

# THE EMPLOYER'S VOICE

## MARCHES LSIPs PROJECT





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## Introduction

This Report provides the employers views for all 463 interviews undertaken by the Marches LSIPs Project team. This document is an updated and extended version of what was presented to the Marches LSIPs Stakeholder Board workshop on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The document was supplied to aid understanding, in addition to the draft priorities established at the end of February, as the Board and team worked to the final report content. During LSIP Stage 1, four key sectors were focused on:

- Engineering/Manufacturing including food & drink Manufacture.
- Construction including environmental technologies.
- Health & Social Care.
- Professional Services.

The purpose of the employer interviews is to highlight potential areas where additional training or resources could be focused to support the Marches area to become more cohesive, productive and assist in growing existing or emerging sectors, as well as keeping skills local. This is very much a follow on from the work of the LEP Skills Advisory Panel and their findings and reports on skills shortages across the Marches.

The views and comments in this document are those of the employers and not Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

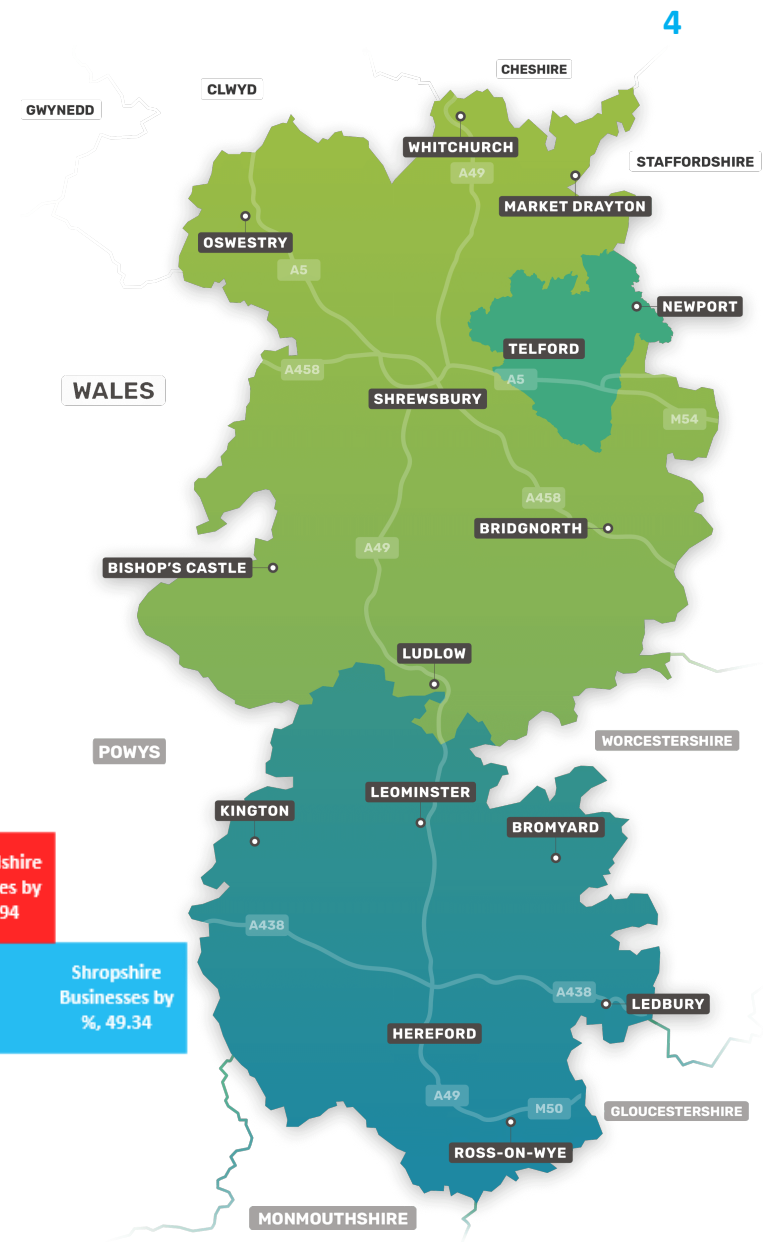
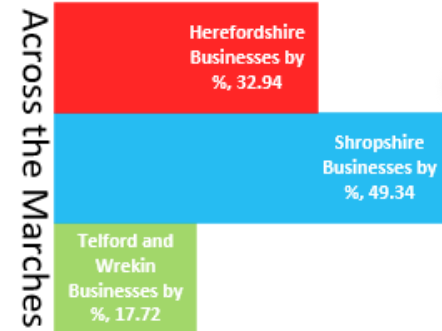


## Context... Geography & Business Makeup

- 32,225 Total number of businesses in the Marches (ONS 2022)
- 26.4% of those businesses employ staff (ONS 2022)

Of the total number of businesses in the Marches, each sub-area has... (ONS/NOMIS 2021/22) – all businesses by number & by %

