



Workforce Skills and Training Survey 2007

Introduction

In November 2006 the CWDC completed an on-line survey of employers' views on workforce skills and training. The results from this survey will inform the development of the CWDC's sector skills agreement (SSA)¹. The survey ran from 19 December 2006 to 12 February 2007 and attracted 1062 responses of which 38 per cent were on behalf of employers or organisations.

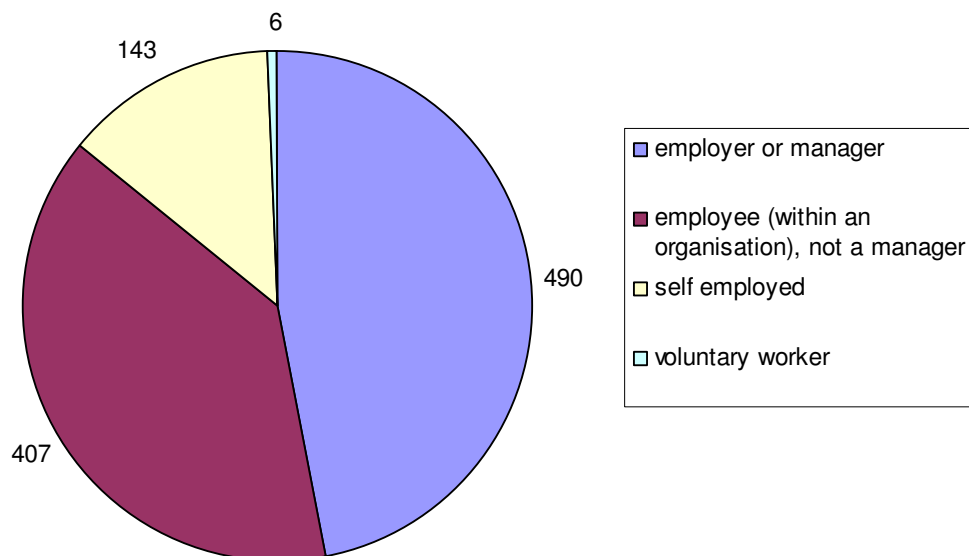
Once the survey was completed, an initial analysis identified nearly 800 people who were willing to be contacted for further, more detailed information. These respondents were sent a follow-up set of questions in order to gain more detail on the availability of workforce skills. (See annex A for key findings from the follow-up work)

The Results

The first section of the survey (questions 1-4) collected background information on the respondents and their employers/organisations. These questions showed the following findings:

Fig. 1.

Employment Role



NB: Figures shown are actual numbers of respondents

¹ Further information about the SSA can be found at <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/projects/sectorskillsagreement.htm>

Fig. 2.²

Field of Expertise

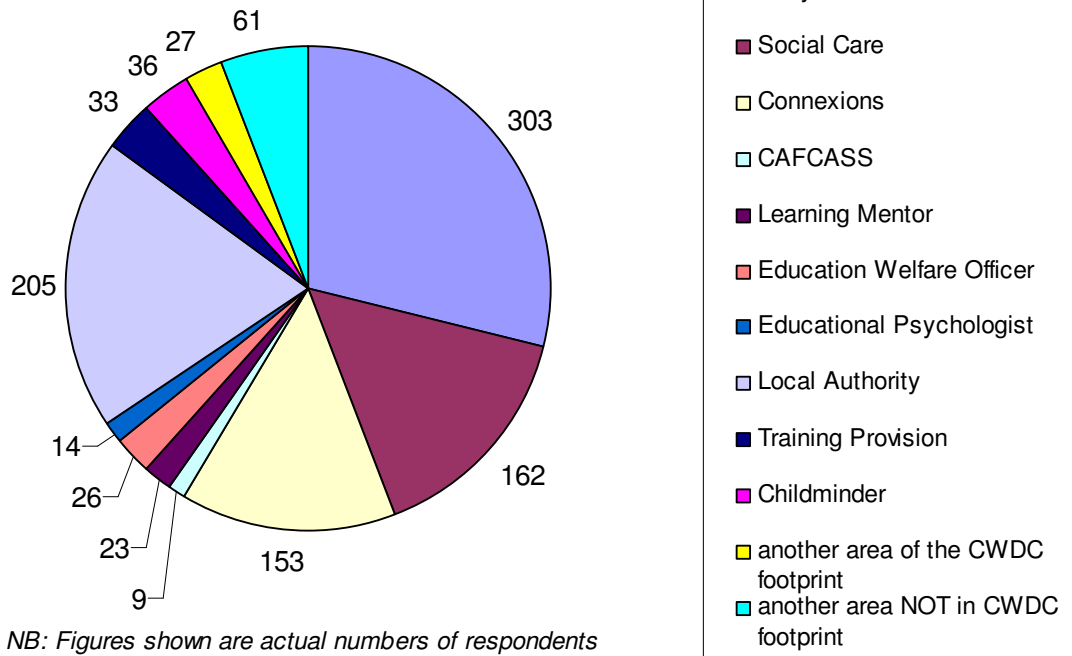
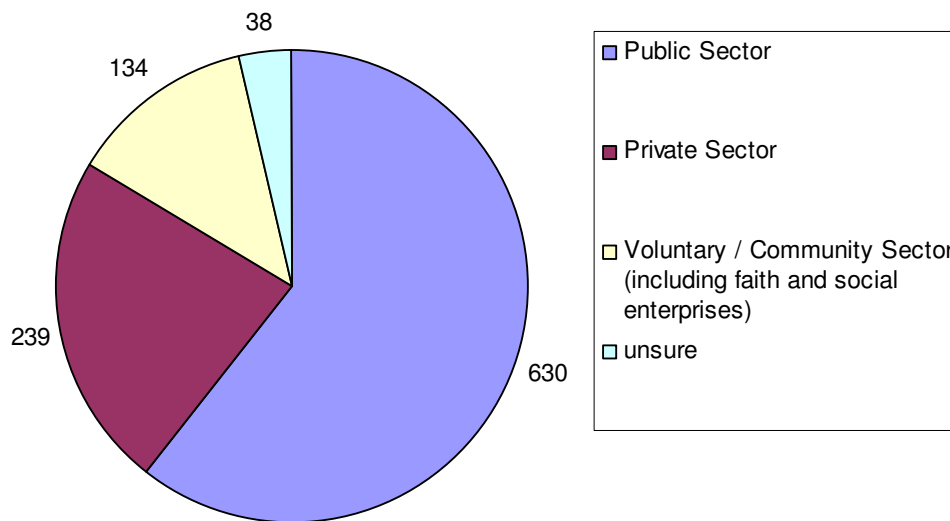


Fig. 3.

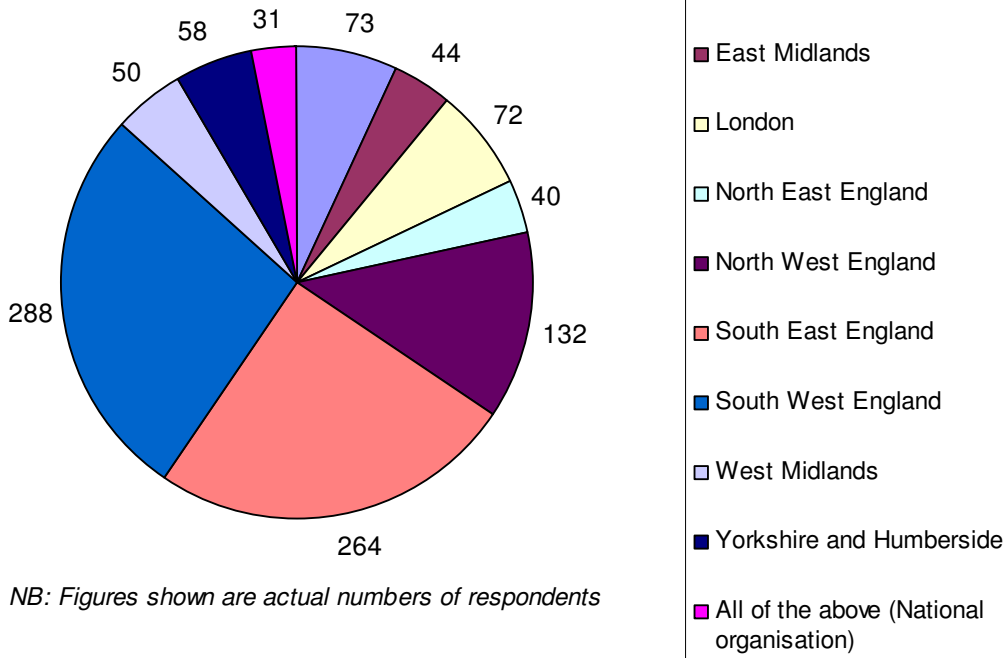
Sector



² Categories relate to area/nature of work rather than specific job titles (e.g. Childminding Network Coordinator is categorised in 'childminder')

Fig. 4.

