

Apprenticeships in the South West – an analysis of data from the National Employers Skills Survey 2007



Leading learning and skills

September 2008

Information Service

Purpose: This document forms the 'Apprenticeships' section of the South West Strategic Analysis 2008. The Strategic Analysis is the annual 'stock-take' analysis and considers labour market intelligence, performance information and Government policy to develop a full strategic picture of current education and training marketplace. The analysis is supported by national skills research (including Skills in England Report 2007, National Employer Skills Survey and Working Futures). The stock-take provides the intelligence to confirm our strategies and priorities.

Theme: Offender Learning and Skills

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Key Points

- > Findings from the National Employers Skills Survey 2007 indicate that 7% of employers in the South West recruited one or more young people to an Apprenticeship in the past 12 months.
- > Between them, employers recruited 22,166 young people as Apprentices in the region, of whom the majority (13,115) were aged 16 to 18.
- > 15 per cent of employers offer Apprenticeships to their staff, but only 8 per cent of employers actually have staff take them up.
- > Employer engagement with Apprenticeships in the South West is very similar to the national average.
- > Within the region, employers in Gloucestershire are least likely to offer or recruit staff to Apprenticeships and those in Devon and Cornwall most likely.
- > Relative to their share of employment (23 per cent), small firms with between 5 and 24 employees take on a disproportionate number of Apprentices (43 per cent).
- > Manufacturing and construction businesses are most likely to offer Apprenticeships.
- > Employers in Government Skills and Skillsmart Retail recruit very low levels of Apprenticeships relative to their share of the workforce.
- > The attraction of Apprenticeships is the opportunity they give employers to train young people in their way of doing things and to train the workforce of the future. Availability of funding is not a significant factor.
- > Those with no involvement consider that they do not need Apprenticeships because their staff are fully trained, the business is too small and/or their jobs are too highly skilled.
- > There are widespread misconceptions as to the availability and appropriateness of Apprenticeships amongst significant minorities of employers, especially in the service sector.
- > In the short term, a mixture of commodity-led inflation and tightening credit is starting [at time of writing] to have an adverse effect on labour market conditions, although the duration and intensity of any future down-turn are unknowable.

Background

The Leitch Review¹ published in December 2006 identified Apprenticeships as a crucial method of delivering work-related intermediate skills. In response, the Government has announced substantial increases in funding to expand and strengthen the Apprenticeship programme for young people and adults. The Apprenticeship Review published in January 2008 sets out the Government's strategic objectives to make Apprenticeships a mainstream option for 16-18 year olds alongside other training routes. To this end, a new dedicated National Apprenticeships Service was announced, designed to ensure that:

- Apprenticeships become a mainstream option for 16 to 18 year olds, with around one in five of all young people undertaking an Apprenticeship within the next decade.
- Action is taken to boost the supply of Apprenticeship opportunities, through a more flexible and responsive model for apprenticeship frameworks, incentives payments to targeted businesses, an apprenticeships credit delivered via skills accounts, and improving public sector supply of apprenticeship places.
- The value of Apprenticeships rises by providing a national matching service, and high-profile events celebrating the achievement of apprentices; and
- More is done to improve equality of opportunity and access, through positive action to encourage young women and young men to consider apprenticeships traditionally limited to one gender.

The Draft Apprenticeships Bill² (July 2008) currently out for consultation will, for the first time, place duties on the LSC to secure 'sufficient and appropriate places to fulfil the entitlement for each suitably qualified young person who wants one'. Specifically, the Bill outlines the role of the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), which is being established to provide focused leadership for the Apprenticeships programme and to act as a one-stop shop for employers making it easier for them to offer apprenticeships. The NAS will bring together a wide range of services and operations currently dispersed among a range of agencies, operating a national apprenticeship vacancy matching service, to link potential apprentices with potential employers. This will enable employers to advertise apprenticeship vacancies through a national portal, and will help young people and adults interested in apprenticeships to understand the range and diversity of opportunities that exist, and, where appropriate, to apply for an apprenticeship online. The scale of the proposed expansion of the Apprenticeship programme will represent a huge challenge for the region.

The National Employers Skills Survey 2007

The National Employers Skills Survey 2007 (NESS07) is the fourth national employers' skills survey. It was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council

¹ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/leitch_review/review_leitch_index.cfm

² http://www.dius.gov.uk/consultations/documents/apprenticeship_bill.pdf

(LSC) together with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

NESS07 shares the aims of the previous NESS studies conducted in 2003, 2004 and 2005, namely to provide detailed analysis at a national, regional and sector level of the extent and nature of employers' recruitment problems, skills gaps and training activity. For the first time, the survey covered a series of questions on employers' involvement with Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships (referred to collectively as Apprenticeships throughout this report). This analysis provides key findings from the survey to identify the characteristics of employers who offer Apprenticeships, their reasons for doing so and the reasons given by employers who are not engaged with Apprenticeships at present.

Headline findings

- > In the South West 15 per cent of employers offer Apprenticeships to their staff, although only 8 per cent have actually had staff undertaking an Apprenticeship in the last 12 months.
- > In all, 7 per cent of employers had recruited at least one 16-24 year old to start an Apprenticeship in the last 12 months and 5 per cent had recruited at least one 16-18 year old. To put this in perspective, 25% of employers in the South West had recruited at least one young person aged 16-24 direct from school, college or university in the past year, whether or not to an Apprenticeship.
- > Between them, employers in the South West recruited 22,166 Apprentices aged 16-24 in the past 12 months, equivalent to 5 per 1,000 people (of all ages) in the workforce.
- > Of those recruited to Apprenticeships, the majority, 59 per cent (13,115) were aged 16-18.
- > Inter-regional comparisons show the South West to occupy a mid-range position, a little above the national average.