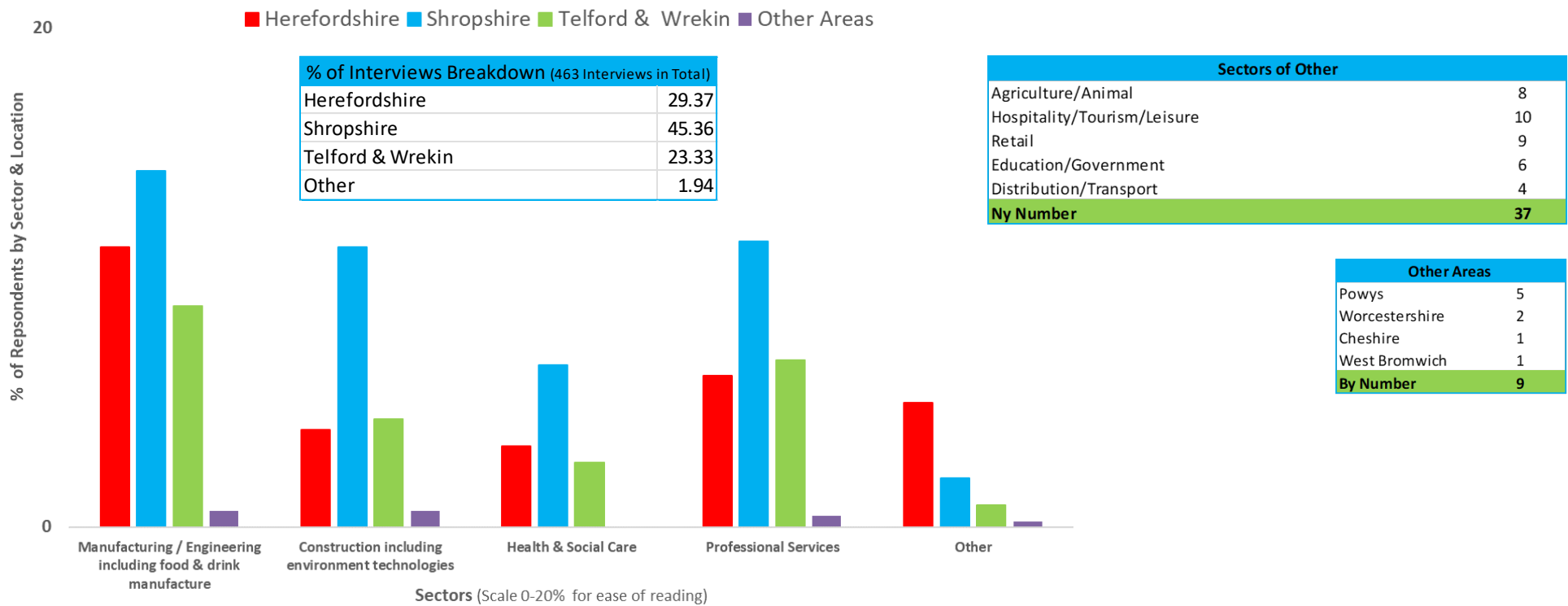
- **Herefordshire – 10,615 Businesses**  
Population 187,100 In Employment 94,100 Size 2180K km<sup>2</sup>
- **Shropshire – 15,900 Businesses**  
Population 323,600 In Employment 146,500 Size 3487K km<sup>2</sup>
- **Telford & Wrekin – 5,710 Businesses**  
Population 185,600 In Employment 88,000 Size 290.3 km<sup>2</sup>



## Employer Interviews - Context... Breakdown at 463 interviews

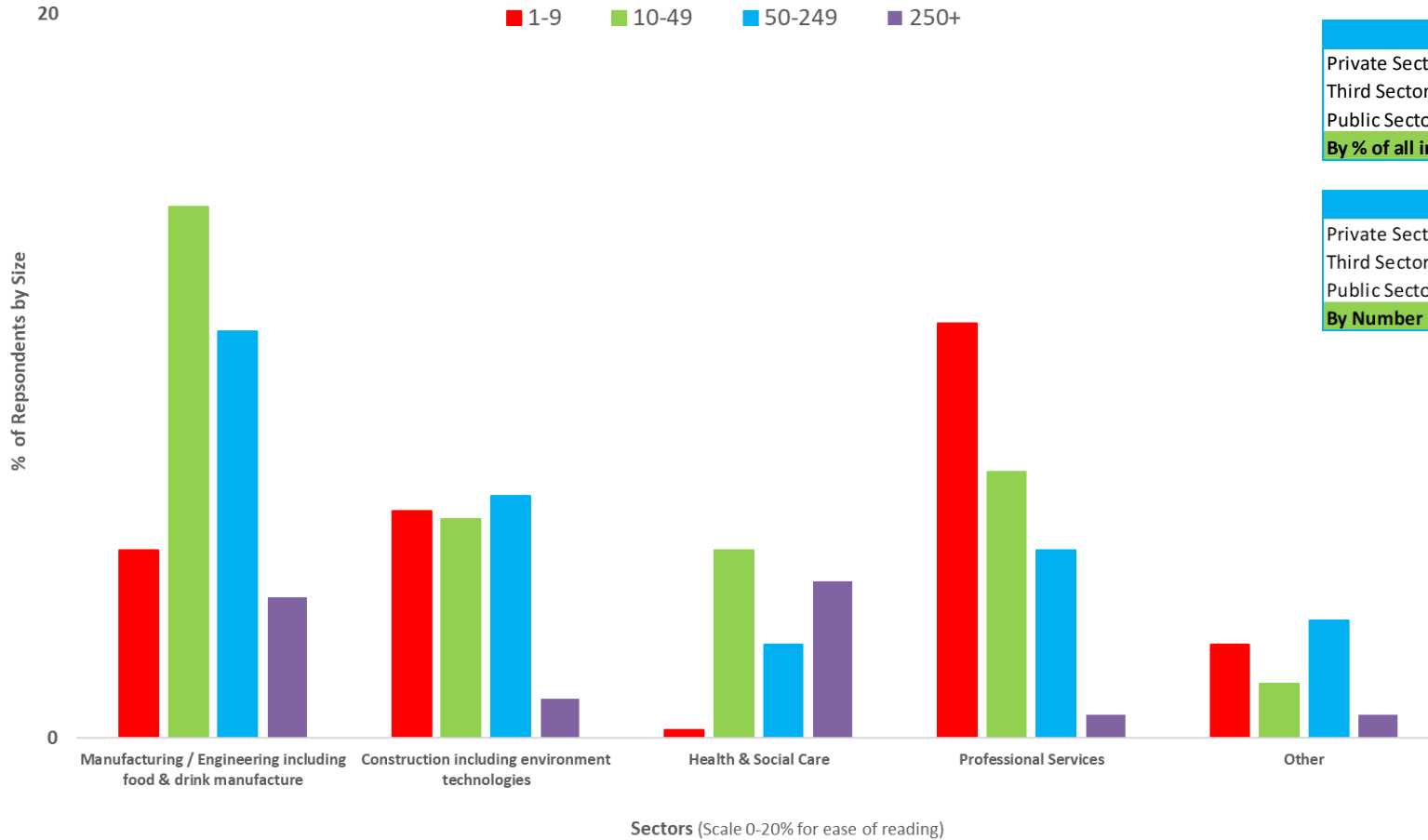
Interviews were carried out by various methods, employer web self-fill, telephone, video conference, face to face or via focus group sessions. No call centre or statistical enhancement methods have been used to capture the interviews, simply reported at 463 actual interviews. A very small percentage of companies elected to answer more than once to ensure a broad breadth of information from their organisation, as different personnel have different understanding and staff interactions or requirements. A small number fell into other areas or sectors, and below we show where and which sector. An array of marketing & strong branding was used to enhance the reach and awareness levels.