Government Office Region



The majority of the questions asked for respondents' views on workforce skills and training. The answers have been analysed by the respondent profile (employment role, field of expertise, sector, and geographical region). This analysis has not shown great variation (of 20 per cent or more) on the basis of respondent profile compared with the results for the whole sample.

Differences according to respondent profile are set out in each of the following sections to this report. These differences occur mainly when the responses are analysed according to respondents' field of expertise.

Recruitment

Fig. 5.

It has been easy to recruit staff with appropriate qualifications

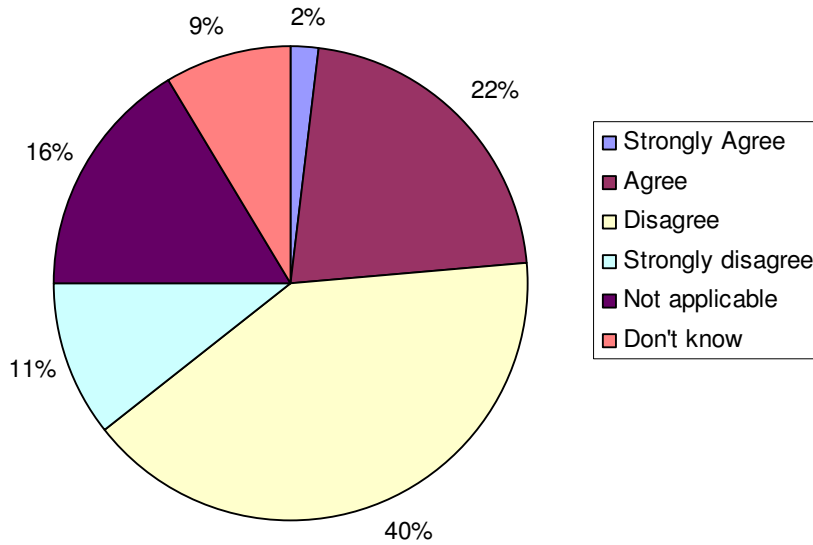


Fig. 6.

It has been easy to recruit staff with appropriate basic skills (e.g. numeracy, literacy)

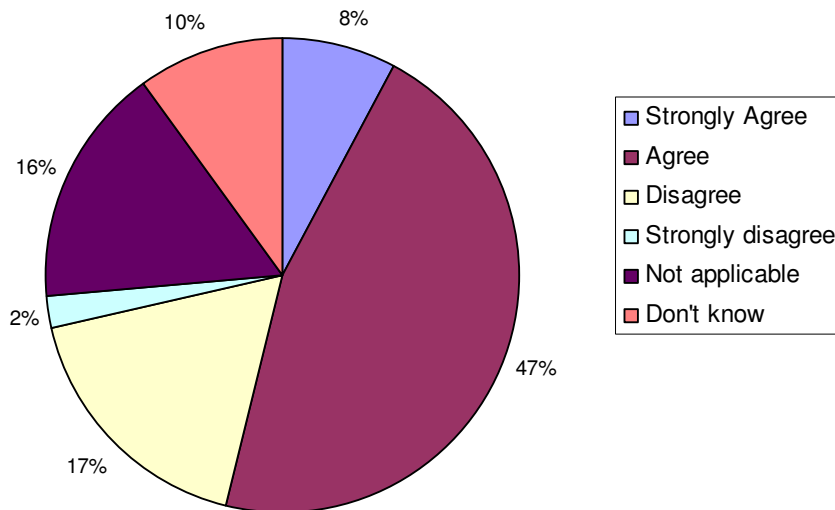
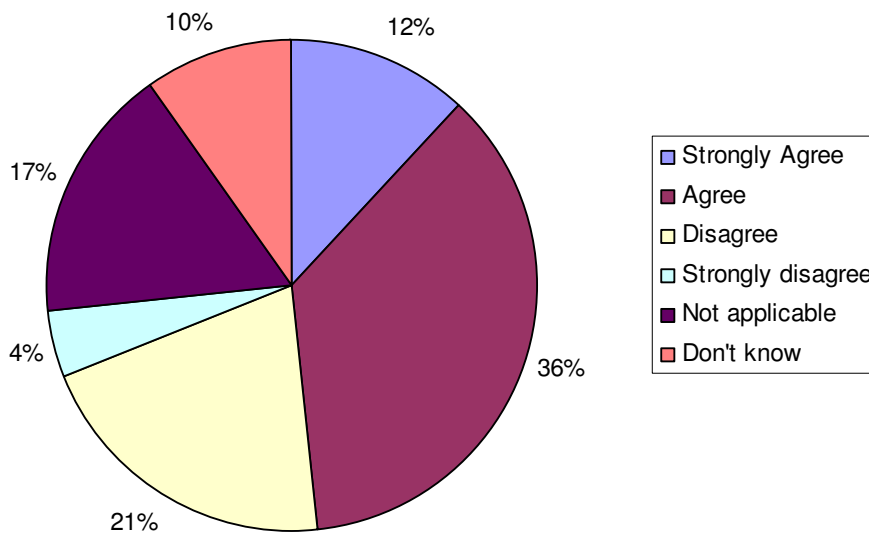


Fig. 7.

It has often been necessary to recruit staff who are not suitably qualified and provide them with further training



Analysis by respondents' field of expertise³

Respondents from early years and social care fields, Connexions Personal Advisers and Education Welfare Officers indicated that it was easier to recruit people with basic skills than it was to recruit staff with the appropriate qualifications⁴. Over half of each of these respondents agreed that it was necessary to recruit people who are not suitably qualified and train them further.

86 per cent of Educational Psychologists agreed that it was easy to recruit people with appropriate basic skills and 17 per cent agreed that it was easy to recruit staff with appropriate qualifications. 30 per cent agreed that it was often necessary to recruit staff who are not suitably qualified and provide them with further training.

Learning Mentors indicated that they felt it was as easy to recruit people with appropriate qualifications as basic skills (80 and 88 per cent respectively). 61 per cent agreed that it was often necessary to recruit staff who are not suitably qualified and provide them with further training.

³ Percentages given are of the total who agreed or disagreed (respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'not applicable' are not included)

⁴ 65-95 per cent of respondents in each of these groups agreed that it was easy to recruit staff with basic skills. 28-41 per cent agreed that it was easy to recruit staff with appropriate qualifications

Training and qualifications

Fig. 8.