Figure 1: Inter-regional comparisons of involvement in Apprenticeships; percentages

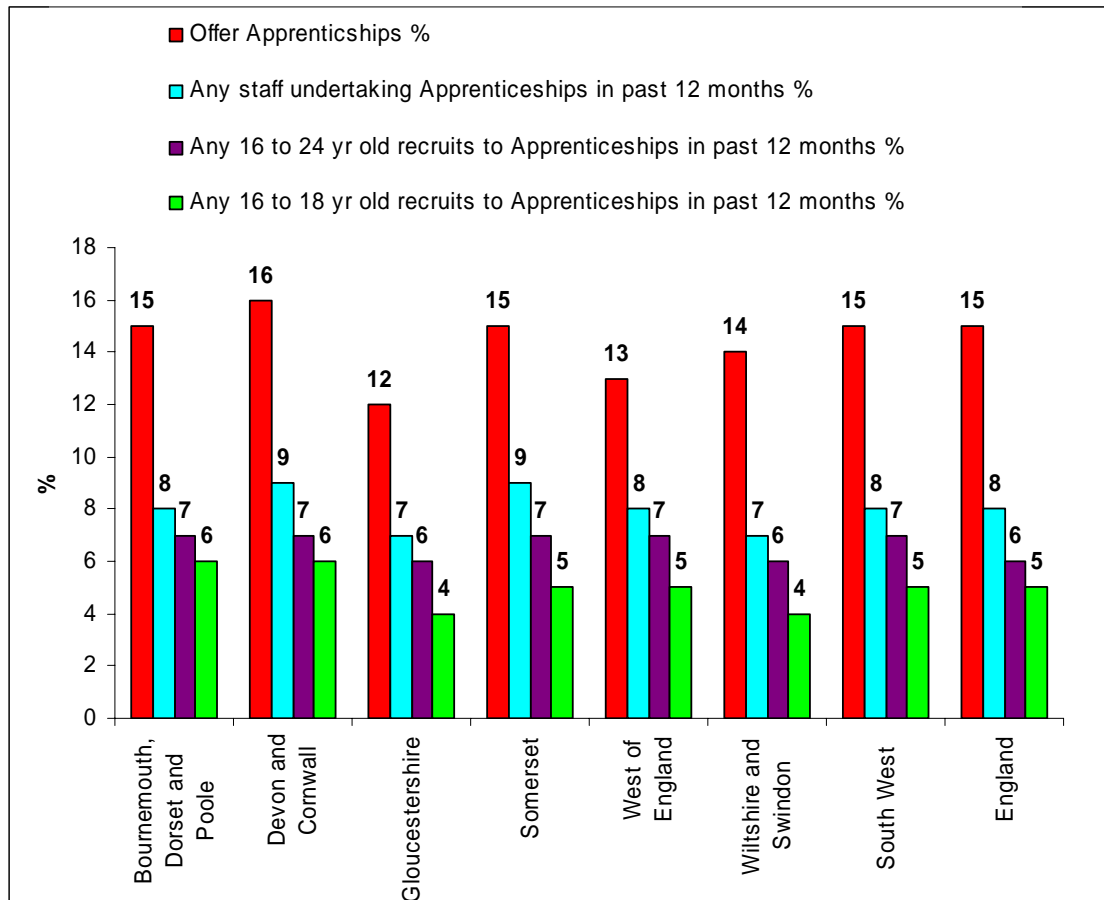
	Unweighted base	Offer Apprenticeships	Any staff undertaking Apprenticeships in last 12 months	Any 16-24 year olds recruited to Apprenticeships in last 12 months	Any 16-18 year olds recruited to Apprenticeships in last 12 months
Eastern	8,454	13	7	6	4
East Midlands	7,612	15	9	7	6
London	12,077	9	5	4	2
North East	5,608	16	9	8	6
North West	8,823	16	9	8	6
South East	12,219	12	7	6	4
South West	8,454	15	8	7	5
West Midlands	8,047	15	9	8	6
Yorkshire and Humber	7,709	16	9	7	6
England	79,018	14	8	6	5

Source: NESS07

Sub-regional findings

Within the region there are small variations in employer involvement in Apprenticeships. Use of Apprenticeships is least common in Gloucestershire where just 12 per cent of employers offer Apprenticeships, 7 per cent had staff on Apprenticeships last year and only 6 per cent had recruited Apprenticeships aged 16 to 24 years old in the previous year. In contrast, employers in Devon and Cornwall have the highest level of involvement in Apprenticeships with 16 per cent having offered Apprenticeships in the past 12 months:

