



Leading learning and skills

Train to Gain Employer Evaluation: Sweep 1 Research Report

May 2008

Of interest to everyone involved in
improving skills and learning opportunities
in the workforce across England

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Executive Summary

- 1 Train to Gain represents one of the most important developments in skills policy in recent years. Introduced in April 2006, and fully rolled out in August of the same year, Train to Gain is a national service for businesses, providing them with help in identifying and sourcing training that will improve the skills of their workforce and their business performance. It aims to encourage employers to invest in the development of the skills and qualifications of their employees. It is particularly concerned with increasing the proportion of adults in the workforce with Level 2 qualifications and good basic skills as well as supporting the development of higher-level skills. In three of the regions (London, the North West and the West Midlands), Train to Gain is piloting support to employers wishing to train employees to Level 3.
- 2 Throughout Train to Gain's existence, research has been conducted among employers to gauge their views on the service. This report focuses on Sweep 1 of the employer evaluation research conducted by IFF Research in June and July 2007, covering employers who have had contact with a Train to Gain skills broker, and who made the initial contact between January and April 2007. Seven previous waves of research have been conducted; these were primarily measures of employer satisfaction with skills brokers. The current research includes questions relating to employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service, but also aims to broaden the scope to:
 - provide more detailed analysis of how the employers became involved with Train to Gain, including the role of providers;
 - include employer expectations and motivations when deciding to become involved with Train to Gain and training accessed through the service;

- explore employer satisfaction with the training provision accessed through Train to Gain, and with the training providers delivering this;
- assess the impact Train to Gain has had on the numbers of employees trained among employers who have had contact with a skills broker, and changes in their training provision; and
- assess the likelihood of future involvement with Train to Gain among those who have been involved so far.

Key facts

3 Key facts that emerge in this survey are as follows.

- Eight employers in ten (80 per cent) have been satisfied with the skills brokerage service, with the highest levels of satisfaction seen in relation to the impartiality of advice offered by skills brokers, along with their knowledge of the local provision market.
- Just under two-thirds (64 per cent) of employers who have been in contact with a skills broker have made a commitment to training as a result of the Train to Gain service.
- Over two-thirds of all employers taking up training under Train to Gain (68 per cent) have received at least some fully funded Train to Gain training. Only 12 per cent have accessed training they paid for in full themselves.
- Over nine employers in ten taking up training under Train to Gain (92 per cent) were satisfied with the content of the training course and the provider that delivered it.
- In half of all cases where employers have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (47 per cent), the intervention has led to the employer providing new or additional training. This includes cases where the employer has engaged with training for the first time this year, where the

service has led to an increase in the number or type of employees involved in training, or where the employer has been able to offer a better quality of training to staff.

- Among employers taking up training, 80 per cent have had at least one employee achieve a Level 2 qualification or above, or have at least one employee currently working towards attaining this level of accreditation.
 - Three-quarters of employers taking up training under Train to Gain (74 per cent) report that they have noticed an improvement in the skills of employees in relation to their specific job role.
 - Two-fifths of employers (42 per cent) said that the training they have engaged with through Train to Gain has had a beneficial impact on the bottom-line or profitability of their business.
 - Eight employers in ten (80 per cent) would recommend the Train to Gain service to a business colleague outside their organisation.
 - Three-quarters of all employers (77 per cent) would be likely or very likely to engage with Train to Gain in the future.
- 4 It should be noted that the findings for this sweep of the research were available prior to the publication in November 2007 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) *Train to Gain: A Plan for Growth, November 2007–July 2011*, and as such influenced the writing of this document. The *Plan for Growth* can be found on the Train to Gain website:
www.traintogain.gov.uk.

Headline findings

Profile of employers in contact with skills brokers with regard to Train to Gain

- 5 In evaluating the success of Train to Gain it is important to explore the characteristics of those employers who have used the skills brokerage service. One of the key performance indicators for Train to Gain skills

brokers has been to target small companies that are not Investors in People recognised and that have not accessed substantial vocational training leading to a qualification within the last 12 months. The majority of companies that have been in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers are indeed small: 82 per cent employ fewer than 50 people, with just over one-third (36 per cent) having fewer than 10 employees (including the survey respondent and any working proprietors). Businesses with fewer than five employees are, however, greatly under-represented compared with the English business population as a whole. It should be noted that the priorities in terms of engaging preferentially with small organisations have changed somewhat as part of the *Plan for Growth* (see paragraph 4).

- 6 There is little strong evidence to suggest that Train to Gain is successfully targeting employers who have not trained recently. Over two-thirds of employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (68 per cent) have arranged a course of training for their staff outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months. However, only 38 per cent of employers have accessed any training for staff in the year prior to the initial contact with the skills broker that led to them gaining a formal qualification (from Level 1 to Level 5).
- 7 A variety of industry sectors are represented among the population of employers who have had some contact with Train to Gain. Skills broker contact with employers is, however, dominated by employers in the Public administration, Health and Education sector, which accounts for almost two in five contacts (38 per cent) made by skills brokers. The Financial and Business Services sector is under-represented among the population of employers who have had contact with skills brokers, in comparison with its share of English employers.

Getting involved with Train to Gain

- 8 Skills brokers play a leading role in first engaging employers with Train to Gain, with a quarter of employers (26 per cent) saying that they heard about Train to Gain from skills brokers. Training providers remain an important medium for initialising dealings with Train to Gain: 14 per cent of employers indicated that they first heard of Train to Gain from a training provider. Just under a quarter of those contacted by a skills broker (representing 16 per cent of all employers) had first talked with a provider about Train to Gain before being contacted by the skills broker. It should be noted, however, that those employers who have had contact **only** with a training provider and not a skills broker with regard to Train to Gain have not been surveyed, so this assessment of the extent of the role of training providers in bringing employers into Train to Gain is likely to be an under-estimate.
- 9 In terms of the reasons employers have for getting involved with Train to Gain, two-fifths stated that they were attracted by the possibility of accessing the Train to Gain funding stream. The opportunity to access subsidised Level 2 training was more important to employers than funding at Level 3 (among those in the Level 3 pilot regions). The next major attraction of Train to Gain for employers was the opportunity for obtaining further training, skills and qualifications; this was mentioned by 35 per cent of employers.

Satisfaction with the Train to Gain skills brokerage service

- 10 Employers gave ratings of **importance** for various elements of the skills brokerage service, and then of **satisfaction** with the service received from the skills broker. The discrepancy between importance and satisfaction ratings has been used as a marker for where improvements in the skills brokerage service could have the greatest positive impact on the value employers gain from Train to Gain.

- 11 The aspects of the skills broker service considered to be most **important** by employers have remained constant across the course of the research. Factors relating to a skills broker's knowledge and expertise in signposting relevant provision, and in sourcing funding to enable employers to take up this provision, are considered to be the most important elements of a skills broker's role.
- 12 **Satisfaction** with the skills brokerage service is high, with four employers in five (80 per cent) satisfied at an overall level with the skills brokerage service. The highest levels of satisfaction are seen in relation to the impartiality of advice offered by skills brokers, along with their expertise in giving guidance and their knowledge of the local provision market. Skills brokers are generally considered to be responsive and accessible, although employer satisfaction is lower for the ease of accessing members of the skills brokerage team, other than the original skills broker, in order to obtain further information.
- 13 There has been a general decline in overall satisfaction across the course of the research. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Many research projects have shown that client satisfaction with a new service often declines over the first few months of operation, reflecting the increase in the volume of business and the increased workload of the various operational units as the service 'beds in'. Furthermore, it is likely that, as time has gone on, skills brokers have used up any 'easy hit' employer contacts that they may have been able to derive from lists of employers who have sought advice before and who are more likely to be positive about training and skills advice in general.
- 14 It should be borne in mind throughout this report that the overall decline in satisfaction is small, and the overall picture remains very positive. Across Sweep 1 of the research (employers initially in contact with Train to Gain from January to April 2007), almost two-thirds of employers (63 per cent) have been very satisfied with the skills brokerage service.

Employers' views on training received under Train to Gain

- 15 Around two-thirds (64 per cent) of respondents indicated that they had committed to training as the result of the Train to Gain service, with the remainder not yet decided or definitely not going ahead. Overall, 15 per cent of employers have accessed training for their employees that has now been completed, and one-third (33 per cent) were involved in Train to Gain training activity at the time of survey.
- 16 Analysis of the probability of a business with no history of training taking up training under Train to Gain indicates very strongly that such businesses are:
 - likely to be small employers;
 - operating in the private sector;
 - those without a training plan; and
 - those that regard a subsidy for Level 2 training as very important.
- 17 The most common method of training staff is a taught course delivered on-site either by an external training provider or by in-house staff (used by 64 per cent of those training under Train to Gain). The next most common type of training undertaken is that delivered by an external training provider or college and taking place off-site (used by 42 per cent of those training under Train to Gain).
- 18 Nearly two-thirds of employers who have completed or were conducting Train to Gain training at the time of interview used private training providers or consultants (63 per cent), while two-fifths (42 per cent) have accessed training delivered by a further education college. Over nine in ten (91 per cent) of all those undertaking training through Train to Gain received some funding for this. There is a strong relationship evident between employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service and the degree to which the training accessed has been funded by the public purse.

- 19 Part of the role of skills brokers within the Train to Gain model is to help employers make choices about relevant training opportunities. In this context it is useful to explore the extent to which employers feel that their skills broker has influenced their decision as to which type of provider to use for training and the nature of training undertaken. Overall, three-fifths of employers who have taken up training under Train to Gain (60 per cent) say that their skills broker was either quite or very influential in the decision of which type of training to access, with the skills broker supplying the employer with a choice of suitable providers and courses.
- 20 Employer views on training are extremely positive, with over nine in ten (92 per cent) of those taking up training feeling satisfied with the content of the course and the provider that delivered it. Employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service and with the training provision are inter-related, a finding to be expected when we take into account the fact that employers' views on the knowledge and judgement of skills brokers are likely to be influenced by the quality of the training and provider to which the skills broker guided them.

Impact of training accessed through Train to Gain

- 21 Assessment of the overall value of Train to Gain relies not only on gaining employers' views on the quality of service received from their skills broker and training provider, but also on the benefits received by the employer and, indeed, by the economy as a whole as a result of involvement with Train to Gain.
- 22 The most commonly cited benefit of involvement with Train to Gain is an improvement in the general company culture with regard to the training and development of staff. Over eight in ten employers (83 per cent) said that engaging with training through Train to Gain had allowed them to demonstrate their commitment to developing their staff and therefore to promote an employee-friendly culture in their business.

- 23 It is also clear that, at the most fundamental level, Train to Gain is having a positive effect on the skills base of those engaging with training. Three-quarters of employers (74 per cent) report that they have noticed an improvement in the skills of employees in relation to their specific job role. This figure was higher among employers whose staff have been working towards or who have achieved a Level 3 qualification.
- 24 Employers who have taken up training were generally positive about the effect of this activity on staff productivity and product or service quality. However, in terms of converting these increases in quality and productivity into raw financial benefit, employers were less confident in ascribing benefits to Train to Gain. In terms of achieving a measurable impact on sales figures, turnover and profit margins, the majority of employers said that engaging with Train to Gain training had made no difference.
- 25 Two-thirds of employers (67 per cent) engaging with training under Train to Gain, and who had conducted other training activity in the past year, said that they had been able to train more employees than they had done through other means during that period. Interestingly, those employers accessing fully subsidised training through the service were no more likely to say that they had been able to train an increased number of staff. As might be expected given the eligibility criteria for participation in much of training signposted and funded through training under Train to Gain, the majority of employers (72 per cent) reported that they had been able to access training for individuals who had not previously received employer-arranged training.
- 26 However, it should be noted that the majority of employees who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker come from organisations that have also accessed training outside Train to Gain in the past year. Of those employers who have been signposted to training provision through a skills broker, two-thirds (68 per cent) have had some experience of arranging training for staff in the last year. These employers account for

almost eight in every ten (78 per cent) learners who have been engaged with training through Train to Gain.

- 27 On the basis of the survey findings relating to take-up of Train to Gain training, previous training activity and changes in training activity, it is possible to make estimates of the overall impact or 'additionality' associated with Train to Gain. These estimates suggest that in just over one-third of surveyed establishments (36 per cent), Train to Gain training has not yet been taken up. Take-up of Train to Gain training was lowest among those employers with fewer than ten employees, and those in the Primary industry, Utilities and Manufacturing, Construction, and Financial and Business Services sectors.
- 28 Employers, who had contact with the Train to Gain brokerage service but who failed to take up training as a result of the intervention, cannot have created any additional training activity. However, it should be noted that as employers were surveyed only a few months after their initial contact with a skills broker, they may well have gone on to take up training through Train to Gain at a later date. In addition, employers may have gained useful insights into the skills of their employees and potential training opportunities as a result of contact with the skills broker and this might encourage them to engage with more staff development in the future.
- 29 In around one-fifth of cases (17 per cent), employers have taken up training outside Train to Gain in the past year, and have taken up training that is not substantially different from that conducted previously. This suggests that, in these cases, Train to Gain may have been used to subsidise training that would have been conducted by the employer in any case.
- 30 In 20 per cent of cases, Train to Gain introduced training in establishments that had not previously trained their workforce. This was the case among the smallest employers and those in the Wholesale and Retail, and Hotels and Restaurants sectors.

- 31 In a further quarter of cases (27 per cent), employers did have some training history outside Train to Gain, but the Train to Gain training led to those employers increasing the number or range of employees involved, or enhancing the quality of their workforce training. This suggests that just under half of all employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (47 per cent) have carried out additional training that could be attributed to the Train to Gain service ('total additionality'). For a summary of this analysis, please refer to Table 6.

Future involvement with Train to Gain

- 32 Three-quarters of all employers (77 per cent) would be likely or very likely to engage with Train to Gain in the future. Small employers are the least likely to continue their involvement in the near future, citing a lack of effective communication from the skills broker, the irrelevance of training, or the lack of benefit gained from this training as reasons for their reluctance to engage with the service again.
- 33 The majority of employers who anticipate continued involvement with Train to Gain (77 per cent) are likely to be recontacting their skills broker in order to access more advice on their organisation's needs and how these can be met. Eight in ten of those who have been involved with training through Train to Gain (80 per cent) will also be seeking skills broker assistance in evaluating the ongoing success of this training.
- 34 When employers were asked which type of training they would be willing to access through Train to Gain in the future, it became clear that Level 2 qualifications are the key focus for employers when considering the use of Train to Gain services. However, there is also a high level of demand for Level 3, 4 and 5 training that can be arranged, accessed or funded through Train to Gain. This perhaps reflects the fact that a significant proportion of these employers will already have had staff members engaged in or completing Level 2 training through Train to Gain, and who are therefore ready to move on to higher-level courses.

- 35 Few employers are willing to meet the total cost of training that they are likely to access through Train to Gain in future. For all qualification types, at least one in seven employers expect to receive full subsidies through Train to Gain, rising to as many as a quarter when referring to basic skills qualifications. The majority of employers expect to contribute half of the cost of the training or less.
- 36 In examining the effect of Train to Gain on employer activity, the survey asked employers to list persons or organisations that they might approach for future guidance in assessing their skills needs and advice on how to meet their objectives. These findings reveal that an equal number of employers would approach a training provider for future advice on training needs as would use a skills broker. Smaller employers are less likely to consider providers as a source of advice, instead preferring to access Business Link services (25 per cent, compared with 16 per cent overall). Given that small employers are under-represented in the population of employers in contact with Train to Gain in comparison with the business population as a whole, and that the Business Link network is a well-established and trusted advice channel for these employers, it makes sense to continue to forge strong links between skills brokers and the Business Link network.

Issues for consideration

- 37 The survey suggests a number of key points for the skills brokers and the LSC to consider.
- There should be continued focus on targeting the smallest employers, given the under-representation of employers with fewer than ten staff in comparison to the business population as a whole.
 - An effective means of reaching small employers may be to continue to integrate skills brokers and Business Link organisations in the delivery of Train to Gain, or at least to ensure that there are strong communication and referral mechanisms between these parties. The Business Link network is a well-established and trusted advice channel for these small employers, who are particularly likely to approach Business Link for advice on skills. Business Link will be well placed to reach the target groups in regions where they are acting as the contracted delivery organisation for skills brokerage services, and to refer small employers to Train to Gain in other regions.
 - More sophisticated needs-based assessment may be required when engaging employers with Train to Gain. A significant proportion of employers had already trained some staff to formal qualifications at Level 1 to Level 5 in the year prior to the initial contact with the skills broker. As mentioned above, there are substitution effects associated with these employers, and further analysis may be required on whether these employers are the most in need of Train to Gain services.
 - It will be important for all stakeholders within the service to work together to manage employer expectations of the subsidies for training that might be available to them through Train to Gain. The availability of subsidies for Level 2 and 3 training are an important reason for involvement in Train to Gain for the majority of employers, and employer dissatisfaction often arises when they are told that they will not be eligible for any

funded provision. Given the finite pool of funding available, as the numbers of employers in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers increases it will be important to communicate clearly about subsidies and eligibility at all levels, from the national skills publicity campaign to the advice given by skills brokers.

- The key reason for employer dissatisfaction with the skills brokerage service relates to a lack of proactive communication on the part of the skills broker, and a perceived neglect or delay in carrying out required follow-up actions. Employers are expecting the skills broker to manage the whole process up to staff enrolling on a course of training, and it will therefore be important for skills brokers to communicate clearly with employers about referrals to training providers, and to keep in touch with employers until training is under way.
- There is a significant demand for further training through Train to Gain among employers. It will be important that employers who have accessed advice, assessment services and training, and who are ready to go on to further development, are followed up by skills brokers or given advice by providers to ensure that they don't slip back into not training. Again, it would appear vital that skills brokers offer ongoing support to employers.

Background and Introduction to Train to Gain

- 38 Train to Gain represents one of the most important developments in skills policy in recent years. Introduced in April 2006, and fully rolled out in August of the same year, Train to Gain is a national service for businesses, providing them with help in identifying and sourcing training that will improve the skills of their workforce and their business performance.
- 39 Train to Gain aims to encourage employers to invest in the development of the skills and qualifications of their employees. It is particularly concerned with increasing the proportion of adults in the workforce with Level 2 qualifications and good basic skills, targeting the 28 per cent of individuals in employment whose only qualifications are below National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 2 (see, LSC, *Skills in England 2007*, published by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Sector Skills Development Agency in September 2007). In three areas (London, the North West and the West Midlands) Train to Gain is piloting support to employers wishing to train employees to Level 3.
- 40 The importance of raising the skills levels of the UK workforce has been recognised for some time and reflected in the policies of successive governments. Lord Leitch's review, *Prosperity for all in the global economy – world-class skills* (published by HM Treasury in December 2006), strongly urged that the UK raise achievement at all levels of skills, while the Budget 2007 report emphasised that workforce skills are key to the country's capacity to respond to new challenges arising from the changing global economic environment.
- 41 Employer Training Pilots (ETP), launched in 2002, were important experiments in skills policy intended to encourage employers to invest in

the skills and qualifications of their workforce, with a particular focus on workers with low skill levels. Initially launched in six local LSC areas, ETP was quickly expanded over the following months to cover 14 additional areas. ETP aimed to increase the volume of employer-led training at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 by providing access to fully funded training programmes, financial support to cover the cost of employees attending courses in working time and a skills brokerage service to help match the training obtained to their needs.

- 42 In 2005, the skills White Paper (*Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work*, published by the Department for Education and Skills) set out the Government's aspiration to achieve the twin goals of enabling individuals to achieve their potential and businesses to become more successful. The new Train to Gain service proposed in the White Paper was an important part of that strategy. Based on the lessons learnt from ETP, Train to Gain is a national service that aims to offer employers a full range of solutions to their skills needs through an independent and impartial brokerage service that takes into consideration the full scope of learning and training provision available locally. Employers are encouraged to voice their needs and skills brokers will then attempt to match these needs with potential training solutions. Through Train to Gain, funded training is available for employees to achieve a Level 2 qualification (or a Skills for Life qualification) if they do not already have academic or vocational qualifications equivalent to Level 2 (for example, five GCSEs at grades A* to C or NVQ Level 2). Train to Gain was launched formally in August 2006.
- 43 More recently, in June 2007, the Government launched the skills pledge. This is a public and voluntary commitment made by employers to support all their employees to develop basic skills and includes literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2. The skills pledge is designed to stimulate demand for training services and support a new culture where gaining skills is taken as a

matter of course. Companies making the skills pledge are directed to the skills brokerage element of Train to Gain, meaning that the skills pledge scheme may develop into an effective channel for bringing employers into the ambit of Train to Gain.

- 44 Following on from the skills pledge, the LSC and DIUS launched the Skills Campaign – ‘Our future. It’s in our hands’ – encouraging people to take control of their future by investing in skills and aiming to bring about the cultural change needed to improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.
- 45 Train to Gain marks a critical change of emphasis in skills policy, as it seeks to link business needs directly to training needs and hence to match that to appropriate provision. The key mechanism for achieving this is the Train to Gain skills brokerage system whereby skills brokers will work directly with employers to help identify business and training needs and secure provision to meet those needs.
- 46 Employers themselves often have a fairly simple view of what is required in terms of skills policy. In December 2005 the National Audit Office published a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, *Employers’ perspectives on improving skills for employment*, highlighting four key messages from employers. Employers said they wanted:
- simple ways of getting advice on the best skills training for their staff;
 - training that meets their business needs;
 - incentives to train their staff more; and
 - the opportunity to influence skills training without getting weighed down by bureaucracy.
- 47 Train to Gain goes a long way towards meeting those employer views. The acquisition of skills or qualifications alone is not, however, a sufficient condition to bring about improved organisational performance. Employers

will need to develop the competence of their workforce but they also need to implement practices that allow for effective deployment of employee skills to ensure that the organisation attains the full benefits of training and development. The challenge for Train to Gain is to bring about such a change in business attitudes and practices.

Employer Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The programme of Train to Gain employer evaluation research

- 48 Throughout Train to Gain's relatively short existence research has been conducted with employers to gauge their views on the service. This report focuses on Sweep 1 of the employer evaluation research conducted by IFF Research in June and July 2007, covering employers who had had some contact with a Train to Gain skills broker, and who had made the initial contact between January and April 2007.
- 49 Previous to this, seven monthly waves of employer research had been conducted, the first four completed by BMG Research and the next three by IFF Research. These previous seven waves provide coverage since the roll-out of Train to Gain in June 2006, and were solely concerned with the measurement of employer satisfaction with the service that skills brokers provide. The results of the first seven waves were solely used to contract-manage skills brokerage organisations.
- 50 Data for the two years following will be collected and analysed by IFF Research and the Institute of Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick; this report is the result of the first of four sweeps of fieldwork that IFF Research will conduct during that period. The next three periods of fieldwork will be conducted at roughly six-monthly intervals. These sweeps of research are more ambitious in coverage than the seven monthly waves conducted previously, both with regard to the numbers of interviews to be undertaken (rising from 7,500 interviews in the first year to 15,000 in the second year) and also in the depth of questioning. The Sweep 1 research includes questions relating to employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service, but also aims to broaden the scope to include other

elements of employer experience of Train to Gain. The findings of Sweep 1 of the employer evaluation covered here include:

- how employers first heard of and became involved with Train to Gain;
- the extent to which they found their skills broker to be responsive and accessible;
- employer views on the impartiality and relevance of advice given, and the skills brokers' knowledge of potential training and funding opportunities;
- analysis of how employers became involved with Train to Gain, including the role of providers;
- employer expectations and motivations when deciding to become involved with Train to Gain and training accessed through the service;
- employer satisfaction with the training provision accessed through Train to Gain, and with the training providers delivering this;
- the impact Train to Gain has had on the numbers of employees trained among employers who have had contact with a skills broker, and changes in their training provision;
- the benefits of involvement with the skills broker and of any training conducted under Train to Gain; and
- the likelihood of future involvement with Train to Gain among those who have been involved so far.

51 Another feature of the employer evaluation research programme is that IFF Research will recontact some employers, who gave permission for them to do so, in order for there to be more effective tracking of results over time. IFF will attempt a recontact census of all those employers contacted in Sweep 1 a year after this fieldwork period. The overall aim of the evaluation is to inquire about employers' experiences of Train to Gain

through a telephone questionnaire survey of employers, supported by face-to-face interviews with employers to inquire further about aspects of their experience of the Train to Gain service.

- 52 As well as the employer evaluation, a number of other research projects are under way to analyse the success and progress of Train to Gain. This includes the Broker Operational Review, which is also being undertaken by IFF Research, and an evaluation of Train to Gain learner views currently being undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) and MORI. These three projects complement one another by demonstrating how the different constituencies – employers, employees and skills brokers – perceive the success of Train to Gain.
- 53 Furthermore, two more discrete projects are under way to examine particular issues of interest. First, IFF Research is currently conducting a study on behalf of the Quality Improvement Agency ('Supporting Progression Routes Within Train to Gain') into how the concept of 'progression' is understood in a Train to Gain context – that is, how providers see learners progressing when they have become involved with Train to Gain. Second, IES has been commissioned to conduct an evaluation of the Train to Gain brokerage support funds provided by the LSC to the sector skills councils for them to help support skills brokers.

Methodology

- 54 This report presents the findings of interviews with 3,759 employers who were initially in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker between January and April 2007 inclusive.
- 55 Prior to main-stage fieldwork, two separate pilot exercises were carried out. These pilots were used to improve the structure and wording of the questionnaire.
- 56 Contact details for employers were supplied by skills broker organisations on a monthly basis, and consisted of details of employers contacted by or who contacted a skills broker with regard to Train to Gain between January and April 2007. This contact could consist of a simple telephone call to the employer, right through to the skills broker having conducted a full training needs analysis, or the employer going on to take up training as a result. Skills brokers were asked to provide full lists of contacts, meaning that a complete population of all employers who had had contact with Train to Gain in this period was obtained. It should be noted that all of the employers surveyed in this research have had at least some contact with a skills broker, and therefore those employers who have experienced a purely provider-driven engagement with Train to Gain are excluded. Therefore, findings that refer to the involvement or influence of skills brokers on employer engagement will not be entirely complete.
- 57 From this population, interviews were conducted by IFF Research using computer-aided telephone interviewing. Strict quotas were set to guarantee a fair proportional spread of interviews by region, as follows: each of the nine LSC regions in England were allocated 200 interviews, with the remaining interviews spread in proportion to the sample population provided by the skills brokerage organisations. IFF Research also monitored the number of interviews completed by month of first contact

with the Train to Gain skills broker, and the skills brokerage organisation making this contact, to ensure a good spread of interviews

- 58 The breakdown of interviews achieved for each region is detailed in Table 1. At the analysis stage, regional weights were applied to the data to ensure that the results reflected the regional sample populations.
- 59 Table 1 also gives the confidence intervals associated with the sample of employers taken for each region, indicating that for each month of first contact. Where results are presented for all employers, we can be 95 per cent confident that the true figure on any measure lies within plus or minus 1.4 per cent of the survey finding.

Table 1: Populations of employers in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers and total interviews achieved – by LSC region

Region	Total interviews achieved	Population of employers contacted through Train to Gain	Proportion of population interviewed (%)	Confidence intervals on a finding of 50%
East of England	457	2,263	20.2	+/- 4.1
East Midlands	329	1,138	28.9	+/- 4.6
London	342	1,254	27.3	+/- 4.5
North East	340	1,236	27.5	+/- 4.5
North West	342	1,259	27.2	+/- 4.5
South East	532	2,904	18.3	+/- 3.8
South West	391	1,677	23.3	+/- 4.3
West Midlands	749	4,827	15.5	+/- 3.3
Yorkshire and the Humber	277	658	42.1	+/- 4.5
Total: (Sweep 1)	3,759	17,216	21.8	+/- 1.4

Profile of Employers in Contact with Skills Brokers with Regard to Train to Gain

60 In evaluating the success of Train to Gain it is important to explore the characteristics of the employers who have used the skills brokerage service. As we have seen, one of the primary objectives of Train to Gain is to target small companies whose employees have little or no history of vocational training or Level 2 attainment. This section examines the key characteristics of employers who have been in contact with a skills broker with regard to gaining advice on skills and training, regardless of whether assessment or training has yet taken place through Train to Gain. This section also discusses the extent to which Train to Gain is proving successful in reaching particular target groups.

Employer size

61 As shown in Table 2, the majority of employers who have had contact with skills brokers under Train to Gain are small: 82 per cent employ fewer than 50 people, with just over one-third (36 per cent) having fewer than 10 employees (including the survey respondent and any working proprietors). These percentages are based on the weighted population of employers who have had contact with a Train to Gain skills broker. Over 16,500 employers can be included in the wider small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) bracket, as they employ fewer than 250 staff.

Table 2: The profile of employers who have had contact with Train to Gain skills brokers – by size

Size	Number of employers interviewed	Population of employers in contact with skills brokers	% of population of employers in contact with skills brokers	% of England business population
1 to 4 employees	633	2,941	17%	67%
5 to 9	689	3,178	18%	15%
10 to 49	1,748	7,947	46%	15%
50 to 249	573	2,619	15%	3%
250+	116	530	3%	>1%
Total	3,759	17,216	100%	100%

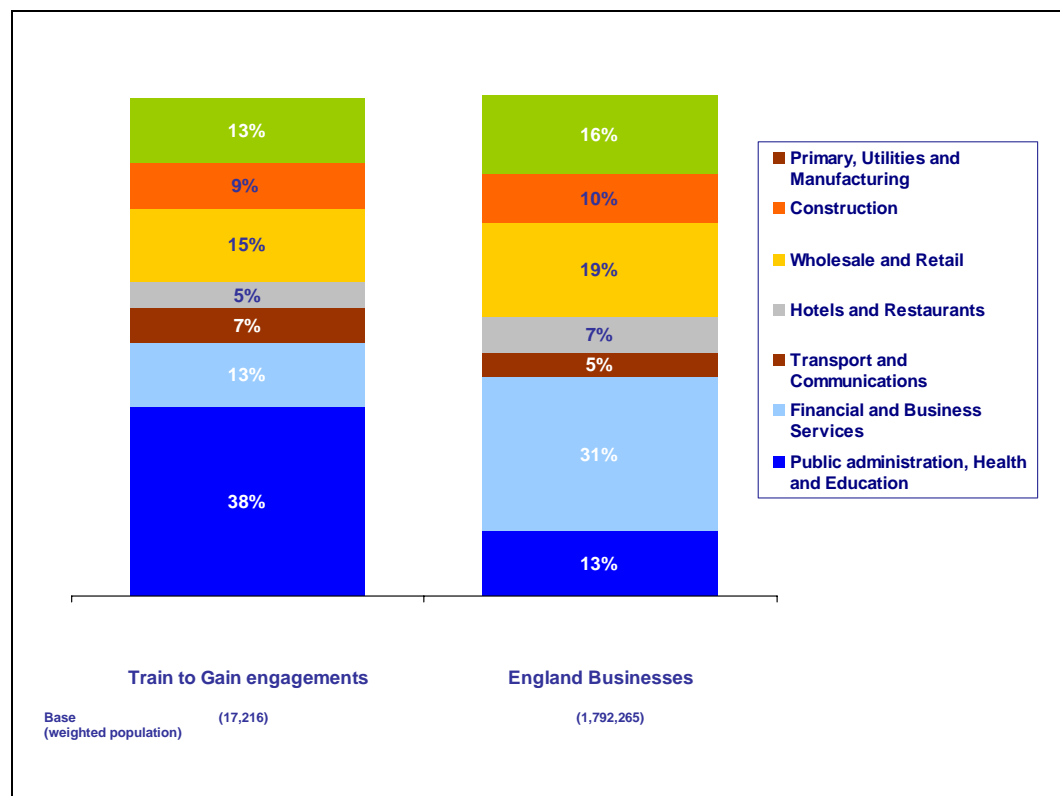
Source: drawn from Office for National Statistics, Statistical Framework Division, 'UK Business: Activity, Size and Location: September 2007', 2007

- 62 Table 2 also compares the employment profile with the profile of VAT-registered businesses nationally. This indicates that businesses with at least 10 employees are over-represented in the population of employers in contact with skills brokers, in comparison to their representation among English businesses generally, while those with less than five employees are greatly under-represented.

Employer sector

63 As shown in Figure 1, a wide variety of industry sectors are represented among the population of employers who have had contact with skills brokers with regard to Train to Gain. Employer involvement with Train to Gain is, however, dominated by employers in the Public administration, Health and Education sector, which accounts for almost two in five contacts (38 per cent) made by skills brokers between January and April 2007. This is also much more than would be expected given the representation of this sector in the England business population as a whole (13 per cent). This may reflect the many requirements that exist in the Health and Education sector for employees to be trained and qualified to at least a Level 2 standard.

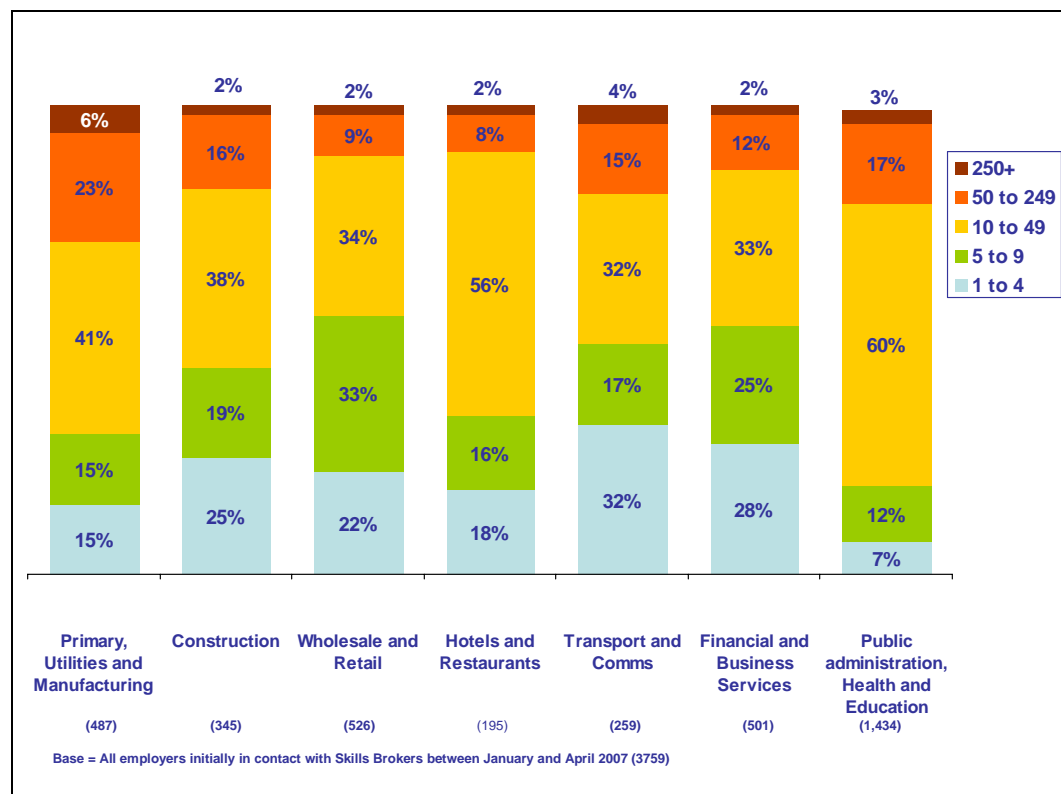
Figure 1: The profile of employers who have had contact with Train to Gain skills brokers – by industry sector



- 64 Wholesale and Retail employers make up the second largest sector in terms of employer contact with Train to Gain, accounting for one-sixth (15 per cent) of the total number of contacts with skills brokers. The Primary industry, Utilities and Manufacturing industries and employers delivering Financial and Business Services each account for 13 per cent of contacts. The Financial and Business Services sector is under-represented among the Train to Gain employer population in comparison to its share of English employers, reflecting that employers in these sectors are more likely to organise their own training, and therefore fall outside the target groups for Train to Gain (see *National Employer Skills Survey 2005: Main Report*, published by the LSC in June 2006).
- 65 There are considerable differences in the size profile of employers in these sectors. As shown in Figure 2, employers in the Public administration,

Health and Education sector who have been in contact with skills brokers with regard to Train to Gain are likely to be larger than their counterparts in other sectors. Only 19 per cent of these organisations employ fewer than 10 staff; in contrast, over half of employers have had contact with skills brokers in other key sectors such as Wholesale and Retail and Financial and Business Services. Those Primary industry, Utilities and Manufacturing firms receiving a Train to Gain intervention are also larger than those in other sectors, with almost three in ten employing more than 50 staff.