**Companies Interviewed by Location & Sector (% of 463 interviews)**



## Context continued... Employer Interview Breakdown at 463 interviews

### Companies Interviewed by Size & Sector (% of 463 interviews)



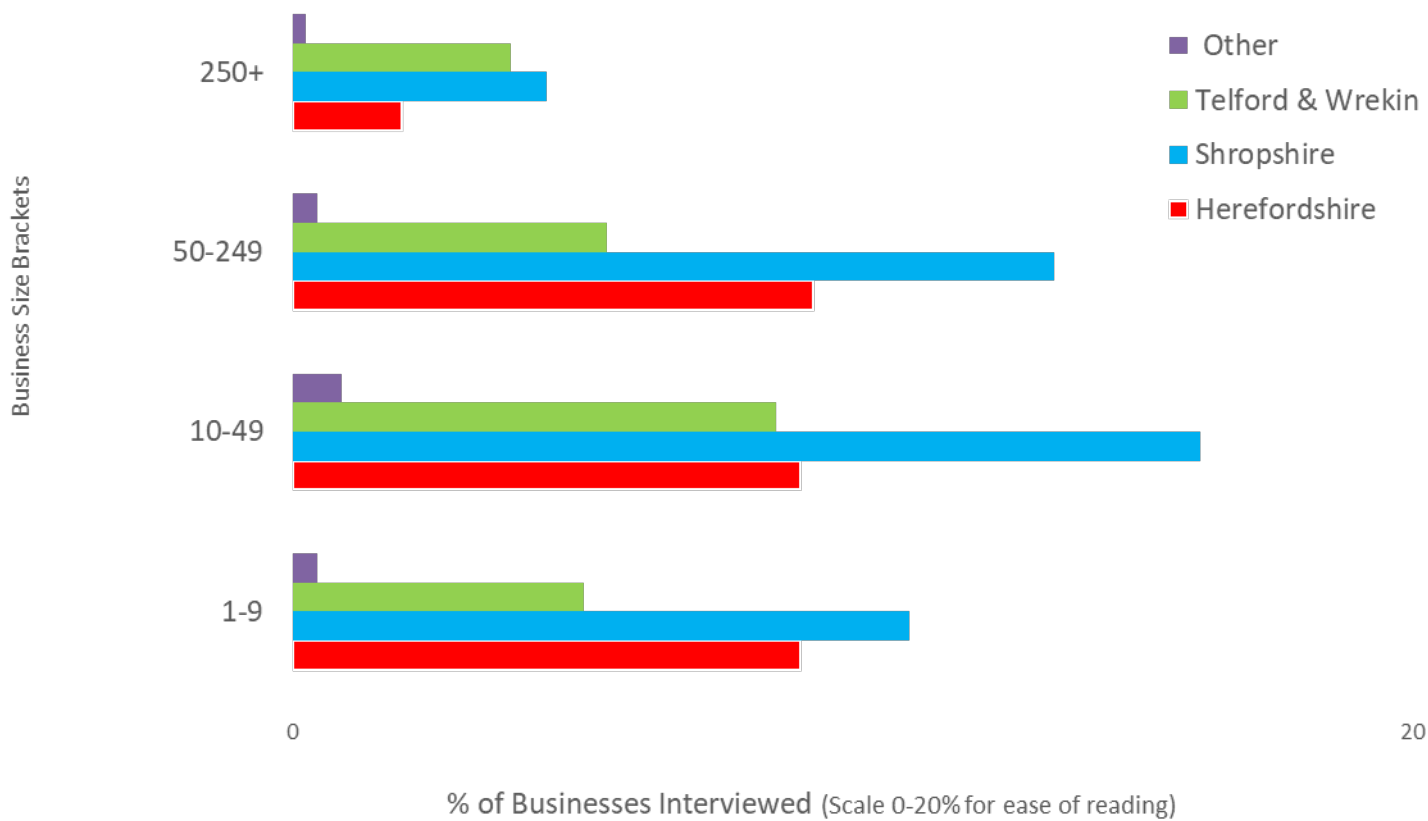
Entity Type 463 Interviews	
Private Sector	90.28
Third Sector (Charity etc.)	5.18
Public Sector	4.54
<b>By % of all interviews</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Entity of Other	
Private Sector	27
Third Sector (Charity etc.)	7
Public Sector	3
<b>By Number</b>	<b>37</b>



## Context continued... Employer Interview Breakdown at 463 interviews

**% of Businesses Interviewed by Size & Location (463 interviews)**



Other	
1-9	2
10-49	4
50-249	2
250+	1
<b>By Number</b>	<b>9</b>

Other Areas	
Powys	5
Worcestershire	2
Cheshire	1
West Bromwich	1
<b>By Number</b>	<b>9</b>



## Context continued... Employer Interview Breakdown at 463 interviews

Of the four sectors Health & Social Care and Construction were the hardest to reach in volume. To compensate for this, we used our standard interviews along with alternative methods.

### Health & Social Care:

NHS was interviewed multiple times at senior level to ensure understanding of all areas of skills shortage, including clinical, acute, community, ICS, non-clinical, specialist care, maintenance, and administration.

Social Care Sector is fragmented, many are smaller businesses and challenged by location and finances, to compensate we also worked with their representative bodies such as Shropshire Partners in Care and West Midlands Care Association to ensure a deep understanding of needs and barriers. Alongside this we also interviewed large social housing and welfare providers to ensure the broadest understanding.