Figure 2: Involvement in Apprenticeships by sub-region; percentages

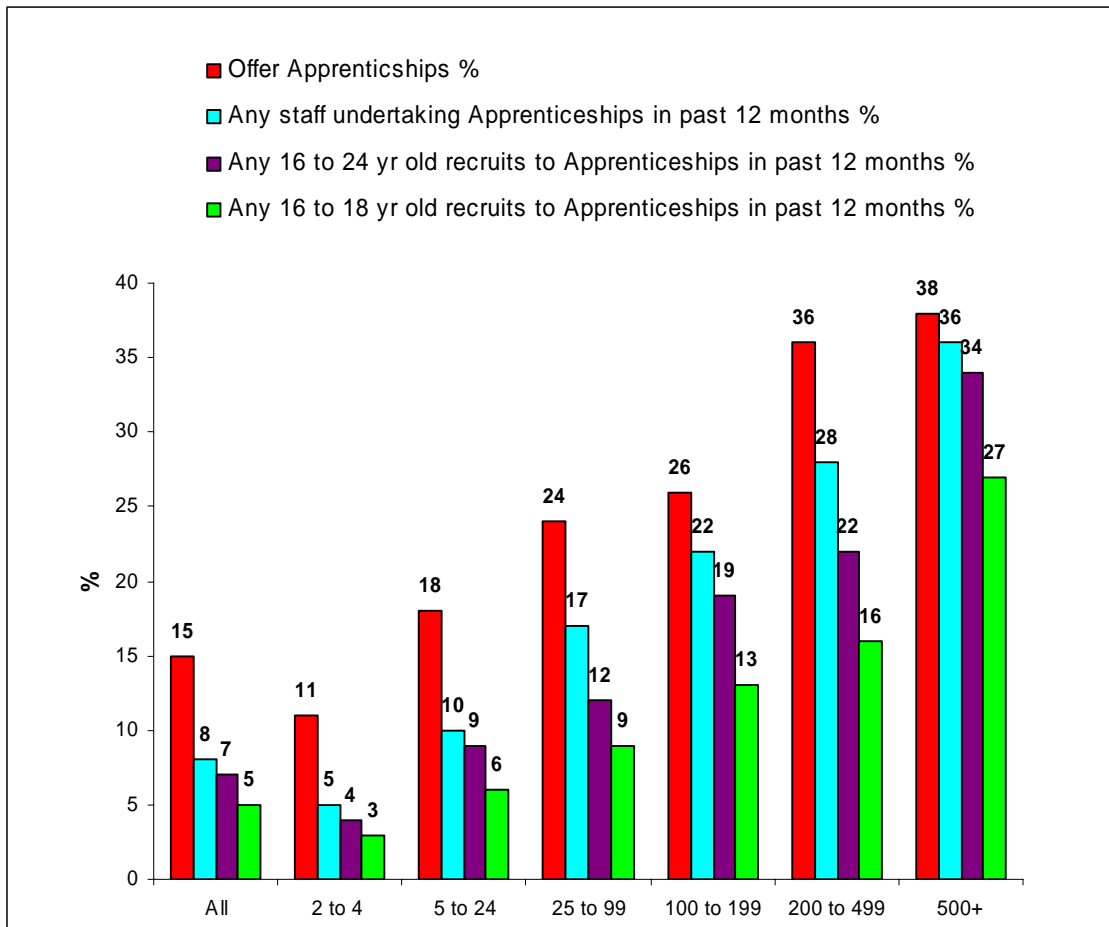


Source: NESS07

Recruits to Apprenticeships by size of employer

As may be expected, involvement with Apprenticeships increases by size of establishment. Employers with more than 500 employees are more than three times as likely to offer Apprenticeships as small, micro businesses. This distribution reflects the national pattern.

Figure 3: Involvement in Apprenticeships by size of establishment; percentages

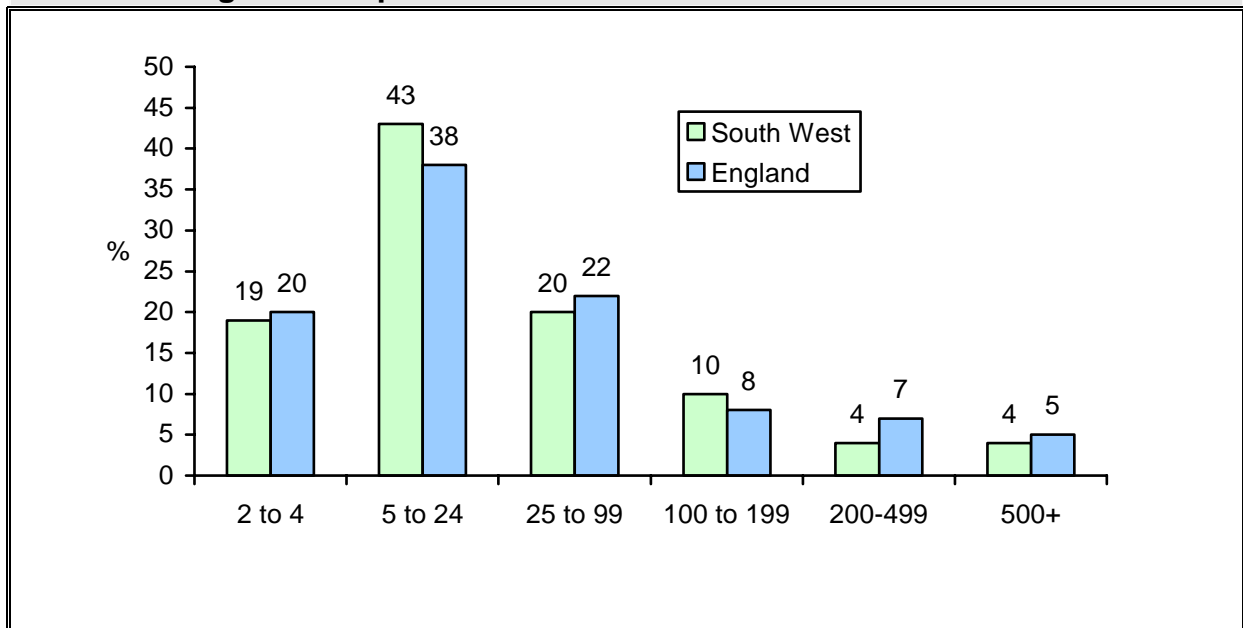


Source: NESS07

Another perspective is given by assessing how the share of all the 22,166 young Apprentices recruited last year by size of employer compares with the share of employment in each size band. The data show that small employers take on a disproportionate share of Apprentices relative to the employment in such establishments, for instance, employers with between 5 and 24 staff recruited more than two fifths (43 per cent) of all Apprentices aged 16 to 24, despite accounting for only a quarter of employment (26 per cent) and being least likely to be involved in Apprenticeships. Similarly, employers with fewer than five staff recruited 19 per cent of all young Apprentices in the past year, but account for only 11 per cent of jobs. In contrast, employers with more than 200 staff account for 25 per cent of jobs but have recruited only 8 per cent of Apprentices.