It has been easy to find information on relevant training courses

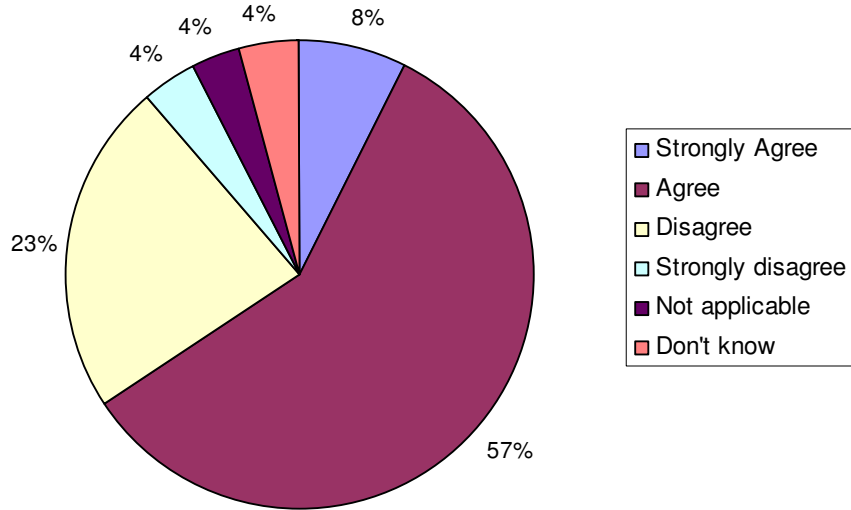


Fig. 9.

I have been able to find training courses which meet staff needs

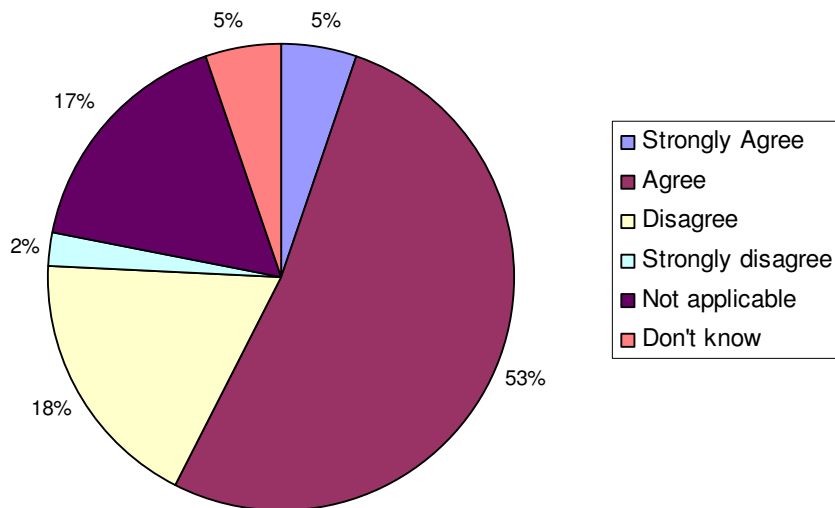


Fig. 10.

I have been able to find training courses which meet my needs as a manager/employer/self employed person

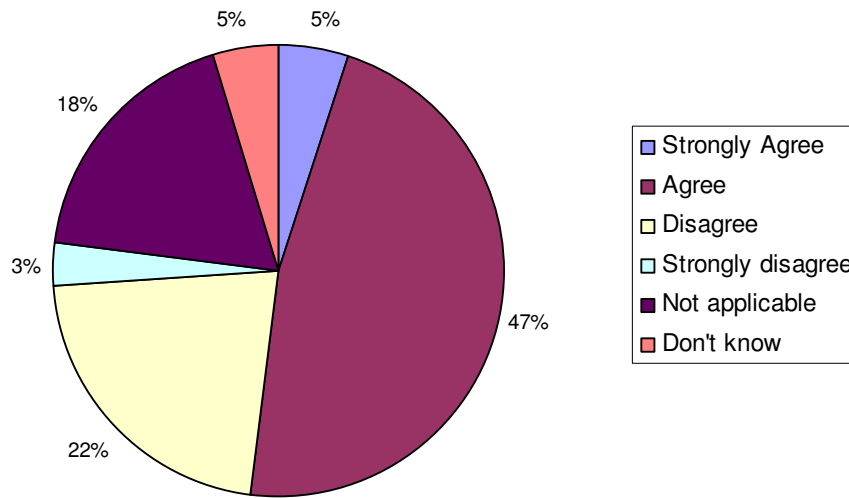


Fig. 11.

I have found that there are enough places available on suitable training courses

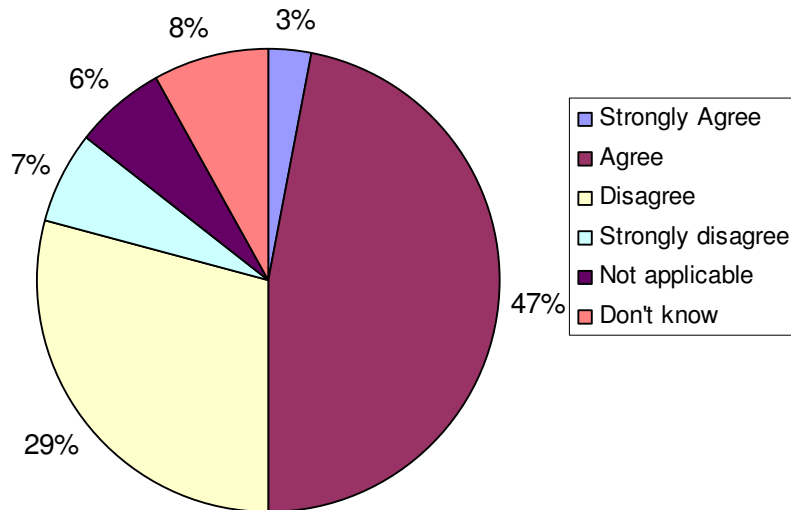


Fig. 12.

The number and range of qualifications available has made it difficult for me to know what qualifications practitioners should hold

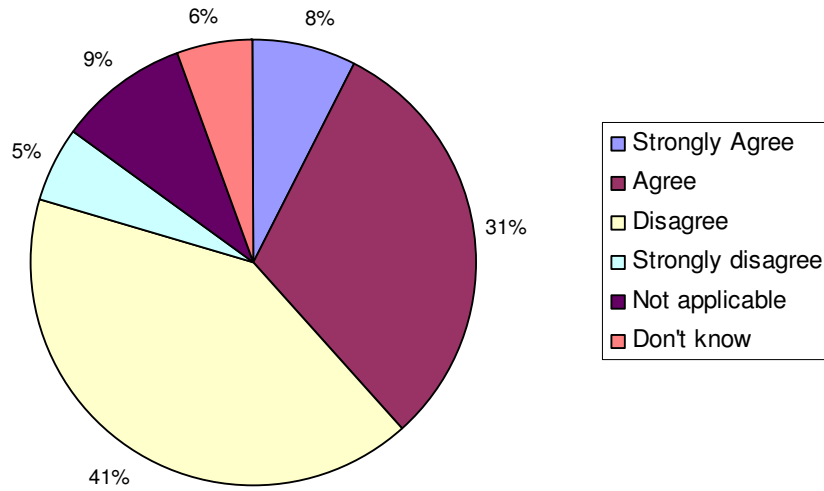


Fig. 13.

What has been the most useful form of staff training?