Figure 2: The profile of employers who have been in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers – by industry sector and size



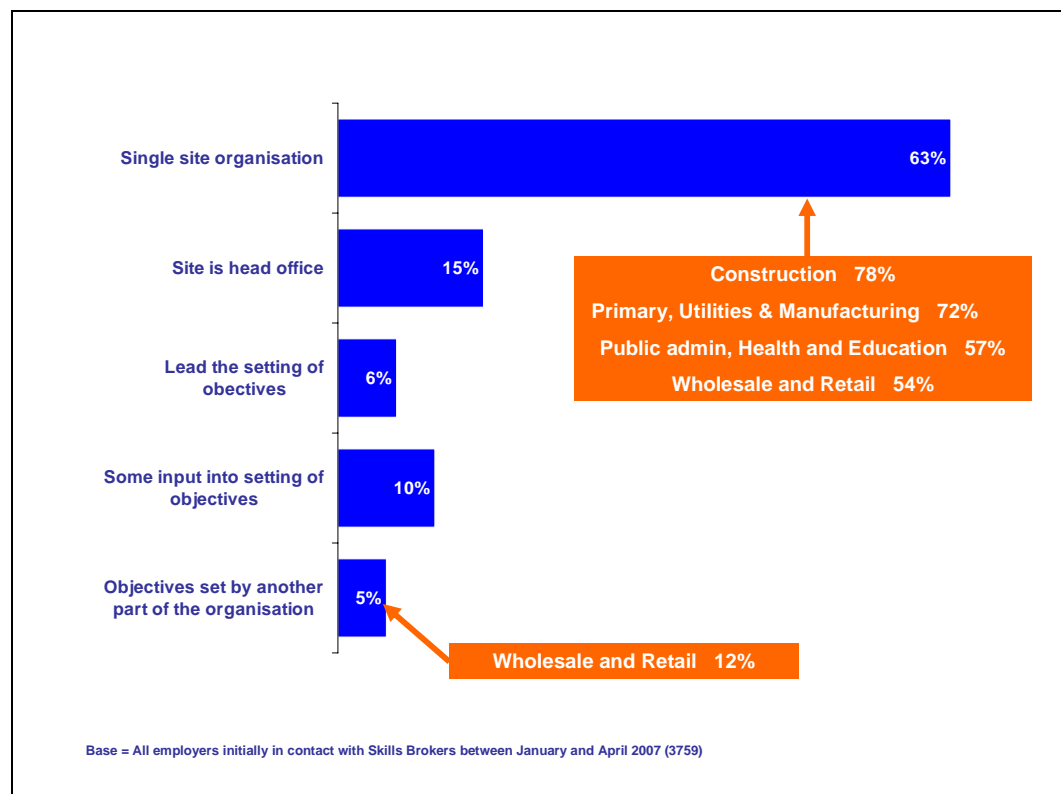
66 All sectors reflect the general difference between the size profile of the national business population and the population of Train to Gain contacts. All sectors of employers contacted with regard to Train to Gain have a lower proportion of large employers compared with these sectors in the England business population as a whole.

Is the employer establishment part of a larger organisation?

67 In delineating the type of employer likely to have been in contact with skills brokers through Train to Gain, it is interesting to investigate the extent to which employers have autonomy in making decisions about training and other human resource issues. One key determinant of this is whether the employer operates as a single-site business or as one part or branch of a

larger, parent organisation. Overall, almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker operate as independent organisations, from 78 per cent in the Construction sector, to 54 per cent for Wholesale and Retail. Employers delivering Public administration, Health and Education services were also less likely to be operating independently: 43 per cent were operating as part of a wider organisation such as a training provider company, primary care trust or local authority.

Figure 3: The status of contacted employers with regard to the setting of human resource and training objectives



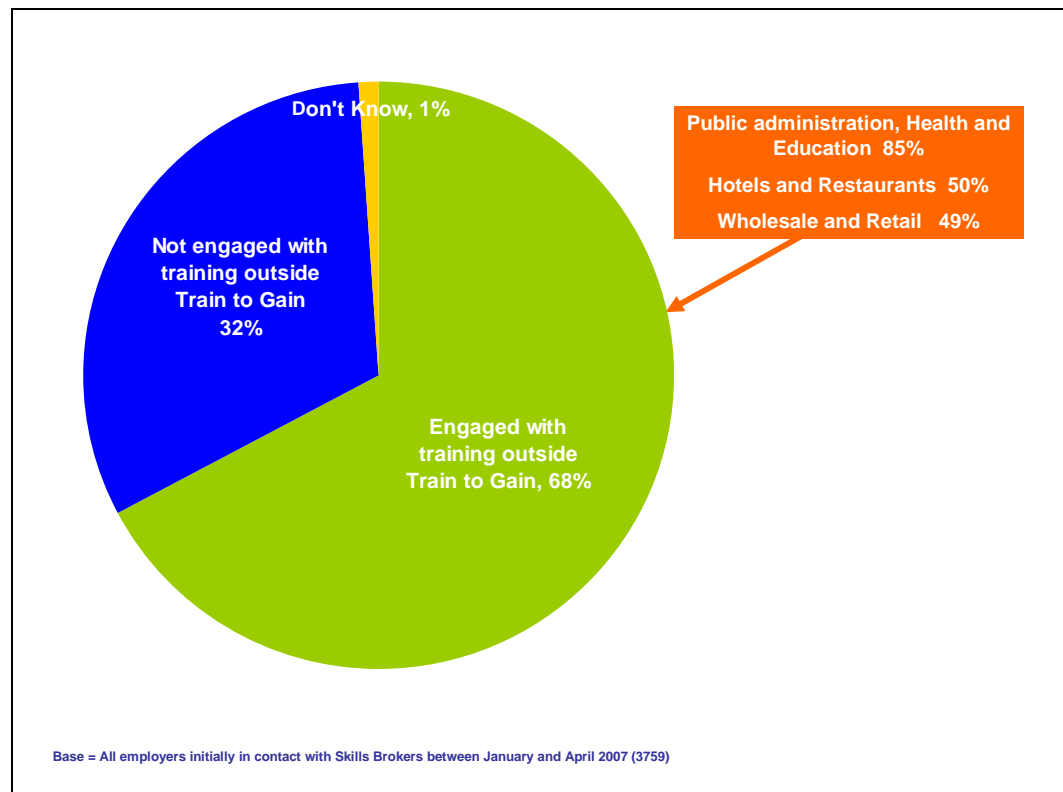
- 68 Of those employers who are operating as part of a larger organisation, 40 per cent (15 per cent of all employers) are the head office of that organisation, and therefore have complete control when setting the development objectives of the organisation. As shown in Figure 3, a further one in six employer establishments do not have a head office function but

none the less have some degree of autonomy when it comes to decisions about how to develop their employees. Only 5 per cent of all the employers who have been in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers say that decisions about training are made entirely by managers elsewhere. This figure is higher for retail employers, reflecting the branch structure of many of these organisations.

Employer training activity outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months

- 69 As noted above, Train to Gain aims to target primarily employers with no history of training within the past year, in order to encourage them to engage with and invest in development opportunities for their employees. Therefore, a key question that needs to be asked is whether those employers who have experienced a Train to Gain intervention meet this criterion.
- 70 Over two-thirds of employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (68 per cent) have arranged a course of training for their staff in the past 12 months. As might be expected, this figure was particularly high for the Public administration, Health and Education sector, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The proportion of employers having engaged with training outside the Train to Gain service in the past 12 months



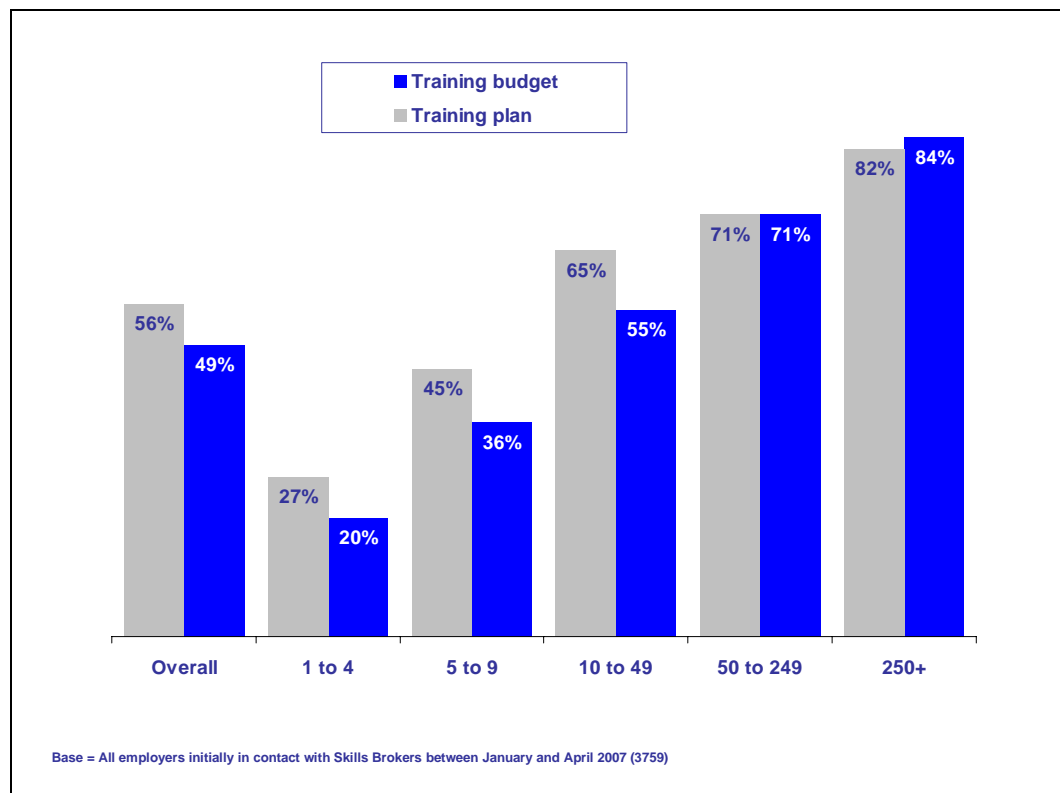
- 71 It should be noted here that the definition of ‘training’ was left to the employer, and therefore this could incorporate on-the-job training or that conducted by external providers. Equally, the training could encompass anything from half-day health and safety training to Level 4 or 5 qualifications lasting as long as three years. What can be said is that 55 per cent of employers who stated that they had conducted training in the past year (38 per cent of all employers) said that this led to at least one member of staff gaining a formal qualification at National Vocational Qualification Level 2 standard or above (see Figure 40 at paragraph 261 for more details).
- 72 As will be discussed at the end of this section, a key performance indicator of the success of Train to Gain is the proportion of successful contacts made with employers who have not engaged with ‘substantial vocational’

training activity in the past year. As shown here, in only one-third of cases (32 per cent) has the employer **not engaged with any training at all** outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months. However, if we define the target group as those employers conducting no training leading to **formal qualifications** in the past 12 months, then a greater proportion of the employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker can be considered as being part of the priority group in need of Train to Gain services. Three-fifths of employers (60 per cent) contacted by the skills brokers have **not** accessed any training for staff in the past year that has led to them to gaining a formal qualification (from Level 1 to Level 5).

The extent of training planning used by employers who have had contact with a Train to Gain skills broker

73 In order to further assess the extent to which employers contacted with regard to Train to Gain match the target profile, employers were asked whether their organisation had a training budget or plan. Around half of employers contacted by skills brokers (49 per cent) said that they do have a budget ring-fenced for training, with a slightly higher proportion (56 per cent) having a formalised written plan for employee development (Figure 5). These figures are significantly higher than among the English business population as a whole: nationally, 45 per cent of employers use a training plan and only 33 per cent have a budget set aside for training (figures derived from the *National Employers Skills Survey 2005: Main Report* – see paragraph 64). As illustrated in Figure 5, there is a statistically significant effect of employer size on the proportion of employers with a training plan and training budget.

Figure 5: The proportion of employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker reporting that they have formal training plans and a training budget – by organisational size



Is Train to Gain successful in reaching target groups?

- 74 One of the key performance indicators for Train to Gain skills brokers is to target small companies that are not Investors in People-recognised and that have not accessed substantial vocational training leading to a qualification within the last 12 months. Based on the key characteristics of employers who have had contact with a skills broker discussed above, it is possible to draw some important conclusions with regard to whether or not these aims of Train to Gain are being met.
- 75 Train to Gain aims to target specifically smaller employers, suggesting that SMEs should be over-represented in the population of employers who have had some contact with a Train to Gain skills broker. As we have seen

in paragraph 61, although the vast majority (82 per cent) of employers who have been in contact with a skills broker employ fewer than 50 staff, when comparing the profile of these employers with that of English businesses as a whole, the coverage of employers with fewer than five staff is poor. Therefore, it would seem that there is some way to go towards engaging the smallest employers.

- 76 Another fundamental objective of Train to Gain is selectively to target and benefit those employers who have not engaged with substantial training in the year before the Train to Gain intervention. Subsequent sweeps of the employer evaluation will look to assess the proportion of employers who have been in contact with Train to Gain who are Investors in People-recognised, in order to more fully assess whether the current employers in contact with skills brokers match the target profile. As we have seen, there is little strong evidence to suggest that Train to Gain is successfully targeting employers who have not trained recently. Only one-third (32 per cent) of those employers who have had a discussion with a skills broker have not undertaken training outside Train to Gain in the recent past.
- 77 However, there are several reasons why the proportion of employers without a previous training history among the population of employers in contact with skills brokers may not be as high as initially expected. First, it has never been envisaged that **all** contacts made by Train to Gain skills brokers should be among employers with no recent training history; rather, the advice of a skills broker is open to all employers. It is also important to reiterate that the training undertaken by those employers who have accessed some training in the past year may well not have been extensive. It is likely that, for many of these employers, there will be groups of employees who have not received training or for whom further skills development is required. Indeed, as we have seen, only two-fifths (38 per cent) of employers who have had some contact with a skills broker have arranged training for any staff that has led to them gaining a formal

qualification at Level 2 or above. There may also be particular skills deficiencies that have not yet been addressed, suggesting that these employers represent legitimate targets within the remit of Train to Gain.

- 78 In addition, even if employers are not eligible for funding through Train to Gain, the intervention of a skills broker may help those who have some experience of training to access provision more suited to their needs or to increase the number of employees participating. The extent to which Train to Gain is adding value to those employers who have trained before is discussed later (see 'The Impact of Training Accessed Through Train to Gain').
- 79 The channels currently being used by skills brokers to make contact with employers may also be having an effect on the relative proportions of employers with a more developed training culture in the Train to Gain population. Research has indicated that skills brokers are currently spending a considerable proportion of their time dealing with employers who take the initiative to contact Train to Gain themselves or, in particular, following up on 'light-touch' employer leads supplied by providers. Given the expectation that most contacts with employers will come from 'cold-calling' activity rather than reactive engagement, it is perhaps unsurprising that there has been a relatively low proportion of contacts being generated with these non-training organisations. In addition, it will often be difficult to ascertain the precise level of previous development activity undertaken and skills gaps existing until the initial contact has been made.
- 80 Despite these caveats, the findings on the planning and budgeting of training would seem to suggest that Train to Gain has thus far been engaging organisations that are reasonably sophisticated and engaged with development activity. As we have seen, those employers engaging with skills brokers are more likely than the national average to have formalised plans and financial resources set aside to cover training. This should be borne in mind when evaluating whether Train to Gain is meeting

its objectives of encouraging training and investment in training where there has previously been little.

- 81 The extent to which Train to Gain is targeting the correct employers in order to meet its objectives is highlighted further throughout this report, but particularly when describing the characteristics of employers taking up funded training (see 'Employers' Views on Training Received Under Train to Gain') and evaluating the impact of training received (see 'Impact of Training Accesses Through Train to Gain').

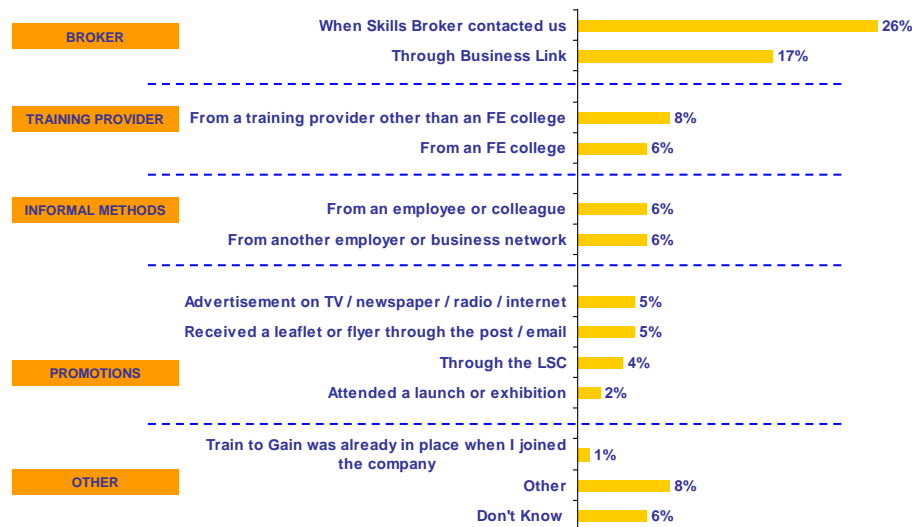
Getting Involved with Train to Gain

82 In this section we consider the process by which employers have become aware of and then involved with Train to Gain. More specifically, we explore the role of training providers in engaging employers with Train to Gain and what particular facets of the programme employers find appealing. At the centre of the programme is the idea of skills brokerage, but how far is that seen as important by employers themselves? Do they value Train to Gain primarily as a funding scheme or for the individualised skills brokerage services they receive? Linked to this, we will consider the role of the training providers in engaging employers with Train to Gain: how influential are they in selling Train to Gain, and what impact does this have on employers' perceptions of Train to Gain?

Initial exposure to Train to Gain

83 Employers were asked about the manner in which they first heard about the Train to Gain skills brokerage service. The question was asked on an unprompted basis in order to gain spontaneous responses. Results are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6: The channels through which employers first heard about the Train to Gain skills brokerage service



Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Brokers between January and April 2007 (3759)

84 In waves 5 to 7 of the previous skills broker satisfaction research (covering employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made in October to December 2006), a quarter of employers (25 per cent) had found out about Train to Gain through training providers, compared with only 9 per cent having heard from skills brokers. Results from this subsequent Sweep 1 of the main employer evaluation (covering employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made in January to April 2007) demonstrate that skills brokerages have started to take more of a lead in the process, with a quarter of employers (26 per cent) now saying that they heard about Train to Gain from skills brokers.

85 Added to this, Business Link acts as the contracted delivery organisation for many of the regions. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that it is the second most frequent means of employers having come into contact with Train to Gain (17 per cent) and that the number of employers who first

heard of Train to Gain through Business Link was higher in the five out of nine LSC regions in which Train to Gain is delivered at least in part through Business Link. For example, a much higher proportion of employers in the North West and North East regions said that they had first heard about Train to Gain through Business Link (31 per cent and 46 per cent respectively, compared with 17 per cent overall). In London, where Business Link does not have any direct involvement in delivering skills brokerage services, only 6 per cent of employers said that they first heard about Train to Gain from this source.

- 86 Those who had not engaged in training in the last 12 months other than through Train to Gain were more likely than average to say they had first come across Train to Gain from a skills broker or through Business Link (28 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).
- 87 Training providers do remain an important medium for initialising dealings with Train to Gain: 14 per cent of employers indicated that they first heard of Train to Gain from a training provider, with 6 per cent saying specifically that it was through a further education (FE) college. Large employers with 250 or more employees were particularly likely to have first heard of Train to Gain from training providers (32 per cent). This may relate to the increased likelihood of larger employers having trained outside Train to Gain and therefore already having relationships with training providers. (As noted in paragraph 56, this survey did not include provider-driven engagements so these findings will underestimate the number of employers first made aware of Train to Gain by a training provider.)
- 88 Employers who had already accessed training through Train to Gain at the time of the survey were slightly, but significantly, more likely to have first heard about the service from a FE college or other training provider. Of these employers, 12 per cent had first been made aware of Train to Gain by an FE college (compared with 8 per cent of all employers) and 9 per cent had been made aware by another type of training provider (compared

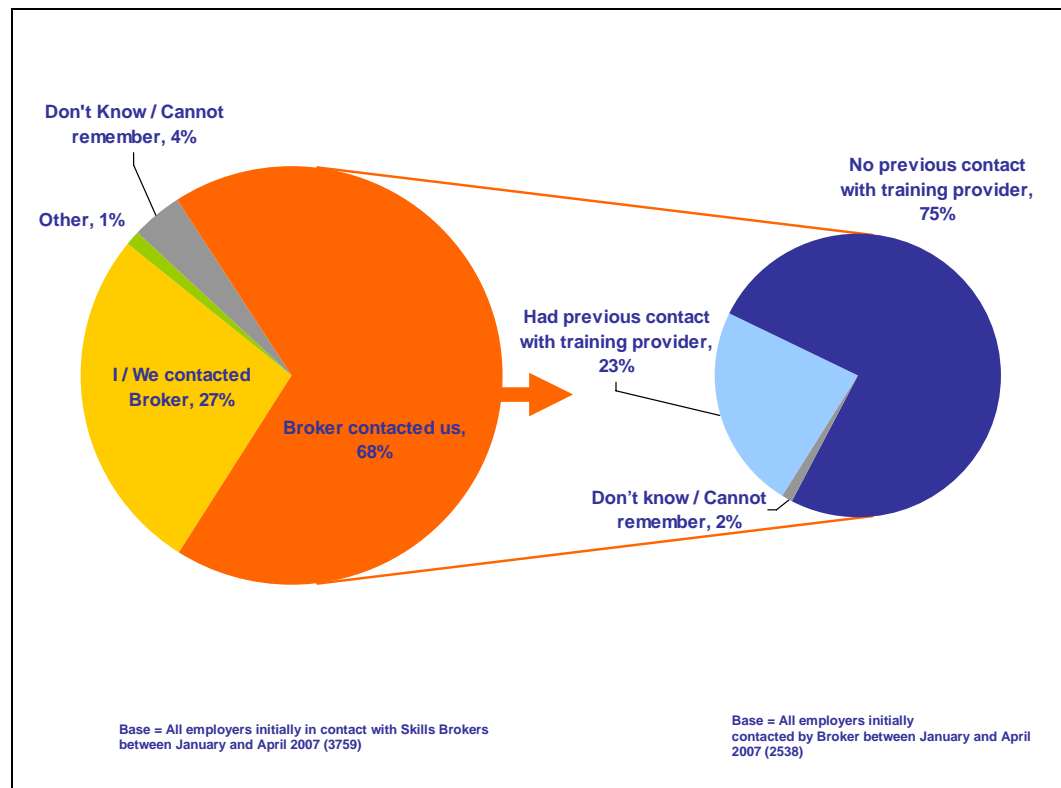
with 6 per cent overall). These cases may represent more 'provider-led' contact events, where the provider has referred to skills brokers employers with whom they have been in touch and who they know are ready and willing to engage with training.

- 89 There was no difference between those employers taking up Train to Gain training at Level 2 or and those training at Level 3 in terms of the proportion who first heard about the service through a training provider. However, those taking up Level 3 training were less likely to have been first made aware of Train to Gain via a skills broker (19 per cent, compared with 26 per cent overall), perhaps indicating that skills brokers are focusing their attentions on more difficult-to-reach employers whose staff are in need of Level 2 qualifications.
- 90 Promotional activities, including media advertisements, electronic leaflets, flyers and other direct contact, accounted for 16 per cent of introductions to Train to Gain. These activities are also likely to have indirectly influenced those who said they had heard about Train to Gain through more informal routes, such as business contacts inside or outside their company (each of which represented 6 per cent of employers). It should be remembered, however, that interviews were conducted in June and July 2007, before the launch of the main media campaign promoting the Train to Gain service in September.
- 91 As we would expect, given that the programme began only recently, only 1 per cent said that Train to Gain was already in place in their business when they joined the company.
- 92 Around one in twelve (8 per cent) of employers had heard about Train to Gain from a range of other sources, including unspecified internet exposure, other public sector organisations (for example, sector skills councils and Jobcentre Plus), industry bodies, professional associations and Investors in People.

Initial contact with a skills broker

- 93 Employers were asked who had initiated the first contact between them and the skills broker. The results are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Whether the first contact was initiated by a skills broker, and whether the employer had had previous contact with a training provider before being contacted by the skills broker



- 94 As illustrated in the left-hand pie chart in Figure 7, over a quarter (27 per cent) of those who have had contact with a Train to Gain skills broker initiated the process by contacting a skills broker themselves, while just over two-thirds (68 per cent) were contacted by a skills broker. A small number could not specify who had initiated contact or felt that initial contact was mutual (for example, because they had met skills brokers at launch events or training fairs).

- 95 There was variation by sector, with Wholesale and Retail, and Hotels and Restaurants being the most likely to be contacted by skills brokers (78 per cent and 75 per cent respectively, with correspondingly lower numbers of employers taking the lead in these sectors), with all other sectors sitting just below the national average in terms of the likelihood for skills brokers to have initiated contact.
- 96 In order to gauge the level of involvement providers are having in the Train to Gain process and to see whether employers are contacting training providers who then pass the employer to a skills broker, employers who were initially contacted by a skills broker were asked whether they had previously been in contact with training providers about the Train to Gain service before they were contacted by a skills broker (see right-hand pie chart in Figure 7). It should be noted that we would not necessarily expect training providers to be automatically referring employers to skills brokers for advisory services. If the training provider is contracted to deliver provision under Train to Gain, then the decision about whether to put an employer in contact with a skills broker or simply to assess their needs and enrol them on training should be based on the needs of that employer. Referrals from training providers to skills brokers should therefore be considered as representing a positive, but not integral or necessary, element of the Train to Gain process.
- 97 Most of those employers contacted by a skills broker had not had any previous dealings with training providers about Train to Gain (75 per cent). (Again, it should be noted that those employers who have had contact only with a training provider and not a skills broker with regard to Train to Gain have not been surveyed, so the full extent of the role of training providers in engaging employers cannot be assessed here.) Just under a quarter of those contacted by a skills broker (23 per cent, representing 16 per cent of all employers) had first talked with a provider about Train to Gain before being contacted by the skills broker. Not all employers who had done this

will have been contacted as a result of that discussion but many will have been.

- 98 Rates of provider contact with employers prior to the skills broker intervention are higher among employers who had already taken up training at the time of the survey (31 per cent had prior provider contact compared with 23 per cent overall), and particularly those with staff engaged at Level 3 (39 per cent). This again suggests that those employers actively looking to engage with subsidised training, especially those who have learners ready for Level 3, are the most likely to be negotiating their initial involvement with the service with a training provider rather than with a skills broker.
- 99 A key characteristic of Train to Gain skills brokers is intended to be their independence. The fact that some employers had spoken to a training provider before being contacted by a skills broker raises the question of how independent skills brokers are seen as being. In fact, as shown in Table 3, those who had had previous discussions with training providers were significantly more likely than average to believe that skills brokers were independent from training providers. This suggests that training providers are successfully communicating to employers the impartial nature of the skills brokerage service and its independence from provider organisations.

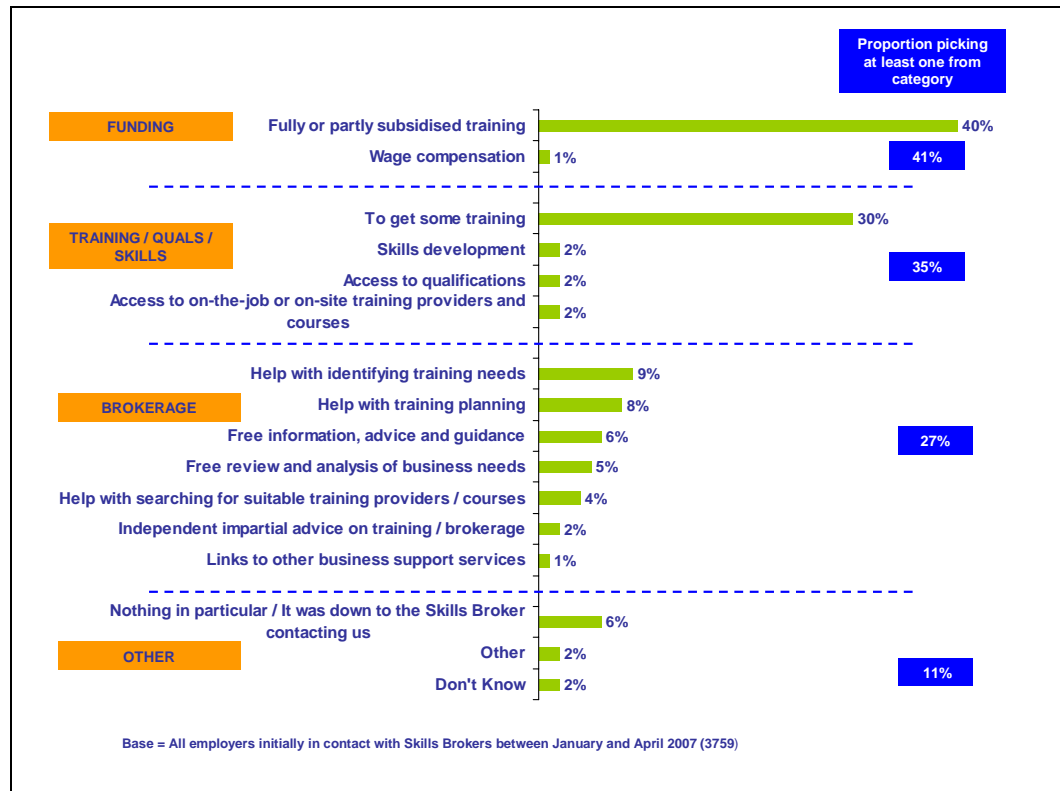
Table 3: Perceptions of skills brokers' independent from training providers

	Consider skills broker to be independent from training providers	Do not consider skills broker to be independent from training providers	Base
Overall	77%	11%	3,759
Client initiated first contact	80%	11%	1,018
Skills broker initiated first contact	78%	11%	2,538
Had previous discussions with training provider	82%	10%	595
Did not have previous discussions with training provider	76%	11%	1,891

Note: those answering 'Don't know' or who were unsure are not shown.

Reasons for being attracted to Train to Gain

- 100 Employers were asked what had initially attracted them to Train to Gain. The results of this provide insight into how Train to Gain is perceived by users, and provides evidence for whether Train to Gain is achieving its aim of providing a tailored skills brokerage service as well as being a funding stream. The results are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The factors attracting employers to Train to Gain

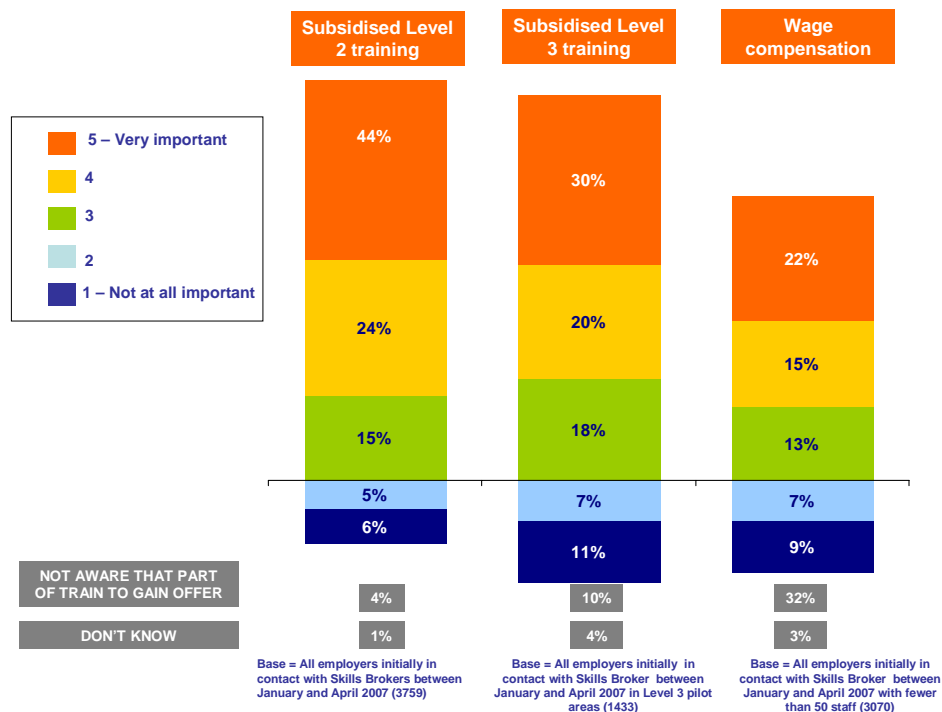
- 101 The responses can be grouped into three areas. The first relates to **funding**. Overall, 41 per cent were attracted by funding, in particular subsidised training (40 per cent). Employers in the Public administration, Health and Education sector were particularly attracted by the offer of subsidised training (with 48 per cent claiming this was the reason for their initial attraction), while those in Construction, and Wholesale and Retail were considerably less likely to cite this as the key attraction (at 35 per cent and 30 per cent respectively). The larger the establishment, the greater the role of subsidised training in attracting employers: only 30 per cent of establishments with one to four employees gave this as a reason, compared with 42 per cent of establishments with 10 to 49 employees, and 54 per cent of establishments with over 250 employees. This is surprising and the opposite of what might be expected. It is likely to reflect a greater

awareness or expectation among larger businesses of funding possibilities from government initiatives.