A comparison with the national picture shows that small firms in the South West with between 5 and 24 employees are more likely than average to have taken on Apprenticeships, whereas larger firms in the region are somewhat less likely to have done so. This is especially the case amongst establishments with between 200 to 499 employees:

Figure 4: Share of total recruits to 16-24 Apprenticeships by firm size; South West and England compared



Source: NESS07

Recruits to Apprenticeships by sector

- > There are significant variations in the use of Apprenticeships by sector³. Employers in sectors relating to manufacturing and construction - where there is a well established tradition of Apprenticeships - are those most likely to offer them.
- > SummitSkills (51 per cent), Automotive Skills (40 per cent), SEMTA (21 per cent) and ConstructionSkills (19 per cent) are not only most likely to offer Apprenticeships but are also most likely to have had staff involved in Apprenticeships. Along with Energy and Utility Skills these four SSCs are most likely to have recruited young people to start Apprenticeships in the past 12 months.
- > On the other hand, involvement with Apprenticeships is lowest amongst employers covered by Improve Ltd, Skillfast UK, and Cogent.

³ Link to list of SSCs and the sectors they cover (Worksheet 2)

Figure 6: Recruits to Apprenticeships in the South West by sector (percentages)

SSC	Offer Apprenticeships per cent	Staff undertaking Apprenticeships in last 12 months per cent	Any 16 to 24 yr old recruits to Apprenticeships per cent	Any 16-18 yr old recruits to Apprenticeships per cent
SummitSkills	51	33	32	28
Automotive Skills	40	21	18	16
SEMTA	21	12	9	7
ConstructionSkills	19	11	10	9
Skills for Health	18	11	8	4
SkillsActive	17	10	7	6
Skills for Care and Development	16	10	7	4
<i>Energy and Utility Skills*</i>	15	9	9	6
Non SSC	15	9	7	4
People 1st	14	8	6	4
Skillset	13	4	4	1
<i>Skills for Justice*</i>	12	12	2	0
Lifelong Learning UK	11	7	6	5
Creative and Cultural	11	5	4	1
Lantra	10	5	4	3
Skillsmart Retail	9	4	3	2
Asset Skills	9	5	5	3
<i>Government Skills*</i>	9	4	4	0
Proskills	8	3	3	1
GoSkills	8	4	3	3
Skills for Logistics	8	3	3	3
Financial Services Skills	8	6	5	4
e-skills	7	4	4	3
Cogent	6	4	4	2
Improve Ltd	6	5	4	3
Skillfast UK	6	4	2	0
All	15	8	7	5

Source: NESS07

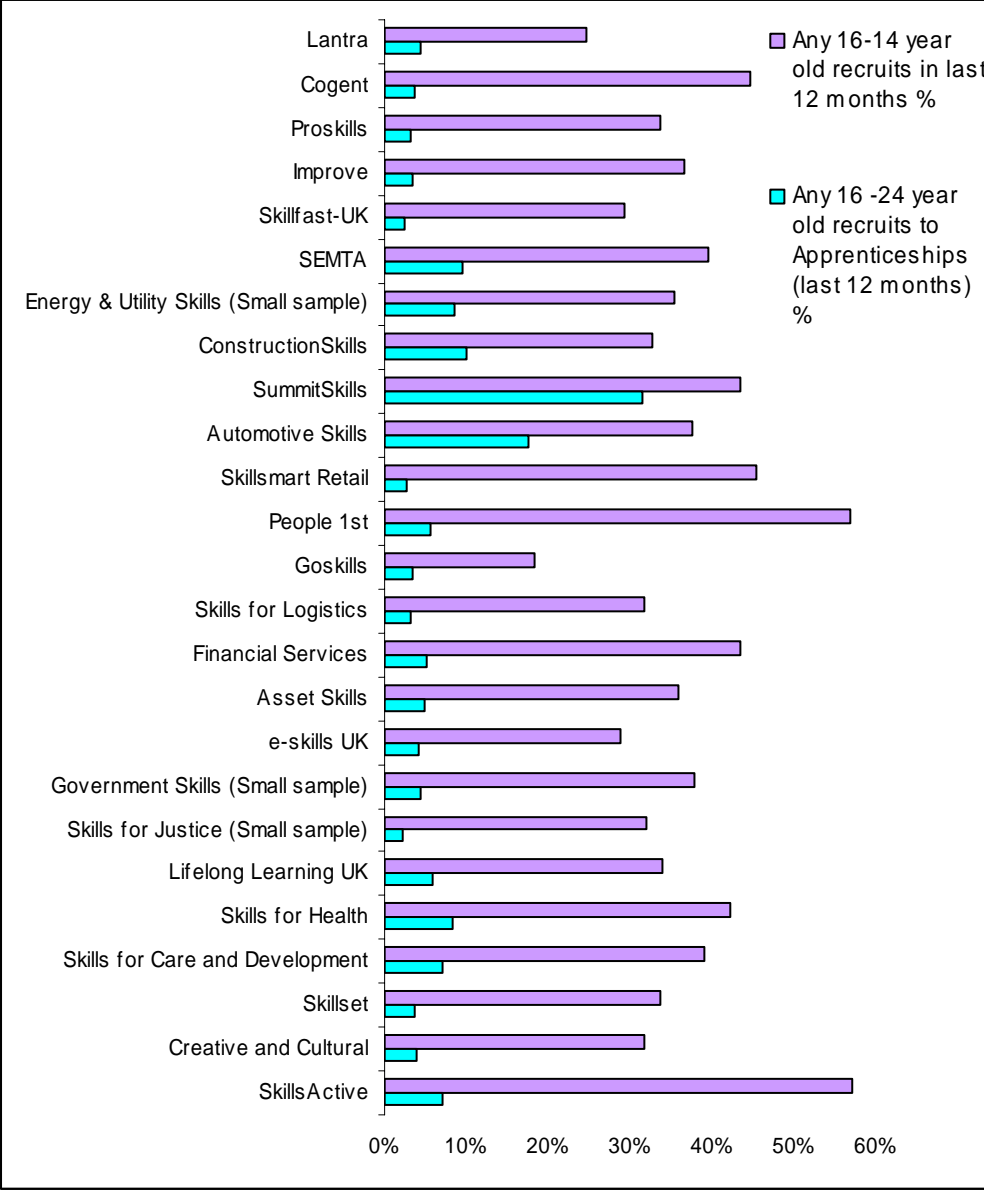
* SSCs where regional sample sizes are below 100 and findings should be treated with caution

It is possible that employers in some sectors tend to prefer older, experienced staff and that their lack of involvement with Apprenticeships simply reflects their low level of recruitment of young people. However, a comparison of the proportions of employers who have recruited Apprenticeships in the past 12 months with the proportions of employers who have taken on any young person under the age of 24 direct from school, college or university shows little correlation between the two.