### Construction including Environmental Technologies:

For civil engineering, large project and house building the companies tended to be larger and have a valuable broad view of employment issues. Many smaller firms and specialist were encouraged to be part of focus groups, so that skills shortages could be better understood. Environmental technologies, we interviewed larger companies and again created focus groups to cover a much wider range of specialisms and small companies to ascertain if any niche issues or innovative solutions. We also attend specialist Net Zero, retrofit and construction events to capture sentiment. We also worked closely with national bodies such as the CITB and ECA.

Funded by  
Department for Education

Marches LSIPs  
Local Skills Improvement Plan

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce

# Help us to help YOU

Are you from one of these sectors?

Engineering / Manufacturing including Food & Drink Production

Professional Services

Construction including Environmental Technologies

Health & Social Care

Do you employ staff?  
Then we need **YOUR** help

**What is the Marches LSIPs?**  
The Local Skills Improvement Plan - a DfE nationwide project. Shropshire Chamber has been selected by the DfE to undertake this work in the Marches, working closely with Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber.

**What is the purpose of the project?**  
To understand the skills training requirements in the next 3-5 years within different sectors. To bring together the views of employers and trainers to help look at innovative ways to deliver future training.

**How can you help?**  
We need your views on how you see training evolving in your sector. How have skills shortages changed how you work and does this give us innovative ideas for the future?

**Your voice is key to this being a success.**  
We ask that you fill in a one-off questionnaire, answer a series of text polls or share your thoughts [1] with our researchers (in confidence of course).

**Help ensure training meets the future head on**

**Click here to complete the Survey TODAY!**

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## Skills Shortages... all 463 interviews

Colour coded groupings simply indicate a commonality between the skill type and industry area.

The Marches does not differ from those highlighted by Government as national or regional skills shortages, such as engineering, construction, medical clinical and agriculture.

However, due to the rurality, retaining and attracting well qualified / experienced under 40's or getting graduates to return after university is a real challenge. Alongside the urban pull for current workers.

Covid brought hybrid working and this has had, in some cases, a negative effect on the Marches workforce as local employers cannot compete with urban wages.

Law and accountancy are some of the sectors affected by this issue with urban employers offering hybrid working.

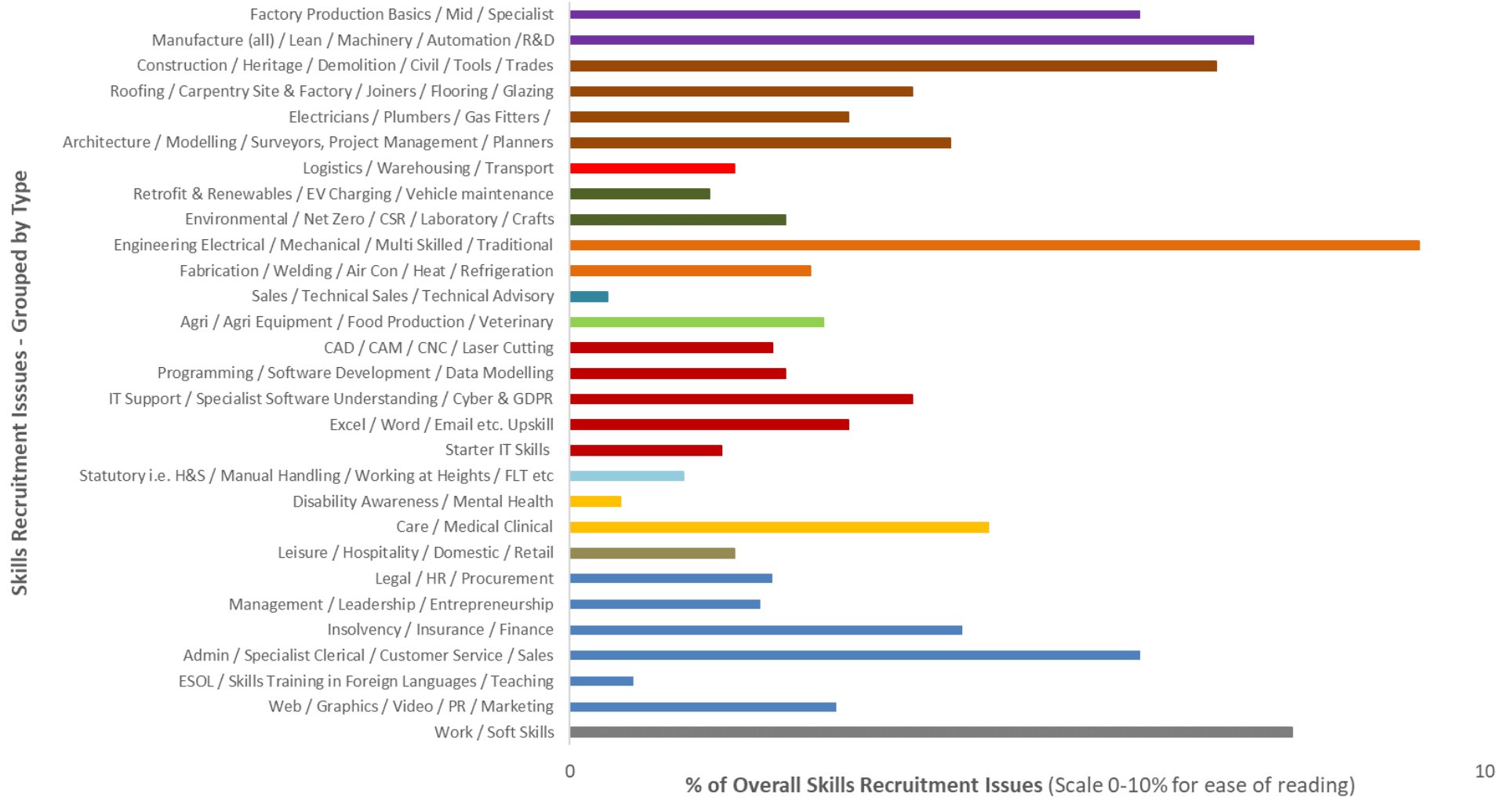
**KEY** - Colour groupings as shown on the skills & training graphs - derived from the analysis of comment data for both questions on skills & training