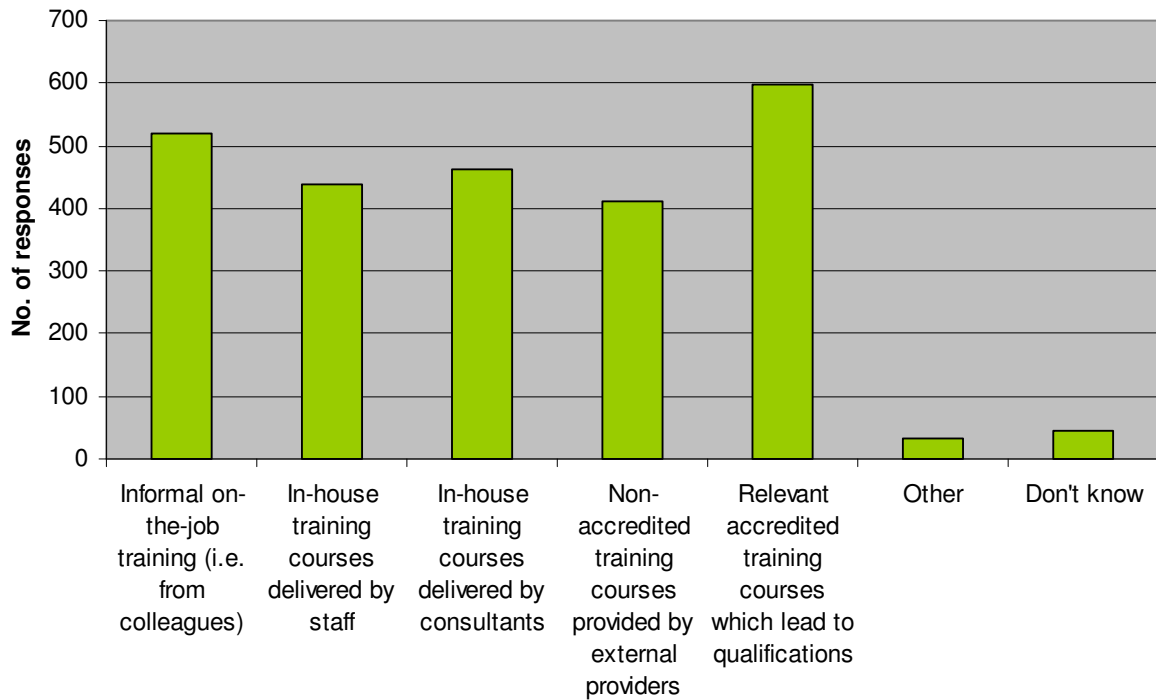
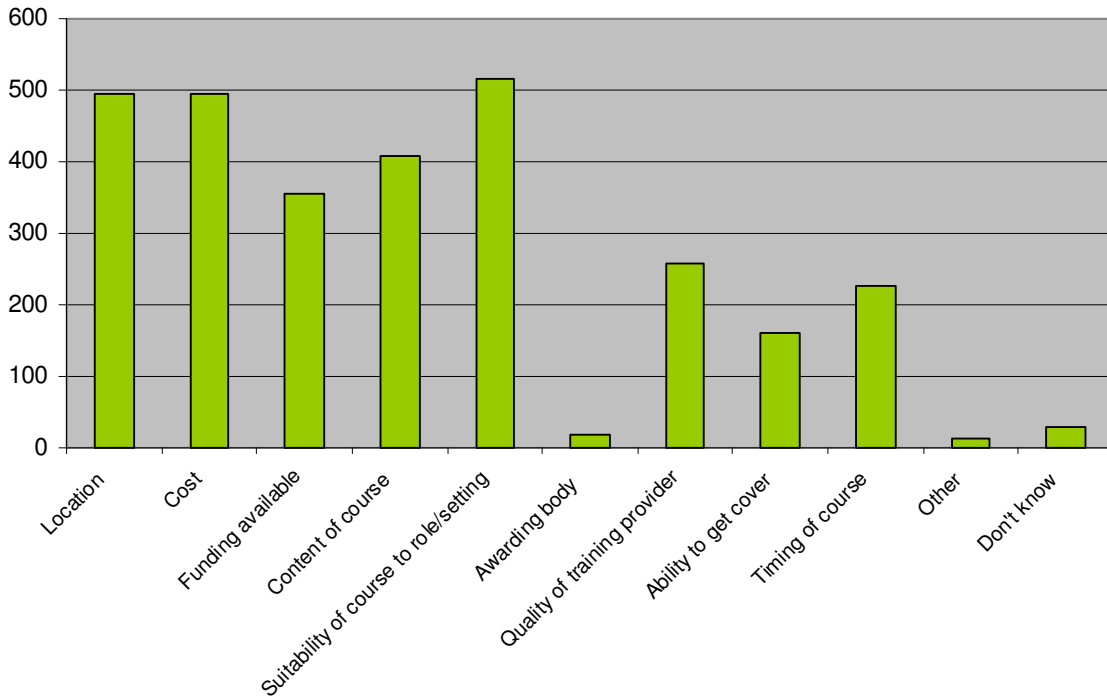


Fig. 14.

What has been an important factor when looking for training?



Analysis by respondents' field of expertise⁵

Most respondents agreed that it was easy to find information on relevant training and that there were courses available which met staff needs. Respondents from most fields of expertise agreed that there were training courses that met their needs as a manager, employer, or self-employed person (62 to 88 per cent of respondents). However, only 38 per cent (six out of 16) of Learning Mentors who responded agreed.

Most respondents agreed that there were enough places available on suitable training courses (70 per cent and over); 56 per cent of those working in social care and childminding agreed, and 48 per cent of early years respondents agreed.

Learning Mentors indicated that the number and range of qualifications available has made it difficult for them to know what qualifications practitioners should hold (88 per cent agreeing with the statement). 50 per cent of childminders and those in the early years field, 45 per cent of Education Welfare Officers, 34 per cent of Connexions staff, 27 per cent of social care respondents and 20 per cent of Educational Psychologists agreed with the statement.

Across all the fields of expertise, respondents found the following types of training to be the most useful:

- informal on-the-job training (i.e. from colleagues, as and when required);
- in-house training courses delivered by staff members;
- in-house training courses delivered by consultants/training companies;

⁵ Percentages given are of the total who agreed or disagreed (respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'not applicable' are not included)

- relevant accredited training courses which lead to qualifications.

In each field of expertise, apart from early years and childminding, these four forms of training were placed above non-accredited training courses provided by external providers. Few respondents suggested other forms of training though three respondents offered university level training as useful and two said local authority training was useful.

Respondents were asked about the most important factors when looking for training and the following options were given:

- location;
- cost;
- funding available;
- content of course;
- suitability of course to role/setting;
- Awarding Body;
- quality of training provider;
- ability to get cover for members of staff participating in training;
- timing of course.

In most fields of expertise, the top five factors in the above list received the highest score. However, Connexions staff placed slightly less importance on the availability of funding compared to the other factors in this top five⁶.

Of the four remaining factors (Awarding Body, quality of training provider, ability to get cover for members of staff participating in training and timing of course) the Awarding Body was consistently scored as less important. The remaining factors were scored at a similar level, apart from the timing of courses which was scored as slightly more important for those working in childminding and early years.

⁶ 23 Connexions Personal Advisors who responded agreed that 'funding available' was important, as compared with 58, 63, 66 and 95 who agreed that the location, cost, content and suitability (respectively) were important factors

Qualifications

Fig. 15.

A BA/BSc undergraduate degree equips potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

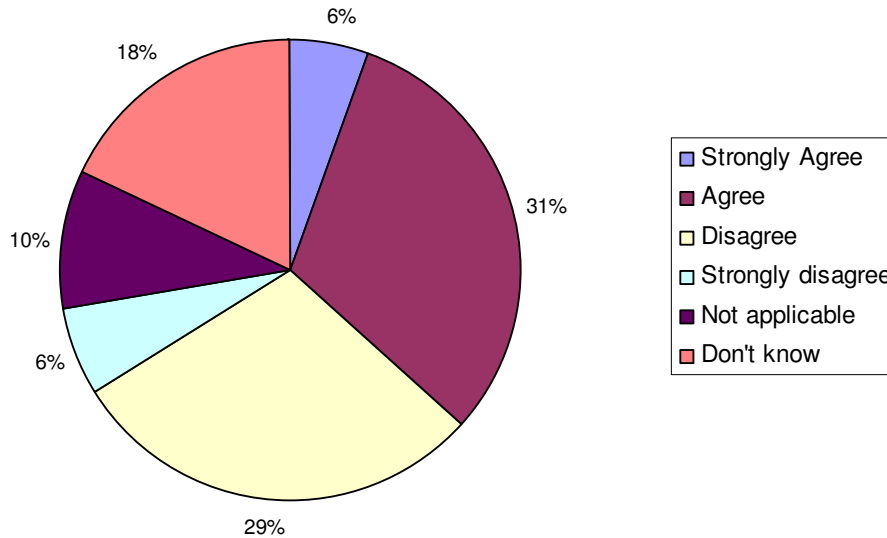


Fig. 16.