On average, 38% employers in the South West have taken on a young person in the past 12 months, whereas just 7% have recruited young people to an Apprenticeship.

Employers in SkillsActive and People 1st are most likely to recruit young people but their likelihood of recruiting to Apprenticeships is no greater than many other sectors.

Figure 7: Percentage of employers recruiting 16-24 Apprenticeships by sector compared with the percentage of employers recruiting young people direct from school, college or university





Source: NESS07

- > Comparison with national findings shows broad similarity between the South West and England, although a number of SSCs in the South West (SummitSkills, Automotive Skills, Skillset and Creative and Cultural) are significantly more likely to offer Apprenticeships than average. In contrast, employers in the Lifelong Learning SSC and Cogent are much less likely than average to offer Apprenticeships.

Figure 8: Percentages of firms offering Apprenticeships by Sector; South West and England compared

SSC	South West	England
SummitSkills	51	44
Automotive Skills	40	33
SEMTA	21	20
ConstructionSkills	19	19
Skills for Health	18	14
SkillsActive	17	15
Skills for Care and Development	16	15
<i>Energy and Utility Skills*</i>	15	13
People 1st	14	12
Skillset	13	7
<i>Skills for Justice*</i>	12	8
Lifelong Learning UK	11	16
Creative and Cultural	11	6
Lantra	10	9
Asset Skills	9	8
Skillsmart Retail	9	9
<i>Government Skills*</i>	9	12
GoSkills	8	8
Financial Services Skills	8	8
Skills for Logistics	8	9
Proskills	8	12
e-skills	7	7
Cogent	6	12
Skillfast UK	6	6
Improve Ltd	6	9
Non SSC	15	15
All	15	14

 5 per cent or more above the national average

 5 per cent or more below the national average

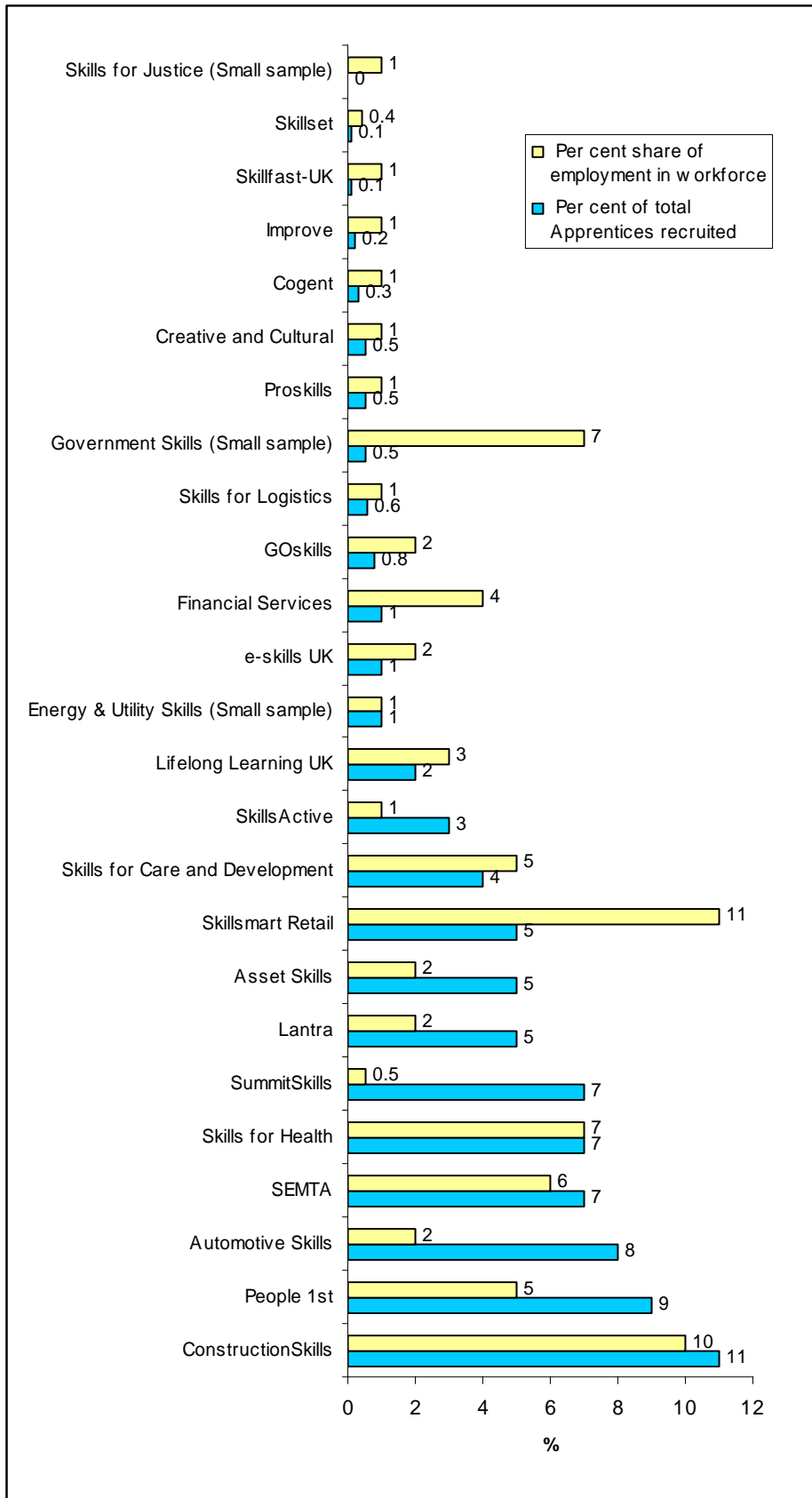
**SSCs where regional sample sizes are below 100 and findings should be treated with caution* Source: NESS07

Turning to Apprentices relative to the size of the workforce, Figure 9 shows that in terms of recruits, Government Skills along with Skillsmart Retail have recruited at very low levels relative to the size and importance of their workforces.