Factory Production Basics / Mid / Specialist
Manufacture / Lean / Machinery / Automation / R&D
Construction / Heritage / Demolition / Civil / Tools / Trades
Roofing / Carpentry Site & Factory / Joiners / Flooring / Glazing
Electricians / Plumbers / Gas Fitters /
Architecture / Modelling / Surveyors, Project Management / Planners
Logistics / Warehousing / Transport
Retrofit & Renewables / EV Charging / Vehicle maintenance
Environmental / Net Zero / CSR / Laboratory / Crafts
Engineering Electrical / Mechanical / Multi Skilled / Traditional
Fabrication / Welding / Air Con / Heat / Refrigeration
Sales / Technical Sales / Technical Advisory
Agri / Agri Equipment / Food Production / Veterinary
CAD / CAM / CNC / Laser Cutting
Programming / Software Development / Data Modelling
IT Support / Specialist Software Understanding / Cyber & GDPR
Excel / Word / Email etc. Upskill
Starter IT Skills
Statutory i.e. H&S / Manual Handling / Working at Heights / FLT etc
Disability Awareness / Mental Health
Care / Medical Clinical
Leisure / Hospitality / Domestic / Retail
Legal / HR / Procurement
Management / Leadership / Entrepreneurship
Insolvency / Insurance / Finance
Admin / Specialist Clerical / Customer Service / Sales
ESOL / Skills Training in Foreign Languages / Teaching
Web / Graphics / Video / PR / Marketing
Work / Soft Skills



## Skills Shortages - All Interviews

Based on 463 interviews. 722 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 83 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.



## Skills Shortages... all 463 interviews

Skills needs are far greater than training needs as will be seen in the following graphs series. There were many reasons given as to why employers are struggling to find the skills required. For example:

- national or regional shortages
- Brexit emigration
- urban lure for higher salaries or conditions
- lack of local training
- niche profession
- rurality & population makeup
- transport & infrastructure
- University non returners
- University promoted over FE
- candidates recruited who despite qualifications or experience were not correctly or fully skilled / trained

In the West Midlands.... (ONS April 2023)

**54.6%** of businesses who employ reported that they had to **increase working hours** for employees due to staff shortages.

**35.7%** had to **recruit temporary workers** to cover staff shortages.

**37.2%** were **unable to meet demand** due to staff shortages.



## Skill Shortages by Sub Region

These vary by sub region for example:

Herefordshire



there is a high demand for engineers of all types and skilled manufacture staff

Shropshire



there is a high demand for care and medical staff, construction, and engineers

Telford & Wrekin



there is a high demand for all manufacturing skills, construction, engineers, and IT skills

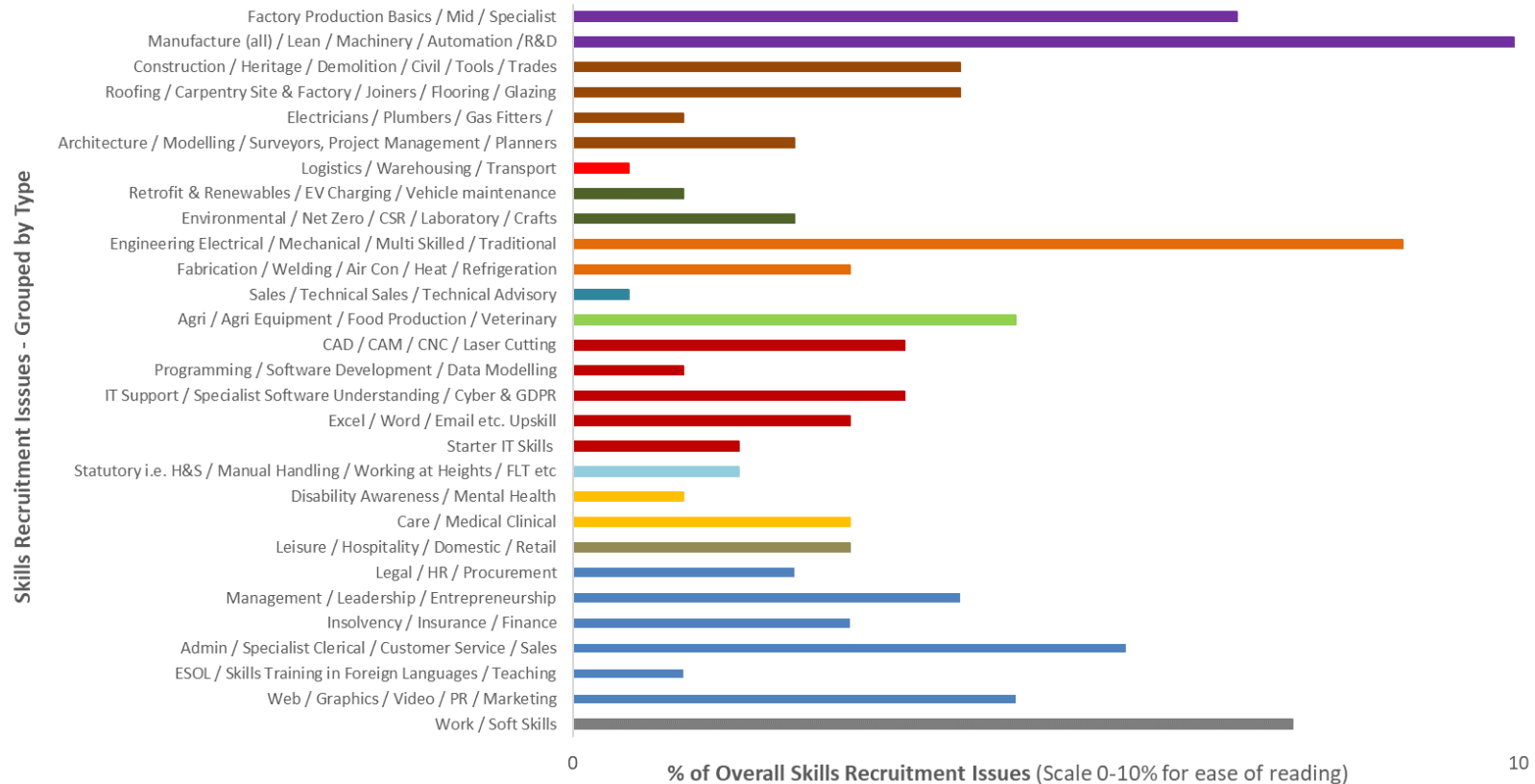


## Skills Shortages... Herefordshire

Herefordshire has a higher need for factory and engineering skills as agriculture and agri food production requires these skills, not just standard manufacture. Construction has a leaning to heritage/specialist, roofing as well as retrofit & environmental.