A Foundation degree equips potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

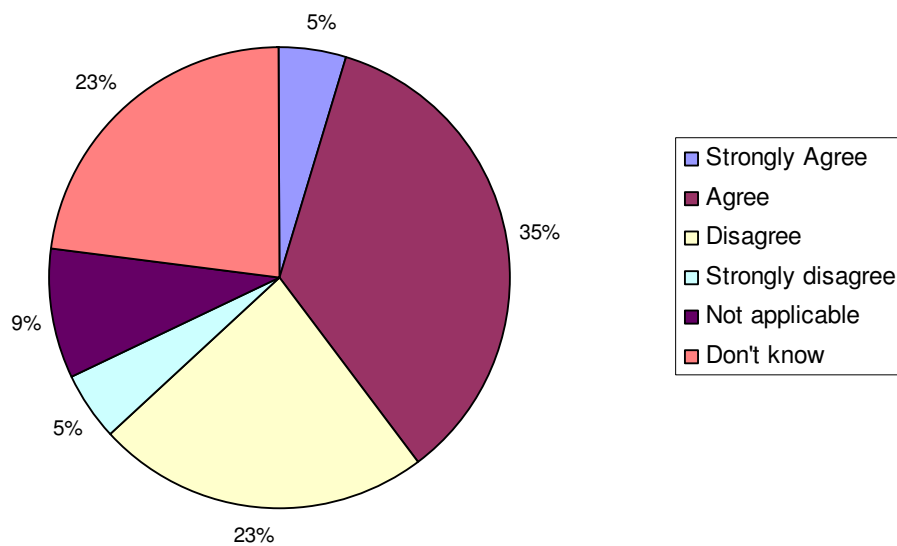


Fig. 17.

An NVQ Level 3 or equivalent equips potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

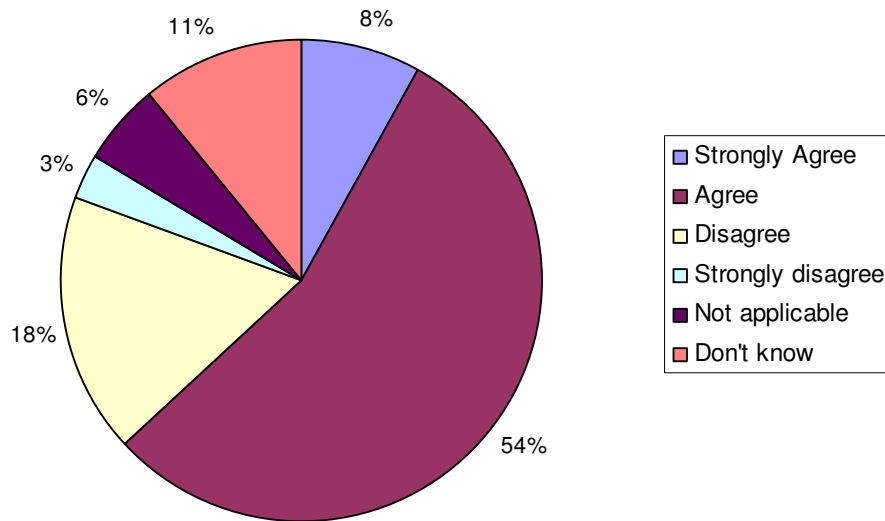


Fig. 18.

An NVQ Level 2 or equivalent equips potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

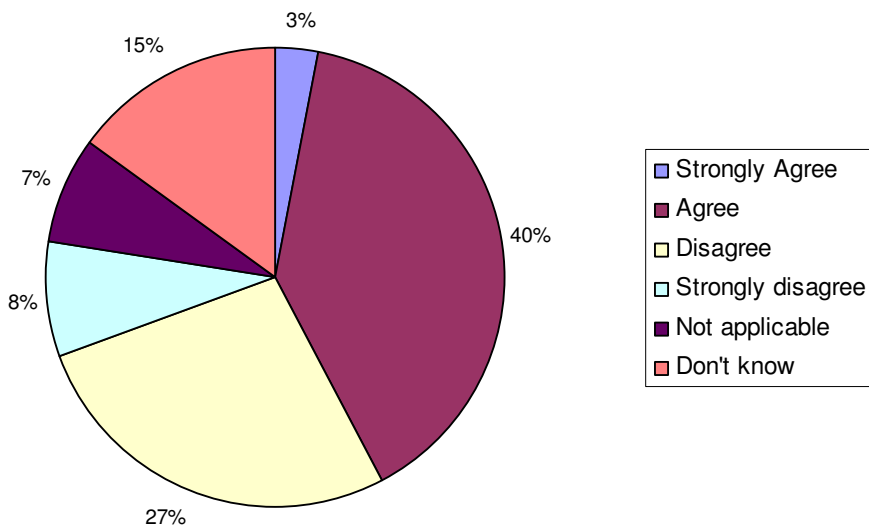


Fig. 19.

An NVQ Level 1 or equivalent equips potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

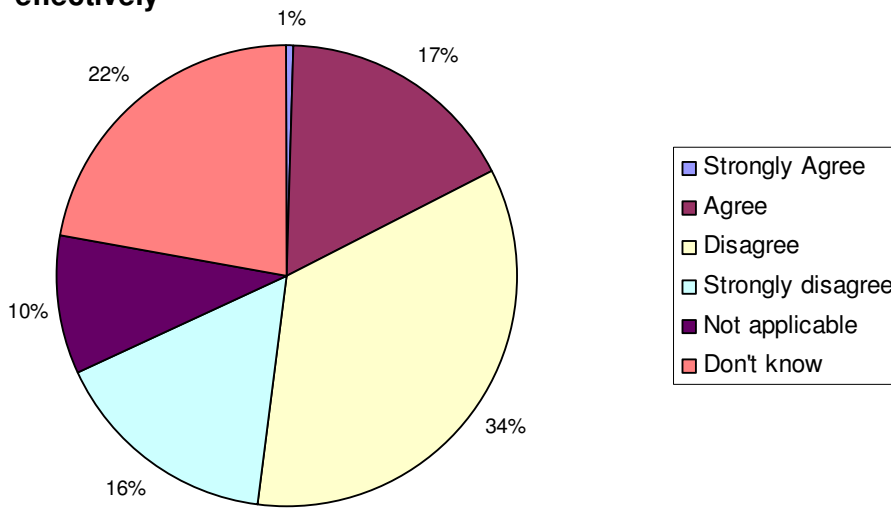


Fig. 20.

The completion of an apprenticeship framework equips prospective employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

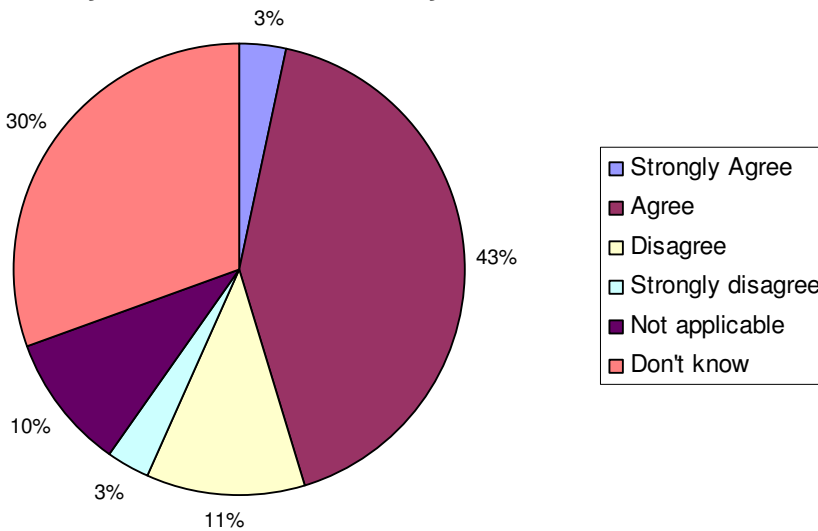


Fig. 21.