In terms of volumes, the largest numbers of young people recruited to Apprenticeships in the previous year were:

- > ConstructionSkills taking on 11 per cent of all Apprentices recruited, broadly in line with their share of employment in the workforce.
- > People 1st recruited 9 per cent of the total which is significantly greater than their share of the workforce
- > Automotive Skills recruited 8 per cent of all Apprentices. By contrast, Automotive Skills employers employ just 2 per cent of the workforce.

Figure 9: Percentages of firms offering Apprenticeships by Sector compared with share of workforce



Source: NESS07

Figure 10: Numbers of Apprenticeships recruited per sector compared with workforce share

SSC	No. of 16-24 year old Apprentices recruited in past 12 months	Per cent of total Apprentices recruited	Per cent share of employment in workforce
ConstructionSkills	2,303	11	10
People 1st	1,800	9	5
Automotive Skills	1,714	8	2
SEMTA	1,524	7	6
Skills for Health	1,458	7	7
SummitSkills	1,448	7	0.5
Lantra	1,074	5	2
Asset Skills	1,035	5	2
Skillsmart Retail	977	5	11
Skills for Care and Development	918	4	5
SkillsActive	663	3	1
Lifelong Learning UK	448	2	3
Energy & Utility Skills	260	1	1
e-skills UK	244	1	2
Financial Services	236	1	4
GOskills	183	0.8	2
Skills for Logistics	128	0.6	1
Government Skills	104	0.5	7
Proskills	103	0.5	1
Creative and Cultural	101	0.5	1
Cogent	56	0.3	1
Improve	54	0.2	1
Skillfast-UK	31	0.1	1
Skillset	30	0.1	0.4
Skills for Justice	0	0.0	1

 5% or more above employment share  5% or more below employment share

Source: NESS07

Reasons for offering Apprenticeships

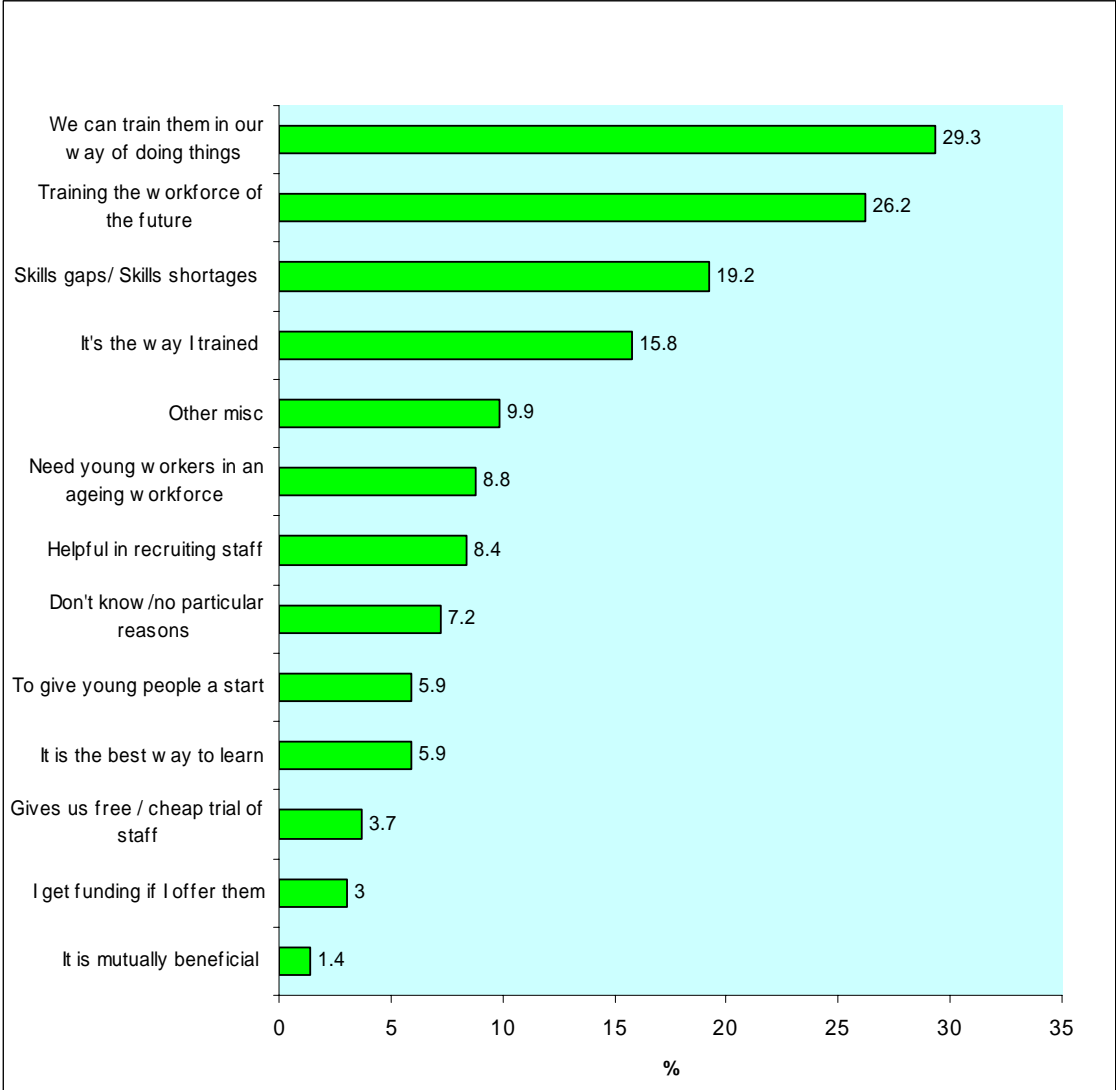
The 15 per cent of employers who offered Apprenticeships were asked why they did so. The most common responses were that Apprenticeships gave employers an opportunity to train young people in their own ways of doing things (29 per cent) and to train future employees (26 per cent). It is also interesting to note that 1 in 6 employers were interested in offering Apprenticeships because they had benefited from a similar opportunity – it was how they had learned. Skills gaps or skill shortage vacancies were cited by 19 per cent of those giving their reasons. Only 3 per cent of employers identified funding as a reason for offering them.