- 102 After funding, the next major attraction of Train to Gain was obtaining **training, skills and qualifications**, which was mentioned by 35 per cent of employers. Most answered simply in terms of wanting to get some training (30 per cent), although others discussed skills or qualifications.
- 103 This feature is particularly important for the Construction and Wholesale and Retail sectors (both 36 per cent). In contrast, significantly fewer employers (26 per cent) in the Public administration, Health and Education sector felt that this was what initially attracted them to Train to Gain. Also, the more people employed at any given establishment, the less likely they were to say that this was an initial attraction: this figure was 29 per cent for establishments of 10 to 49, and only 21 per cent for establishments of 250 or more employees. Given that larger employers are more likely to be training already, they are therefore less likely to answer 'get some more training' and are more likely to provide other reasons such as subsidised training.
- 104 The third broad area that appealed to employers about Train to Gain related to the **skills brokerage service** itself. Over a quarter of employers felt that the skills brokerage service was what had attracted them to Train to Gain, citing getting help with identifying training needs (9 per cent), help with planning training (8 per cent), a more general desire for help and guidance (6 per cent), getting an Organisational Needs Analysis (5 per cent), help with finding suitable training (4 per cent) and other skills brokerage services (3 per cent).
- 105 We have seen that the offer of subsidised training is one of the key aspects that employers mentioned spontaneously in terms of what appeals about Train to Gain. Further to this, some prompted follow-up questions were asked about funding issues, asking employers to rate the importance of subsidised Level 2 and Level 3 training and contributions to wage costs.

These results are presented in Figure 9, and show the percentages giving ratings of 5 ('Very important') to 1 ('Not at all important').

Figure 9: The importance of subsidised Level 2 and Level 3 training, and contribution to wage costs to decision to get involved with Train to Gain



106 Results show the relative importance of subsidised Level 2 training compared with subsidised Level 3 training (a question asked only in the Level 3 pilot regions), and of the relative unimportance of contributions to wage costs. Access to contributions to wage costs for training time is much less important, with under two-fifths (37 per cent) citing this as important, and, as shown earlier in Figure 8, only 1 per cent citing this as a motivation on the unprompted question. Contributions to wage costs are available only to establishments with fewer than 50 employees, but even among these employers, nearly a third did not even know that this was a feature of Train to Gain. This suggests that skills brokers are not publicising and encouraging take-up of this element to the extent that they should be.

107 There was some variation by sector, with funding aspects more important to employers in the Public administration, Education and Health, and

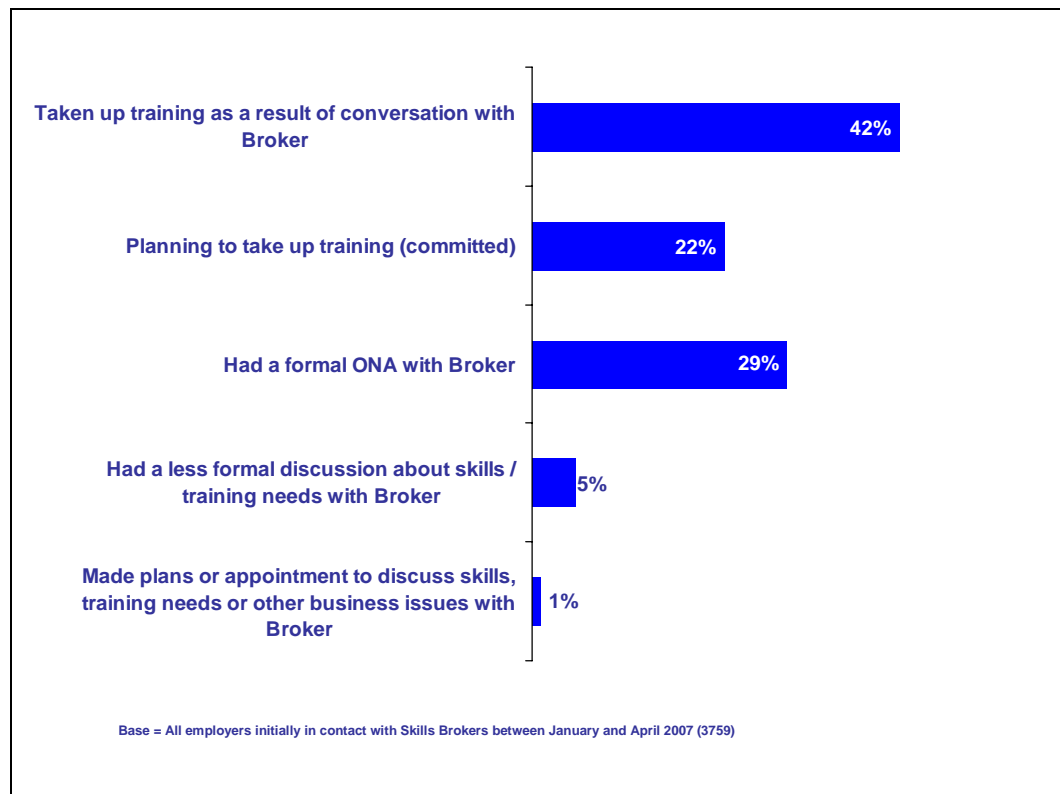
Hotels and Restaurants sectors, and least important to those in the Financial and Business Services sector.

- 108 For many employers, the opportunity to receive subsidised training is of more importance than various skills brokerage services. However, this does vary by how employers first came into contact with Train to Gain. Among those who first heard about Train to Gain from an FE college or other training provider, 47 per cent and 57 per cent respectively said that subsidised training was what initially attracted them to Train to Gain, compared with only 37 per cent saying so if initially contacted by a skills broker. This suggests that training providers may be encouraging employers to see Train to Gain as a funding stream. Another important trend is that employers who have not engaged in any training outside Train to Gain in the last year were more likely to say that subsidised training was an initial draw than those who have done previous training (44 per cent compared with 32 per cent). Subsidised training is thus particularly important for these employers.

The depth of contact and relationship with the skills broker

- 109 Employers were asked about their current situation in relation to Train to Gain. Results are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: The depth of contact and/or engagement with Train to Gain



110 That over nine in ten of skills broker contacts (93 per cent) have so far led to at least an Organisational Needs Analysis, with over two-fifths of employers (42 per cent) having already undertaken training, are positive findings. Depth of involvement with Train to Gain at the time of the survey is unsurprisingly related to the length of time between the initial contact and the survey period in June and July. Those employers who were first in contact with a skills broker in January were the most likely to have gone as far as taking up training, with nearly half having done so at the time of the survey (48 per cent). Those first in contact with a skills broker in April (who were surveyed between one and three months after the initial contact) were less likely to have engaged in training by that time (37 per cent). Conversely, they were more likely to be planning training than those contacted about Train to Gain in earlier months (29 per cent compared with

18 per cent of January contacts). The proportion of employers who reported an Organisational Needs Analysis with a skills broker as the extent of their engagement at the time of the survey did not, however, vary significantly by month of first contact. (Results presented by month of engagement should be treated with caution, as interviews were not conducted concurrent with the month of engagement. There may not, therefore, be an exact relationship between the month of engagement and the length of time that the employer had been engaged with Train to Gain at the time of interview.)

- 111 Employers were also asked to describe the particular relationship they had with their Train to Gain skills broker (see Figure 11). Around one-quarter of employers (23 per cent) stated that they had regular, ongoing contact with the skills broker, and were currently receiving advice and assessment. A further one in seven (13 per cent) reported that they felt that the onus had been on the skills broker to come back to them with further information on training or to carry through contact with a provider so that their involvement might move forward. Just under half of employers (45 per cent) reported that they considered their current involvement with their skills broker to be complete, but that they felt able to recontact the skills broker for future advice on training.

Figure 11: Employer relationships with the skills broker



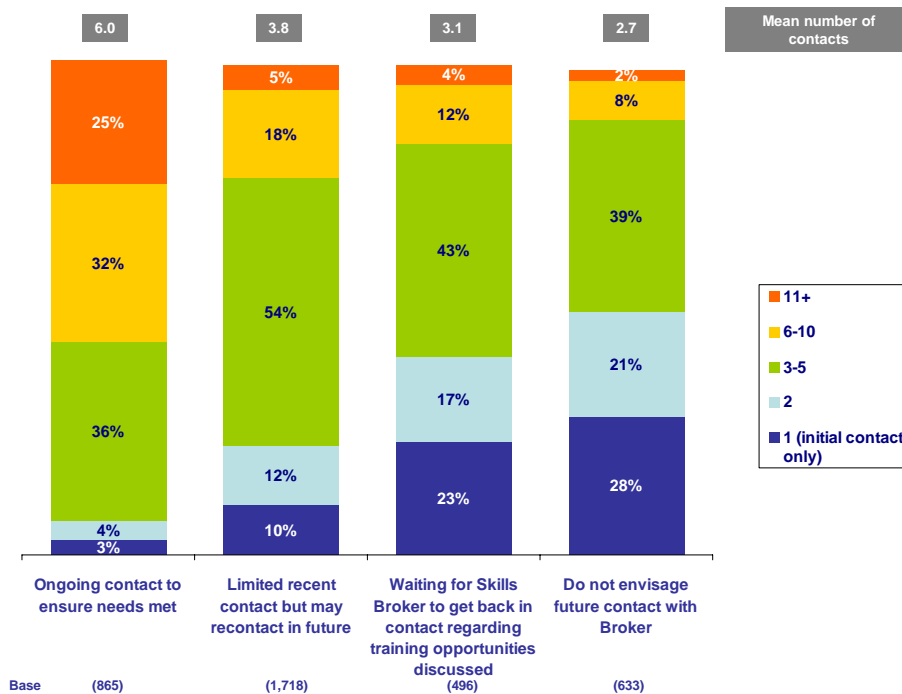
Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Brokers between January and April 2007 (3759)

112 A smaller proportion did not expect to continue with their involvement with Train to Gain, or felt that they had no need to be involved with the skills broker once the training had been arranged; one-third of this group of employers have Train to Gain training planned, under way or already completed. Small employers with fewer than five staff were more likely to say that they did not envisage further dealings with their skills broker (22 per cent, compared with 15 per cent of those with over 50 employees). Unsurprisingly, employers dissatisfied with the service received from the skills broker were significantly more likely to reject the possibility of further involvement with the skills brokerage service; 45 per cent of those dissatisfied did so, compared with only 11 per cent of those satisfied with the skills brokerage service.

113 Employers were asked how many times they had had contact with their skills broker after their initial contact. Results are presented in Figure 12, crossed by the employer's perceived relationship with the skills broker.

Overall, employers have had an average of four contacts with their skills broker, with one in ten having had over ten contacts.

Figure 12: The number of contacts with skills broker by relationship with skills broker



- 114 Unsurprisingly, employers who considered themselves to have had an effective, ongoing relationship with the skills broker within which they could access advice at whatever time, report the most contacts with the skills broker (mean, six contacts).
- 115 Employers who are waiting for the skills broker to get back in touch with regard to further assessment or arranging training had experienced fewer contacts (an average of three), while those who do not think that they will have further contact often seemed to have decided this on the basis of only one contact with the skills broker (28 per cent having only one contact, compared with 13 per cent overall).
- 116 Interestingly, the time elapsed between the initial contact event and the survey date had little effect on the amount of contact between the employer

and the skills broker. This probably reflects the point noted above, that employer involvement with the skills brokerage service may be terminated after only one or two contacts. Employers who were first in contact with a skills broker in January were, however, more likely to report having five or more contacts since their initial contact (33 per cent) than those first in contact with a skills broker in April (26 per cent), closer to the survey date.

- 117 Employers who reported no training activity in the year prior to their first contact with a skills broker appear to have less strong relationships with their skills brokers. While employers training and not training outside Train to Gain were equally likely to say that they had ongoing contact regarding training, the latter group were significantly less likely to have the next deepest level of contact (limited recent contact with expectation of more contact in the future – 42 per cent, against 47 per cent among other employers). However, there is very little difference between the number of contacts skills brokers have had with these two groups. This suggests that the slightly less close relationship with skills brokers has more to do with the nature of employers with no recent prior training activity than with differential skills broker effort between these and other employers.

Satisfaction with the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service

118 In order to understand employer perceptions of the skills brokerage service and Train to Gain as a whole, it is important to measure what employers value about the service at present. These findings are important as pointers to the direction in which the service should be moving if it is to be responsive to employers and add value to their business. This section reports employer ratings of importance for various elements of the skills brokerage service, and employer satisfaction with the service received from the skills broker. The discrepancy between importance and satisfaction ratings will be used as a marker for where improvements in the skills brokerage service could have the greatest positive impact on the value employers derive from Train to Gain. Employer satisfaction with training providers and the provision accessed through Train to Gain is examined in the following section, 'Employers' Views on Training Received Under Train to Gain'.

The aspects of the skills brokerage service valued by employers

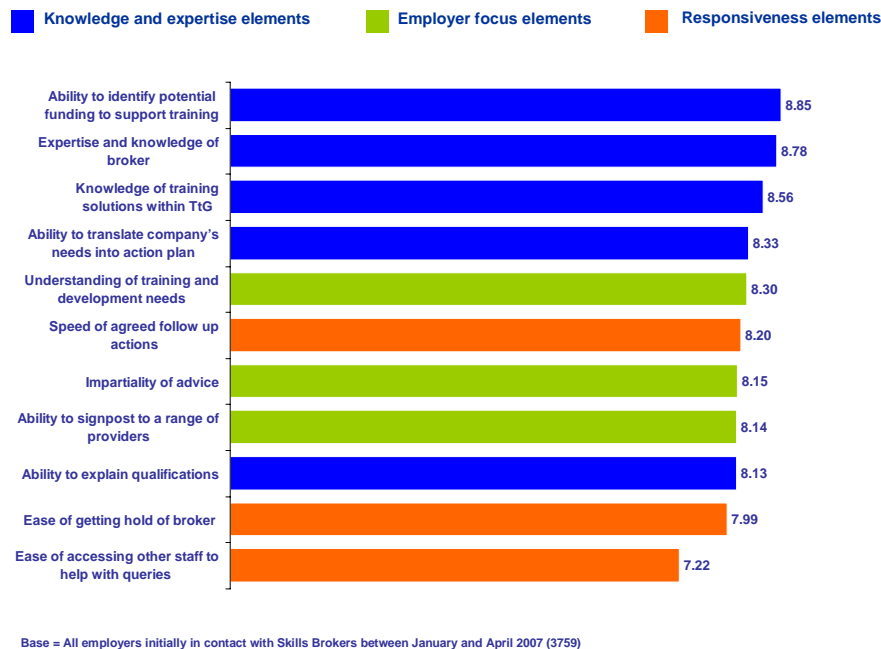
119 This survey asked employers to rate the importance of 11 key elements of the skills brokerage service. Ratings were provided on a scale of 1 to 10, where a score of 1 indicates that the employer felt this element to be 'unimportant', and 10 where the employer felt that this service was 'highly important'. The specific service elements presented to employers can be grouped into three over-arching areas:

- the **employer focus** of the advice and provider signposting service offered by the skills broker, and the degree to which skills brokers appreciate and understand the needs of employers;
- the **responsiveness** of the skills broker team in terms of communicating with the employer and providing helpful advice on up-skilling; and

- the **knowledge and expertise** of the skills broker with regard to translating employer needs into viable action plans, based on a sound knowledge of the local provision market.

- 120 It is clear that, in a broad sense, all of these service elements are seen as important and valuable by employers. As shown in Figure 13, the average importance score was over seven out of ten for all elements, suggesting that these are likely to be influential when employers are evaluating the skills brokerage service.
- 121 The aspects of the skills brokerage service considered to be most important by employers have remained constant across the course of the research. Among employers who had had some contact with a skills broker in January to April 2007, factors relating to skills broker knowledge and expertise in signposting relevant local provision and sourcing funding to enable employers to take up this training are considered to be the most important elements of a skills broker's role.

Figure 13: The mean importance scores for key measures of the skills brokerage service



122 As Figure 13 makes clear, factors relating to the knowledge and expertise of the skills broker are deemed to be more important to employers than factors relating to responsiveness or employer focus. However, the skills broker's ability to understand the specific business context and provide an objective, specifically tailored assessment of the employer's needs (taken here as a measure of employer focus) is relatively high in the list of priorities revealed by these ratings.

123 The ability to explain accreditation and qualification frameworks, while still considered important by the majority of employers, is valued less than other elements of the service relating to skills broker knowledge, suggesting perhaps that employers already have knowledge of qualifications available and require more guidance on where to access courses and funding.

- 124 Although the general hierarchy of importance was largely the same across different employer sub-groups, certain groups of employers valued particular elements more strongly than other organisations. The largest employers, with over 250 employees, were more likely than their smaller counterparts to value the knowledge and expertise of the skills broker: 90 per cent gave an importance rating of between 8 and 10, compared with 83 per cent overall and 80 per cent of organisations with one to four employees. They were also more concerned about the skills broker's knowledge of particular training solutions (85 per cent scoring 8 or more compared with 78 per cent overall), and to value the skills broker's ability to explain qualifications and accreditations (72 per cent compared with 61 per cent of the smallest companies). This may reflect the fact that the larger employers have more complex skills, training and development needs than those with few staff, and therefore are more likely to value skills brokers who have in-depth knowledge and expertise when it comes to advising on these issues.
- 125 Those employers who have engaged with training outside Train to Gain in the past year also gave slightly different ratings of importance on some measures. These employers were more likely to give importance scores of 8 out of 10 or above when asked about the skills broker's knowledge of training solutions and provision in their area (79 per cent compared with 75 per cent of those not engaging with other training) and when evaluating the importance of the skills broker's ability to understand their training and development needs (75 per cent compared with 71 per cent). These differences may reflect poor experiences with engagement with training in the past, meaning that employers are more likely to value guidance from a knowledgeable adviser.
- 126 The depth of contact or engagement with Train to Gain has a significant effect on employer ratings of the importance of a number of service elements. As detailed in Table 4, those employers who have taken up the

Train to Gain training offer were generally more likely to feel that the skills brokerage service as a whole is important. They were more likely than those who had only got as far as an Organisational Needs Analysis or a less formal discussion with an adviser to feel that it is important for the skills broker to be able to create action plans and source funding, to be impartial, and to be contactable and responsive. This may well indicate a greater awareness of the services that the skills broker can offer, but may also reflect the quality of the service received thus far.

Table 4: The effect of depth of contact and/or engagement on the proportion of employers giving scores of at least 8 out of 10 for importance

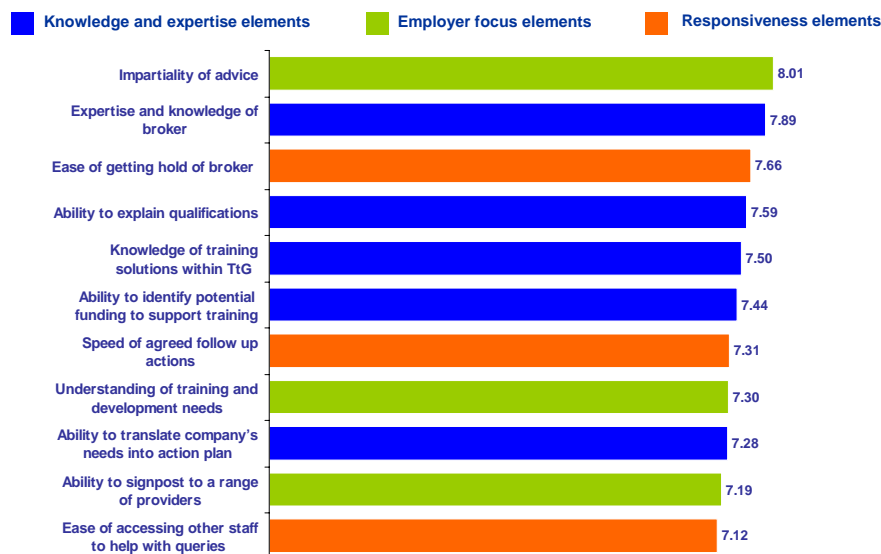
	Training completed or under way	Training planned	Organisational Needs Analysis conducted	Less formal discussion with skills broker	Made appointment with skills broker
Skills broker's knowledge					
Ability to identify potential funding sources for training	87%	82%	79%	79%	84%
Ability to translate employer's needs into an action plan	74%	74%	70%	64%	72%
Employer focus and objectivity					
Understanding of training and development needs	76%	77%	70%	68%	74%
Impartiality of advice	71%	71%	65%	62%	72%
Skills broker's responsiveness					
Ease of getting hold of skills broker	73%	69%	58%	57%	58%
Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries	55%	47%	39%	44%	55%
Speed of follow-up actions	77%	73%	63%	59%	60%
Base: All employers initially in contact with a skills broker between January and April 2007 (3,759).					

Note: this table lists only those elements of the skills brokerage service that are subject to effects relating to depth of contact and/or engagement.

Satisfaction with key aspects of the skills brokerage service

127 Having explored what employers regard as the areas of key importance in the delivery of the Train to Gain service, this section moves on to consider how satisfied employers have been with the service received from their skills broker thus far. Again, the focus is on three areas of the service: knowledge, employer focus and objectivity, and responsiveness. Following examination of level of client satisfaction on the 11 key service delivery measures, we will examine where performance is currently falling short of the importance that employers attach to that area of service.

Figure 14: The mean satisfaction scores for key elements of the skills brokerage service



Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Brokers between January and April 2007 (3759)

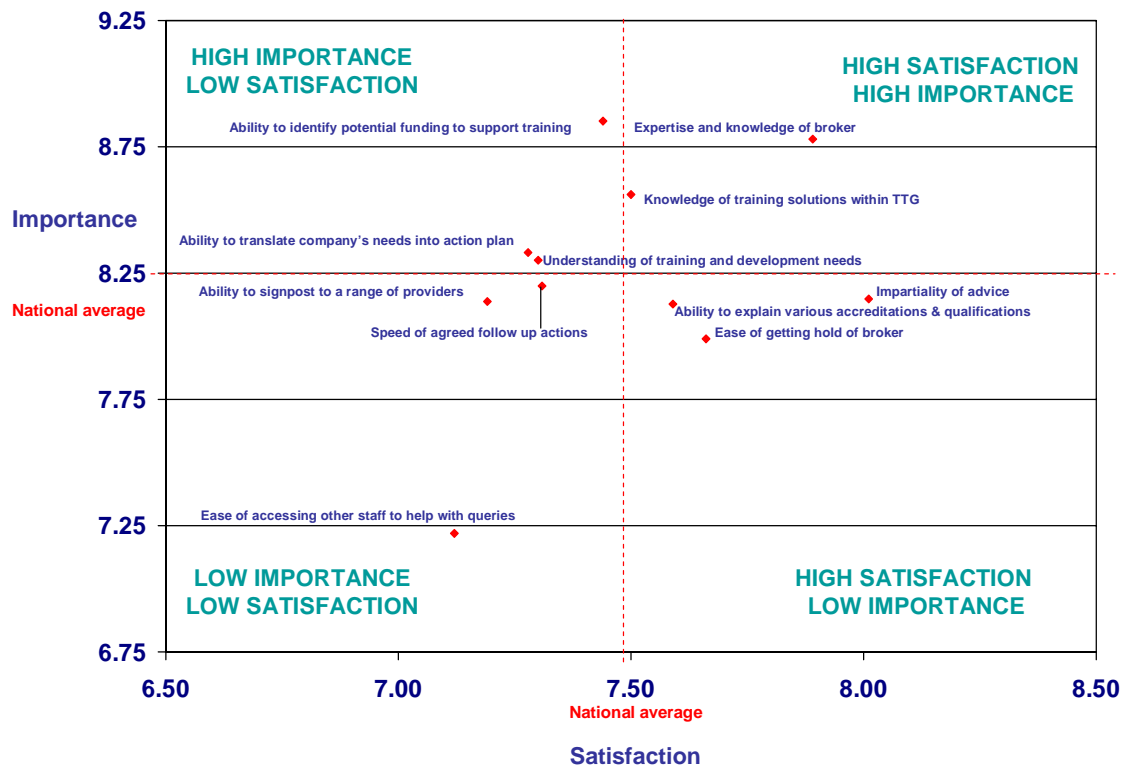
128 As illustrated in Figure 14, satisfaction scores are universally high, with the mean score for all measures coming out at over 7 out of 10. The highest levels of satisfaction are seen in relation to the impartiality of advice offered by skills brokers, training, along with their expertise in providing guidance and

knowledge of the local provision market. Skills brokers are generally considered to be responsive and accessible, although employer satisfaction is lower for the ease of accessing members of the skills brokerage team other than the original skills broker in order to obtain further information.

- 129 The order of relative importance of these elements has remained very stable across the course of the research, with the ability of skills brokers to identify funding and their expertise and knowledge being the two most valued aspects across both waves 1 to 4 (covering employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made between June and September 2006), and waves 5 to 7 (covering employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made in October to December 2006).
- 130 It should be noted that as well as the average satisfaction scores for the 11 measures being tightly grouped, it is also true that scores on these measures are highly correlated (at a value of 0.5 or more). This indicates that if employers are satisfied with one aspect of the skills brokerage service, they are likely to be satisfied across the board.
- 131 The particular areas where the skills brokers seem to be performing relatively less well (although still at a high level) involve developing an action plan, and being willing and able to signpost employers to a range of providers that could meet their training needs.
- 132 The satisfaction scores also suggest that the skills brokers could do more to provide alternative contacts at their organisation to whom employers could address queries. However, it must also be recognised that the Train to Gain service is generally envisaged as a dedicated, 'one point of contact' personalised advisory service. Furthermore, as Figure 15 makes clear, this aspect of the service is not as important to employers as other elements and, therefore, does not necessarily indicate an area of priority in terms of service improvements.

133 Figure 15 plots the mean satisfaction scores for each service element against the average importance rating for that measure. This shows clearly the high degree of correlation between the two measures, with mean scores for both satisfaction and importance falling within a tightly defined range. Despite this high level of correlation, it is possible to note some discrepancies in the data between the value employers afford to an aspect of the skills brokerage service and their views on the current performance of skills brokers in delivering this service. Creating a composite mean score from all measures allows the data to be segmented into four quadrants, based on whether the average score on the measure falls above or below the overall mean score for importance and satisfaction. (Calculating the composite mean score for importance involves summing all importance scores given in the course of the survey; that is, 11 scores for each respondent, representing the 11 factors listed in Figure 14. A mean score is then derived from this sum, taking n as the total number of scores given (total employers \times 11 = 41,349). The same process was applied for the satisfaction scores, to give the national average figures shown in Figure 15.)

Figure 15: Mean satisfaction and importance scores for key aspects of the skills brokerage service



- 134 The most positive findings to emerge from Figure 15 suggest that, when it comes to the most fundamental aspects of the skills brokerage service, employers are pleased with the performance of the skills brokers. The knowledge base of the skills brokers and their ability to produce information and to advise on relevant training opportunities are obviously critical to the success of the skills brokerage element of Train to Gain; indeed, employers rate these aspects as being of above average importance. Employers consider skills brokers to be performing well on these aspects, giving above average scores for satisfaction with the expertise and knowledge of skills brokers and their knowledge of training solutions within Train to Gain.

135 Other areas in which the skills brokers are rated as performing well include offering impartial advice, being accessible, and being able to explain clearly the types of vocational accreditation available to learners. However, these competencies come down the list of priorities when employers are evaluating Train to Gain, with below average importance scores afforded to these service elements.

136 Figure 15 highlights some areas for concern relating to service aspects that are considered to be of high importance, but where employers feel performance is less impressive. There are three areas in which importance scores are high but satisfaction ratings are below average:

- the skills broker's ability to identify potential funding to support the employer's training activities;
- the skills broker's ability to translate the organisation's training and skills needs into an action plan; and
- the skills broker's understanding of the employer's training and development needs.

137 It should be noted that, when it comes to the issue of sourcing funding, as suggested in previous reports, the slightly lower satisfaction scores might reflect employers' unrealistic expectations of the Train to Gain service and the subsidies available. For example, employers may think that they will be able to access funding for all their staff to engage with training, whereas, in fact, the majority might not be eligible. In addition, it is debatable whether the role of skills brokers should extend to signposting employers to funding streams outside Train to Gain provision, or, if they do, how far they should go in terms of sourcing information for employers about this other funding. It is, therefore, important to manage employers' expectations about the availability of funding through Train to Gain, especially, as we have seen in 'Getting Involved with Train to Gain', because the availability of subsidies for Level 2 training is an important reason for involvement in Train to Gain

for the majority of employers (68 per cent). It will be important for skills brokers to make it clear to employers that while they can give indicative information on funding eligibility based on the information that the employer has given them, only the training provider will be able to conduct a full assessment of whether or not employees qualify for funded provision

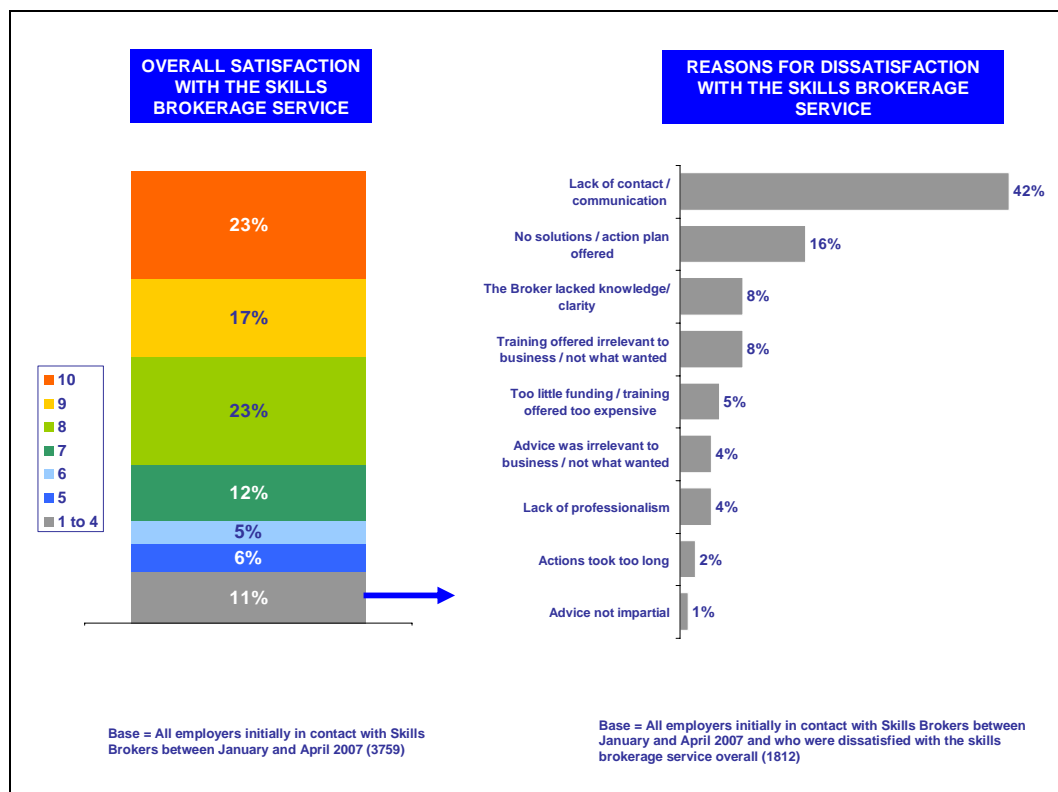
- 138 These findings suggest that while employers consider that skills brokers have a good knowledge of the provision in their area, skills brokers are falling somewhat short of expectation when it comes to understanding employers' particular business context and delivering advice and long-term plans that are specifically tailored to employers' needs. Again, this may reflect the fact that employers value being guided and helped with planning rather than being presented with information, as reflected in the following comment from an employer:

'The advice I was given was generic – what the delivery options are, the fact that we can go on "tailored short course programmes". I can find that information out. What I was looking for were specific recommendations.'

Overall satisfaction with the skills brokerage service

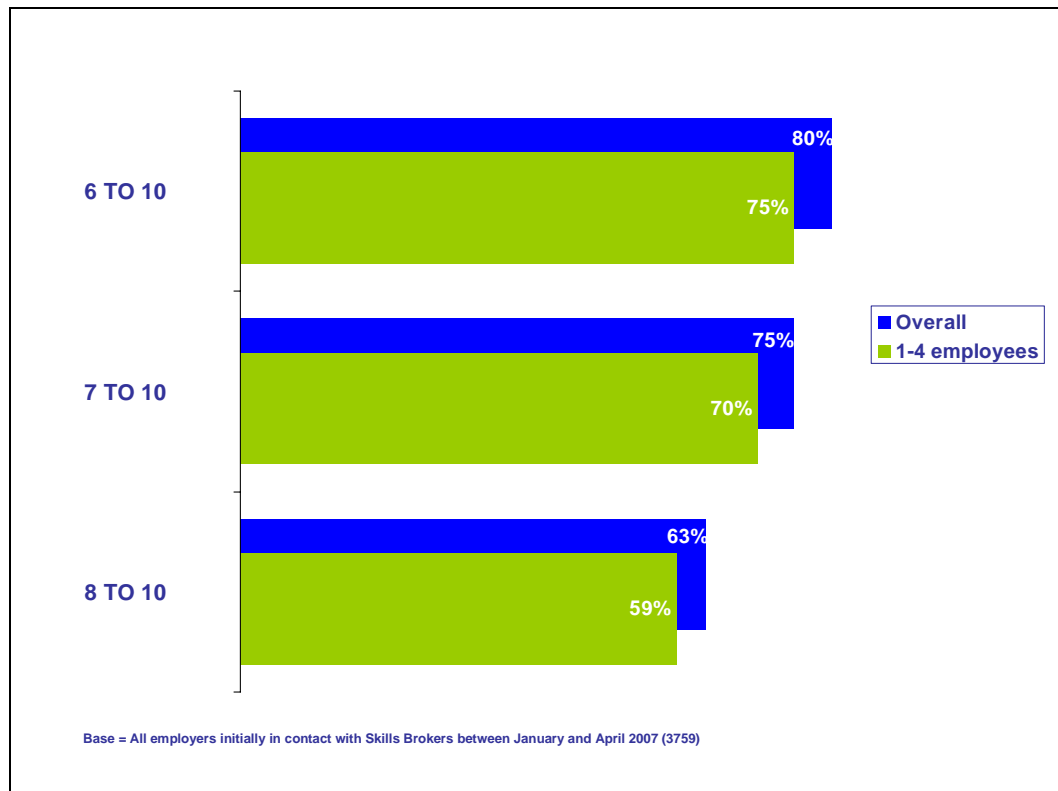
139 After giving importance and satisfaction ratings for the individual measures of service quality, employers were asked to sum up their experiences by giving their overall satisfaction with the skills brokerage service. Ratings were again provided on a scale of 1 to 10, with a score of 1 to 4 taken to indicate dissatisfaction, and a score of 6 to 10 representing overall satisfaction. The overall satisfaction scores for Sweep 1 (covering employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made between January and April 2007) are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Overall satisfaction with the service received from the skills broker and reasons for dissatisfaction



- 140 Across Sweep 1, four out of five employers (80 per cent) said that they were satisfied at an overall level with the skills brokerage service. Most of these employers were very satisfied, giving a score of at least 8 out of 10 for overall satisfaction (63 per cent of employers overall).
- 141 Differences in overall satisfaction levels across different sectors and sizes of employer mirrored many of the patterns seen for satisfaction with the individual service elements. Again, those employers in the Construction and Financial and Business Services sectors, while still on the whole very satisfied with the skills brokerage service, were slightly less positive than other employers: 74 per cent and 75 per cent were satisfied, compared with 80 per cent across all employers. As seen for satisfaction with the impartiality and knowledge of the skills broker, employers in the Hotels and Restaurants and Public administration, Health and Education sectors were the most satisfied: 87 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

Figure 17: Proportion of employers giving scores of at least 6, 7 and 8 out of 10 for overall satisfaction with the skills broker service – comparison with micro-employers



- 142 As shown in Figure 17, while there was no significant variation in satisfaction across the top four employer size-bands (ranging from 5 to 250+ employees), those micro-companies with fewer than 5 employees were slightly less likely to rate themselves as satisfied with the skills brokerage service. Seventy-five per cent of these smallest employers have been satisfied with their designated skills broker, significantly lower than the average across all employers. Furthermore, one in six (15 per cent) were dissatisfied, compared with one in ten (11 per cent) across the larger employers.
- 143 When looking for reasons why small companies are less positive about the skills brokerage service they have experienced, a few potential reasons emerge. First, micro-employers who were dissatisfied with their skills

broker were the most likely to say that this was because the skills broker lacked knowledge or was unable to explain issues relating to training clearly. Interestingly, it would seem that although small employers may have less complex skills and training requirements than their larger counterparts, this simply increases the perception that the skills broker lacks expertise when these needs cannot be met. As the following quotes from small employers demonstrate, when the skills broker cannot offer any insight into what employers see as relatively straightforward problems, the employer is less likely to see the service as adding value to their organisation:

‘Train to Gain have not assessed my needs, and they have not got back to us regarding training that we needed. I feel I am paying tax for no reason because I seemed to know more than the skills broker.’