### Skills Shortages - HEREFORDSHIRE

Based on 136 interviews. 171 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 42 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.

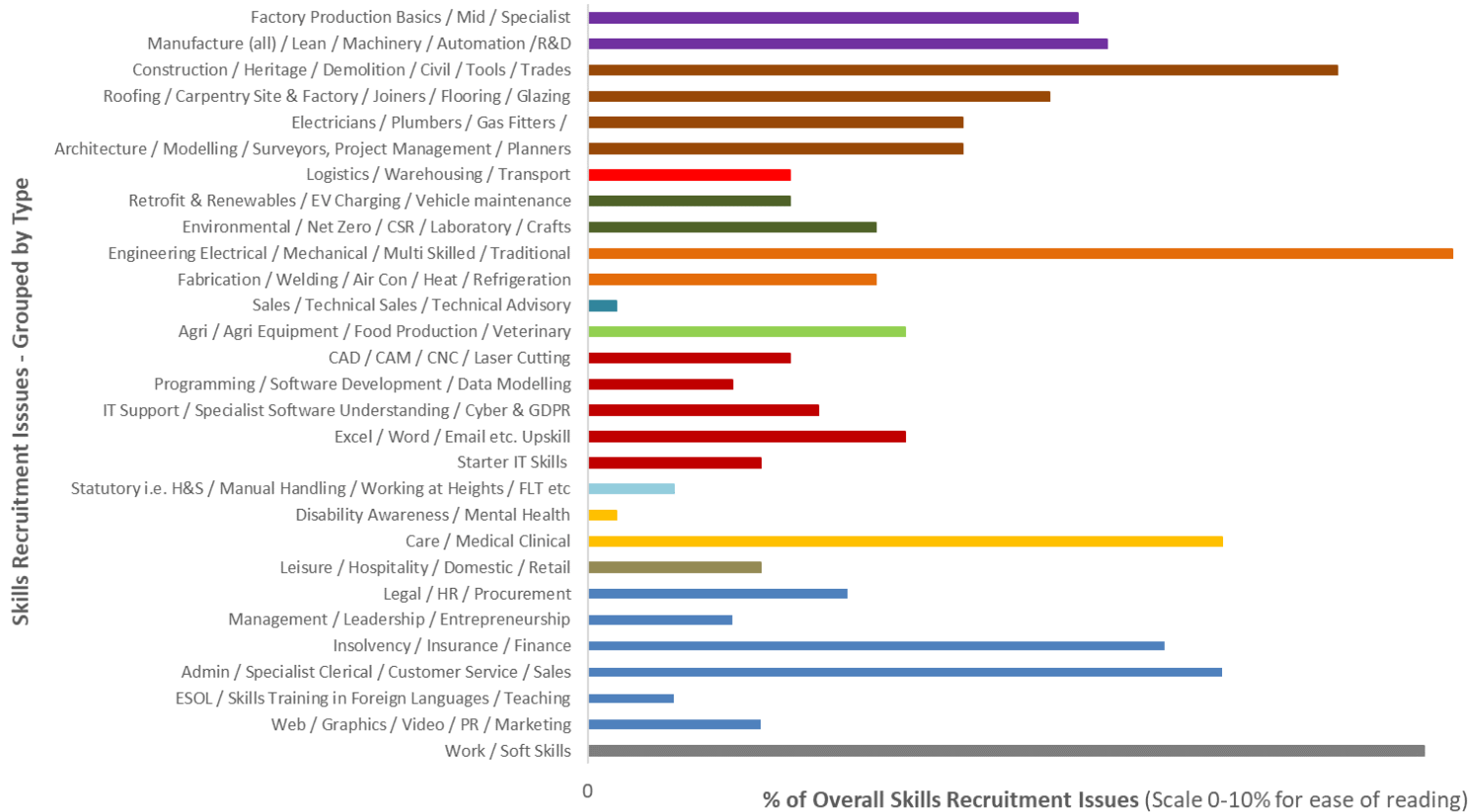


## Skills Shortages... Shropshire

Shropshire due to its size, rurality and population demographic has a high need for care & medical. Professional service roles are as equally important as manufacturing roles, but construction & engineering outweigh all other needs stated.

### Skills Shortages - SHROPSHIRE

Based on 210 interviews. 342 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 25 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.



