



Plymouth Priority Sector Skills Audit



Socio-economic Research and Intelligence Observatory

In April this year your business participated in a survey to determine the training and skills needs of businesses in the Plymouth area. The research was carried out by the University of Plymouth on behalf of the Plymouth Employment and Skills Board. As promised, this newsletter highlights the key findings from the research.

the research...

The research aims to help understand the skills needs and constraints faced by businesses in Plymouth's priority sectors.

The research was commissioned by the Plymouth Employment and Skills Board (PESB), an employer-led voluntary body supported by public sector partners including Plymouth City Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Government Office for the South West.

PESB will use the research in their future work to identify local strategic skills priorities and encourage demand and investment in related provision.

the survey...

The questionnaire was sent out to over 2000 business from Plymouth's six priority sectors – identified in the City Growth Strategy:

- Advanced Engineering,
- Business Services,
- Creative Industries,
- Marine Industries,
- Medical and Healthcare, and,
- Tourism and Leisure.

Over 350 businesses completed the survey.

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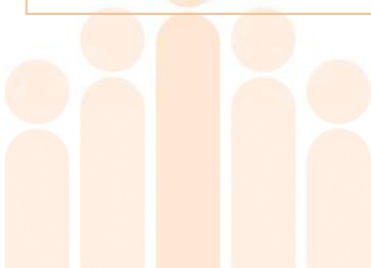
business profile...

- The majority of businesses that responded were small, with half employing between one and four members of staff, reflective of the high levels of micro-enterprise in the South West.
- Employers in the Business Services and Marine Industries sectors tended to be smaller, whereas large companies were more common in the Advanced Engineering, Medical and Healthcare, and Tourism and Leisure sectors.
- Only 17% of employees had degree-level or equivalent qualifications, which is significantly lower than the national or regional average.
- Businesses felt that the biggest current and future skills-related challenge facing them was recruiting adequately skilled, trained or experienced staff.



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Businesses in Plymouth are experiencing more difficulties recruiting than average



skills gaps exist where employers consider their current staff are not fully proficient in their jobs.

skills gaps...

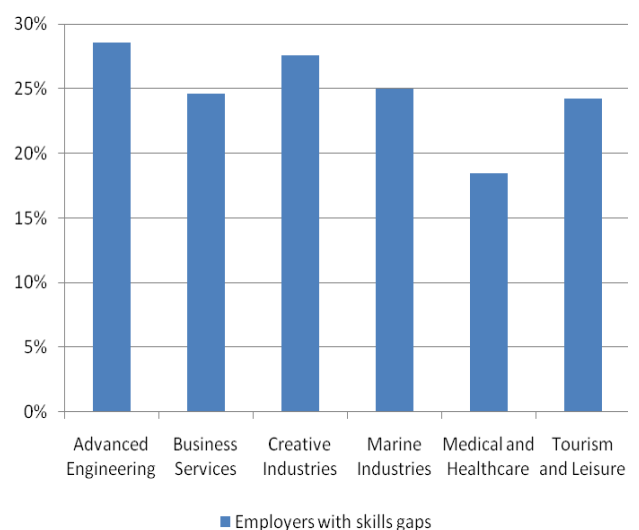
- A quarter of employers in Plymouth felt that they had a skills gap. This was higher than the 19% who identified skills gaps nationally.
- Employers reported skills gaps more commonly in administration (31%), management (22%), skilled trades (22%) and customer service (22%) occupations.
- Employers said that skills gaps were mainly caused by insufficient training (51%), lack of experience or being recently recruited (34%), and the inability of the workforce to keep up with change (24%).
- This differed substantially from the national situation, where the overriding cause of skills gaps was a lack of experience or staff being recently recruited (71%). Insufficient training only applied in a quarter of cases.

hard to fill vacancies are any vacancies which employers are finding difficult to recruit to. This can be for many reasons, including a low numbers of applicants with the right skills or the fact that a position offers low wages.

hard to fill vacancies...

- Sixteen percent of employers surveyed reported current vacancies, while 9% said they had hard to fill vacancies. Both these figures were higher than the national averages.
- The most common reasons for hard to fill vacancies were a low number of applicants with the required attitude, motivation or personality, and a lack of applicants with the required skills or experience.
- The most commonly lacking skills were technical, practical and job-specific skills.
- Employers in the Medical and Healthcare sector were most likely to report vacancies (26%).
- All Marine Industries and Advanced Engineering employers with vacancies (20% and 10% respectively) said some were proving hard to fill.