The reasons given by employers in the South West closely reflect the national responses. Similarly, there were no significant differences in response by size or

geography, other than the finding that larger employers were more likely to offer Apprenticeships because their workforce was ageing and therefore more likely to see Apprenticeships as an opportunity to train the workforce of the future.

For further research on employer engagement and other issues see LSC (June 2008) Rapid Review of Research on Apprenticeships – [CLICK HERE](#)

Figure 11: Reasons for offering Apprenticeships (percentages)



Source: NESS07

Other characteristics of employers who offer Apprenticeships

Further analysis of those who offer Apprenticeships by a range of variables indicates:

- > A weak link between employers with skills shortage vacancies and those who offer Apprenticeships. Accordingly, 27 per cent of those with recruitment difficulties caused by skills shortages offer Apprenticeships compared with 23 per cent of those with no such difficulties. Employers with skills shortage vacancies

for Skilled Trade staff (38 per cent) and Personal Service vacancies (38 per cent) are most likely to offer Apprenticeships.

- > A stronger link is evident between the use of Apprenticeships and employers who have skills gaps amongst their existing staff, suggesting that employers may be starting to use Apprenticeships strategically to address internal skills gaps within their existing workforce. 23 per cent of those with skills gaps offer Apprenticeships compared with 13 per cent of those with no skills gaps. Of those with skills gaps, employers who offer Apprenticeships are most likely to have gaps for literacy, numeracy and written communications as well as a lack of product knowledge and qualifications.

Figure 11: Extent of skills gaps amongst employers offering Apprenticeships (percentages)

Skills gaps in	per cent identifying
Literacy skills	30
Written communication skills	27
Numeracy skills	27
Experience/lack of product knowledge	27
Relevant qualifications	27
Sales / marketing / promotional / PR skills	26
Oral communication skills	25
Problem solving skills	25
Technical, practical or job-specific skills	25
Management skills	24
Office admin skills	24
Foreign language skills	23
Team working skills	22
Customer handling skills	21
General IT user skills	18
IT professional skills	17
Personal attributes	14
Other	27
All offering Apprenticeships who have skills gaps	23

Source: NESS07

- > Perhaps it is unsurprising to note that employers with more formalised training instruments are more likely to offer Apprenticeships. 64 per cent of those who offer Apprenticeships have a training plan compared with 41 per cent of those with no involvement in Apprenticeships. Similarly, 47 per cent of those who offer Apprenticeships have a training budget, considerably more than those with no involvement (32%):

Figure 12: Differences in training instruments amongst employers offering/not offering Apprenticeships (percentages)

Training instruments	Employers who offer Apprenticeships are more likely to	Than those who don't.....
Have a Business Plan	61%	54%
Have a Training Plan	64%	41%
Have a Training Budget	47%	32%
Would like to be able to offer their staff more training	48%	36%
Be aware of Train to Gain	34%	26%
Be involved with Train to Gain	30%	14%

Source: NESS07

- > It can be seen that employers who offer Apprenticeships are twice as likely to be involved with Train to Gain as those who do not.

Employers' reasons for not offering Apprenticeships

The main reasons employers give for not offering Apprenticeships relate to their perceived irrelevance either because the employer already has fully trained staff; the business is too small or the jobs in the establishment are not that highly skilled.

Although businesses with 2 to 4 employees were most likely to consider their business too small for Apprentices (16 per cent of this size band), as noted elsewhere, relative to the number of people they employ, firms in this size band actually recruit a disproportionately high number of people to Apprenticeships.

Funding was not perceived to be a significant issue with just 1 per cent identifying it as a reason.

Figure 14: Reasons for not offering Apprenticeships

Reasons for not engaging with Apprenticeships	South West %
All staff fully trained	16
Not relevant/applicable to our business	15
Our business is too small	12
We don't (the job doesn't) require staff to be that highly skilled	10
We prefer to recruit fully trained / qualified recruits	7
No apprenticeships available for our industry	6
We don't take on young people	6
No vacancies/ not taking on new staff	4
We prefer to train in-house	3
Financial constraints/ Training is too expensive	3

No young people have applied	3
Not worth my time for the money we get	3
Don't know enough about them / what we'd have to do	3
Lack of resources/ facilities	2
We haven't got the time	2
Bad previous experiences with apprentices	2
Our company is too new	1
It is a Head Office decision	1
Lack of (government) external funding / grants	1
No such courses exist (unspecified)	1
Not as good as they used to be	1
Too much paperwork / bureaucracy / admin	0
High staff turnover	0
Other	8
Don't know/ no particular reasons	13