10

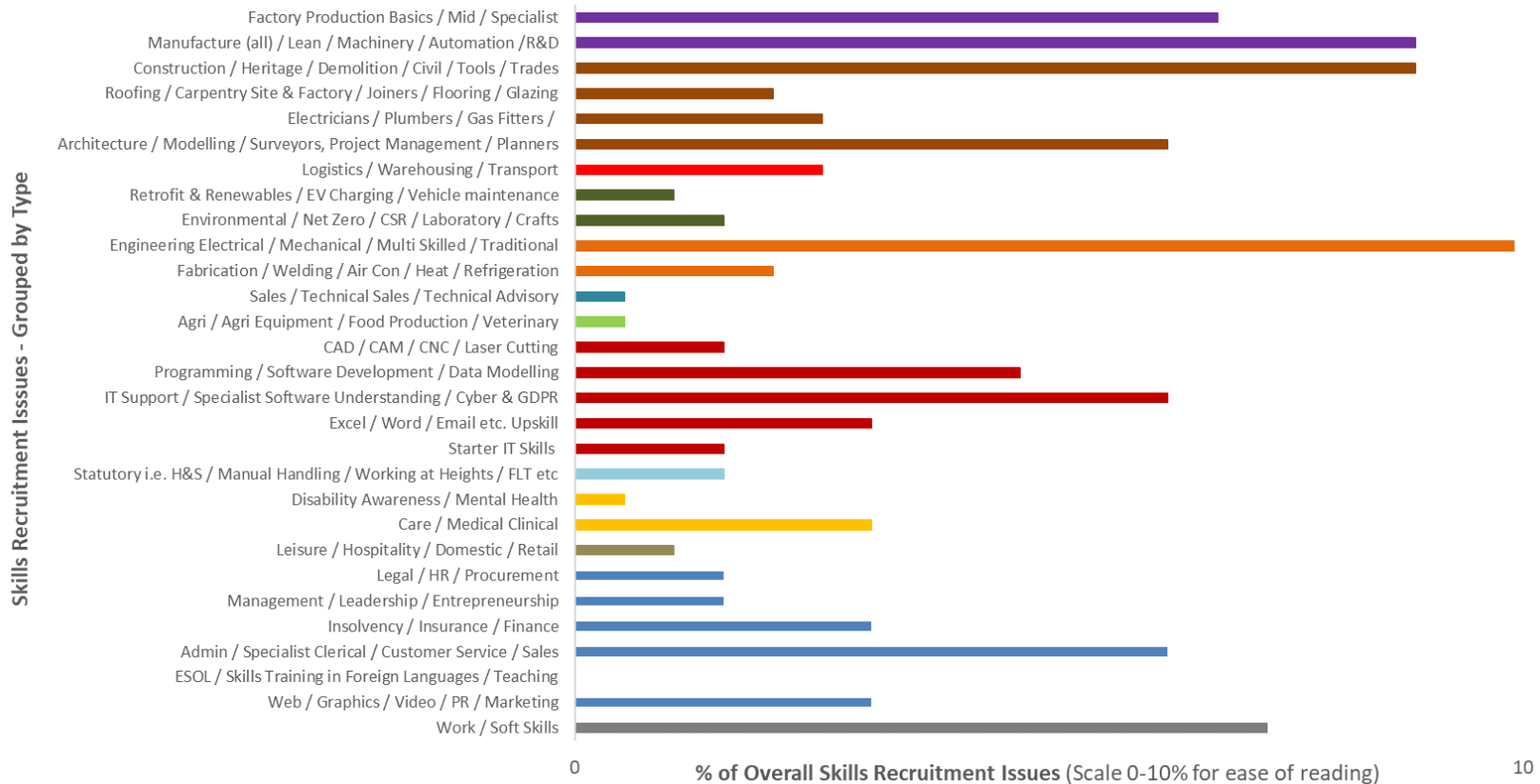


## Skills Shortages... Telford & Wrekin

Telford with its high density of industry showed a need for all areas of manufacturing and engineering. This also led to a greater need for a wide range of IT skills to support the rise in automation. Construction and admin also struggled for skills.


### Skills Shortages - TELFORD & WREKIN


Based on 108 interviews. 192 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 15 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.





## Skill Shortages by Four Sectors

These vary by sector for example:

