and Law (32% of workplaces); Health, Public Services and Care (20%); Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (19%); and Retail and Commercial Enterprise (17%). There has been a significant decline in workplace learning which is consistent with the greater emphasis towards funding apprenticeships (4% of employer-respondents were delivering workplace learning compared with 24% in the 2012 to 2013 survey).

## Key findings

As in previous years of the survey, employers were very positive about the training received by their employees.

Over seven in ten (73%) were very satisfied about the **benefits of the training to their organisation**, as well as with the **overall quality of the training/assessment**. Ratings on the benefits of the training had increased by two percentage points since 2012 to 2013.

Over three quarters employers (77%) reported that they were highly likely to **recommend the training provider to other employers** – an increase of one percentage point since 2012 to 2013.

Employers were equally positive regarding other aspects of the training, with at least seven in ten giving a rating of 8-10 across all key aspects that were measured. In particular, employers were especially positive about the **professionalism of the staff**, with 79% giving a rating of 8-10 to staff delivering the training. They were also positive about the **flexibility of the training** and the **use of up-to-date industry practices**, with 75% and 74% respectively rating them highly. Ratings on staff professionalism had increased by two percentage points since 2012 to 2013, whilst ratings for flexibility and use of up-to-date industry practices were unchanged.

Other aspects that were rated highly by employers included: the **overall efficiency** in their dealing with the provider (73%); the provider's **understanding** of their organisation's training needs (72%); and the provider's **communication** throughout the process (70%).

The high ratings overall mean that there were limited subgroup differences: workplaces with 2-9 employees were generally less positive than average, as were employers who were only delivering apprenticeships to 16-18 year olds. In terms of provider type, private sector providers consistently received the most positive ratings from employers. These patterns were consistent with the 2012 to 2013 survey.



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Focusing specifically on apprenticeships in the four sector subject areas (SSAs) with the highest employer volumes, ratings were generally (slightly) higher for **Retail & Commercial Enterprise** and **Health, Public Services & Care**, compared with **Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies** and **Business, Administration & Law**. All four SSAs were rated positively by at least seven in ten employers so the differences are generally minor; this also applies more generally to other subgroup differences and, therefore, should not detract from the findings that the majority of employers were positive about their experience and willing to act as advocates for their provider.

## **Note regarding slides**

The 'total base size' is the number of employers answering a question. The base size varies because some employers do not answer all of the questions. Slide 5, for example, shows the total base size of 52,471, which is the total number of employers that responded to this question. Slide 24 includes breakdown by Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP Areas) for each region. The regions are noted in abbreviated format, as follows: EE – East of England, EM – East Midlands, GL-Greater London, NE – North East, NW – North West, SE – South East, SW- South West, WM- West Midlands, YH - Yorkshire and Humber.