‘They’ve delivered nothing to date. They’re wasting my time, I could have done the training by now if I had organised it myself.’

‘It was a waste of resources and tax payers’ money. All the advice that I was given I could have found for myself within three minutes on the internet.’

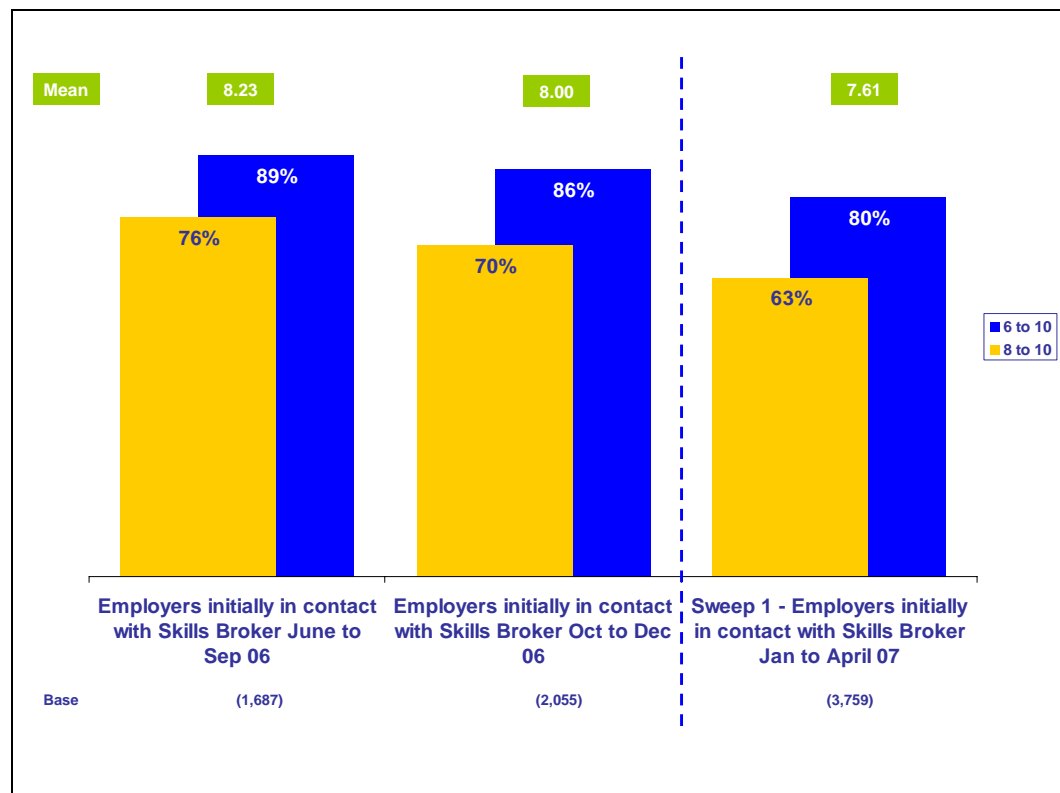
‘I expected them to know a bit more than they did. There must be more than one plasterer wanting training, so why can’t they point you in the right direction instead of drawing it out?’

- 144 Overall satisfaction is affected by the depth of contact an employer has experienced with Train to Gain. Those who have gone through the entire process and accessed training through Train to Gain were much more

satisfied than those who have only had an initial discussion with a skills broker (91 per cent compared with 29 per cent). The findings support the conclusion that the more contact individuals have with a skills broker, the more likely they are to be satisfied with the advice and service offered. Those employers who were dissatisfied and had not yet had an Organisational Needs Analysis with a skills broker were much more likely to cite a lack of follow-up and communication from the skills broker as the reason for their negative views. As discussed earlier in this section, it may also be that those employers who are satisfied with the original contact are the ones more likely to go forward through the Train to Gain service, and those whose skills broker has been successful in providing appropriate solutions are the ones most likely to proceed with training.

- 145 There has been a general decline in overall satisfaction across the course of the research, as shown in Figure 18. Across waves 1 to 4, referring to employer contacts made in June to September 2006, mean overall satisfaction levels were above 8, peaking at 8.38 in wave 3. This has dropped to a mean of 7.61 across Sweep 1 (referring to employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made in January to April 2007). There has also been a decrease in employer satisfaction over the course of the survey for individual elements of the skills brokerage service.

Figure 18: Trends in overall satisfaction over time: proportion of employers giving scores of at least 6, 7 and 8 out of 10 for overall satisfaction and mean satisfaction scores



- 146 There are a number of possible reasons for this drop in employer satisfaction over time. The first thing to note is that many research projects have shown that client satisfaction with a new service often declines over the first few months of operation, reflecting the increase in the volume of business and the increased workload of the various operational units as the service 'beds in'. Furthermore, it is likely that, as time has gone on, skills brokers have used up any 'easy hit' employer contacts that they may have been able to derive from lists of employers who have sought advice before and who are more likely to be positive about training and skills advice in general.
- 147 Methodological factors may have had some effect on mean satisfaction ratings. Because of the relatively small numbers of employer contacts

made before this point, Sweep 1 of the survey (covering January to April 2007 contacts) has a much larger sample size than previous waves of the survey, leading to greater statistical confidence.

- 148 Changing employer expectations of Train to Gain may also affect satisfaction levels. At the start of this survey, employers were contacted in the same month as being in contact with a skills broker, but in Sweep 1 of the main employer evaluation research, employers were contacted anything between one and six months after engaging with the skills brokerage service. This means that employers responding to the survey across Sweep 1 may have had more contact with skills brokers on which to base their satisfaction rating, more outside information on Train to Gain and, potentially, more scope for feeling let down by the service.
- 149 It should be borne in mind throughout this report that the overall decline in satisfaction, although statistically significant, is small in real terms, and the overall picture remains very positive. Across Sweep 1 of the research, almost two-thirds of employers (63 per cent) have been very satisfied with the skills brokerage service (that is, gave a score of 8 or more out of 10). These satisfaction levels compare favourably with those expressed by employers in relation to Employer Training Pilots (ETP): 54 per cent of employers were 'very satisfied' with the scheme overall (Hillage, J. et al., *Employer Training Pilots: Final Evaluation Report*, Institute for Employment Studies, 2006). A slightly greater proportion of employers were satisfied with ETP overall – 93 per cent compared with 80 per cent for Train to Gain – but it should be noted that the scales used in the two questions are not directly comparable: the ETP survey asked for employer satisfaction on a five-point scale ranging from 'very dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied'; the survey reported here used a ten-point scale ranging from 'highly dissatisfied' to 'highly satisfied'.

Key drivers of overall satisfaction

- 150 An employer's overall assessment of the skills brokerage service is likely to be a reflection of their experience of different aspects of the service. A satisfactory experience on some aspects may offset a less satisfactory experience on other aspects, particularly if the former are more important to the employer than the latter. A crucial question for the evaluation was, therefore, which aspects of the skills brokerage service had the greatest impact on overall satisfaction. The answer to this question provides an indication of where the greatest scope lies for raising overall employer satisfaction with Train to Gain.
- 151 With one notable exception (the impartiality of advice received from the skills broker), it is true that the higher the satisfaction score on any **individual aspect** of the skills brokerage service, the higher the **overall satisfaction** rating of the skills brokerage service. This is not to say, however, that all aspects carried the same weight. In order to examine the relative impact of different aspects of the skills brokerage service on the employer's overall assessment, a multivariate analysis was conducted in which the dependent variable was the employer's overall satisfaction and the explanatory variables were the employer's satisfaction with the 11 aspects of the skills brokerage service (for the purposes of this analysis, scores were converted into binary variables – satisfied or not satisfied – and weighted by their importance to the employer). This analysis took into account the relative importance afforded by employers to each of the individual service aspects.
- 152 The result of the analysis indicates that some aspects of the service have little or no impact on the overall satisfaction of employers with the skills brokerage service. These were:
- the skills broker's understanding of the employer's training and development needs;

- the ease of accessing other staff to help with queries;
- the skills broker's ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualification; and
- the impartiality of the skills broker's advice (this had a small but positive influence on overall satisfaction).

153 The main drivers of overall employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service are (in order of the magnitude of impact):

- the expertise and knowledge of the skills broker;
- the speed with which follow-up actions took place;
- the ease with which the employer can get hold of the skills broker;
- the skills broker's knowledge of training solutions and training providers;
- the skills broker's ability to signpost to a range of providers;
- the skills broker's ability to identify potential funding to support training; and
- the ability of the skills broker to translate the company's needs into an action plan.

154 Of the drivers of overall satisfaction, the first two (expertise and speed of follow-up) are particularly important – where employers are satisfied with either of these two aspects of the service, the odds of them being satisfied overall more than quadruple. These findings seem to suggest that the greatest positive impact on employer satisfaction comes when employers deal with a skills broker who has expertise and knowledge and works quickly and efficiently to carry through agreed actions. These findings support the evidence described above about the propensity of employers dissatisfied with the skills brokerage service to mention problems with communication and efficiency following the initial contact. Employers

appear to place great weight on the skills broker's understanding of workforce training and development, together with detailed local knowledge of the training available and how to fund it.

- 155 The implication of these findings for the delivery of skills brokerage services through Train to Gain is that employer satisfaction with the service critically depends on having skills brokers who are experts in training and workforce development and who are capable of delivering on agreed actions in a speedy manner. The former has implications for the selection and training of skills brokers, while the latter has implications for the procedures and practices of the brokerage organisations. In addition, as we have seen, skills brokers will have to work closely with training providers to make sure employer referrals are followed up in a timely manner.

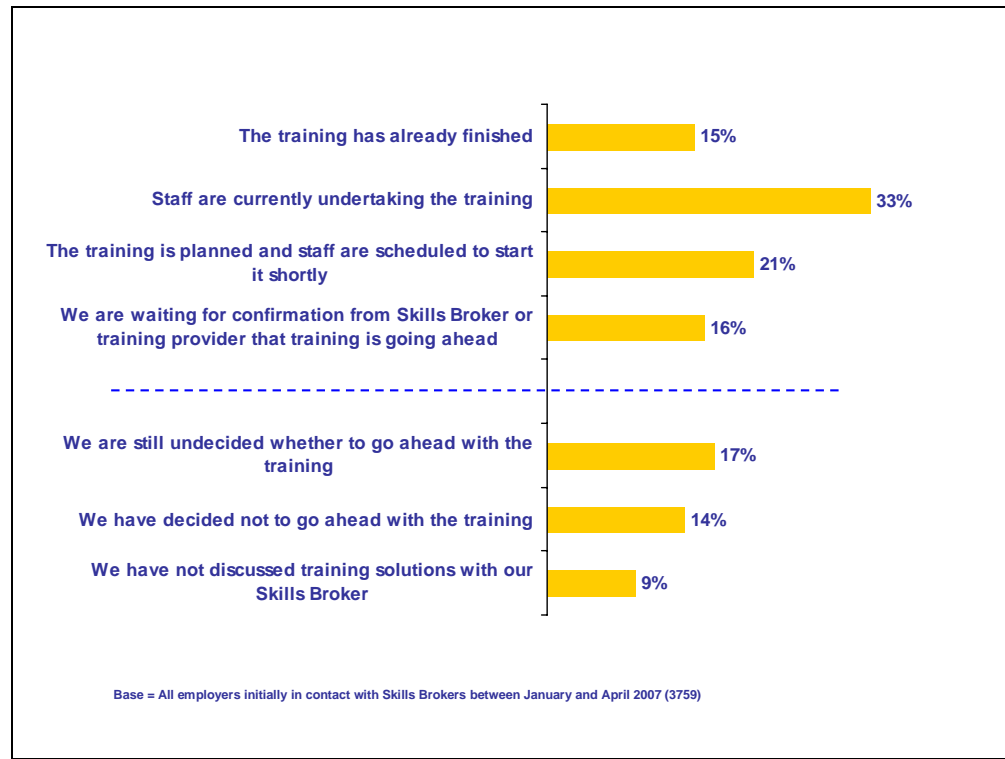
Employers' Views on Training Received Under Train to Gain

156 The previous section of this report looked at how satisfied employers are with the service they have received from their skills broker since they became involved with Train to Gain. However, for many employers engaging with Train to Gain, this has included training activity; for these employers, satisfaction with Train to Gain as a whole may well be influenced by their experience of the training provision and training provider to which they were signposted. This section of the report looks at the characteristics of those employers who go on to take up the offer of training accessed through Train to Gain, and examines how satisfied they are with the training they have received.

The status of Train to Gain training

157 Employers were asked whether they had accessed or were planning to access training provision as a result of their discussions with their skills broker. Employers were also asked to indicate the stage they had got to in terms of taking up training (funded or otherwise) suggested by their skills broker, and the results are shown in Figure 19. It should be noted that employers could give more than one answer to this question, for different blocks of training or groups of learners engaging with training. For instance, one employer may have had some staff who had finished a course of Train to Gain training, and some waiting to go ahead. Therefore, the figures shown in Figure 19 sum to over 100 per cent.

Figure 19: The status of Train to Gain training



158 Overall 15 per cent of employers have accessed at least some training for their employees that has now been completed, and one-third (33 per cent) were involved in some Train to Gain training activity at the time of the survey (as noted above, there could be overlap) One-fifth of employers (21 per cent) were waiting for scheduled training to begin at this time, with 16 per cent saying that they were still waiting for confirmation from their skills broker or training provider before starting. Together, these groups of employers can be taken to represent those ‘committed’ to engaging with Train to Gain training. Just under two-thirds (64 per cent) of respondents indicated that they had ‘committed’ to training as the result of the Train to Gain programme, with the remainder not yet decided or definitely not going ahead.

159 Of those employers who have ‘committed’ to training, two-thirds have actually started or completed some training as the result of contact with a skills broker, that is they have ‘taken up’ training. As shown in Table 5, this

means that at the overall level 42 per cent of all employers who have been in contact with a skills broker have gone on to take up training.

- 160 Commitment to training was greater among larger establishments, as indicated in Table 5 below. The lowest rate of commitment to training under Train to Gain was among very small establishments (one to four employees) at 53 per cent, rising to around 70 per cent among the medium to large establishments.

Table 5: The proportion of employers committed to training under Train to Gain

		'Commitment' to Train to Gain training	'Take-up' of Train to Gain training
Number of employees	Base		
1 to 4	633	53%	29%
5 to 9	689	60%	38%
10 to 49	1,748	68%	46%
50 to 249	573	71%	51%
250+	116	69%	41%
Total	3,759	64%	42%
Base: All employers whose initial contact with a Train to Gain skills broker was made between January and April 2007 (3,759)			

- 161 There are some significant differences by employer sector in the likelihood of employers taking up Train to Gain training. Employers in the Hotels and Restaurants, and the Public administration, Health and Education sectors are the most likely to have staff either currently undertaking or already finished training, at 51 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. Take-up of training has been lowest among Financial and Business Services employers, at 28 per cent.

Factors associated with the take-up of Train to Gain training

162 In order to identify the factors associated with the take-up of Train to Gain training, it is necessary to use multivariate analysis. This is because of the multiplicity of possible factors and the fact that many of these factors are inter-related. Such modelling, in effect, standardises cases by taking account of the types of factors listed above.

163 The extent to which Train to Gain is able to bring about take-up of additional training within an establishment is likely to depend on a number of factors. Broadly speaking, these can be categorised as:

- establishment characteristics;
- aspects of Train to Gain delivery; and
- other.

164 Key establishment characteristics include:

- establishment size;
- single- or multiple-site operation;
- head office/not head office;
- relationship with head office regarding training;
- previous training activity;
- existence of a training plan;
- existence of a training budget; and
- sector.

165 Features of Train to Gain delivery that may play a role include:

- skills broker organisation;

- nature of first contact with Train to Gain;
 - amount of contact with skills broker;
 - nature of relationship with skills broker;
 - why initially attracted to Train to Gain; and
 - importance of subsidies.
- 166 Defining take-up as described earlier, multivariate analysis (reporting only results significant at the 95 per cent confidence level) indicates that take-up of Train to Gain is less likely in establishments that:
- are very small (one to four employees);
 - think that the offer of a contribution to wage costs is important; and
 - are in the Primary, Utilities and Manufacturing, Construction and Financial and Business Services sectors.
- 167 Similarly, the multivariate analysis suggests that take-up of Train to Gain is likely to be above average in establishments that:
- regard the offer of subsidised Level 2 training as very important;
 - have more than two contacts with a skills broker (with the likelihood of take-up increasing with the number of contacts);
 - have ongoing contact with the skills broker.
- 168 It is interesting to examine the characteristics of those ‘new’ employers taking up training as a result of Train to Gain, that is, those who have not engaged with other training outside Train to Gain in the past year. Analysis of the probability of a business with no history of training taking up training under Train to Gain indicates very strongly that such businesses are:
- likely to be small employers;

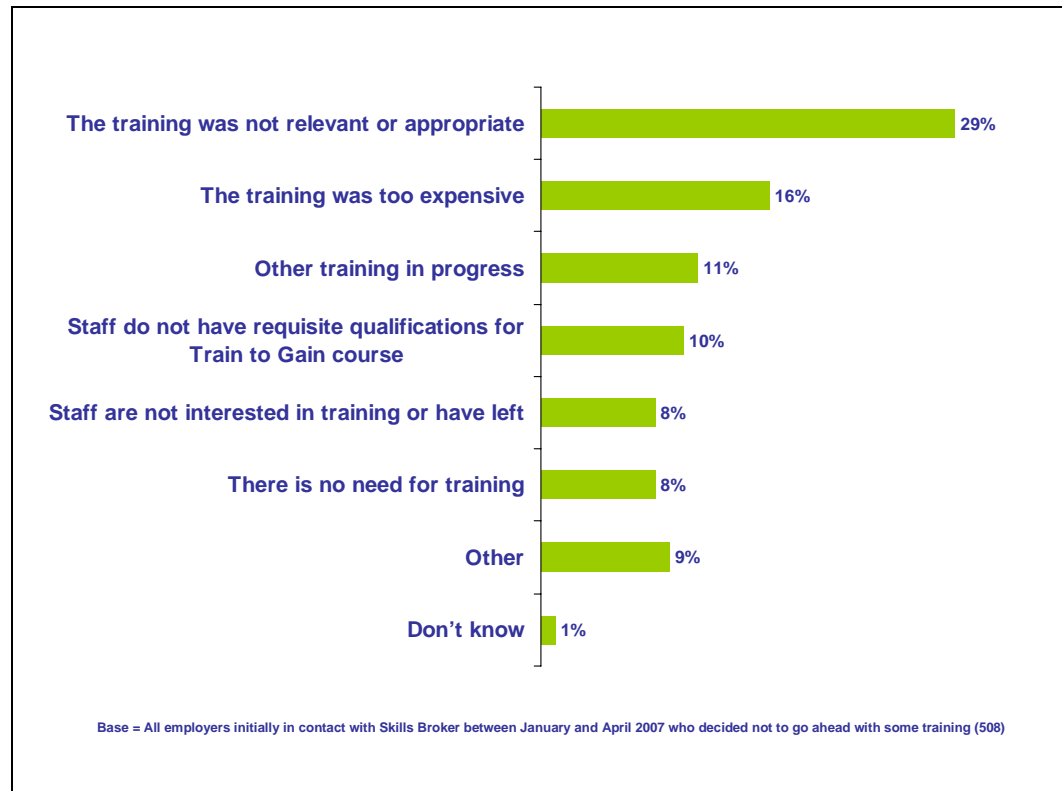
- those operating outside the Public administration, Health and Education sector;
- those without a training plan; and
- those regarding a subsidy for Level 2 training as very important.

169 To some extent, these findings are as expected, since we have seen that the likelihood of large businesses and those in the Public administration, Health and Education sector not having engaged in some form of training in the previous 12 months is lower than for other organisations.

Reasons for not taking up Train to Gain training

170 As shown in the previous section, one in seven employers (14 per cent) stated that they had decided not to take up some or all of the training discussed with their skills broker. These employers were asked why they had rejected the suggestions for training offered. The results are shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Reasons for deciding not to undertake training



171 The most common reason for deciding not to undertake training was that the training suggested by the skills broker was not deemed appropriate or relevant for the employer. This may represent a failure by skills brokers to find relevant training, but it may also reflect the landscape of provision and the lack of available courses for specific job roles or types of company. As the quotes below illustrate, the inability of the skills broker to offer appropriate training provision is linked variously to the content, delivery and level of training offered:

‘We don’t have the time to sit down on the computer for hours and hours to do the training the skills broker suggested.’

‘We set up our own training. We couldn’t have distance learning. We are very short staffed and we explained this, but the skills broker seemed not to take our comments on board. Travel was about two and a half hours there and back, only three hours for actual training.’

‘They wanted us to devote a certain number of hours a week, and we don’t always have enough time – some weeks are busier than others, so the training would have needed to be more flexible.’

‘What he offered was very basic. We are in a specialised industry and there is no support for the level of expertise that we need. All they offer is cover for NVQ Level 2, whereas we would need Level 3 or 4 and above or the equivalent.’

‘What she was offering was training for NVQs, but we wanted IOSH health and safety, intermediate to advanced database training and so on. It’s all geared to people with no qualifications, not ongoing training.’

- 172 Other reasons employers gave for not taking up training under Train to Gain include the fact that they felt that the training on offer was too expensive; one in six (16 per cent) felt that the training was too expensive either in terms of actual direct costs or in terms of lost working hours. As the quotes below demonstrate, a few employers also felt that the training offered was too expensive compared with other provision they could access or that they found it difficult to access the funding needed for them to afford the course:

‘I had to provide all the funding myself before I could get it paid back. They say they will provide funding but do everything they can do to hold it back.’

‘I decided not to go ahead because I found an easier, cheaper option than Train to Gain myself.’

‘The courses were not funded and they were more than what we could afford.’

‘The training wasn’t affordable because of our loss of earnings – over three months, it was not palatable, even if they’re paying for the training.’

‘There was nothing available unless I paid.’

‘We just decided not to go down the training route at this time because staffing levels are low at present and we cannot afford to spare people. There’s the cost factor as well.’

- 173 A further one in ten of those employers who decided not to go ahead with training said that this was due to the fact that the end result of their assessment was a decision that their staff did not qualify for the training that was suggested. Although this is always going to occur if Train to Gain is to be selective in which learners receive public funding, it will be important for skills brokers to ensure that they make clear to employers the eligibility criteria from the start of their involvement. However, it should also be noted that employers may have unrealistic expectations based on false or incomplete knowledge of the qualifications held by their staff. Employees and employers may not be able to assess the level of qualification an individual has reached in the past.

‘We decided not to continue with training because we were not aware that if we had any type of qualification we would not be able to be actively involved in Train to Gain. It wasn’t made clear to us how low a level of skill you need to actually take part.’

‘We were told we were not eligible, as everyone has higher qualifications.’

‘The main problem is the confusion about who is eligible to join Train to Gain. Someone who has decided to make a career change or someone who has been working but decided to join our industry cannot join Train to Gain, which is ridiculous.’

- 174 A significant proportion of employers not taking up training suggested by a skills broker did so because they had decided against training any staff at that time. Around one in twelve employers (8 per cent) said that the staff they had in mind for training were not interested in taking up the opportunity. A similar proportion (7 per cent) felt that having had an assessment of skills needs, training was not a priority for their business or was not needed at all at this point in time. One in ten employers not engaging with Train to Gain training reported that they were already accessing or planning to access provision outside the Train to Gain framework which they were finding satisfactory for their needs.

‘We haven’t got any employees that qualified for the training.
At this point in time it’s not relevant.’

‘We’re doing the training off our own backs, having contacted
the provider directly.’

‘We are in a very acute transitional period within the
organisation, we are at the point of moving premises and we
are going into partnership with another organisation, so that
could mean that the training needs would alter.’

‘We found the same course closer to home, and sourced the
funding elsewhere.’

- 175 There was little reliable variation by sector in the reasons for not taking up training, although employers in the Public administration, Health and Education sector were significantly more likely to say that they already had appropriate training under way (17 per cent of those not taking up, compared with 11 per cent overall), reflecting the above average level of training activity outside Train to Gain being conducted in this sector. These employers were also significantly lower than the national average in terms of the proportion who said that they had decided not to engage in training because the training was irrelevant (22 per cent as opposed to 29 per cent overall).

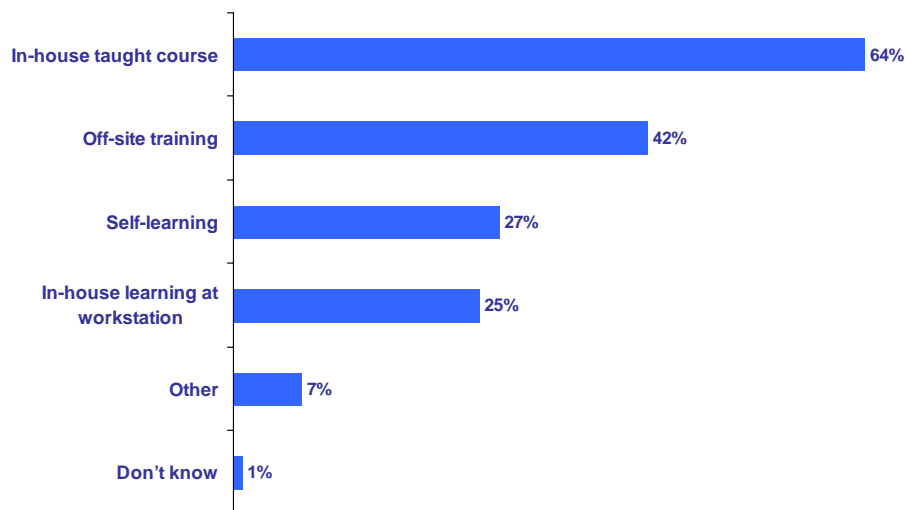
The nature of training conducted under Train to Gain

- 176 This section examines the characteristics of training provision accessed by employers who have taken up the offer of training signposted by their skills broker. It explores delivery format, provider and funding of training for all those employers who were either trained or had completed training at the time of interview. (It should be noted that the survey covered only those

employers who had had contact with a skills broker. The training accessed by employers who have had contact only with a training provider cannot therefore be assessed.)

- 177 Figure 21 details the type or format of training taken up under Train to Gain. The most frequent method of training staff was a taught course delivered on-site either by an external training provider or college or by in-house staff, which 64 per cent of those training under Train to Gain had used or were using. The next most common type of training was training delivered by an external training provider or college that took place off-site, which 42 per cent of those training under Train to Gain had used or were using.

Figure 21: The type of training undertaken



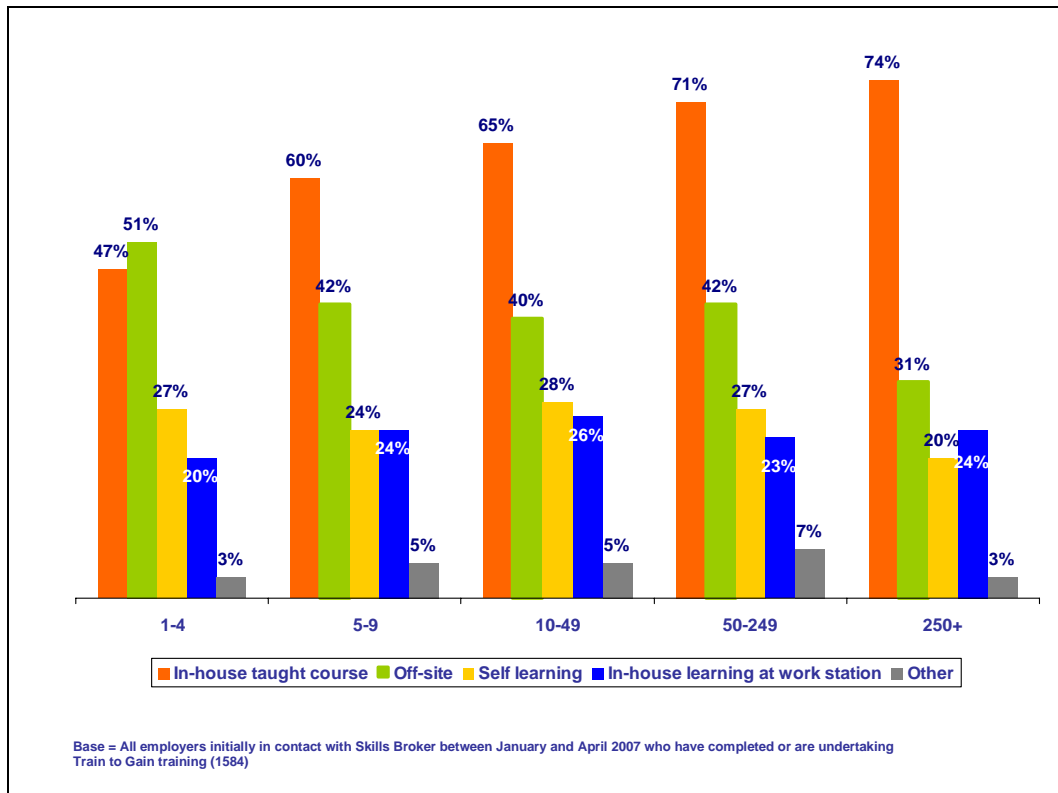
Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Broker between January and April 2007 who have completed or are undertaking Train to Gain training (1584)

- 178 The only sector in which off-site training was more common than in-house taught course training was Financial and Business Services (57 per cent compared with 45 per cent). Off-site training was least common among Wholesale and Retail employers (25 per cent from this sector having used

it) with in-house taught course training being most frequent in Primary, Utilities and Manufacturing (68 per cent).

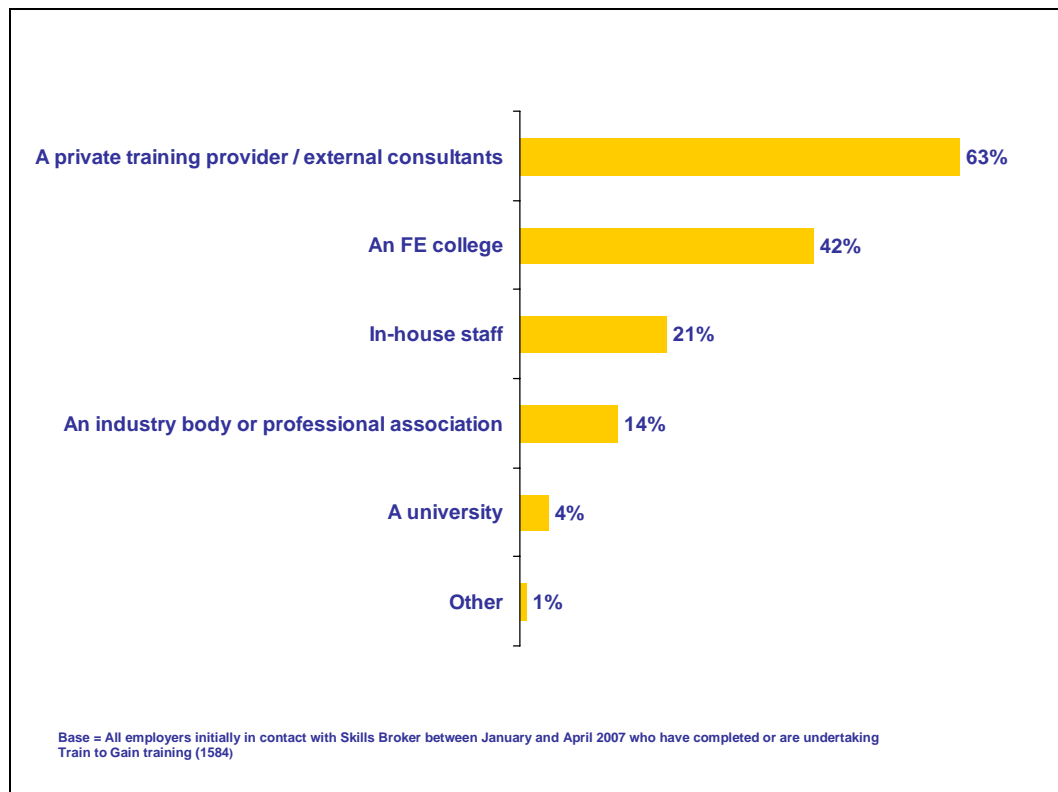
- 179 The two other main forms of training, both of which were used by approximately a quarter of employers taking up training, are those delivered by in-house staff that took place at the employees' usual workstation, and learning that involved employees studying on their own from a package of materials (including computer-based training packages).
- 180 The use of on-the-job training delivered at employees' workstations was significantly higher in the Hotels and Restaurants sector at 39 per cent (compared to the national average of 25 per cent). Self-learning was least common among Financial and Business Services employers (18 per cent compared with the national average of 27 per cent), but significantly more frequent in the Public administration, Health and Education sector at 30 per cent.
- 181 There was a strong relationship between size of establishment and type of training conducted under Train to Gain. As the size of the establishment grows it becomes more likely to provide in-house taught course training and less likely to provide off-site training (see Figure 22). There was no similar relationship, however, for any of the other types of training.