Source: NESS07

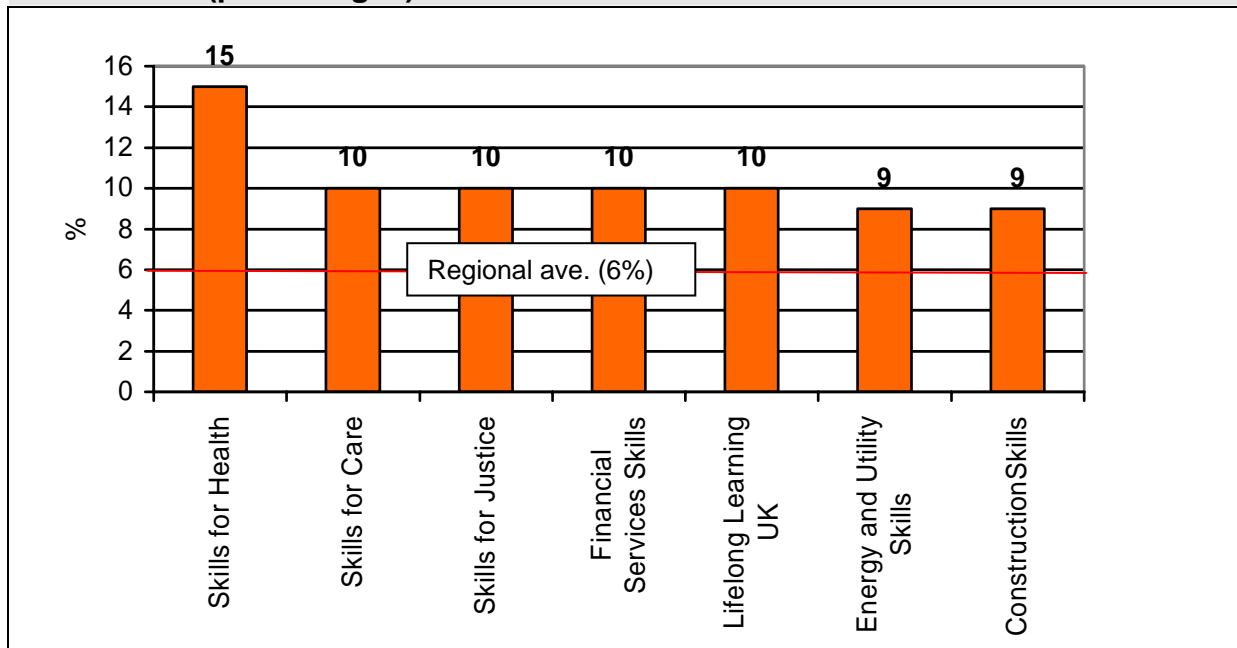
Employers in Improve (5 per cent) and Skillfast UK (5 per cent) were most likely to say they did not know enough about Apprenticeships.

Those most likely to consider that Apprenticeships were **not** relevant to their business were in:

- > Government Skills - 34 per cent
- > Asset Skills - 21 per cent
- > Lifelong Learning UK - 20 per cent
- > People 1st - 18 per cent
- > Skills for Logistics - 17 per cent

Employers who believed that there were no Apprenticeships available in their industry tended to be service sector employers. Perhaps surprisingly, 9 per cent of ConstructionSkills employers also believed this to be the case, although closer analysis shows that this response came from technical consultants within the industry. In fact, there are Apprenticeship frameworks in each of the sectors below with the exception of Skills for Justice and Lifelong Learning UK.

Figure 15: Employers most likely to consider there are no Apprenticeships in their sector (percentages)



Source: NESS07

Even though the numbers saying they did not know enough about Apprenticeships were low, it appears that there are widespread misconceptions as to the availability and appropriateness of Apprenticeships amongst significant minorities, especially in the service sector where it is less traditional to use Apprenticeships as a form of recruitment and skills development.

Apprenticeships and Train to Gain

Apprenticeships are not funded under Train to Gain and the role of Train to Gain brokerage in relation to Apprenticeships is primarily to raise awareness of Apprenticeships amongst employers and to signpost employers and their employees to Apprenticeships as appropriate. However, providers report that Apprenticeship referrals received by Train to Gain brokers, 'were very low compared to their overall throughput.'⁴

Data analysis shows that, in fact, the South West compares relatively favourably in relation to other regions, with 47% of its Work Based Learners aged 19-24 undertaking the Apprenticeship route (the third highest region) and one of the lowest rates of young people undertaking NVQ Level 2 through Train to Gain (second lowest region):

⁴ LSC SW (May 2008) Review of Basic Skills under Train to Gain and Referrals to Apprenticeships. GHK – [CLICK HERE \(LSC INTRANET\)](#)

Figure 16: Number and proportion of learners aged 19-24 undertaking NVQs and Apprenticeships

	Train to Gain NVQ Level 2		Apprenticeships		Total Learners (19-24)
	Number	%	Number	%	
East of England	1,835	11.0%	8,210	49.0%	16,749
East Midlands	1,954	12.1%	7,264	45.0%	16,137
Greater London	2,317	18.2%	5,268	41.3%	12,742
North East	1,702	15.3%	4,348	39.0%	11,141
North West	3,280	11.2%	12,990	44.5%	29,212
South East	1,936	7.6%	12,916	50.7%	25,482
South West	1,853	9.4%	9,272	47.0%	19,722
West Midlands	2,741	12.6%	8,812	40.5%	21,770
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,929	9.8%	9,272	47.3%	19,598
Unknown	708	17.7%	1,735	43.5%	3,989
England Total	20,255	11.5%	80,087	45.4%	176,542

Source: LSC SW (May 2008) Review of Basic Skills under Train to Gain and Referrals to Apprenticeships. GHK

The research⁵ found that learners were significantly more likely to choose NVQs over Apprenticeships in Construction, Health and Social Care and Manufacturing where legislative requirements require Level 2 qualifications and where the NVQ option may therefore be preferred as the quickest way of achieving this.

The main **barriers** to the take-up of apprenticeships identified by employers included:

- A lack of awareness and understanding of apprenticeships, their additional benefits in comparison to NVQs and the commitment they require.
- Potentially outdated views of apprenticeships, based on individuals' own experiences, including the time required for study away from the workplace.
- Delivery issues – including the availability of a specific apprenticeship programme, location and economies of scale issues for providers
- Concerns among employers over the cost and duration of apprenticeships compared to NVQs – although the majority recognised the 'added value' offered by apprenticeship provision and considered the additional investment to be worthwhile.

⁵ LSC SW (May 2008) Review of Basic Skills under Train to Gain and Referrals to Apprenticeships. GHK

Implications

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