Relevant experience equips potential employees with the skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively

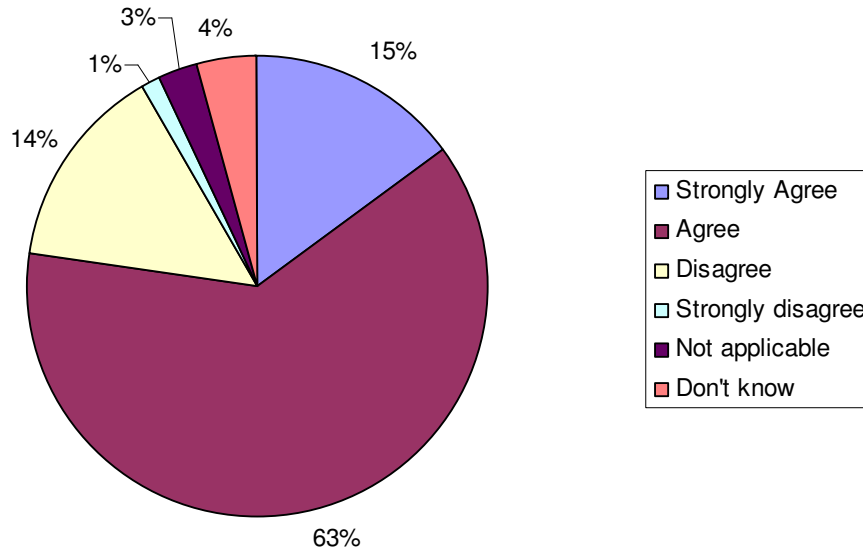
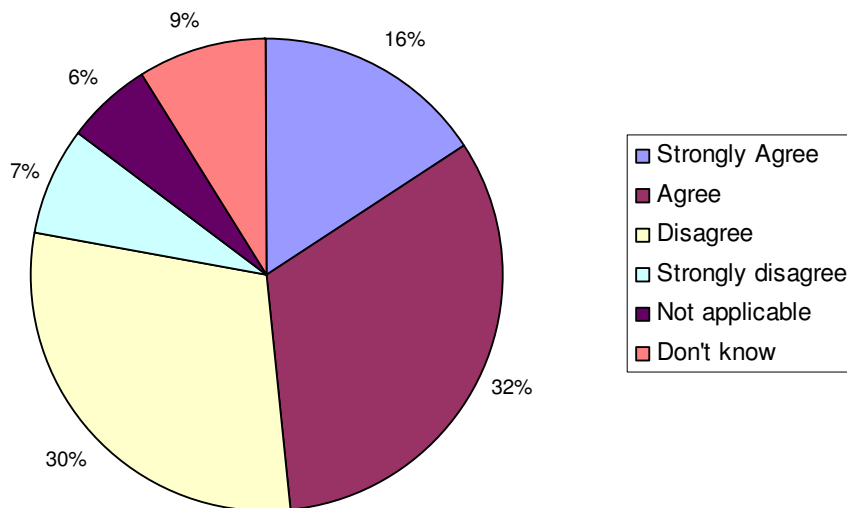


Fig. 22.

There is a need for a graduate level professional (holding at least a BA/BSc undergraduate degree) in my area of the workforce



Analysis by respondents' field of expertise⁷

This section on qualifications asked respondents the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that each level of qualification and/or experience equipped potential employees with the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out their role effectively. The tables below show the percentage of people who agreed within each field of expertise, in ranked order (from most to least agreement).

Table 1.

Early Years	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Level 3	85%
Experience	85%
Apprenticeship	80%
Foundation Degree	68%
Level 2	64%
BA/BSc	43%
Level 1	31%

Table 4..

Social Care	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Experience	81%
Apprenticeship	73%
Level 3	66%
BA/BSc	54%
Foundation Degree	47%
Level 2	42%
Level 1	22%

Table 2.

Education and Advisory Support Services⁸	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Experience	83%
Apprenticeship	71%
Level 3	64%
BA/BSc	56%
Foundation Degree	48%
Level 2	39%
Level 1	14%

Table 5.

Local Authority	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Experience	82%
Apprenticeship	75%
Level 3	72%
Foundation Degree	68%
BA/BSc	58%
Level 2	55%
Level 1	29%

Table 3.

Training Provision	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Apprenticeship	91%
Level 3	78%
Level 2	66%
Foundation Degree	50%
Experience	48%
BA/BSc	44%
Level 1	35%

Table 6.

Childminding	
Qualification Level	Percentage agreement
Level 3	91%
Experience	88%
Apprenticeship	80%
Level 2	75%
Foundation Degree	69%
Level 1	46%
BA/BSc	37%

Respondents from each area of expertise agreed that experience was important. Apprenticeships and Level 3 qualifications were consistently in respondents' top three in terms of importance, and Level 1 was always in the bottom two.

⁷ Percentages given are of the total who agreed or disagreed (respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'not applicable' are not included)

⁸ Including Connexions Personal Advisors, Learning Mentors, Education Welfare Officers and Educational Psychologists

Graduate Level Professionals

Respondents were asked to comment on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'there is a need for a graduate level professional (holding at least a BA/BSc undergraduate degree) in my area of the workforce'. The level of agreement with this statement was quite similar across the social care, Connexions, Education Welfare, local authority and training provision respondents, at between 60 to 75 per cent. The greatest level of agreement came from Educational Psychologists (92 per cent) and the lowest from the childminding field (5 per cent). 22 per cent of Learning Mentors and 33 per cent of respondents in the early years field felt that there was a need for a graduate level professional in their area of the workforce.

Funding for Training

Fig. 23.

I am able to access sufficient funding to support necessary training and development

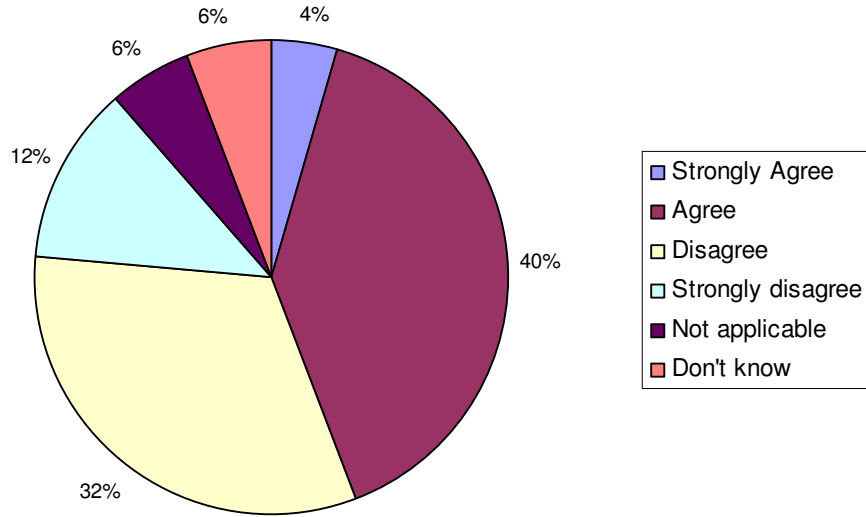


Fig. 24.