Figure 22: The type of training undertaken by size of establishment



182 Employers were also asked to identify the organisations which delivered the training they had accessed through Train to Gain. Results are shown in Figure 23.

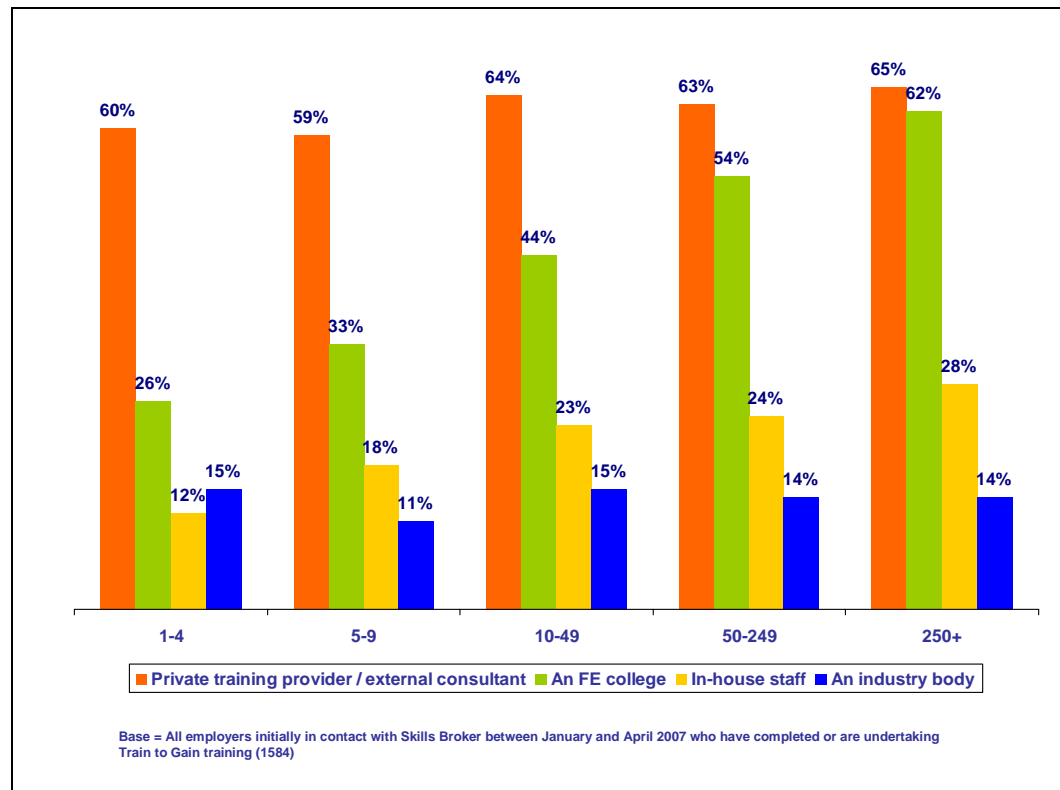
Figure 23: The type of training provider delivering training under Train to Gain



- 183 Nearly two-thirds of employers who had completed or were conducting Train to Gain training at the time of interview (63 per cent) used private training providers or consultants, while two-fifths (42 per cent) have accessed training delivered by a further education (FE) college. Employers in the Wholesale and Retail, and Financial and Business Services sectors were less likely to use FE colleges (26 per cent and 31 per cent respectively had done so), while Public administration, Health and Education employers were more likely to make use of FE (52 per cent). There were no differences in the use of private training providers across different sectors.
- 184 There were strong patterns of usage of certain training providers by the size of organisation. While usage of private training providers and industry bodies remains relatively stable by the size of employer, the use of FE

colleges and in-house staff to deliver training increases markedly the larger the employer (see Figure 24). While only 26 per cent of establishments of between one and four employees use FE colleges, this figure reaches 62 per cent for the largest establishments.

Figure 24: The type of training provider by size



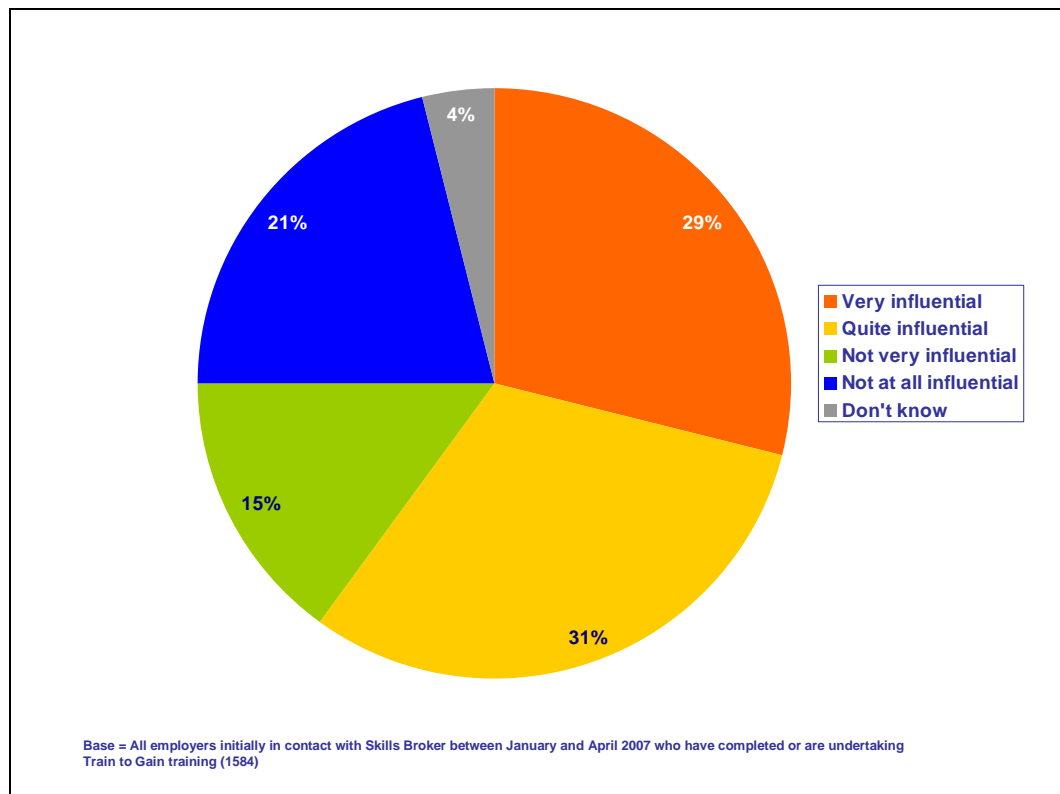
185 Employers who have not engaged with any training activity outside Train to Gain in the past year are less likely to have used each type of training provider. Almost three-fifths of these employers (58 per cent) had accessed private training providers under Train to Gain, compared with 65 per cent of those employers who had undertaken other training in the year preceding their take-up of Train to Gain training. Over a third (36 per cent) had used FE colleges (compared with 45 per cent of those training in the past year), 19 per cent had used in-house training (22 per cent), and 12 per cent had used industry or professional bodies (15 per cent). This

suggests that while employers with little experience of training are still willing to consider a range of training provider options, they will typically use fewer.

The influence of skills brokers on the type of provision accessed

186 In addition to their role in providing assessment and advice on skills needs, part of the role of skills brokers within the Train to Gain model is to signpost employers to relevant training opportunities. As discussed in relation to employer satisfaction with the objectivity of the skills brokerage service, it is anticipated that skills brokers will provide an impartial and independent signposting service. In this context it is useful to explore the extent to which employers feel that their skills broker has had an influence on their decision as to which provider to use for training and the nature of training undertaken.

Figure 25: The influence of skills brokers on decisions as to which provider to use for training and the nature of training undertaken



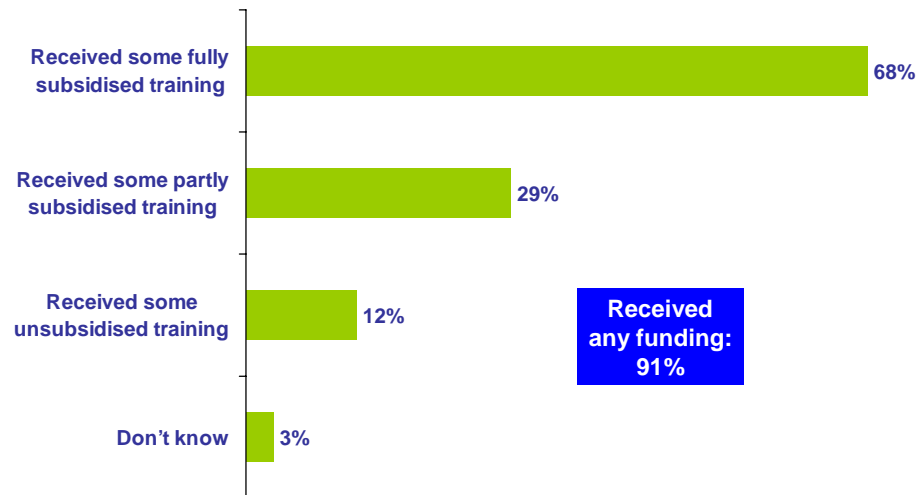
187 As shown in Figure 25, overall, three-fifths of employers who had taken up training under Train to Gain (60 per cent) said that their skills broker was either quite or very influential in the decision of which type of provision to access, with just over one-third (36 per cent) saying that the skills broker was either not at all or not very influential. There was little variation by sector, although Wholesale and Retail employers were more likely to rate their skills broker as influential (68 per cent saying either very or quite influential) and Financial and Business Services to feel that the skills broker was less important in their decisions (44 per cent very or quite influential). Interestingly, there was little difference here by size of organisation, with larger employers as likely to say that the skills broker had been very influential in their training decisions as those employing only a small workforce.

- 188 These findings provide a useful insight into the additional value that Train to Gain represents to employers, as will be discussed in more depth in the next section, 'The Impact of Training Accessed Through Train to Gain'. It is possible to argue that in the cases where employers' decisions about training have not been influenced by the contact with the skills broker, employers may well have gone ahead to access this particular type of training even if they had not received any intervention from a Train to Gain skills broker. However, it should be borne in mind that Train to Gain may well be providing the **impetus** and **means** for employers to develop their staff, even if the employer already has a good idea of the type of training and training provider that would be most appropriate.
- 189 Looking at the training accessed by those employers who rate their skills brokers as influential in their choice of training provider allows some tentative conclusions to be made about the **direction** in which Train to Gain is influencing employer choice of provider. Almost a third of employers taking up training delivered by an FE college (31 per cent) said that the skills broker was very influential in this choice, in comparison with closer to one-fifth of employers engaging with training delivered by their own staff (24 per cent) and that delivered through higher education (22 per cent). In terms of the format of training adopted, skills brokers have most influence on those employers using training delivered in the workplace by external training providers. Therefore, it may be the case that FE colleges and those providers able to offer work-based learning schemes benefit slightly more from Train to Gain than others, in terms of the number of new referrals from skills brokers.

The funding of Train to Gain training

- 190 A key part of the Train to Gain service is the use of skills brokers to offer selective access to funded provision in cases where staff have no previous qualifications at Level 2, or Level 3 in certain pilot regions. However, one of the key aims of Train to Gain is also to encourage employers to make their own investment in the training of staff. It is therefore of importance to explore the extent to which take-up of training discussed with the skills broker represents take up of **funded** provision under Train to Gain, and the extent to which skills brokers are succeeding in prompting employer investment in training (see also the following section, 'The Impact of Training Accessed Through Train to Gain').
- 191 Employers taking up training were asked how each element of that training had been funded. Over two-thirds of all employers taking up training under Train to Gain (68 per cent) have received at least some fully-funded Train to Gain training, for which they had to pay nothing. Furthermore, 29 per cent of all respondents said they had completed or had some training under way which was partly subsidised, but which they had put some money towards. Only 12 per cent had accessed training they had paid for in full with no other organisation contributing to costs. These results are shown in Figure 26.

Figure 26: The funding of Train to Gain training

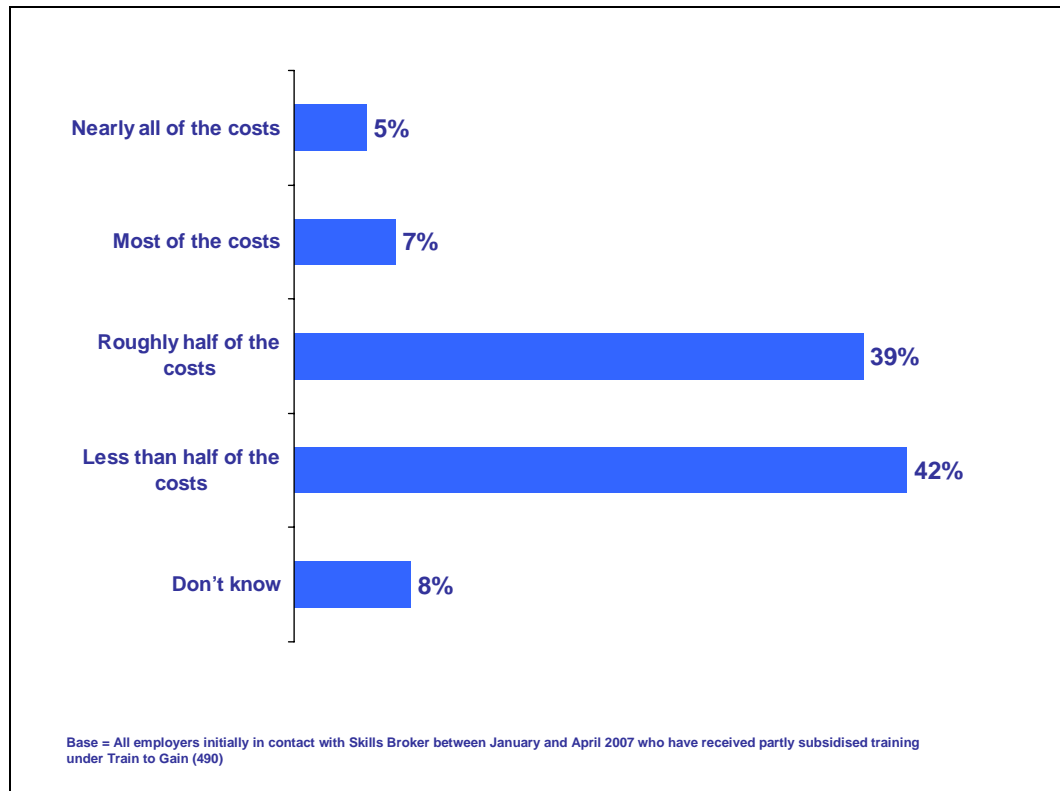


Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Broker between January and April 2007 who have completed or are undertaking Train to Gain training (1584)

- 192 Overall, this means that 91 per cent of all those undertaking training through Train to Gain received some funding for it. This figure is stable across employers of differing sizes and different industry sectors, and is not strongly influenced by whether the organisation has engaged with training outside Train to Gain in the past year.
- 193 However, there is a strong relationship evident between employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service and the degree to which the training accessed has been funded. Of those employers who were satisfied with the skills brokerage service (that is, scored this as 6 or more), 92 per cent had received funding. This compares with only 70 per cent of those employers who gave a skills broker satisfaction rating of between 1 and 4, indicating dissatisfaction. Clearly, the skills broker's ability to source funding is seen as crucial by employers.
- 194 Employers who had received some training that had been only partly subsidised under Train to Gain were asked roughly what proportion of the

cost of training was paid for by themselves. The results are presented in Figure 27.

Figure 27: The proportion of training costs contributed by employers receiving partly subsidised training under Train to Gain

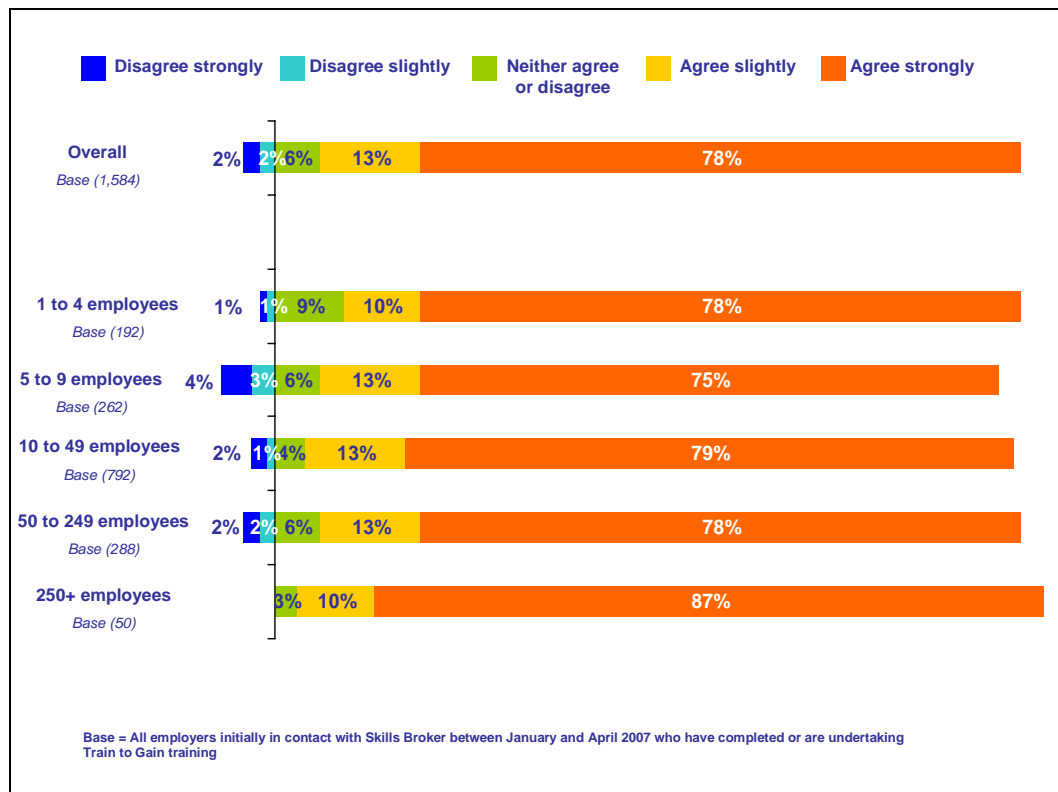


195 This shows that respondents who do receive some level of subsidy are rarely left to cover more than half of the cost of training themselves, and over two-fifths pay less than half. The majority of employers having to pay nearly all the costs of part-subsidised training themselves come from the Public administration, Health and Education, Construction, and Primary, Utilities and Manufacturing sectors.

Recommending Train to Gain training to other employers

- 196 Having explored the types of courses and providers accessed by employers taking up training through Train to Gain, this section of the report moves on to consider the extent to which this training has met employers' expectations, and whether they are satisfied enough to recommend the service and training to other employers.
- 197 Some insight into employers' views on the training accessed can be gained by looking at the proportion who would recommend that other employers get involved with Train to Gain. Employers were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement '**I would recommend this training to other employers.**' The results are shown in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Whether employers would recommend Train to Gain training

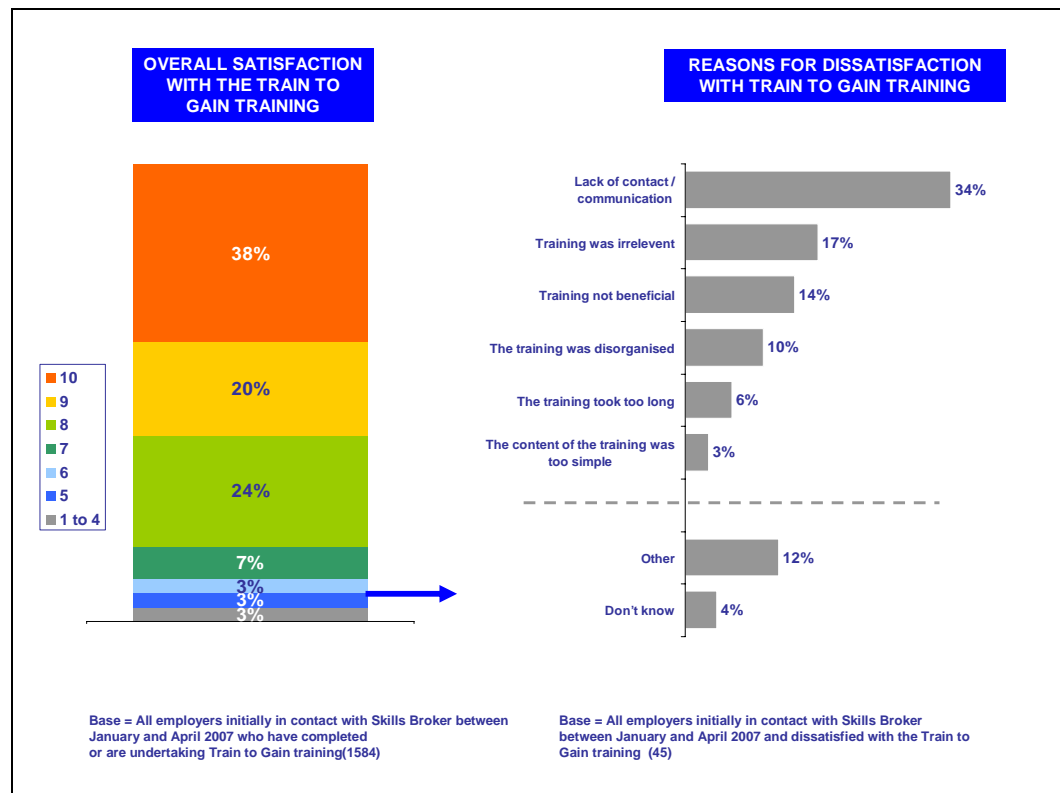


198 Employer views on this matter were very positive, with nearly eight in every ten employers saying they agreed strongly with the statement. Only 4 per cent of employers taking up training said that they would not be likely to recommend involvement with Train to Gain to other employers. The largest employers were the most likely to recommend training through Train to Gain, 87 per cent saying that they agreed strongly with the statement.

Overall satisfaction with the training undertaken through Train to Gain

- 199 The high levels of advocacy reported above reflect the very high level of satisfaction reported by employers when discussing the courses engaged with and the service received from the training provider. The following discussion covers employer satisfaction with the training overall, and with individual elements of the service received when engaging with training under Train to Gain.
- 200 All employers engaging with training were asked to give an overall rating for the training on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being 'very satisfied' and 1 being 'very dissatisfied'. The results are shown in Figure 29. As with results shown earlier for skills broker satisfaction, a score of 1 to 4 was considered to represent employer dissatisfaction, and a score of 6 to 10 to represent satisfaction.

Figure 29: Overall satisfaction with Train to Gain training



- 201 These results are extremely positive, with over nine in ten (92 per cent) of those taking up training satisfied with the training and the provider that delivered it. Particularly striking is that nearly four in ten respondents gave the training the best possible satisfaction rating. In fact, 89 per cent of respondents scored their satisfaction at 7 or above, and 82 per cent at 8 or above, which represents very high levels of satisfaction. These high levels were very consistent by size and sector.
- 202 Interestingly, there was little variation in satisfaction (that is, a score of 6 to 10) when crossed with the type of training undertaken, with no one category varying by more than a couple of percentage points either side of the average.
- 203 The most frequently cited response from those who were not satisfied with the training or training provider was that there was a lack of contact or

communication with the training provider (34 per cent). Employers talked about delays in the training provider contacting them with regard to enrolling learners on courses, and a lack of communication when it came to organising training around the employer's working schedules.

'There was no follow-up with anything from the provider. The timescales lapse when they promise things. General communication over the telephone is very poor – they are unobtainable.'

'The contact and the follow up was very poor. We have received confusing and conflicting advice from the people within the department at the college. People at the provider are saying different things, saying our staff hadn't registered when they turned up.'

'We started off very well, and it was all looking good until the trainer went on holiday. We've not heard anything since. I have got two people who are very close to finishing their training and getting an NVQ, and they have been left high and dry, disgruntled and disappointed.'

'I had to keep calling them all the time, and chase them for the training.'

- 204 The next most important reasons were that the training was irrelevant (17 per cent) or that it was not in practice beneficial, regardless of the seeming relevance of the subjects covered (14 per cent). Three per cent said more specifically that the training was too simple in content to meet their needs.

'I'm finding that the staff are asking questions that they should already have known from the training.'

'The training is not tailored to specific individuals. Rather it's geared towards group training rather than service-specific.'

'It's not very tailored to glazing. The package is being sold as training, but it's more of an assessment of existing skills than new training.'

'A number of engineers have enrolled to the introductory session, but no assessment has taken place. They've been given underpinning questions to fill in but no support to help with this.'

'The courses are orientated towards people on the lower end of the knowledge scale, so a complete waste of time to us.'

- 205 One in ten employers dissatisfied with the training provision blamed the lack of organisation of the training providers.

'We were unhappy because the man sent by the training provider was not coming to deliver the training at the times we had prearranged, but he would just turn up at other times whenever it suited him. We are a shop, so there are some times we just cannot afford not to have all our staff working.'

‘It has basically just been very haphazard. There have been a lot of missed appointments with members of staff, and it looks like it’s just an exercise in getting a qualification rather than improving employee skills.’

‘They have not fulfilled any training yet and we’ve lost time. The trainers come late when they give you a specific time – it’s no good.’

‘We had lots of different tutors, so there was no chance of building relationships. The service, the tutor, communication and feedback were all really poor.’

- 206 The high levels of satisfaction noted earlier in many ways mirror the pattern seen for satisfaction with the skills brokerage elements of the service (as reported in ‘Satisfaction with the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service’), and it is therefore interesting to explore whether there is any evidence to suggest that employers conflate training providers and skills brokers when evaluating training that has taken place under Train to Gain and the service they have received from those helping them access this. If this were the case, then we would expect a **very strong** relationship or correlation between employer satisfaction with the skills broker and their satisfaction with the training provision and provider. Among employers taking part in Sweep 1 of the research who have taken up the offer of training under Train to Gain, there is a only a **moderately** strong correlation of 0.43 between these two measures. This suggests that employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service and with the training provision are inter-related, a finding that would be expected if we takes into account the fact that employer views on the knowledge and judgement of skills brokers are likely to be influenced by the quality of training and provider that the skills broker signposted them to. However, the fact that the relationship is, in statistical terms, moderate rather than strong does mean that we can be

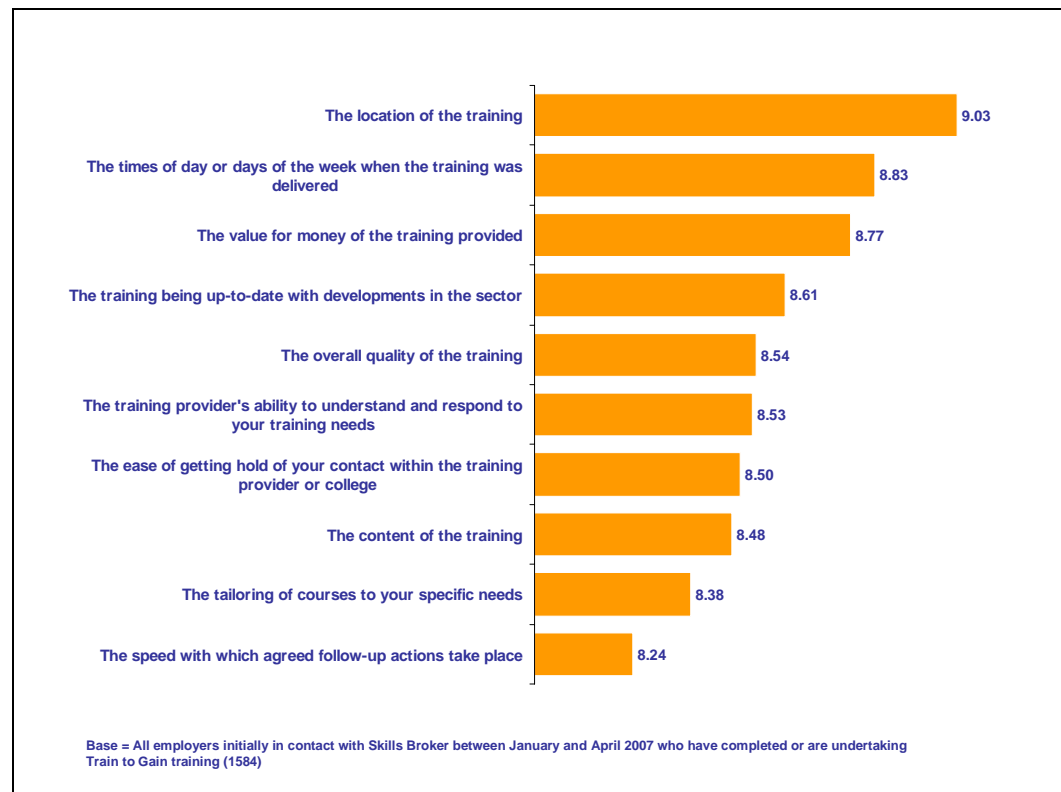
reasonably confident that employers do discriminate between the quality of the skills brokerage service on the one hand and the service received when accessing the training on the other when evaluating the Train to Gain service.

- 207 The high levels of satisfaction with the training provision accessed through Train to Gain mirror those seen in relation to a similar scheme whereby employers could access funding for training through the European Social Fund (ESF). A survey of employers engaged with ESF training (Shury, J. et al., *A quantitative survey of companies supported by the European Social Fund Objective 3 (2006)*, Research Report 361, published by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2006) found that over nine in ten (91 per cent) of employers were satisfied with the training provision accessed, very similar to the 92 per cent of employers satisfied with the training accessed through Train to Gain.

Satisfaction with individual elements of the training accessed under Train to Gain and with the training provider

- 208 To provide further insight into possible areas for improvement, employers were also asked to say how satisfied they had been with a number of specific aspects of Train to Gain training. Ratings were again provided on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 indicates 'totally dissatisfied' and 10 indicates 'totally satisfied'. The mean results are shown in Figure 30.

Figure 30: Mean satisfaction with elements of the training provision accessed under Train to Gain



209 Again, this reveals high levels of satisfaction across the board, with only limited variation in satisfaction between these factors. Respondents were most satisfied with the location and timing of the training (with respective mean scores of 9.03 and 8.83). They were also particularly satisfied with the value for money of the training (8.77), a reflection no doubt of the high proportion of employees receiving full funding for this training, as described earlier. Those employers receiving full subsidies for training were the most likely to be satisfied with the value for money of the training (8.99), but the differences between these employers and those who received only part subsidies or had to pay for the training in full (mean satisfaction of 8.50 and 8.37 respectively) were very slight.

210 Training provider responsiveness was the area with which respondents were least satisfied: the average satisfaction score for the speed of agreed

follow-up actions was the lowest, at 8.24, and the ease of getting hold of contacts within the training provider and the training provider's ability to understand and respond to training needs were also relatively low, scoring respectively 8.50 and 8.53.

- 211 While respondents were relatively less happy with the ability of trainers to tailor courses to their specific needs (at 8.38), they were more positive about the content of the training (8.48), particularly regarding the training being up-to-date with developments in the sector (8.61). The overall quality of the training scored an average satisfaction of 8.54.
- 212 There was very little significant variation in the satisfaction with specific elements of training when crossed with size and sector. Regarding the convenience of Train to Gain training, smaller establishments were often more satisfied. Among employers with between one and four staff, satisfaction with the location of the training was significantly lower, with 89 per cent of these employers satisfied (scoring at least 6 out of 10) compared with 95 per cent overall. The proximity of the training location may be more important to small employers as they are unable to cover for staff having to take time off in order to travel far to the training course. Employers in the Financial and Business Services sector were particularly likely to be satisfied with the content of the training received, with 95 per cent satisfied compared with 89 per cent across all employers.

The Impact of Training Accessed Through Train to Gain

213 Assessment of the overall value of Train to Gain relies not only on the quality of service delivered by skills brokers and training providers, but also on the **benefits** to the employer and, indeed, to the economy as a whole as a result of involvement with Train to Gain. This section looks at the extent to which involvement with Train to Gain is having an impact on the ability of employers to meet their business objectives, and the degree to which the service is succeeding in its aim of up-skilling individuals in a manner that will benefit employers. The numbers of additional employees being trained in comparison with training conducted outside Train to Gain will be assessed, as well as the occupational groups of trainees benefiting from involvement with the service.

The benefits of involvement with Train to Gain training

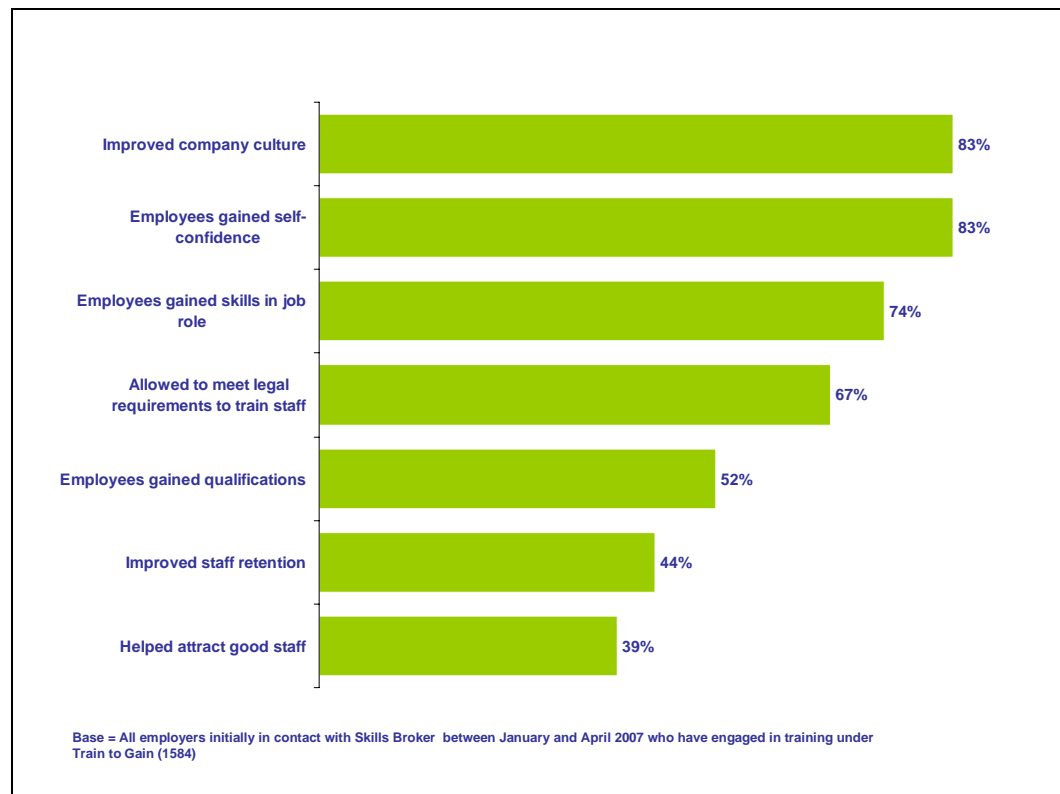
214 As illustrated in Figure 31, the most commonly cited benefit of involvement with Train to Gain is an improvement in the general company culture with regard to the training and development of staff. Over eight in every ten employers said that engaging with training through Train to Gain had allowed them to demonstrate their commitment to developing their staff and therefore to promote an employee-friendly culture in their business. Perhaps linked with this, 44 per cent of employers report that involvement with Train to Gain has helped them to retain employees.