This chart shows the proportion of employers with skills gaps across Plymouth's priority sectors.



Plymouth employers say expense is the biggest barrier to training staff

upskilling means that an employer believes their staff will need to acquire new skills or knowledge in the future.

upskilling...

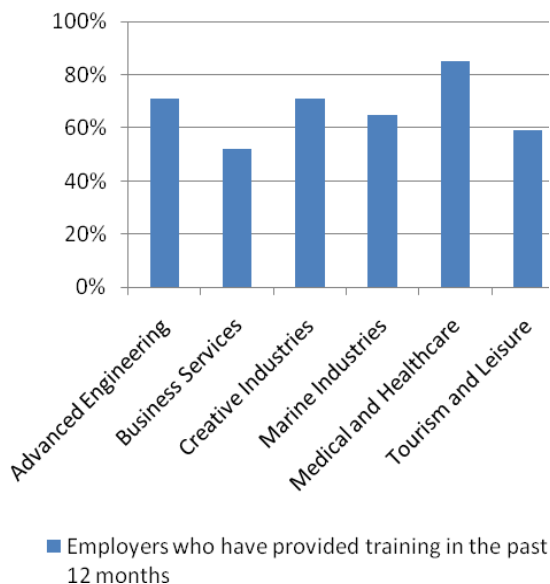
- While only a quarter of employers identified skills gaps among their staff, around three quarters (74%) anticipated that some of them would need to acquire new skills or knowledge over the coming year.
- The Medical and Healthcare, Advanced Engineering and Creative Industries sectors were the most likely to anticipate the need to upskill over the next 12 months, while employers in the Tourism and Leisure sector were the least likely.
- Managerial staff were identified as the occupational group most affected by the need to upskill.
- Employers within the Business Services sector indicated that new legislative and regulatory requirements were the main reason for upskilling (52%).
- Employers from the Advanced Engineering and Creative Industries sectors were most likely to say the main reason for upskilling was the introduction of new technologies or equipment, while employers from the Medical and Healthcare sector mainly attributed it to new working practices.

workforce development...

- Just under two-thirds of employers (64%) had provided staff with training in the past year. Employers in the Medical and Healthcare sector were more likely to have provided training (85%). Business Services employers were the least likely to have done so (52%).
- Employers identified expense as the biggest barrier to training their staff (52%), followed by being unable to spare time for staff to attend (35%).



This chart shows the provision of training across employers in Plymouth's priority sectors.



business planning and training schemes...

- Similar to national findings, larger companies were more likely to make business and workforce development plans.
- Employers in the Medical and Healthcare and Advanced Engineering sectors were the most likely to have a training plan and an associated budget.
- Over 80% of employers had heard of modern apprenticeships. Despite these high levels of awareness, only 10% currently employed staff undertaking apprenticeships.
- Half of employers were aware of Train to Gain, the government's flagship training scheme, with over one in ten actively involved. Knowledge and participation in other schemes was much lower.

next steps...

- Plymouth Employment and Skills Board are in the process of compiling a set of priorities and recommendations for Plymouth drawing on this research, which will be available to download at www.plymouthesb.co.uk.
- This report will be circulated to education providers, such as the University and City College, and bodies responsible for local economic development, like the City Council and City Development Company, to help them plan for the coming years.
- The Plymouth Employment and Skills Board are also working with their counterparts across Devon and Cornwall to identify skills priorities within the region. With a strong evidence base behind them, they will be more likely to influence public spending in the South West.



prize draw...

- Businesses who took part in the survey were automatically entered into a prize draw to win £500.
- The winner was Lesley Addison from Saltash Foot Clinic who has kindly donated her prize to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

your research needs...

- SERIO at the University of Plymouth provides a full range of research services for businesses and other organisations. Previously clients include local charities and businesses, the City Council, the Home Office and Defra.
- Our services include market research, evaluation, impact assessment, scoping studies, business planning and strategy mapping.
- More information can be found on our website www.serio.ac.uk or to discuss your research needs in more detail please give a member of the SERIO staff a call on 01752 588942.

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