Employers should invest in the training and development of employees and themselves

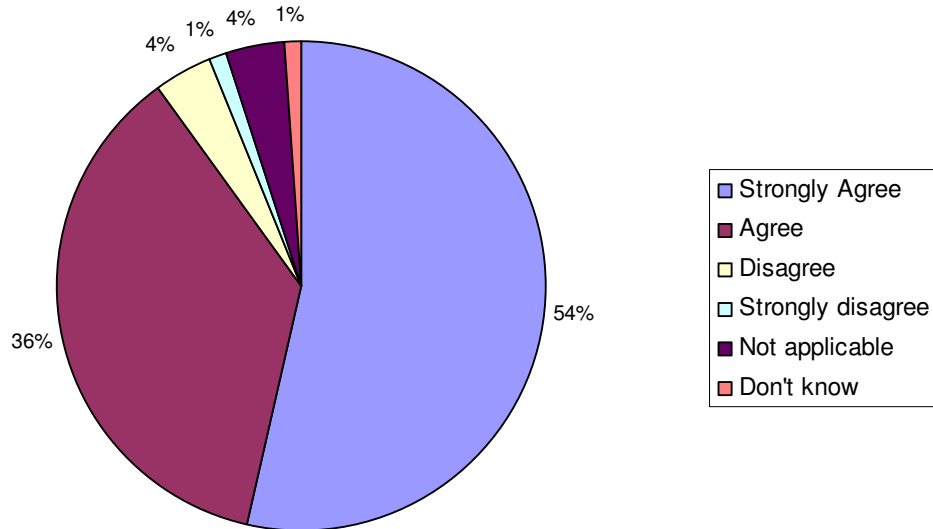
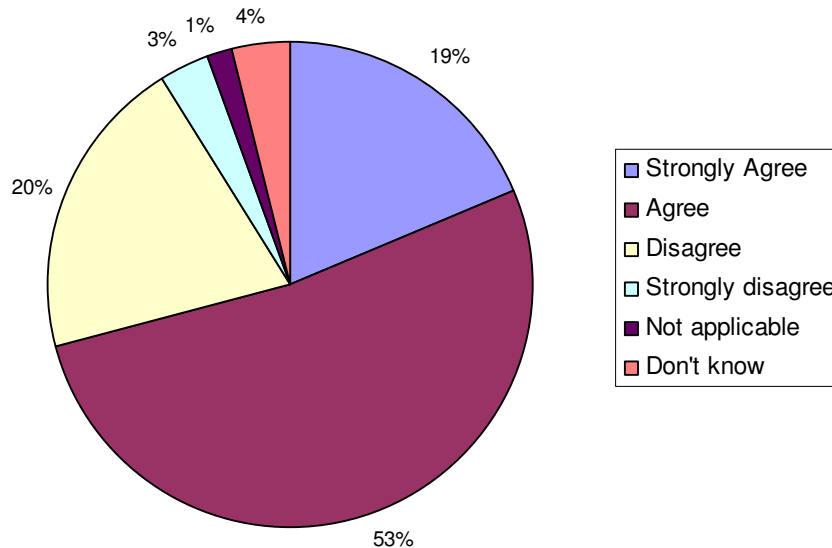


Fig. 25.

Individuals and the self-employed should be encouraged to invest in their own training and development



Analysis by respondents' field of expertise⁹

Respondents' opinions differed when they were asked to comment on the statement 'I am able to access sufficient funding to support necessary training and development'. The lowest level of agreement came from Education Welfare Officers (18 per cent). The highest came from childminders at 69 per cent, with the early years field at 62 per cent. Other respondents were in agreement between 39 and 55 per cent of the time.

All groups of respondents agreed that employers should invest in the training and development of employees and themselves (between 86 and 100 per cent agreement), and that individuals and the self-employed should be encouraged to invest in their own training and development (between 62 and 83 per cent agreement).

Analysis by geographical region¹⁰

There was more regional variation on the funding of training than in any other section of the survey. 29 per cent of respondents in the north east agreed that they were able to access sufficient funding to support necessary training and development. London was similar, at 34 per cent. The south east and west midlands had the highest level of agreement, at 60 and 66 per cent respectively.

Respondents consistently agreed that employers should invest in the training and development of employees and themselves (ranging from 88 per cent in the south east to 100 per cent in the north east). Respondents also agreed that individuals and the self-employed should be encouraged to invest in their own training and development (ranging from 66 per cent in the west midlands to 94 per cent in the east midlands).

⁹ Percentages given are of the total who agreed or disagreed (respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'not applicable' are not included)

¹⁰ Percentages given are of the total who agreed or disagreed (respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'not applicable' are not included)

Skills

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed that the following skills were readily available in their current setting:

- effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families (involving listening and building empathy, summarising and explaining, consultation and negotiation);
- understanding of child and young person development (involving observation and judgement, empathy and understanding);
- ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child (involving relating, recognising and taking considered action, communication, recording and reporting, personal skills);
- ability to support transitions in the lives of children and young people (involving identifying transitions and providing support);
- ability to work across multi-agency settings (involving teamwork, communication, assertiveness);
- ability to share information effectively across different agencies (involving information handling, clear communication, engagement);
- ability to deliver integrated services to children, young people and their families;
- basic skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy);
- ability to commission and contract work out;
- leadership and management skills;
- ability to make use of technology (including IT and specialist equipment);
- understanding disability and surrounding issues.

Respondents agreed that most of these skills were readily available in their current setting (ranging from 74 to 92 per cent for each skill). The exception was commissioning and contracting, for which only 36 per cent of respondents agreed this skill was available and 38 per cent of respondents saying they “did not know” or that this was not applicable.

Further information on the availability of these skills was collected through a follow up e-mail survey. Details of the responses are in annex A.

Other skills

103 respondents provided comments on the other skills that were readily available in their setting. This represented just under 10 per cent of those surveyed, with a high number of respondents from youth work. The responses reflect the different priorities of different agencies and organisations, with some referring specifically to skills within their workforce e.g. Connexions, whereas others referred to more generic skills needs across the workforce.

Issues that were apparent in relation to analysing these responses were that:

- responses did not always clearly differentiate between skills and knowledge and some respondents were concerned with the lack of provision or access to training opportunities, whereas others referred to the personal qualities and attributes needed by practitioners;
- there was confusion as some respondents were unsure whether the questions related to skills currently available in their setting, whether they had access to individuals with these skills, or whether they had opportunities to obtain the skills;
- for those in education and training, there appeared to be confusion regarding whether the question related to their student population, the children’s workforce or their own staff. As a result, the responses were mixed and there was no majority view on any particular skills deficit.

The analysis of individual respondents' comments identified some key issues in relation to perceptions of the gaps in skills and knowledge which may or may not be applicable more widely. Further investigation is required to determine whether these views are representative of the workforce. However, we report the full list of issues that have been identified in order to provide a full record of the responses.

- understanding of cultural, equality and diversity issues – not just racial equality or disability but of family and lifestyle diversity, discrimination, power relationships and ideology, particularly across mainstream/universal services;
- understanding adolescence and youth culture; the impact of poverty and links between poverty, delinquency and anti-social behaviour;
- how to develop a non-judgemental approach, but challenge effectively; reflective practice;
- a greater understanding of child development and developmental needs, particularly emotional development and resilience, across the age range but especially adolescent development;
- the impact of different experiences on children's development;
- the importance of play;
- analysing information obtained through observation and assessment and translating this into service planning, delivery and review;
- information technology skills;
- organisational, finance and budgeting skills; managerial and administrative skills;
- legal and statutory requirements;
- communication with children and adults, life experience, empathy and true partnership working, especially with parents;
- better understanding of the work of other agencies, multi-agency working together.

Connexions staff responded on behalf of their own workforce skills needs and identified:

- organisational ability, meeting deadlines, ability to manage self;
- knowledge and understanding of the issues facing young people, the changing labour market and opportunity awareness;
- the roles and responsibilities of the range of organisations working with children and young people and the relevant legislation;
- strategies for influencing children and young people and their families;
- equality issues, personal safety, substance abuse awareness, sexual health, data protection and information sharing;
- solution focussed, motivational interviewing techniques, ethical and anti-discriminatory practice;
- support for children, young people and their families to access benefits.