215 Employers in the Hotels and Restaurants and Public administration, Health and Education sectors were particularly likely to report that their company culture has improved through contact with a Train to Gain skills broker, with 91 per cent and 86 per cent of employers in these sectors reporting this benefit respectively. Hotels and Restaurants employers were also more likely to report that employee involvement with training has had a beneficial

knock-on effect on staff retention: 57 per cent reported this benefit, compared with 44 per cent overall – this is encouraging, given the typically high levels of staff turnover normally associated with this sector.

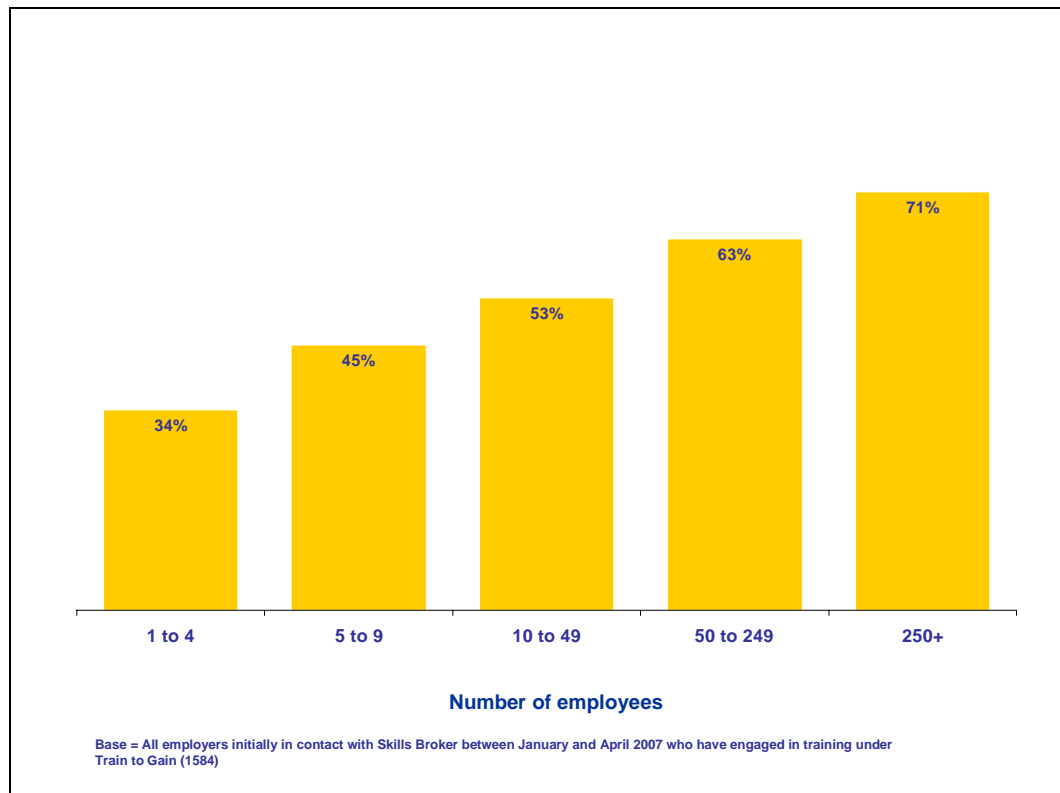
- 216 Two-fifths of employers taking up training report that they have been more successful in recruiting skilled staff, presumably because they are able to offer candidates increased opportunities for training and development. However, this may also be a reflection of the general advice on human resource issues provided by skills brokers (including signposting employers to new or better places to recruit staff) and a greater awareness among employers of the skills they require from new recruits.
- 217 While these improvements in recruitment effectiveness and in the relations between employers and staff are encouraging signs, the main objective of Train to Gain is to deliver a service that allows organisations to achieve their business objectives through the up-skilling of staff. As shown in Figure 31, it is clear that, at the most fundamental level, Train to Gain is having a positive effect on the skills base of those engaging with training. Three-quarters of employers (74 per cent) report that they have noticed an improvement in the skills of employees in relation to their specific job role. This figure was higher among employers whose staff have been working towards or have achieved a Level 3 qualification; 80 per cent of these employers feel that staff have gained useful job-specific skills, compared with 75 per cent of those whose staff were trained at Level 2, and 74 per cent of all employers.

Figure 31: The benefits experienced as a result of training funded or accessed through Train to Gain



218 As will be discussed in more detail later in this section, many learners are succeeding in attaining formal qualifications as a result of their employer's involvement with Train to Gain. Just over half of all employers (52 per cent) report that employees have gained formal qualifications as a result of the training received. There will, however, be additional employers who have employees who are **working towards** attaining qualifications, as discussed later in this section. Unsurprisingly, a greater proportion of employers first in contact with a skills broker in January had had employees achieve qualifications by the time of the survey (57 per cent), reflecting the greater length of involvement with the Train to Gain service. Larger organisations were more likely to have had employees achieving qualifications as a result of training accessed or funded through Train to Gain (Figure 32).

Figure 32: The proportion of employers reporting that staff have gained formal qualifications through Train to Gain – by organisation size



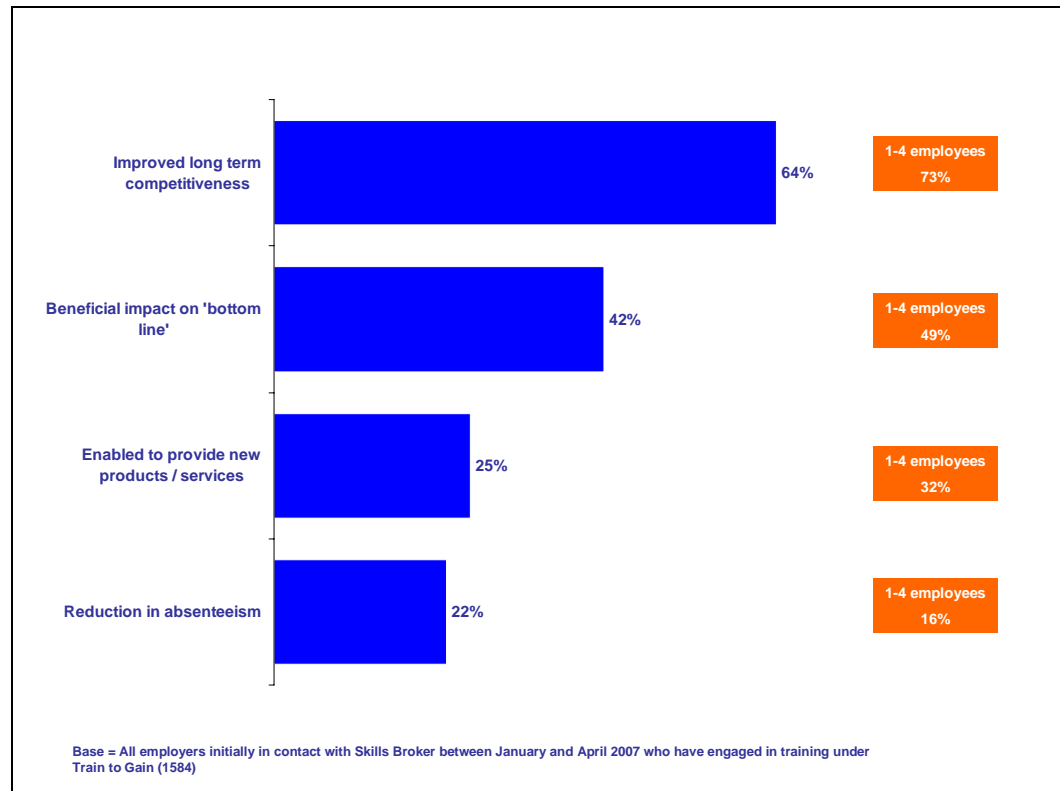
219 Employers who have not engaged with any training outside Train to Gain in the last 12 months were less likely to have had staff gain qualifications through the training accessed (47 per cent compared with 54 per cent of employers who have engaged in training outside Train to Gain). Along with the lower proportion of small companies reporting that staff have gained formal qualifications, this finding may suggest that Train to Gain is to some extent failing in its aim to target opportunities for up-skilling and for gaining first full Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at the smaller employers who are less likely to have been able to offer other training opportunities outside Train to Gain. However, these groups were as likely to say that staff had gained job-related skills and become better at their work as their larger, more training experienced counterparts. This suggests that formal qualifications may well be less relevant in the eyes of these smaller

employers, and that they are generally satisfied with the training that can be delivered through less formal training routes.

- 220 It is interesting to note that, in two-thirds of cases (67 per cent), employers report that training accessed or funded through Train to Gain has contributed towards their ability to meet their legal requirement to train staff. The two sectors in which this effect was reported most frequently were the Public administration, Health and Education sector, where 81 per cent of employers said Train to Gain had enabled them to meet legal requirements to train staff, and in the Construction sector, where the figure was 68 per cent. These findings reflect the more stringent training requirements in these sectors; for example, health and safety requirements in the construction industry, and a minimum standard for Level 2 qualified staff in the health and social care workforce.
- 221 The proportion of employers citing an ability to meet legal requirements as a benefit of Train to Gain is potentially a worrying finding, which raises the question of whether the funding stream is being utilised to drive up business performance in the most disadvantaged or reluctant employers and to encourage investment in training. The findings suggest that, in at least some cases, employers may be exploiting the availability of Level 2 funding in order to avoid having to make an investment of their own in training employees to basic legal standards. It is debatable whether this type of activity can be considered to represent an increase in skills and value as was intended under Train to Gain.
- 222 As has been reiterated throughout this report, the ultimate aim of a Train to Gain intervention is to help employers meet their business objectives. Overall, two-fifths of employers (42 per cent) said that the training they had engaged with through Train to Gain had had a beneficial impact on the bottom-line or profitability of the business (Figure 33). This was significantly lower among employers in the Construction and Wholesale and Retail sectors (29 per cent and 33 per cent respectively). Those employers

engaging with Level 3 training under Train to Gain were significantly more likely to report beneficial impacts on the bottom-line (51 per cent).

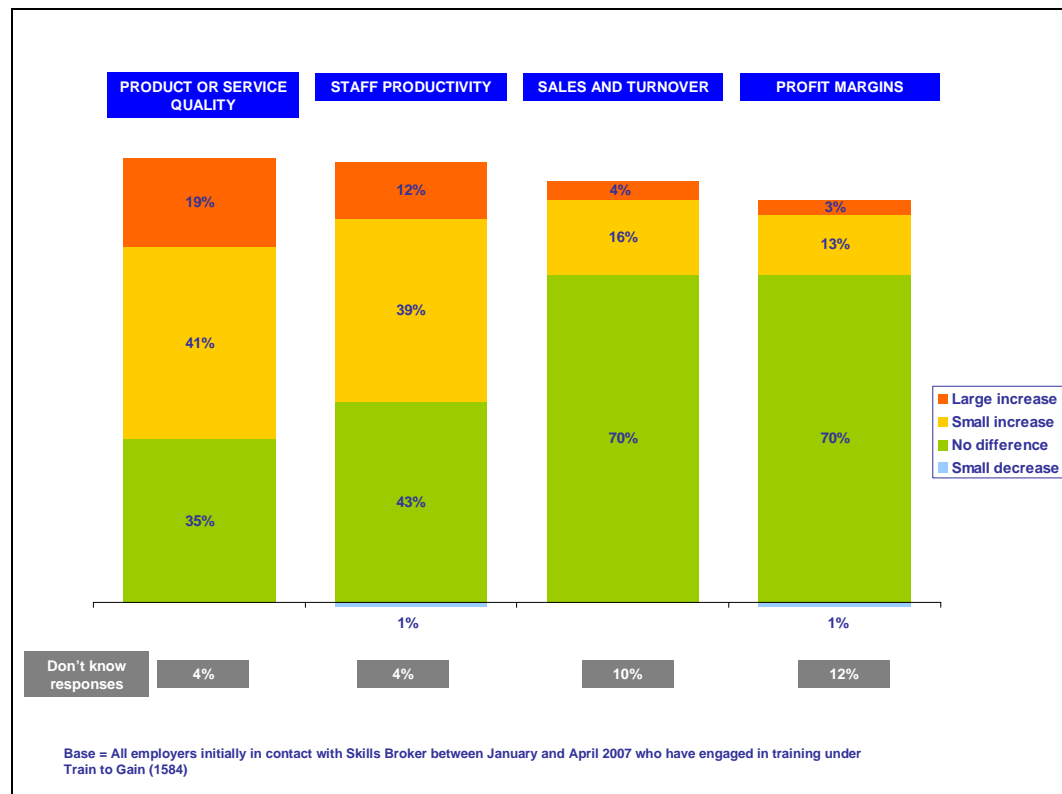
Figure 33: The proportion of employers experiencing business benefits as a result of Train to Gain training



223 As is evident in Figure 33, the majority of employers engaging with training through Train to Gain (64 per cent) feel that the skills acquired by staff have contributed to an improvement in the organisation's ability to compete in the long term. The smallest employers are the most likely to note improvements in competitiveness, with three-quarters (73 per cent) citing this as a benefit of training. Again, those employers whose staff have engaged in Level 3 training were more likely to feel that this has led to an improvement in their ability to compete: 71 per cent did so, compared with 65 per cent of employers whose staff have achieved or have been working towards Level 2 qualifications.

- 224 As shown in Figure 33, employers with between one and four staff were also the most likely to see the benefits of training carrying over into new product or service development. Employers in the Hotels and Restaurants sector were the most likely to cite the ability to deliver new services as a benefit of training (35 per cent). Employers who have not engaged in training outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months were more likely to report having expanded their organisation's product or service range as a result of the training. One-third (32 per cent) of these employers stated that training had enabled them to provide new products or services.
- 225 Employers were also asked in more detail about the extent to which their organisation has experienced each of four more tangible financial or operational benefits as a result of involvement with Train to Gain. Figure 34 details the findings for product or service quality, staff productivity, sales and turnover, and profit margins.

Figure 34: The effect of Train to Gain training on four key financial or operational benefits



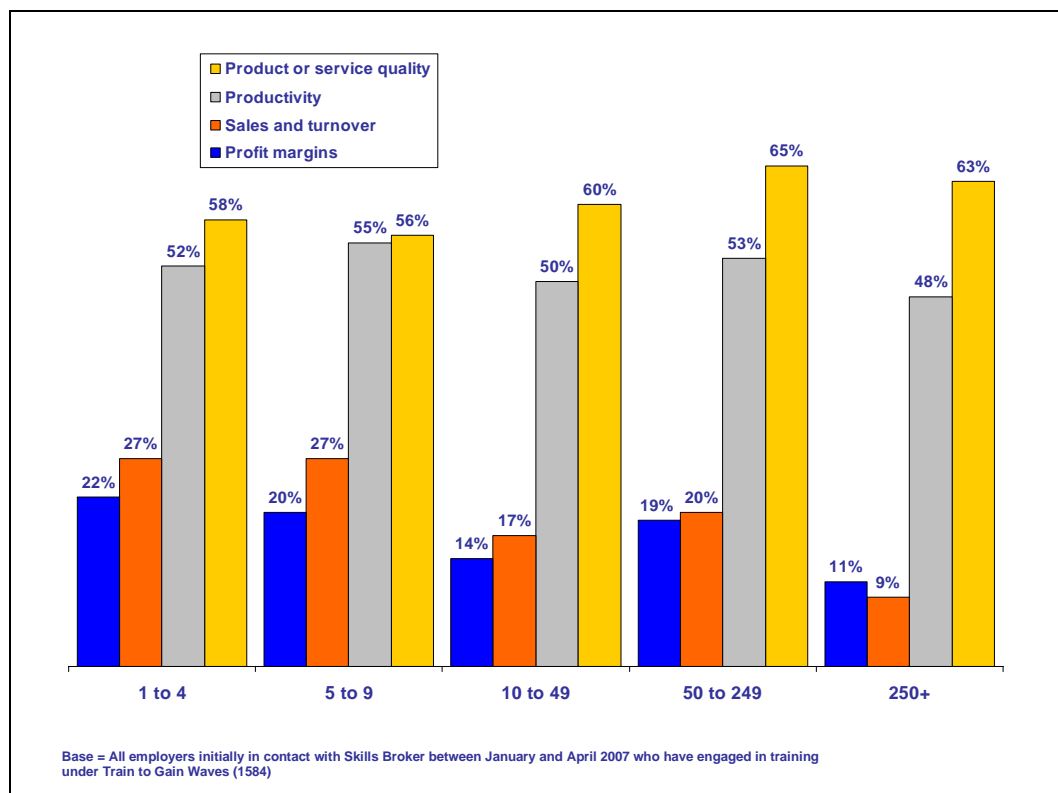
226 Employers who have taken up training were generally positive about the effect of this activity on staff productivity and product or service quality. The most marked effects on quality were seen in the Public administration, Health and Education, and Hotels and Restaurants sectors, in which 69 per cent and 66 per cent of employers respectively reported an increase (compared with 60 per cent overall). Level 3 engagement employers were particularly likely to report that training had led to an increase in product or service quality (71 per cent).

227 The increases in staff productivity reported by just over half of employers (52 per cent) may well be in part attributable to reductions in absenteeism; 77 per cent of those reporting an improvement in staff attendance reported that productivity had improved.

- 228 As shown in Figure 34, in terms of converting this increase in product and/or service quality and staff productivity into raw financial benefit, employers were less confident in ascribing benefits to Train to Gain. In terms of achieving a measurable impact on sales figures, turnover and profit margins, the majority of employers said that engaging with Train to Gain training had made no difference. However, encouragingly, one in five employers engaging with training (20 per cent) reported an increase in sales and turnover as a direct result, rising to 27 per cent among smaller employers with fewer than 10 staff. Unsurprisingly, these beneficial effects on sales and turnover were more prevalent among employers who had had employees complete a course of training (25 per cent reporting an increase, compared with 18 per cent of those with training under way but not completed at the time of the survey). Employers who reported that they had been able to provide new products or services to customers as a result of the training were also more likely to report improvements in sales and turnover figures.
- 229 It is important to note that the reported benefits of Train to Gain training are likely to change over time. At the time of the survey, many employers commented that it was too early to say whether there had been an impact on sales, turnover or profit, which is understandable given that they were speaking only between one and six months after their first contact with a Train to Gain skills broker. This is also reflected in the sizeable minority of employers who gave a 'don't know' response, and who have been excluded from Figure 34 (10 per cent for sales and turnover; 12 per cent for profit margins).
- 230 The proportions of employers reporting improvements in both sales figures and profit margins were significantly higher in the Primary, Utilities and Manufacturing sector (28 per cent for sales and turnover and 29 per cent for profit margins). Small employers with fewer than five employees were also more likely to report an increase in profit margins; 22 per cent did so,

compared with 17 per cent overall (see Figure 35). Interestingly, those employers who stated that conducting training had allowed them to launch new products or services were more likely to report a corresponding increase in profit margins (31 per cent compared with 17 per cent overall). Profit margins were also more likely to increase among those reporting a reduction in absenteeism (32 per cent) and an improvement in the company's ability to retain staff (26 per cent).

Figure 35: The proportion of employers reporting an increase in four key financial or operational measures as a result of training under Train to Gain – by organisation size



Assessing the additional impact of Train to Gain on the provision of training by employers

- 231 In order to assess the impact and additional value conferred by the Train to Gain service, the survey examined the extent to which involvement with the service has led employers to alter or improve their training provision. Some businesses traditionally engage in a substantial volume of workforce development, while others do not. Train to Gain aims to increase the incidence of training in businesses, especially where training has not been significant before. Thus, the key research question to answer is whether Train to Gain has led to additional training over and above what would have occurred in the absence of the intervention.
- 232 Knowing how much training would have been undertaken by employers in the absence of Train to Gain is difficult to determine, as the current survey covers only those employers who have had some form of contact with the skills brokerage service. However, it is possible to reach conclusions on the additional impact of Train to Gain by examining the level of take-up of training and the previous training history of employers engaging with the skills brokerage service.
- 233 The most basic measure of additionality that can be derived from this survey relates to whether contact with the Train to Gain skills broker prompted or facilitated employer take-up of training for their employees. Employers who have had contact with the Train to Gain brokerage service but have failed to take up training as a result of the intervention cannot have created any additional training activity. However, it should be noted that as employers were surveyed only a few months after their initial contact with a skills broker, they may well have gone on to take up training through Train to Gain at a later date. In addition, employers may have gained useful insights into the skills of their employees and potential training opportunities as a result of contact with the skills broker which might encourage them to engage with more staff development in future.

The effect of take-up of training on employers not training in the past year

- 234 Those employers who have taken up training through Train to Gain but have not arranged other training in the past year constitute the most clear additionality effect of the skills brokers on training activity. Among this group, it is reasonable to consider the switch from an employer being a non-training establishment to becoming a training establishment as something brought about by the Train to Gain intervention. It could therefore be said that employers with no record of previous training in the past year, but who took up training through Train to Gain, can be regarded as examples of 'pure additionality', with all the training undertaken by those employers attributed to the Train to Gain intervention.
- 235 However, there are a number of significant caveats. First, it is possible that employers may have already been planning to engage in training at the time of the Train to Gain intervention, and therefore that the actions of the skills broker had little effect on the decision to engage in this training activity. Indeed, it may be the case that these employers were willing and able to engage in training but felt that they could access this at a lower cost through Train to Gain, a 'substitution' effect that does not represent added 'value' to the overall skills base. Therefore, while the training undertaken by these employers may be 'additional' in a broad sense, the extent to which Train to Gain is truly targeting those employers least likely to develop their workforce remains somewhat equivocal in this data.
- 236 In summary, the findings presented thus far allow us to segment employers who have had some contact with a Train to Gain skills broker into three groups in terms of the impact of Train to Gain on training activity within the enterprise. These groups can be defined as follows.
- **No impact on training provision:** did not take up training through Train to Gain.

- **Pure additionality:** did not train in the year before the Train to Gain intervention, but went on to train under Train to Gain. There may be possible substitution effects here, as described above.
- **Potential additionality:** trained in the 12 months prior to the Train to Gain intervention, and went on to train as result of Train to Gain.

237 Applying these definitions allows us to calculate the proportions of employers who have been in contact with a skills broker who fall into each of these categories. Estimates of the effects of Train to Gain are shown below:

- no impact on training provision: 35.7 per cent;
- pure additionality: 20.3 per cent; and
- potential additionality: 44 per cent.

238 For this largest 'potential additionality' group, it is possible to conduct a further examination of the value of the training that has taken place. This is discussed below.

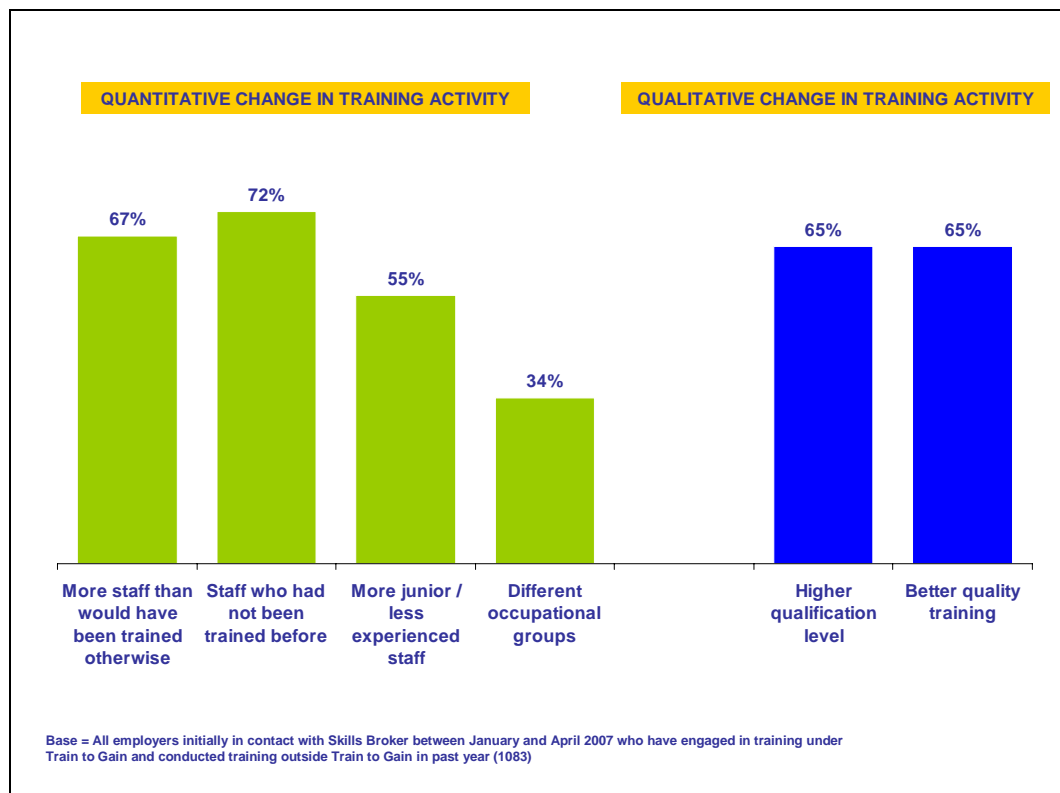
The effect of take-up of training on employers training outside Train to Gain in the past year

239 In cases where employers have trained in the past year and then gone on to take up training through Train to Gain, it is possible to conduct analysis to measure the extent to which the training accessed under Train to Gain has been an improvement on what had taken place previously.

240 Such additionality effects may be quantitative (a greater number or different groups of employees receive training) or qualitative (where the training is of a higher standard or leads to qualifications not previously achieved). Figure 36 explores the proportion of all employers engaging with training who have experienced qualitative and quantitative effects on their training provision as a result of the Train to Gain intervention, specifically:

- whether there has been an increase in the number of employees who received training;
- whether there has been any change in the pattern or incidence of training across occupational or skill groups in the workforce; and
- whether there has been an improvement in the quality of the training received.

Figure 36: Changes in training provision as a result of contact with a Train to Gain skills broker



241 Two-thirds of employers engaging with training under Train to Gain (67 per cent) said that they had been able to train more employees than they had done through other means in the past year. Interestingly, those employers accessing **fully** subsidised training through the service were no more likely to say that they had been able to train an increased number of staff.

242 As might be expected given the eligibility criteria for participation in much of the training signposted and funded through Train to Gain, the majority of employers (72 per cent) reported that they had been able to access training for individuals who had not previously received employer-arranged training.

243 In terms of evaluating the impact of the Train to Gain service, it is important also to look at the quality of training being accessed, as well as the additional numbers of learners being brought into vocational training. The

findings in this area are broadly positive, with two-thirds of employers (65 per cent) saying that they had been able to access better quality provision with the help of their skills brokers.

- 244 One-third of employers have accessed training in which employees are working towards qualifications at the same (or lower) level or standard as those they have already attained. This is interesting, given the requirement that those entering Train to Gain provision be funded **only** if they are gaining their first Level 2 qualification. This finding may well be partly attributable to the fact that that employers can access training through Train to Gain that falls outside the **funded** provision offered through the service, or training that does not lead to any formal qualification. There is scope within Train to Gain for individuals to access training at a lower or similar level as that already received in order to enhance and widen their skills base. However, as previous research with regard to the Employer Training Pilots (Hillage, J. et al., *The Employer Training Pilots: Final Evaluation Report*, Institute for Employment Studies, 2006) has shown, there is likely to be some non-first Level 2 training being funded as a result of the difficulty of enforcing the eligibility criteria for fully-funded training.
- 245 As discussed earlier in this section with regard to employers taking up training to meet legal requirements, this research does raise some concerns about the extent to which the Train to Gain service is giving help to those employers who are already able to access and fund suitable training provision. Over two-thirds of employers (70 per cent) said that some of the training accessed through Train to Gain involved further development for individuals who would have received training anyway.
- 246 Taking these findings together, it is possible to provide summary estimates of the proportion of these employers who have experienced some benefit of involvement with Train to Gain training, and those who appear to have used Train to Gain to carry out the same training as before. This group of employers can be split into those who have experienced:

- **quantitative additionality**, where employers have accessed training that has allowed them to train more staff than previously, those not previously trained, more junior staff, or staff in additional occupational groups;
- **qualitative additionality**, where employers have accessed better quality training than they have done before, or training that leads to staff gaining qualifications at a higher level; and
- **substitution**, representing cases in which employers report no change in the training offered to staff as a result of involvement with Train to Gain, or where employers state that they have merely provided additional training to staff who would have received this in any case and not reported any other quantitative or qualitative additionality.

247 Among those employers who have trained both outside and under Train to Gain, a total of 48 per cent reported both quantitative and qualitative effects on their training provision. A further 9 per cent reported only quantitative effects, and 3 per cent that the qualitative nature of the training received had changed, but not the number or type of staff accessing this.

248 Using the multivariate analysis process and variables described in the previous section ('Employers' Views on Training Received Under Train to Gain') reveals that the probability of an employer who has trained outside Train to Gain exhibiting qualitative or quantitative additionality is increased if:

- they are a large employer;
- they have a formal training plan;
- they are in the Public administration, Education and Health sector;
- they have had several contacts with their skills broker;
- they have a continuing relationship with their skills broker; and
- if they consider a subsidy for Level 2 training very important.

Summary of additionality effects associated with training accessed through Train to Gain

249 On the basis of the survey findings relating to take-up of Train to Gain training, previous training activity and changes in training activity, it is possible to make estimates of the various components of additionality. Taking the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative additionality into account generates the estimates for the population of all employers in contact with Train to Gain skills brokers that are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of additionality effects of involvement with Train to Gain

	% of employers in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker	% of employers training under Train to Gain and training outside Train to Gain in past year
Base (unweighted)	3,759	1,083
Additionality effect		
No impact on training provision (no take-up of Train to Gain training)	35.7%	-
Substitution	17.4%	39.6%
Pure additionality	20.3%	-
Quantitative additionality only	4.0%	9.1%
Qualitative additionality only	1.3%	3.0%
Both quantitative and qualitative additionality	21.2%	48.2%

250 These estimates suggest that in just over half of all surveyed establishments (53 per cent), Train to Gain training was either not taken up (36 per cent) or was used to subsidise training that would otherwise have been conducted by the employer (17 per cent). However, again it should be noted that although 36 per cent of employers had not taken up this training at the time of survey, they may well have gone on or still be planning to access training through Train to Gain.

251 In around one-fifth of establishments (20 per cent), Train to Gain led to training taking place in establishments that had not previously trained their workforce, while in a further quarter of establishments (27 per cent), Train to Gain led to employers increasing the number, range or quality of their workforce training. This suggests that just under half of all employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (47 per cent) were carrying out additional training that could be attributed to the Train to Gain service ('total additionality').

Table 7: Additionality of training by sector

		Impact on training						Total
		No impact on training provision	Substitution	Pure additionality	Quantitative additionality alone	Qualitative additionality only	Both numerical and qualitative additionality	
	Primary, Utilities and Manufacturing	41.7	13.6	21.5	1.4	1.2	20.5	100.0
	Construction	37.1	20.0	20.3	3.5	1.7	17.4	100.0
	Wholesale and Retail	36.9	12.6	34.2	1.3	1.1	13.8	100.0
	Hotels and Restaurants	27.2	16.9	32.3	1.0	2.1	20.5	100.0
	Transport and Communications	37.3	14.6	26.9	2.7	2.3	16.2	100.0
	Financial and Business Services	49.5	15.7	19.9	2.2	2.0	10.7	100.0
	Public administration, Health and Education	28.9	21.0	12.1	7.4	.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	35.7	17.4	20.3	4.0	1.3	21.2	100.0

Note: table shows row percentage figures.

Table 8: Additionality of training by size of establishment

		Impact on training						Total
		No impact on training provision	Substitution	Pure additionality	Quantitative additionality alone	Qualitative additionality only	Both numerical and qualitative additionality	
	1 to 4 employees	47.4	10.4	32.2	1.1	1.3	7.6	100.0
	5 to 9	39.8	13.9	28.7	1.7	0.9	14.9	100.0
	10 to 49	32.3	20.0	16.1	5.1	1.4	25.0	100.0
	50 to 249	29.3	19.0	12.0	6.3	1.7	31.6	100.0
	250+	31.0	27.6	9.5	6.0	1.7	24.1	100.0
	Total	35.7	17.4	20.3	4.0	1.3	21.2	100.0

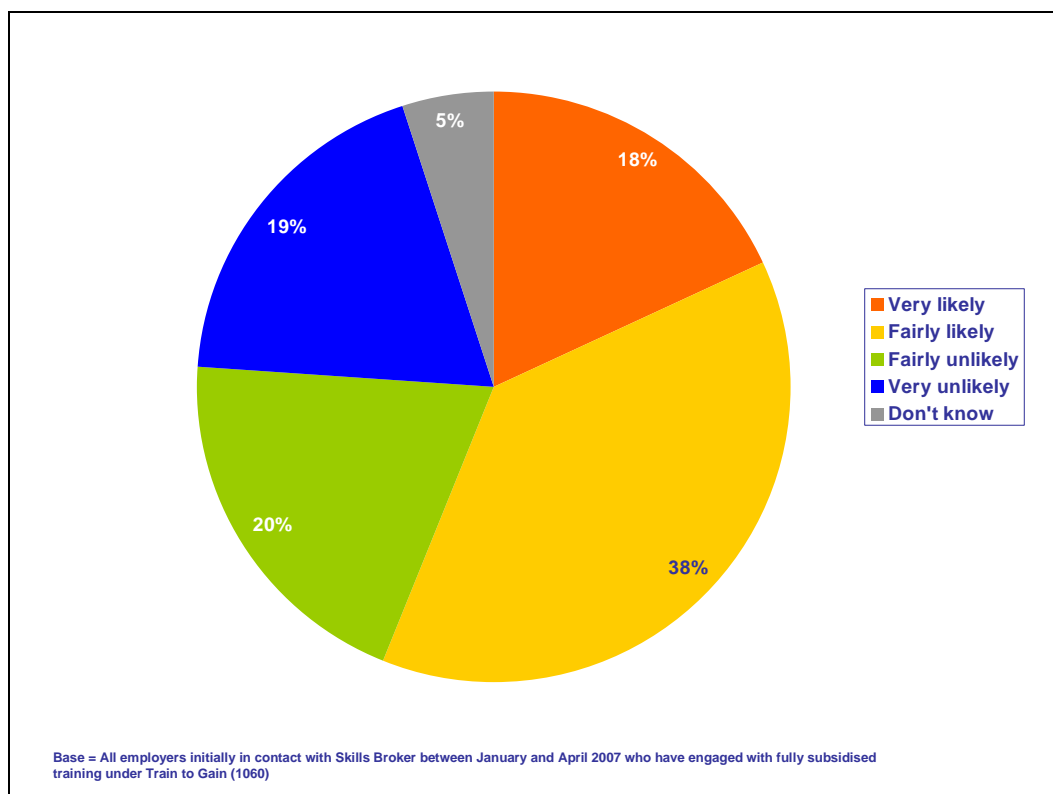
Note: table shows row percentage figures.

- 252 The pattern of additionality varies by employer size and sector as indicated in Tables 7 and 8. Total additionality varies from 56 per cent in the Hotels and Restaurants sector to 35 per cent among Financial and Business Services employers.
- 253 There is, however, a clear relationship between establishment size and the incidence of 'pure' additionality. Among very small employers (those with fewer than five employees), the incidence of pure additionality is high (over 32 per cent). The proportion falls sharply as establishment size increases, and is less than 10 per cent among the largest employers (250 plus). This is in part a result of the fact that employees with fewer than five staff are less likely to have engaged in training outside Train to Gain (36 per cent have, compared with 85 per cent of employers with more than 50 staff). Consequently, the scope for Train to Gain to generate pure additionality among large employers is much less than among small employers (although because there is additional training in large establishments the number of employees affected may greatly exceed the pure additionality in small businesses).

Assessing additionality through employer views on Train to Gain subsidies

- 254 Further insight into whether Train to Gain is having an impact on provision is provided by data on the extent to which employers who have received fully subsidised training under Train to Gain would have gone ahead with this activity had this funding not been available. As Figure 37 demonstrates, 56 per cent of employers said that they would have still gone ahead with the training even if they had had to meet at least some of the costs themselves. This could be interpreted both positively and negatively; on the one hand, the findings lend weight to the argument that the skills brokerage service is succeeding in its aim of encouraging employers to consider investment in training. However, it could indicate that employers are taking advantage of the opportunity to substitute subsidised training under Train to Gain for training that they would otherwise have paid for themselves at full cost.

Figure 37: The likelihood of employers going ahead with training through Train to Gain if subsidies had not been available



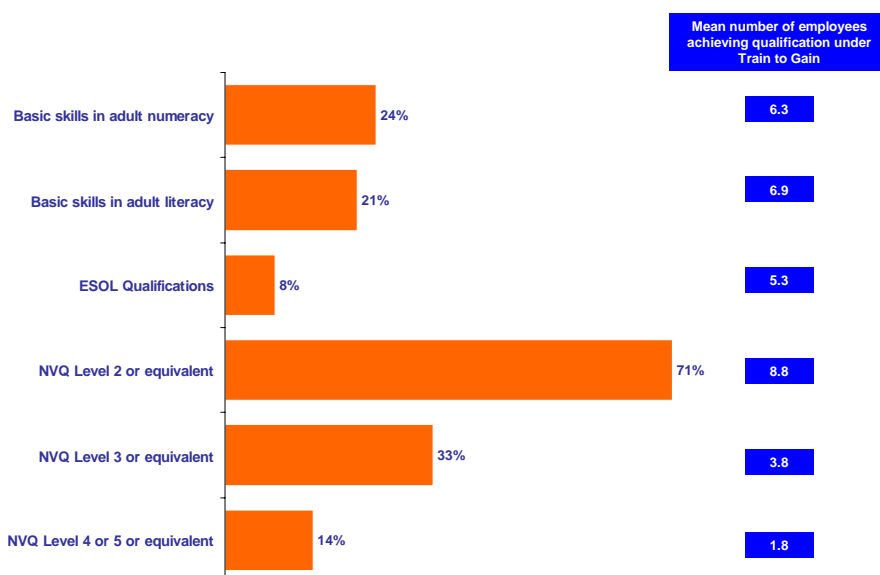
- 255 Unsurprisingly, given the limited financial resources for training in these organisations, the smallest employers (one to four employees) were the most likely to report that they would have been 'very unlikely' (27 per cent) to have engaged with Train to Gain training had subsidies not been available.
- 256 Almost half (46 per cent) of employers with no training history in the past year said that they would have been likely to go ahead with the training had no funding been available, suggesting perhaps that although the skills broker may well have provided the impetus for the employer to train, these employers were not necessarily the most in need of Train to Gain intervention.

The impact of Train to Gain on the level of employee engagement with training and qualifications

- 257 The next section of this report examines the impact of Train to Gain on the **numbers of individuals** trained and the extent to which the service is helping employees to gain relevant qualifications for their job role. As a comparison, this section will also look at the characteristics of training conducted outside Train to Gain by the surveyed employers in the past year. Where the employer has arranged or funded training

outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months, the outcomes of the learning and the profile of learners can be directly compared with the training arranged through Train to Gain.

Figure 38: The incidence of qualifications achieved or working towards under Train to Gain



Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Broker between January and April 2007 who have engaged in training under Train to Gain (1584)

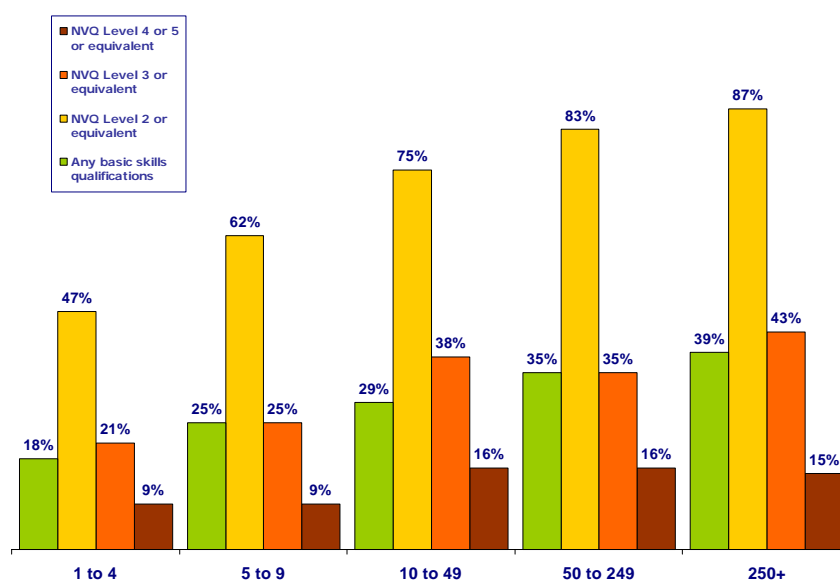
Note: the Level 4

and Level 5 training outlined here will not have been funded through the Train to Gain stream. Rather, it falls under the umbrella of Train to Gain because skills brokers may signpost an employer to this level of training if it is deemed necessary following the completion of the Organisational Needs Analysis. The holistic skills brokerage service could include referrals to provision not funded through Train to Gain.

- 258 Figure 38 shows the proportion of employers who have engaged with training under Train to Gain and who have at least one of their employees working towards or having already achieved qualifications as a result. Overall, 83 per cent of all those training under Train to Gain have staff who are working towards or who have achieved a formal qualification (35 per cent of all employers who have had some contact with a skills broker). NVQ Level 2 qualifications or equivalents are the most popular, as we might expect given the relative focus and funding directed at these qualifications. An average of nine employees per organisation engaging with Train to Gain provision are working towards or have achieved Level 2 qualifications.
- 259 Eighty per cent of employers taking up training have had at least one employee achieve a Level 2 qualification or above or have at least one employee currently working towards attaining this level of accreditation. As we would expect, the

proportion of employers benefiting from these qualifications increases with employer size – the largest employers are the most likely to have had employees working towards formal qualifications at Level 2 or above, as illustrated in Figure 39. The larger employers are also more likely to put staff through Skills for Life qualifications through the Train to Gain service.

Figure 39: The incidence of qualifications achieved or working towards under Train to Gain – by organisation size

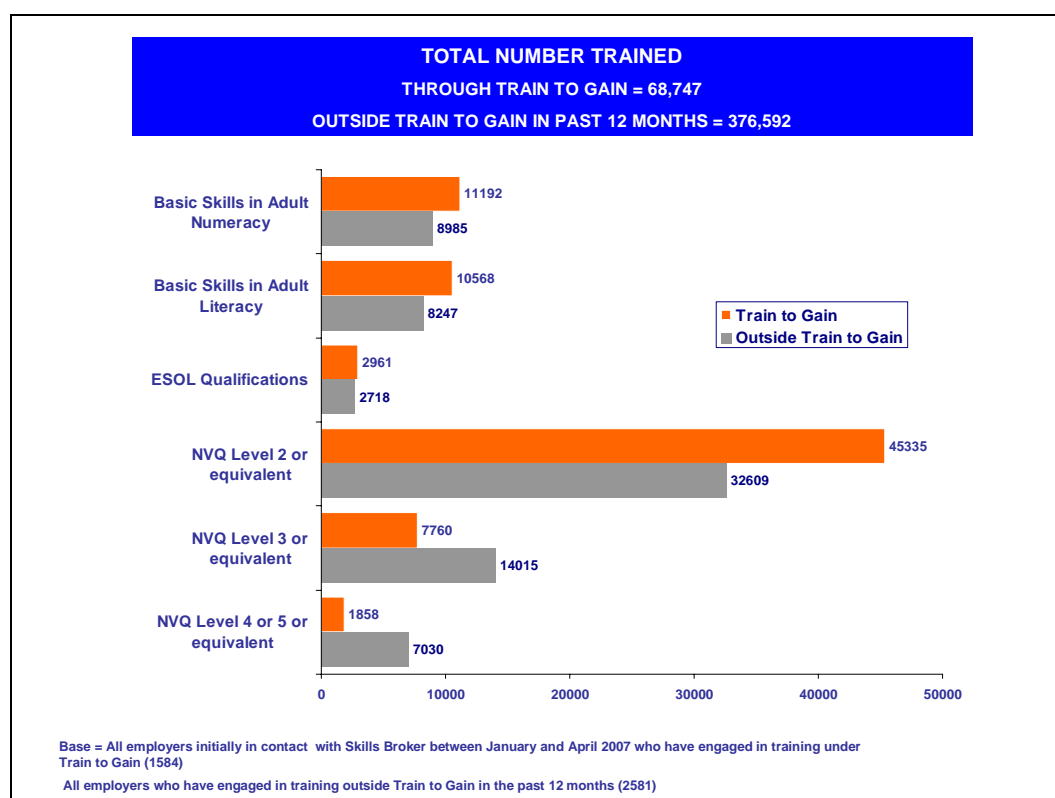


Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Broker between January and April 2007 who have engaged in training under Train to Gain Waves (1584)

- 260 Employers in the Hotels and Restaurants sector are the most likely to have had employees working towards formal qualifications through Train to Gain; 45 per cent have had one or more employees who have achieved or have been working towards accreditation in basic skills, and 82 per cent have an employee working towards or have had them achieve an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent. Level 2 engagement is also relatively high in the Public administration, Health and Education sector where the figure stands at 76 per cent. In contrast, only 47 per cent of employers in the Financial and Business Services sector who have taken up training have had employees working towards gaining Level 2 qualifications at the end of their course.
- 261 The number of employees completing or working towards qualifications under Train to Gain is shown in Figure 40. Almost 70,000 individual employees have been engaged with training accessed or funded through Train to Gain, an average of nine per employer organisation engaging with this training. As would be expected, the

highest number of employees (around 45,000) have engaged with Level 2 courses, representing 66 per cent of the total trained under Train to Gain. Around 11,000 learners are working towards or have already achieved Skills for Life qualifications in adult numeracy (16 per cent of learners). A similar number are working towards or have already attained basic skills in adult literacy (15 per cent of the total trained), while 3,000 employees have engaged with English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) training (4 per cent of the total trained). There will be, to some extent, an element of double-counting contained within these figures. This is more likely to be evident within the Skills for Life courses where the same person may be undertaking a combination of the two basic skills qualifications and ESOL.

Figure 40: The number of employees achieving or working towards qualifications under Train to Gain and outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months



- 262 Around 375,000 employees have engaged with training outside the Train to Gain service in the last year, more than five times as many as through Train to Gain. Figure 40 shows the number of employees who have gained the same qualifications through training outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months. As can be seen, the majority of this training did not lead to a qualification. (Around 70,000 employees undertook training leading to qualifications although, again, there is likely to be some double-counting.) In fact, encouragingly, a higher number of learners are currently working towards or have achieved NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualifications through training accessed under Train to Gain than have achieved this level of qualification through other means in the past year.
- 263 Train to Gain would also seem to be boosting take-up of Skills for Life training, with more employees engaged on these courses than have been outside Train to Gain in the companies in the past year. As would be expected, fewer individuals are currently working towards or have achieved qualifications at Level 3 or above through Train to Gain than have done so through other training channels in the past year (although almost 8,000 employees are working towards and have attained a Level 3 qualification under Train to Gain, a figure that is intended to increase significantly over the next few years).
- 264 Tables 9 and 10 demonstrate the extent to which funding has been provided through Train to Gain in order for these qualifications to be attained. Table 9 shows the number of employers who have had at least one member of staff achieve a qualification as a result of training arranged through a skills broker, and the proportion of employers who have received full subsidies for this training. The proportion of employers who have received either full or part subsidies for this training is also shown.

Table 9: The proportion of employers receiving funding for Train to Gain training leading to qualifications

	Skills for Life	NVQ Level 2 or equivalent	NVQ Level 3 or equivalent
All employers with at least one member of staff working towards or having attained qualification through Train to Gain (wtd)	2,059	5,152	2,404
Proportion of employers in which the training leading to the qualification has been fully subsidised	61%	63%	52%
Proportion of employers in which the training leading to the qualification has been either fully or partly subsidised	91%	90%	88%

Note: employers who said that they had received some fully or partly subsidised training and some non-subsidised training through Train to Gain are not listed as receiving subsidies in this table. This is because in these cases it is not possible to distinguish whether the training leading to a qualification represents the training that was funded or the training that was paid for in full by the employer.

- 265 Table 9 shows that in the majority of cases where employers have benefited from an employee working towards or gaining a qualification, this has been a result of training that has been fully subsidised through Train to Gain. Where an employer has had employers working towards or achieving a Level 2 qualification, in nine out of ten cases (90 per cent) the employer has received at least some subsidies for this training, and in 63 per cent of cases the training course has been fully funded. Employers who have employees engage with Level 3 training through Train to Gain were slightly less likely to have had this training fully funded, although still as many as half (52 per cent) have received this free of charge.
- 266 Table 10 details the same information about the funding of training leading to qualifications, but based on the total number of trainees rather than employers. This shows that of the around 45,000 individuals who have successfully completed or who have been working towards qualifications at Level 2, just over half (55 per cent) have had their course fully funded through Train to Gain. Over nine out of ten (92 per cent) have benefited from at least some contribution towards their training costs. The situation is similar for Level 3 trainees, 49 per cent of whom have received full subsidies for the training under Train to Gain.

Table 10: The proportion of trainees receiving funding for Train to Gain training leading to qualifications

	Skills for Life	NVQ Level 2 or equivalent	NVQ Level 3 or equivalent
All trainees working towards or attaining qualification through Train to Gain (wtd)	24,721	45,335	7,760
Proportion of trainees for which the training leading to the qualification has been fully subsidised	56%	55%	49%
Proportion of trainees for which the training leading to the qualification has been either fully or partly subsidised	91%	92%	90%

Note: trainees employed by organisations receiving some fully or partly subsidised training and some non-subsidised training are not considered as being beneficiaries of subsidies for the purposes of this table, for the same reasons noted at Table 9.

267 To further explore the issue of whether the Train to Gain service is adding value on top of the training already conducted by employers, Tables 11 and 12 detail the overlap between those companies accessing training through Train to Gain and those engaging with other training in the past year. The number of trainees undertaking each type of training is given as a proportion of employment within those organisations. Note that employment figures used in this section are derived from survey data, rather than external sources. Employers were asked to give the number of employees overall in their establishment, and the numbers employed in the three occupational groups shown in Table 13.

Table 11: The total number of employees trained or currently training under Train to Gain as a proportion of employment

	Base (unwtd)	Number of employees in all employers in contact with a skills broker	Number of employees trained under Train to Gain	% of employees trained under Train to Gain
Total	1,584	423,853	68,747	16.2%
Also engaged with training outside Train to Gain	1,083	346,640	53,922	15.6%
Not engaged with training outside Train to Gain	501	77,212	14,825	19.2%

Table 12: The total number of employees trained outside Train to Gain as a proportion of employment

	Base (unwtd)	Number of employees in all employers in contact with a skills broker	Number of employees trained outside Train to Gain in past year	% of employees trained outside Train to Gain
Total	2,581	872,779	376,592	43.1%
Also engaged with training under Train to Gain	1,083	346,640	180,505	52.1%
Not engaged with training under Train to Gain	1,498	526,138	196,087	37.3%

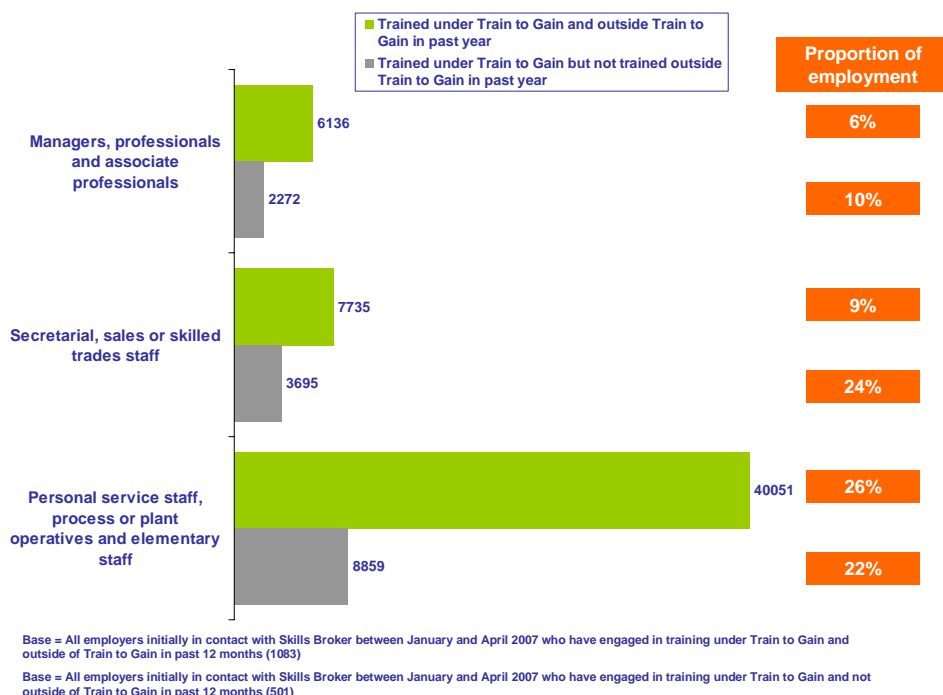
- 268 A total of 16 per cent of staff employed by employers engaging with training under Train to Gain have participated in this training. This compares with the 43 per cent of employees engaging with the training arranged by their employer outside of Train to Gain, and reflects the greater total number of learners engaged in learning outside Train to Gain in the past year. However, it should be noted that the two measures cover different timescales, with the figure for engagement with non-Train to Gain training covering the past 12 months compared with just a few months for those engaged with Train to Gain training. The survey involved speaking to employers between one and six months after engaging with Train to Gain and therefore, as seen in 'Satisfaction with the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service', many employers have not been involved with Train to Gain beyond an Organisational Needs Analysis or a more informal discussion with a skills broker.
- 269 The tables above make explicit the fact that the majority of employees and trainees who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker come from organisations that have also accessed training outside Train to Gain in the past year. Of those employers who have accessed training provision through a skills broker, two-thirds (68 per cent) have had some experience of arranging training for staff in the last year. These employers account for almost eight out of ten (78 per cent) learners who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker.

270 The occupational categories of employers receiving training accessed through Train to Gain are detailed in Table 13. The figures show that the majority of learners (71 per cent) are employed in the lower-skilled occupational roles, ranging from personal service roles, through machine operatives to elementary staff. This group is also the most likely to be offered training when considering the number of employees in this group among organisations who have had some contact with a Train to Gain skills broker; one-quarter of employees in these job roles have engaged with the Train to Gain training, compared with only 6 per cent of the managers, professionals and associate professionals employed by the assisted employers.

Table 13: Occupational groups trained or currently training through Train to Gain

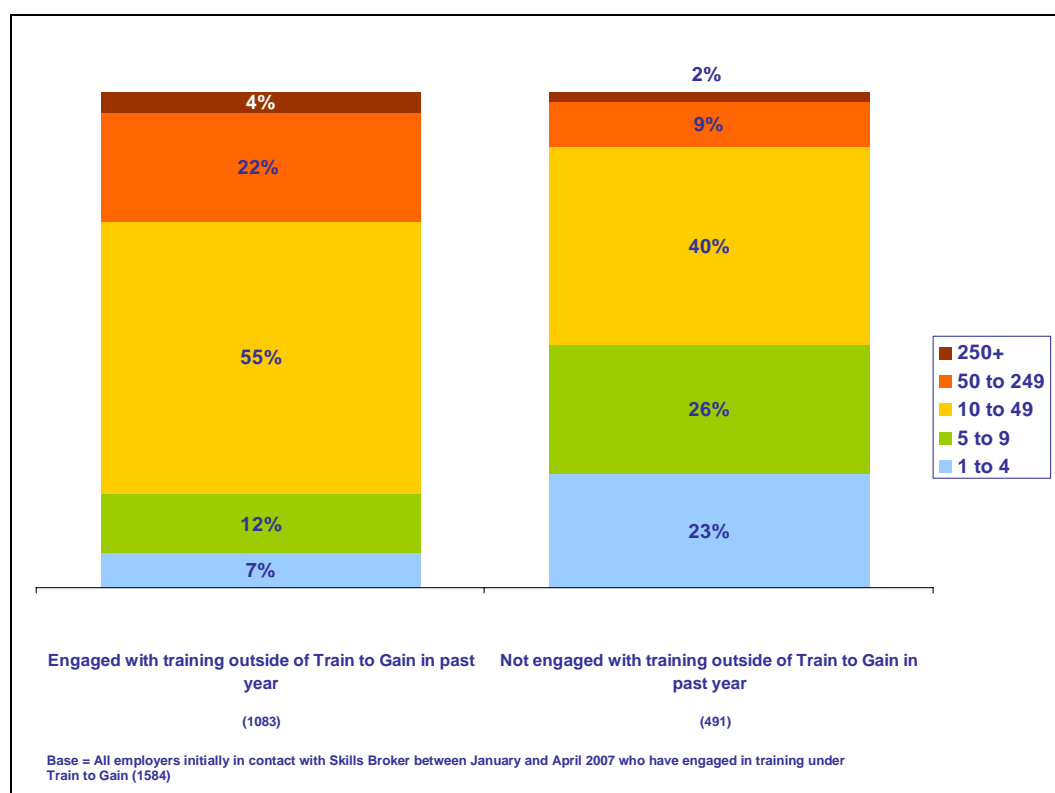
	Number of employees in organisations	Number of employees trained	% of employees trained
Total	423,853	68,747	16.2%
Managers, professionals and associate professionals	132,248	8,407	6.4%
Secretarial, sales or skilled trades staff	98,744	11,430	11.6%
Personal service staff, process or plant operatives, and elementary staff	192,861	48,910	25.4%
Base: All employers engaging with training under Train to Gain (1,584)			

271 It is interesting to explore the occupational profile of Train to Gain learners in employers who have engaged with other outside training and those for whom Train to Gain has represented their only training activity in the past year. Figure 41 shows the total number of trainees in each occupational group among those Train to Gain employers who have and have not engaged in other training in the recent past.

Figure 41: The numbers of Train to Gain learners in each occupational group – by previous engagement with training

272 This indicates that those employers who have trained outside Train to Gain in the past year are likely to train a larger number of staff through Train to Gain than those with less experience of training, especially in terms of the personal service, plant operatives and elementary staff category. However, the figures for the numbers trained as a proportion of employment indicate that those employers newly engaged in training through Train to Gain trained a greater proportion of their managers and professionals, and secretarial, sales and skilled trades staff than those who had engaged with other training in the past year. This is likely to reflect the fact that the employers who have trained through Train to Gain, but not outside Train to Gain prior to this, are likely to have fewer employees than those who have engaged with other training outside the Train to Gain service (see Figure 42).

Figure 42: The size of employers engaged with training under Train to Gain – by previous engagement with training

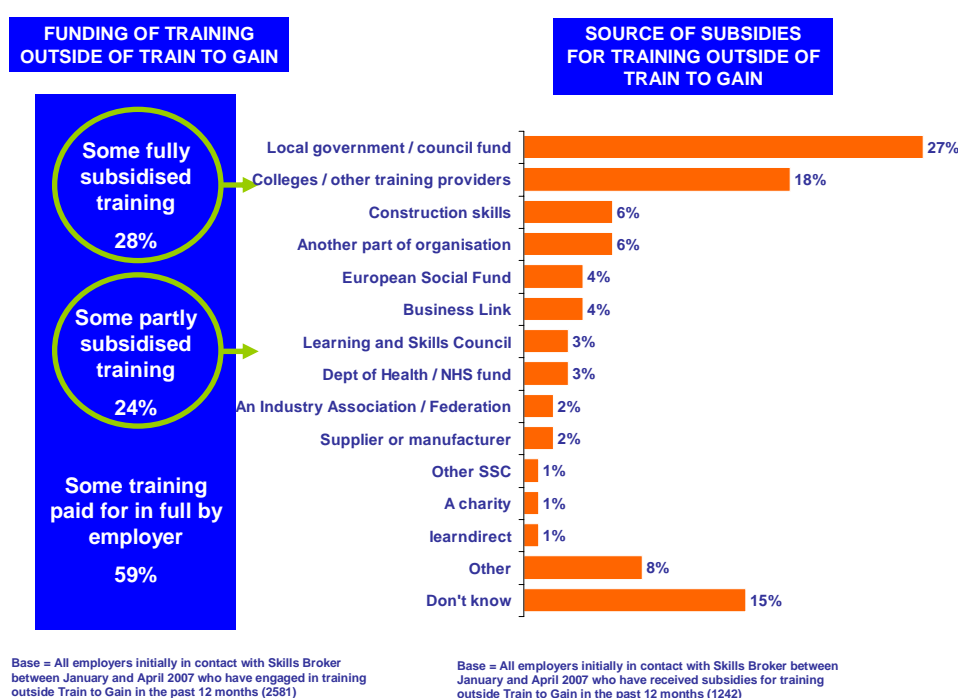


273 Despite the concerns raised earlier in this report about whether Train to Gain is targeting the correct employers and potential learners, it is clear that training arranged or funded through Train to Gain is successfully engaging the lower-skilled occupations. While training conducted under Train to Gain is characterised by up-skilling of personal service, plant or process operative and elementary staff, training conducted outside Train to Gain is more likely to benefit those employees who are already qualified to a higher level. Among those employers who have taken part in both Train to Gain and non-Train to Gain training in the past year, managers, professionals and associate professionals are much more likely to have taken part in the training arranged outside Train to Gain; 59 per cent of managers, professionals and associate professionals employed by these companies had been involved with training in the year prior to the first contact with a Train to Gain skills broker. This compares with 6 per cent of managers, professionals and associate professionals employed by these companies who have received training through Train to Gain, reflecting the focus on Skills for Life and Level 2 qualifications in the Train to Gain service.

The funding of training conducted outside Train to Gain

274 In order to further explore the nature of training conducted by employers outside Train to Gain, employers were asked whether the training conducted had been subsidised in any form. Just under half of employers who have trained outside Train to Gain in the last 12 months (48 per cent) said that they had received some financial support in paying for this training (see Figure 43).

Figure 43: Subsidies received for training arranged outside Train to Gain in the past 12 months



Note: it is possible for an employer to have received one or more courses of training subsidised by more than one funding provider. Therefore, the combined total in Figure 43 is over 100 per cent.

275 As shown in Figure 43, local authorities were the most common source of funding accessed by employers. Although employers in all sectors reported receiving local government subsidies, this was, unsurprisingly, more common in the Public administration, Health and Education sector (34 per cent).

276 Around one-fifth of employers (18 per cent) claimed that the **training provider** organisation had offered them some subsidies to cover the cost of training. The extent to which this reflects employer confusion with regard to the source of these subsidies is unknown; it may be that the training provider is able to access funds from government sources, such as through the European Social Fund, but does not necessarily communicate this information to employers. This same issue may apply

to those instances where employers reported that funding was sourced through Business Link and learndirect.

- 277 A significant proportion of employers have accessed funding for training through an organisation dedicated to their particular industry sector. For example, 52 per cent of employers in the Construction sector who have received some subsidised training outside Train to Gain in the past year had received this financial assistance from the Construction Skills sector skills council. Three per cent of employers receiving subsidised training had received support from the Department of Health. Employers engaged in the Hotels and Restaurants sector activities were the most likely to have accessed funding through Business Link (13 per cent compared with 4 per cent overall).

Future Involvement with Train to Gain

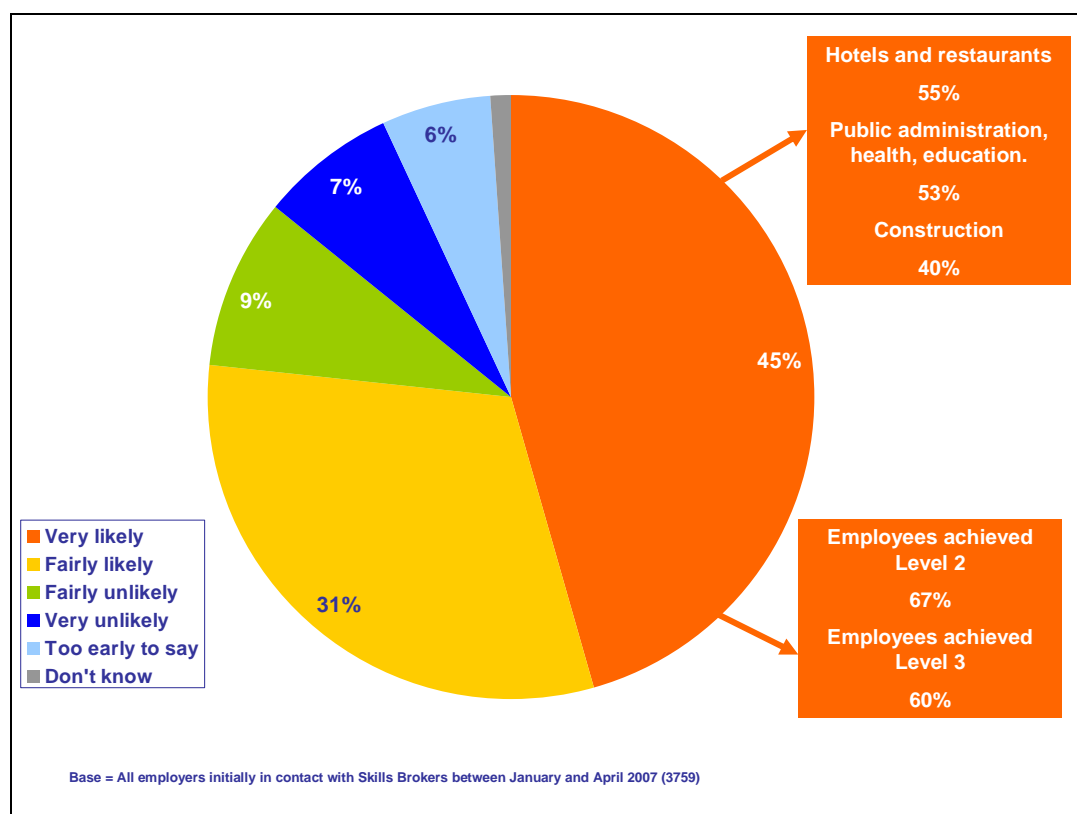
278 This final section of the report explores the likely long-term impact of Train to Gain. It examines:

- how likely employers are to want to continue their involvement with Train to Gain;
- the likely nature of this future contact with the skills brokerage teams;
- the impact of Train to Gain on employer demand for particular training and qualification formats; and
- the extent to which the service is succeeding in its aim of encouraging employer investment in training.

The likelihood of involvement with the Train to Gain service in the future

279 Overall, three-quarters of all employers (77 per cent) said that they would be likely or very likely to be involved with Train to Gain in the future (Figure 44). Just under half (45 per cent) said that they would be very likely to use the service again.