Connexions staff also expressed concern about reduction in training budgets and de-skilling.

General comments on the availability of skills

182 respondents provided general comments on skills, representing approximately 17 per cent of the responses. One emergent issue was the importance of gaining experience to enable effective practice; as highlighted earlier, it is not clear to what extent these views represent the whole workforce. Other comments included the following:

- that poor management, ineffective management and inappropriate organisational structures impair the ability of staff to deliver high quality services and/or meet skills gaps and training needs;

- a focus on targets and performance indicators, which are sometimes irrelevant or inappropriate, can impair the ability to deliver real and creative solutions for children and young people;
- the complexity of the workforce is not well understood. Many, including managers, do not recognise and value unique professional roles and approaches;
- the skills identified in the questions reflected mixed levels of skills within teams, with some staff being highly skilled and others not;
- the skills identified are the basic requirements of a team;
- expertise is in danger of being lost in the drive towards integration;
- the childcare aspect of the role will be lost to the teaching role;
- there are few opportunities to develop higher ordered thinking and analytical skills within the constraints of the National Curriculum which is compounded by a lack of “soft skills” development e.g. empathy, emotional intelligence, reflection and scope for learning from mistakes;
- soft skills are undervalued, but the workforce needs high self-esteem and self-actualisation in order to make a positive impact on children and families;
- basic skills are still lacking in workers entering the sector;
- information sharing between agencies remains poor and there is a reluctance by those in social services to act preventatively rather than react once an incident had occurred;
- Data Protection seems to be used in many instances by statutory agencies to justify not sharing relevant information. A lack of close partnership working and mutual distrust still exists between agencies;
- too many qualifications which seem to deliver the same outcomes.

A key issue set out by at least one respondent related to the need for properly implemented performance management systems to be embedded within organisations delivering services for children. This issue was linked to the comments regarding poor management.

Good practice would link performance management to training and development – personal and role related, allowing managers to identify objectives for individual staff that would contribute to organisational objectives, where appropriate. Training needs would be identified through appraisal and the quality of the workforce would, in theory, be improved by supporting the development of individuals with potential and weeding out those who were not performing; thus linking ability and potential with job roles and progression opportunities

Concern was expressed that there was a lack of training for working with different age groups, especially in relation to child development and communication skills. Practitioners were expected to work with children of different ages, and sometimes they were not trained, they worked outside their area of expertise and they felt ill equipped.

Connexions respondents made a number of comments:

- practitioners must be able to see the wider picture for children and their families – i.e. the child in context of family and wider society;
- Connexions Personal Advisors for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities would benefit from being placed within multi-agency teams;
- it would be helpful to have modular qualifications incorporating transferable skills between different agencies;
- communication between agencies working with children and young people is still generally very poor;
- particular skills are required for practitioners in agencies that deal with adolescents, who are able to make independent decisions;

- some highly qualified (degree) and experienced Personal Advisors strongly resented having to undertake additional qualifications such as the PA Diploma.

Barriers to recruitment and retention

Respondents were asked to comment on the main barriers to recruiting and retaining fully trained/qualified/skilled staff. This question received the highest number of comments with 792 responses. The majority (56 per cent) commented that the main barrier to recruitment and retention was low levels of pay and remuneration compared with other industries.

As highlighted in the previous section, the key issues identified below are not given here as representative of the workforce, as further investigation will be required in order to determine whether this is the case. However it is important to report these issues in order to provide a full record of the responses. Key issues identified were:

- there was significant disparity between the high level of qualifications being required and the low levels of pay, which has a negative impact on recruiting and retaining staff;
- the general reluctance to invest in training and development of staff, as they were likely to leave for better pay. For example, private nursery providers had lost staff to the education sector since they were able to offer a better salary alongside pension schemes and other benefits such as improved holiday entitlement. Nurseries were also under pressure from schools as parents were being encouraged to use schools for childcare in order to gain a place in the same school for their child's education;
- the lack of a career structure in the early years sector, with little conviction that degree level qualifications would improve the quality of care;
- private early years establishments expressed concern about the affordability of employing graduates without subsidies. In most cases they said that they would need to increase the costs to parents in order to be able to finance a graduate salary, and this was felt to be unacceptable as it increased the already high costs of childcare beyond the reach of many parents;
- people commented on the regulatory requirements which meant that providers need to pay for another practitioner to stand in for the trainee, thus potentially doubling the cost of providing training.

There were further individual comments on the following issues:

- employers are willing to provide and pay for training – particularly mandatory training, but reluctant to support or subsidise qualifications including vocational qualifications;
- there is a marked reluctance to train/upskill qualified staff in case they leave for improved salaries;
- a majority of respondents had experienced difficulty in recruiting staff with suitable skills and qualifications;
- there is a disparity between the high levels of qualifications required and the low pay, leading to “churn” in the workforce – low wages mean people leave. Some respondents felt that workers could receive better pay in supermarkets or cleaning. Many would like to be able to reward staff and pay them more;
- basic skills levels are still poor.

In addition, individual responses cited bureaucratic recruitment processes, the value placed on people who work with children, working unsocial hours and poor management practice as barriers to recruitment and retention. Some individuals commented that the lack of career opportunities or more generally the cost of living

could be a barrier. Funding was also highlighted as an issue, especially the lack of funding specifically for training and development. Some respondents in the voluntary/community sector (including faith and social enterprises) commented that short term funding was counter-productive to encouraging a stable and well-trained, effective workforce.

Early Years Targets

The survey included four questions about targets for the early years sector. This part of the consultation was extended in order to gain more responses and CWDC's Early Years team will report the findings in autumn 2007.

Concluding Comments

This is the first general skills and training opinion survey undertaken by the CWDC. The information is extremely valuable to CWDC, and a special thank you is extended to those who responded, especially those who provided detailed comments.

A few respondents commented that some of the questions were difficult to answer. This was mainly in reference to the general questions in the qualifications and skills sections. These questions could have been made more specific during the design of the survey (for example respondents could have been asked to consider the questions in relation to differing levels of staff seniority – assistants, supervisory staff and management) however this would have considerably lengthened the survey which may have discouraged people from responding. We tried to address this issue by asking more specific questions in the follow up survey (see annex A).

Results from this survey will be included in the CWDC's Sector Skills Agreement later this year. The findings will also inform projects across the organisation. The feedback we have received on the design of the survey will be used when developing future consultations.

Annex A

The CWDC decided to follow up the workforce skills survey by e-mailing a number of additional questions to 798 of the respondents (those who provided e-mail addresses and said they were happy to be contacted again). They were asked to draw on their personal experience within the children's workforce in order to rate:

- the importance of a series of skills to their organisation/business;
- the ease with which staff who have these skills are recruited;
- the extent to which it is a training priority for staff or themselves in their organisation/business.

262 people responded to the e-mail.

Table 7.

Skill	Average ¹¹ Value		
	Importance of the skill <i>1 = Not at all important 10 = Very important</i>	Ease of recruitment <i>1 = Very easy 10 = Very difficult</i>	Training priority <i>1 = Not a priority 10 = Very high priority</i>
Effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families	9.74	5.80	7.83
Understanding of child and young person development	8.90	5.90	7.42
Ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child	9.60	5.99	8.62
Ability to support transitions in the lives of children and young people	8.64	5.90	7.18
Ability to work across multi-agency settings	8.49	6.25	7.20
Ability to share information effectively across different agencies	8.64	6.09	7.35
Ability to deliver integrated services to children, young people and their families	8.22	5.99	7.10
Basic skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy)	8.93	5.98	5.79
The ability to commission and contract work out	4.94	5.75	4.27
Leadership and management skills	8.08	6.31	7.08
The ability to make use of technology (including IT and specialist equipment)	7.74	5.99	6.66
An understanding of disability and surrounding issues	8.61	6.16	7.62

¹¹ The averages are the mean figures