Figure 44: The likelihood of employers using the Train to Gain service in the future

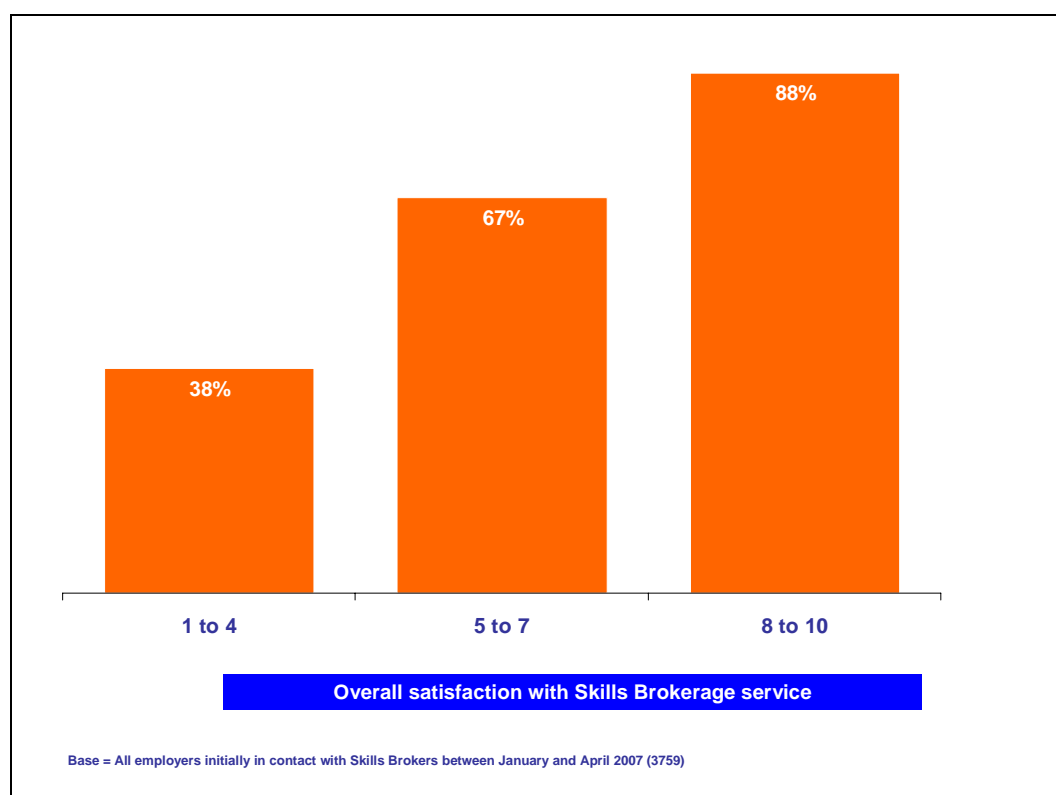


- 280 As with satisfaction with the skills brokerage service, the depth of contact or engagement with Train to Gain experienced thus far has a significant bearing on employers' views on using the service in future. Those who have employees currently undertaking, or who have completed, training through Train to Gain are highly likely to be repeat users (93 per cent likely to use service again). Those employees who have had staff working towards or having achieved formal Level 2 or 3 qualifications were also very positive (94 per cent and 96 per cent respectively, Figure 44). Those who have had only an informal discussion were less positive about their future involvement, with only half (48 per cent) saying that they would be likely to use the service in future, 37 per cent saying that they would be unlikely to, and 15 per cent saying that it was too early to say whether they would engage with Train to Gain again.
- 281 Therefore, confidence in the skills brokerage service grows as more Organisational Needs Analysis and training outcomes are achieved, meaning that those who have had most involvement are the most likely to continue to use the services in future. This reflects the 'virtuous cycle' of involvement often seen when employers engage

with staff development, in which employers' perceptions of the benefits of assessing skills needs and training feed into an increased willingness to engage with this activity in the future. This bodes well for the future of Train to Gain.

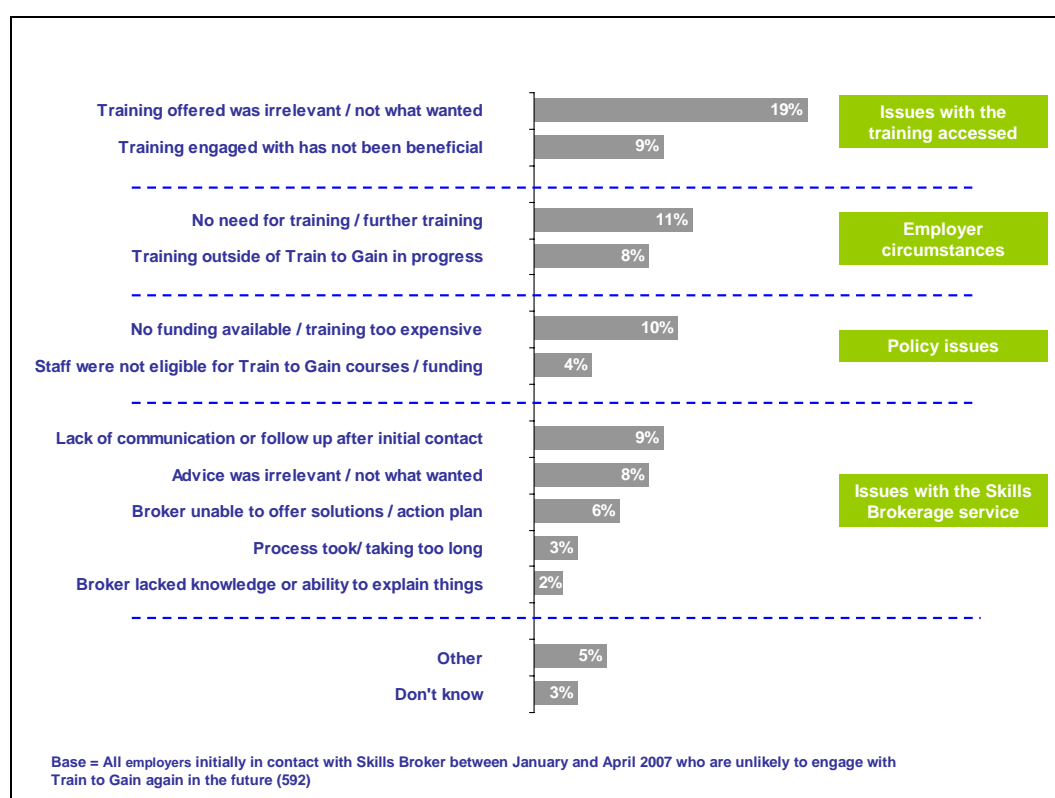
- 282 Reflecting the sectoral patterns seen for overall satisfaction with the skills broker service, employers in the Hotels and Restaurants, and Public administration, Health and Education sectors were the most positive about using the skills brokerage service again, while those in the Construction sector were the least likely to anticipate future involvement.
- 283 Those employers who were dissatisfied with the service they had received from their skills broker, were, unsurprisingly, less likely than their more satisfied counterparts to be willing to call on the skills broker in future. As shown in Figure 45, only two in five of these dissatisfied employers are likely to engage with the service on an on-going basis.

Figure 45: The proportion of employers likely or very likely to use the Train to Gain service in the future – satisfaction with the skills brokerage service



284 Small employers, whom the Train to Gain service is selectively targeting, are the least likely to continue their involvement in the near future. While 72 per cent of employers with fewer than 10 staff are likely or very likely to use Train to Gain in the future, this figure is significantly lower than for employers with between 10 and 49 or between 50 and 249 staff, 79 per cent and 80 per cent of whom are intending to continue involvement respectively. However, this may well reflect the fact that for many small employers there will be no further employees who require training and no immediate need for further skills development following the initial intervention. We would expect larger organisations to have a more continuous requirement when it comes to assessing and addressing the skills gaps in the workforce.

Figure 46: Reasons for reluctance to engage with the Train to Gain service in the future



285 Figure 46 details the reasons given by employers for not wanting to use the Train to Gain service again. Most commonly, these relate to poor past experiences with the Train to Gain service, and should therefore be within the power of the contracted skills brokers and training providers to address. Poor experiences with the training accessed through Train to Gain are particularly salient, with irrelevant or inappropriate training being the reason for discontinuing involvement for one in five employers who are unlikely to use the service again (3 per cent of all employers who

have had contact with a Train to Gain skills broker). A further 1 per cent of employers who had been in contact with a skills broker cited the fact that the training had not been beneficial as the reason for their reluctance to use the service in future. At least some of the responsibility for addressing these issues must lie with skills brokers, who need to work to ensure that they are fully assessing employers' needs and signposting them to training that actually meets these needs.

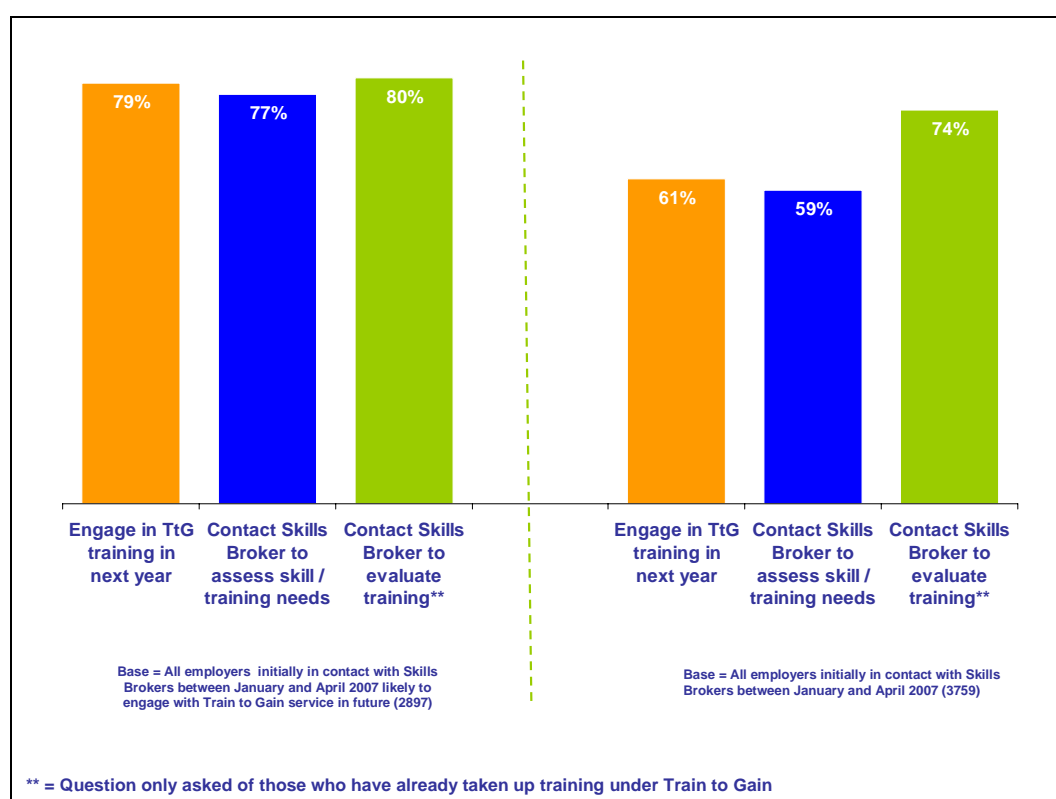
- 286 A significant proportion of employers mentioned reasons more specifically related to the service received from the skills broker, including being given irrelevant advice and the skills broker's inability to translate their needs into an action plan. Poor experiences with the responsiveness of the skills broker service and lack of communication are particularly important in employers' reluctance to continue involvement; one in ten of these employers said that the lack of communication or follow-up contact by the skills broker would put them off using Train to Gain again.
- 287 It is clear that some of the reasons for employers' reluctance to use the service again can only be addressed at a policy level. One in ten employers who are unlikely to use Train to Gain again (2 per cent of all employers who have had contact with a skills broker) say this is because they have not been able to access sufficient funding through the service to support their training needs – a function of the total value of subsidies available through Train to Gain and the eligibility criteria for accessing this funding. One in twenty employers unlikely to use the service again noted that this was because they had found that staff were ineligible for Train to Gain courses or funding, an issue that skills brokers in themselves will not be able to overcome.
- 288 Around one in ten employers who are unlikely to seek advice from a skills broker again said that this was simply down to the fact that they had already sourced suitable training outside the scheme or that there was no need for further development at this time.

The nature of future involvement with the Train to Gain service

- 289 Those employers who said that they would be likely to continue their involvement with Train to Gain were asked what particular involvement they anticipated having with the service in the next year. Figure 47 shows the proportion of employers who expect to:

- engage in training under Train to Gain in the next year;
- be in contact with a skills broker to evaluate the training that has taken place so far or that is to take place shortly; or
- be in contact with a skills broker to further assess or reassess the organisation's skill and training needs.

Figure 47: The nature of likely involvement with Train to Gain in the future



290 The majority of employers who anticipate continued involvement with Train to Gain (77 per cent) are likely to be recontacting their skills broker in order to access more advice on their organisation's needs and how these can be met. This represents 59 per cent of all employers who have had some contact with a Train to Gain skills broker (as shown on the right-hand side of Figure 47). Eight in ten of those who have been involved with training through Train to Gain and who are likely to use the service in future (80 per cent) will be seeking skills broker assistance in evaluating the ongoing success of this training (74 per cent of all those engaging in training).

291 As illustrated in Tables 14 and 15, the likelihood of recontacting the skills broker for these purposes is strongly influenced by the employer's level of satisfaction with the skills brokerage service received thus far. However, employers who have had a bad experience (those who score the skills brokerage service as 1 to 4 out of 10) are still relatively willing to engage with their skills broker for further advice on skills issues (61 per cent of those dissatisfied and likely to continue their involvement; 23 per cent of all those dissatisfied). This somewhat surprising finding may be due in part to the fact that many employers are still waiting for a first meeting or Organisational Needs Analysis with a skills broker, and may therefore interpret 'future contact' with a skills broker to mean a continuation of the intervention currently under way, rather than thinking about a reassessment of their needs in the long term. As can be seen in the 'Satisfaction with the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service' section, a significant number of those employers dissatisfied with the skills brokerage service report that this is because of a lack of contact with the skills broker or a stalling of the skills brokerage process. It is therefore likely that these employers will want to recontact the skills broker in order to obtain a full assessment of their needs.

Table 14: The effect on employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service on the likelihood of recontacting skills brokers to assess skills needs

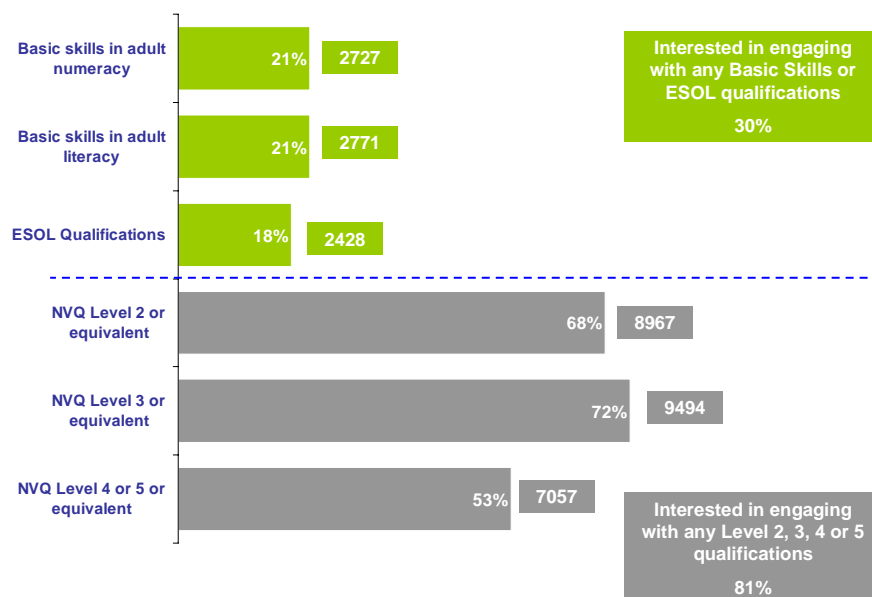
		Anticipated future involvement in Train to Gain
		Contact skills broker to assess skills/training needs
Satisfaction with skills brokerage service	Base	
1 to 4	142	61%
5 to 7	587	72%
6 to 10	2,101	79%
8 to 10	2,551	80%
Base: All those likely to engage with Train to Gain again in the future.		

Table 15: The effect on employer satisfaction with the skills brokerage service on the likelihood of recontacting skills brokers to evaluate Train to Gain training

		Anticipated future involvement in Train to Gain
		Contact skills broker to evaluate training
Satisfaction with skills brokerage service	Base	
1 to 4	36	62%
5 to 7	218	73%
6 to 10	1,192	81%
8 to 10	1,364	82%
Base: All those engaged with Train to Gain training and likely to engage with Train to Gain again in future.		

- 292 Four in every five employers (79 per cent) who will be involved with Train to Gain in the future say that this is because they will be taking up the offer of training proposed by their skills broker or using the Train to Gain funding stream.
- 293 While those employers who have seen employees attain Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications under Train to Gain were the most likely to continue to put employees through training, employer satisfaction with other aspects of the training and the training provider does not appear to influence the decision about whether to engage with training in the future.
- 294 Employers expressing an interest in continued involvement with the service were asked which levels of course, if any, they might be interested in for their employees. They were also asked how much they would be willing to contribute to the cost of these different forms of training.
- 295 Figure 48 shows the proportion of employers who are likely to look into accessing each course or qualification type through Train to Gain in future.

Figure 48: The levels of course/qualification that employers are interested in engaging with through Train to Gain in future



Base = All employers initially in contact with Skills Brokers between January and April 2007 likely to engage with Train to Gain service in future (2,897)

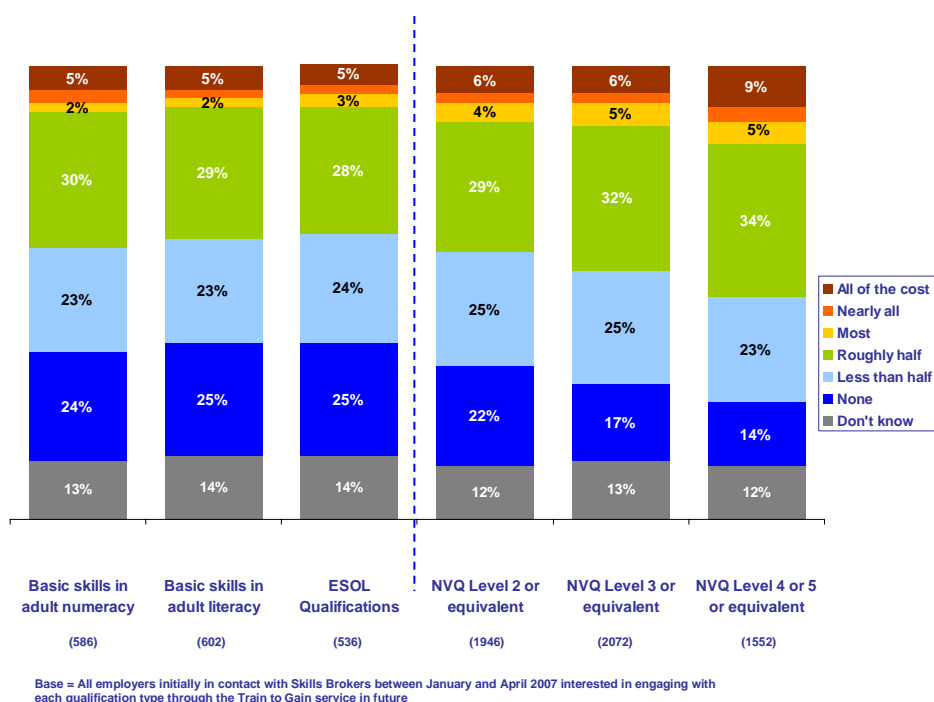
- 296 Figure 48 illustrates clearly that Level 2 qualifications are likely to remain an important focus when employers are considering use of Train to Gain services. However, there is a greater demand for training at Levels 3, 4 and 5 than can be

arranged, accessed or funded through Train to Gain. Three-quarters of those likely to be involved with Train to Gain in the future would be interested in accessing NVQ Level 3 or equivalent courses for their staff. This perhaps reflects the fact that a significant proportion of these employers will already have had staff members engaged in or completing Level 2 training through Train to Gain, and who are therefore ready to move on to higher-level courses. It is clear that employer demand currently exists for qualification types falling outside current Train to Gain funded provision.

- 297 Demand for Skills for Life training through Train to Gain is likely to continue to be relatively low by comparison. Fewer than a third of employers (30 per cent) who hope to have further contact with Train to Gain would be interested in discussing basic skills training, compared with four-fifths (81 per cent) who would be looking to access Level 2 to Level 5 qualifications.
- 298 Employers who have already had some employees achieve Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications were more likely to be interested in engaging with further courses across the qualification spectrum. These employers were the most likely to want to be involved with all of the qualification types noted above, even basic skills. This was also the case for the larger employers: 95 per cent of organisations with over 100 employees are interested in engaging with some kind of formal training through Train to Gain in the future, compared with 79 per cent of those with between one and four staff. Those employers who had not done any training outside Train to Gain over the past year were no more likely to want to engage in these qualifications in future.
- 299 Different sectors of employers have different needs and preferences in terms of future training. Employers in the Hotels and Restaurants sector are significantly more likely than those in other sectors to want to access basic skills training in the future (39 per cent compared with 30 per cent of employers overall). Employers in the Public administration, Health and Education sector were particularly interested in employees studying specifically for qualifications in basic literacy skills and ESOL (26 per cent and 25 per cent respectively). Hotels and Restaurants and Public administration, Health and Education employers were also more likely than others to want to engage with Level 2 training in future: 75 per cent and 73 per cent respectively, compared with 68 per cent overall.

300 Having established the level of demand for different types of qualification, Figure 49 explores the extent to which employers are willing to pay for this training when accessing these courses through the Train to Gain service.

Figure 49: Employers' willingness to contribute to the costs of training, among those interested in using the Train to Gain service in the future



301 It is clear from Figure 49 that very few employers are willing to meet the total cost of training that they are likely to access through Train to Gain in the future. For all qualification types, at least one in seven employers expect to receive full subsidies through Train to Gain, rising to as many as a quarter when referring to basic skills qualifications. The majority of employers expect to contribute half of the cost of the training or less. It should be noted, however, that this question in effect presents employers with the 'option' of not paying for training, so it is likely that this has inflated the extent to which employers appear unwilling to invest in future training.

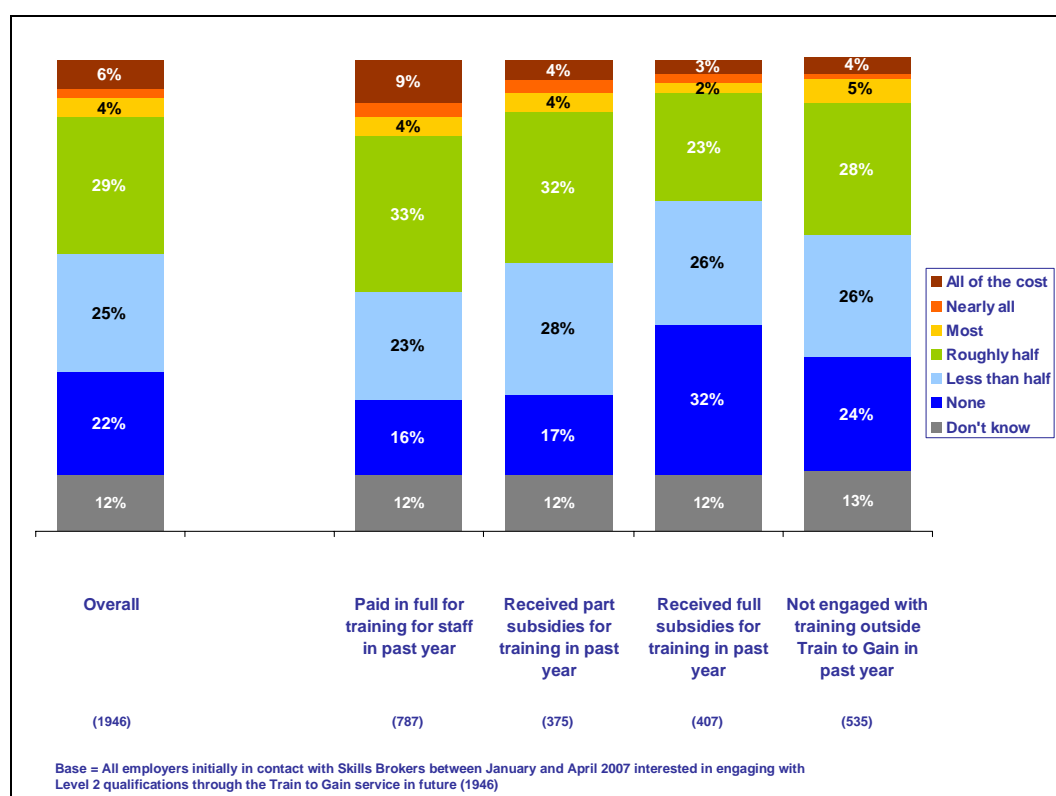
302 Employers are willing to shoulder a greater proportion of the cost of higher-level qualifications; only 14 per cent of employers looking to access Level 4 or Level 5 qualifications expect to be offered these free of charge, and one in ten (9 per cent) are willing to cover the full cost. This contrasts with the one in twenty employers who are willing to cover the full cost of basic skills training.

- 303 These findings suggest that employers recognise the greater potential returns arising from higher-level qualifications, and are therefore willing to invest more in these courses. The results also suggest that employers recognise that the Train to Gain funding stream cannot be expected to provide full cover for expensive, longer-term qualifications. However, it is also true to say that the vast majority of employers expect funding to be available to help pay for training they do in the future, even at higher levels than are currently routinely subsidised through Train to Gain (Level 3 and above). Therefore, skills brokers must expect to be challenged on their ability to source funding for employer training, within and outside the Train to Gain funding stream.
- 304 It is important to try and assess the extent to which Train to Gain is succeeding in one of its key aims, namely, encouraging employers to increase their financial investment in training. As we have seen in the previous section ('The Impact of Training Accessed Through Train to Gain'), over half of employers (56 per cent) who have received fully subsidised training through Train to Gain would have been willing to go ahead with this training if a financial contribution had been required from them. In terms of willingness to pay for **future** training, what can be said is that, overall, between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of employers interested in future training would be willing to cover the full cost of staff training through Train to Gain. This compares with the 6 per cent of employers who have already taken up Train to Gain training and have covered the full cost, suggesting that there has not been a significant increase in the tendency for employers to want to pay for training. However, it should be noted that the 'future willingness' figure is based on all employers who have had some contact with a skills broker, rather than just those taking up training through Train to Gain, and, therefore, in overall terms, the number of employers willing to pay for training in future is greater than the number who have done so under Train to Gain. In addition, a lower proportion of employers seem to be expecting training to be fully subsidised in future (around one-fifth), which compares with the 68 per cent of employers who have received full subsidies for training under Train to Gain.
- 305 An alternative approach to assessing whether Train to Gain encourages investment involves comparing employers' future intentions with the pattern of investment in previous training conducted outside Train to Gain. From this perspective it appears that Train to Gain actually **reduces** willingness to pay for training; around a fifth of employers are not willing to contribute to Train to Gain training in future, even though

around a half of those engaging with other training (49 per cent) have been willing to pay for all of this themselves.

- 306 Willingness to pay for future training is higher among employers who have arranged training for staff outside Train to Gain in the past year, and particularly for those who had to pay for this training in full. When looking at the willingness to pay for future Level 2 training, the proportion of employers willing to make a financial investment is higher among those who have already had some experience in funding training themselves, that is those who have paid in full for training staff outside Train to Gain. Those employers who have received fully subsidised training outside Train to Gain, or who had no non-Train to Gain training history in the past year, were less likely to want to pay for future training (see Figure 50).

Figure 50: Employers' willingness to contribute to the costs of Level 2 training accessed through Train to Gain in the future – by previous investment in training



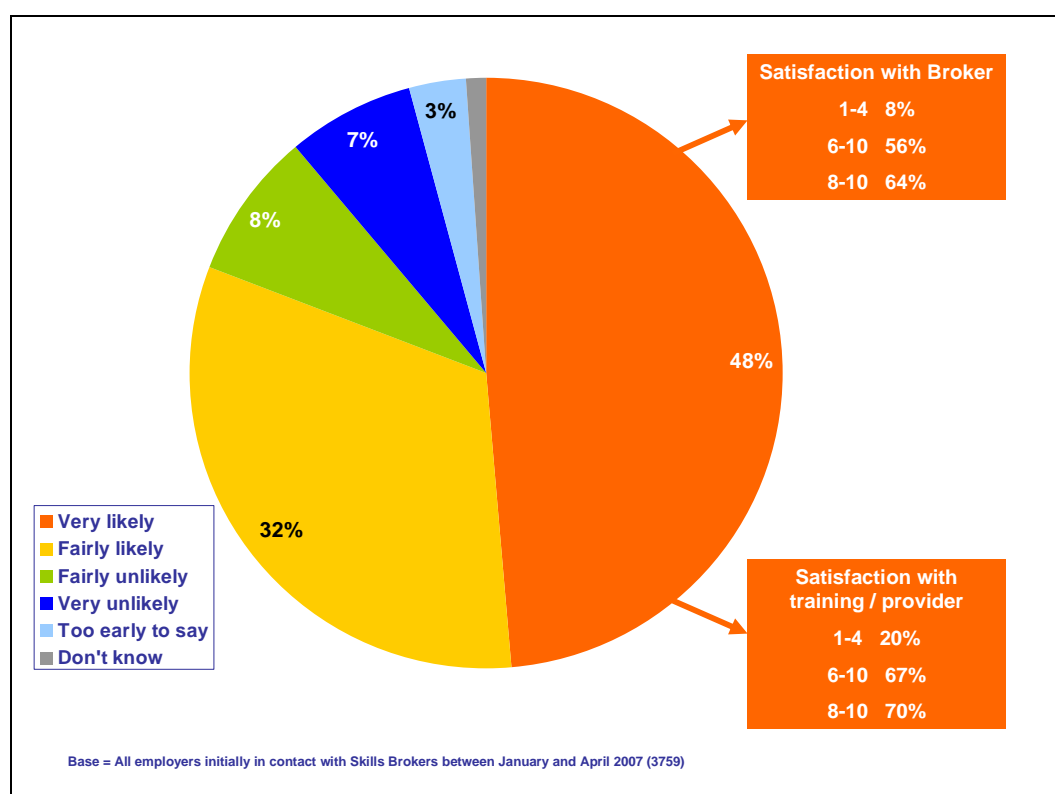
- 307 These findings taken together seem to suggest that employers anticipate that being involved with Train to Gain in future will allow them to access funding through the scheme, and the scheme is therefore having limited success in encouraging employer investment in skill development. These findings reflect the fact that the opportunity to access funded Level 2 provision is a major incentive for getting

involved with the service (see 'Getting Involved with Train to Gain'). Indeed, if employers view Train to Gain as just being about funded provision and not about the holistic skills brokerage and advisory service, then it makes logical sense for them to expect future training accessed through this service to be subsidised.

Recommending Train to Gain to other employers

308 The previous section focused on the likely future demand for Train to Gain services among those employers who have already been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker. It is also possible to assess the extent to which further demand is likely to be generated by these employers recommending the service to others. Measuring the extent to which employers are likely to recommend Train to Gain to business associates outside their organisation also provides further insight into whether Train to Gain is perceived as a useful, employer-led service.

Figure 51: The likelihood of employers recommending Train to Gain to a business colleague outside their organisation



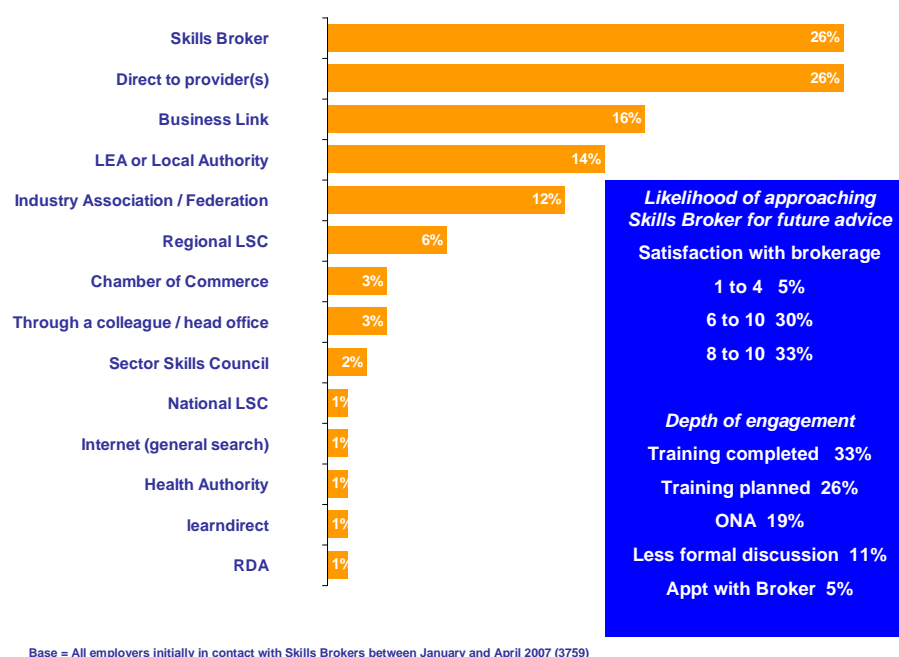
309 As illustrated in Figure 51, eight in ten employers who have been in contact with a Train to Gain skills broker are likely to recommend using the Train to Gain service to a business colleague, and 48 per cent are very likely to do so. As might be expected, satisfaction with the service received thus far has a strong effect on the chances of an employer recommending Train to Gain to others; only 26 per cent of those

dissatisfied with the skills brokerage service said that they would be very or fairly likely to give a recommendation to another employer. The relationship with the skills broker seems to be more key in employer willingness to recommend Train to Gain than the experience the employer has with any training provider or training provision. Over half of those employers dissatisfied with the provider or training provision accessed through Train to Gain still said that they would be likely to recommend the service.

Other organisations likely to be approached for advice on future training requirements

310 In examining the effect of Train to Gain on employer activity, the survey asked employers to list persons or organisations that they might approach in the future for guidance in assessing their skills needs and advice on how to meet their objectives. While we have seen that many employers are likely to continue their involvement with Train to Gain, it is interesting to discover whether there will be any knock-on effects on the demand for other business advisory services, and whether the an employer would go back to the skills broker after the current intervention is complete. Figure 52 shows the most commonly cited sources of training advice likely to be accessed by employers in the future.

Figure 52: The proportion of employers likely to approach advisory organisations for guidance on skills development issues



- 311 One-quarter of employers (26 per cent) said that they would approach their skills broker or the skills brokerage organisation operating in their region for further assessments or if they wanted to access further advice on training issues. In some regions where Business Link is operating as the Train to Gain skills brokerage organisation, this figure may be inflated, as those employers saying that they would approach Business Link may perhaps be referred to the skills brokers operating under Train to Gain.
- 312 Those organisations that have been more heavily involved with Train to Gain and have therefore built up a more in-depth relationship with their skills broker are more likely to perceive them as a useful advisory resource, as are those who have had success in getting staff qualified through Train to Gain. As we might expect, the more satisfied an employer is with the service received from the skills broker thus far, the more likely the employer is to see them as a potential source of business advice for the future; one-third (33 per cent) of those very satisfied with the skills brokerage service said they would consider using them to help with their business in future, compared with only 5 per cent of those who were dissatisfied.

- 313 As shown in Figure 52, an equal number of employers would approach a training provider for future advice on training needs as would use a skills broker. Interestingly, those who have already conducted training under Train to Gain were no more likely to say that they would see a provider as a good source for business advice, nor were those who were highly satisfied with the training they had received through Train to Gain. However, those who had engaged with training outside Train to Gain in the past year were more likely to say they would approach a training provider for assessment or advice (24 per cent, compared with 14 per cent of employers who have not trained in the year prior to the skills broker contact). This perhaps reflects the fact that these employers may have built up an effective relationship with these training providers through using them in the past.
- 314 Smaller employers are less likely to access providers as a source of advice (only 13 per cent of employers with between one and four staff would do so), instead preferring to access Business Link services (25 per cent, compared with 16 per cent overall). Given that Train to Gain is aiming to target small employers, and that the Business Link network is a well- established and trusted advice channel for these employers, it makes sense to continue to forge strong links between skills brokers and the Business Link network. It also suggests that Business Link will be well placed to reach the target groups in regions where it is acting as the contracted delivery organisation for skills brokerage services.