**Manufacture**  Need for unskilled to highly skilled manufacturing operatives, engineers, and IT specialities

**Construction**  As well as a strong need for wet and dry trades, there is also a need for planners, surveyors etc

**Health Care**  Medical, doctors to porters, GPs to specialist admin and maintenance trades all required

**Professional**  Legal, accountancy & admin are key along with all areas of IT, marketing, and customer service

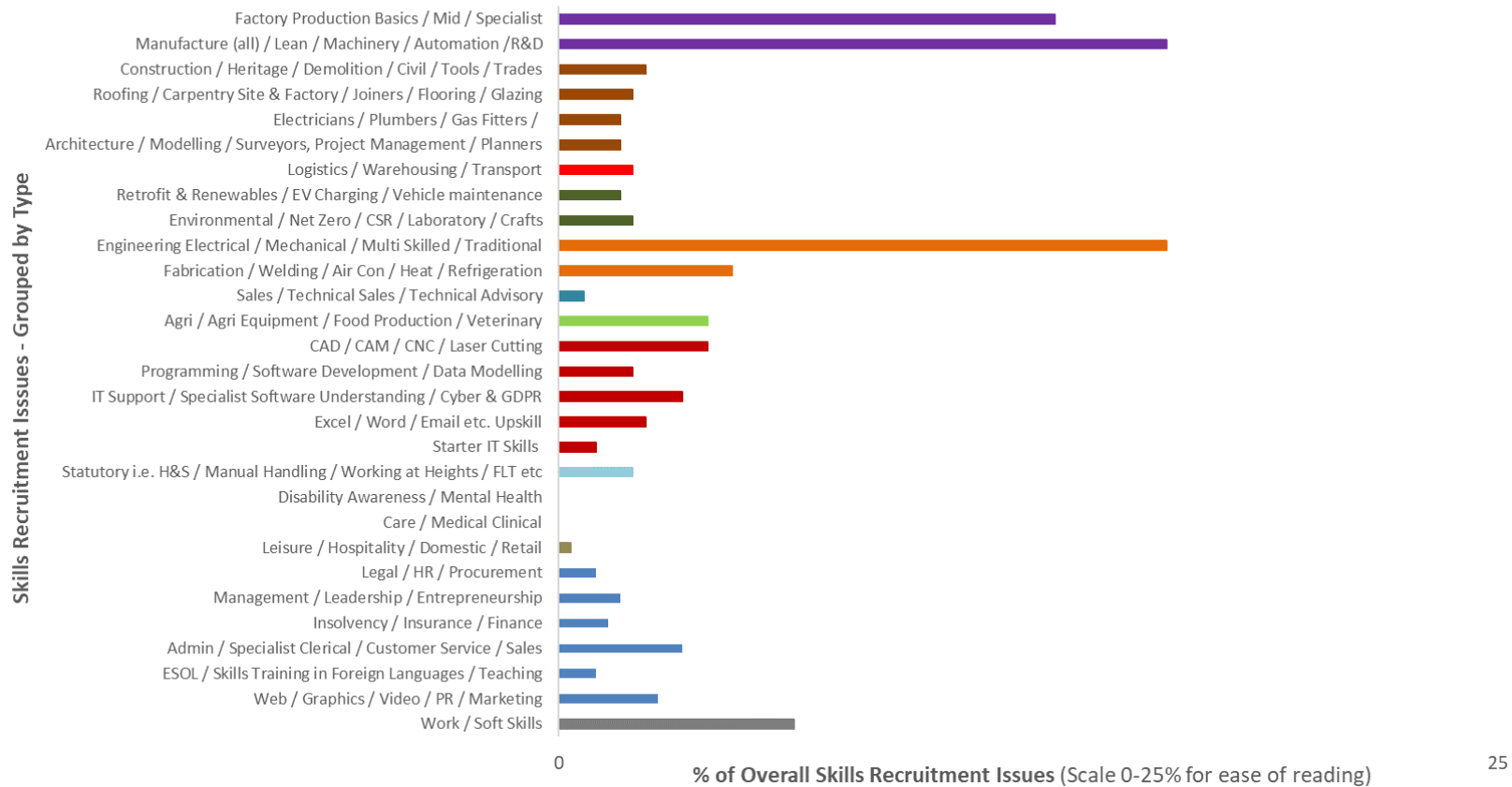


## Skills Shortages... Manufacture & Engineering including food & drink manufacture

Though all levels required, it is the more skilled that are in shortest supply. Unskilled production workers are in demand due to retention issues. Engineers are required in all disciplines and at all levels. IT skills for operatives is a growing need.

### Skills Shortages - Manufacturing / Engineering including food & drink manufacture

Based on 162 interviews. 303 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 25 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.

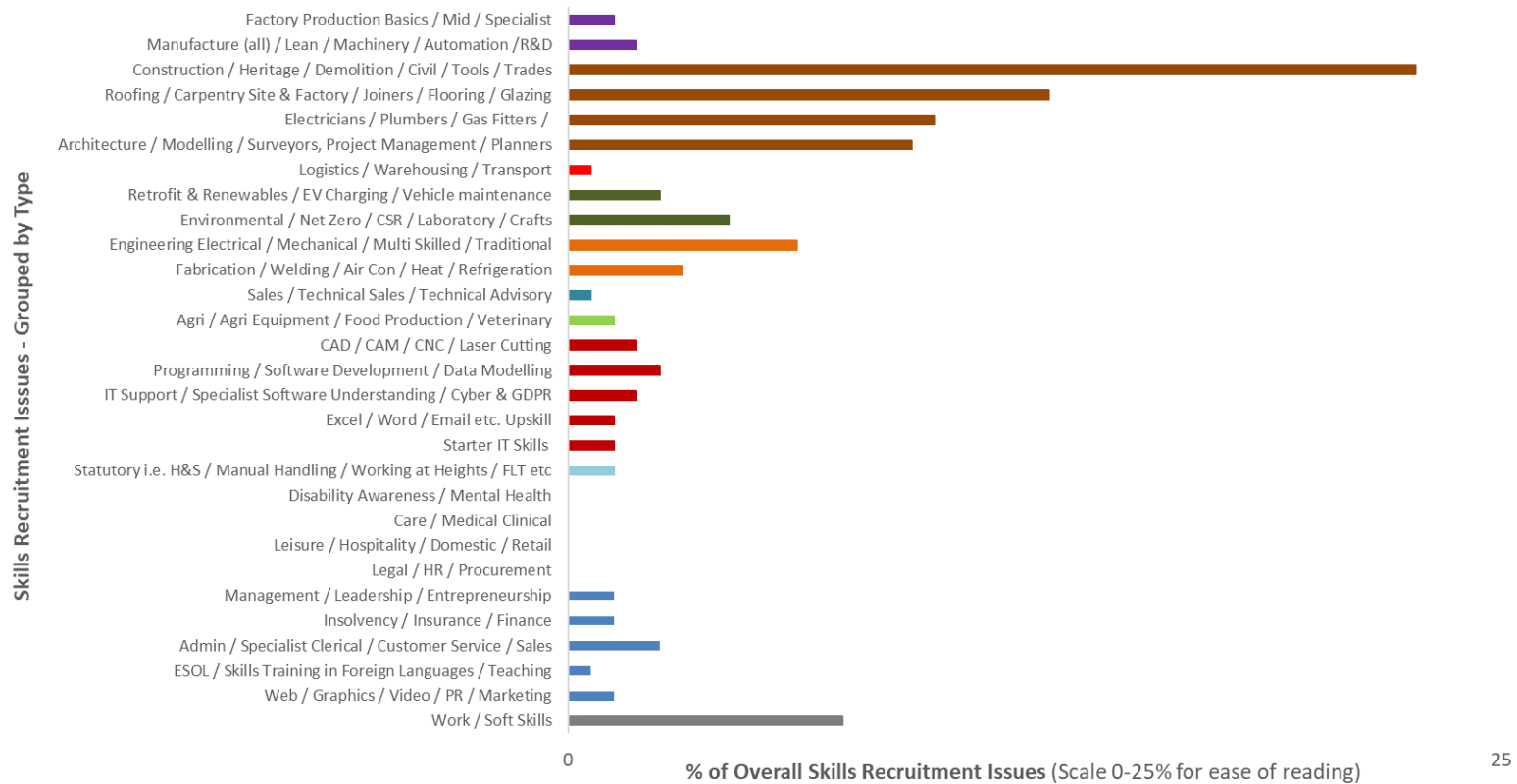


## Skills Shortages... Construction including environment technologies

Due to the boom in house building and large infrastructure projects such as HS2 there is a pressure on all aspects of construction, especially trades, surveyors, and project management. The transition from on-site build to off-site factory build is a growing need requiring revised skills. Retrofit and environmentally friendly installations such as solar is currently fragmented but the opening of a new training centre will help build cohesion within this growing sub-sector.

### Skills Shortages - Construction including environment technologies

Based on 93 interviews. 153 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 28 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.

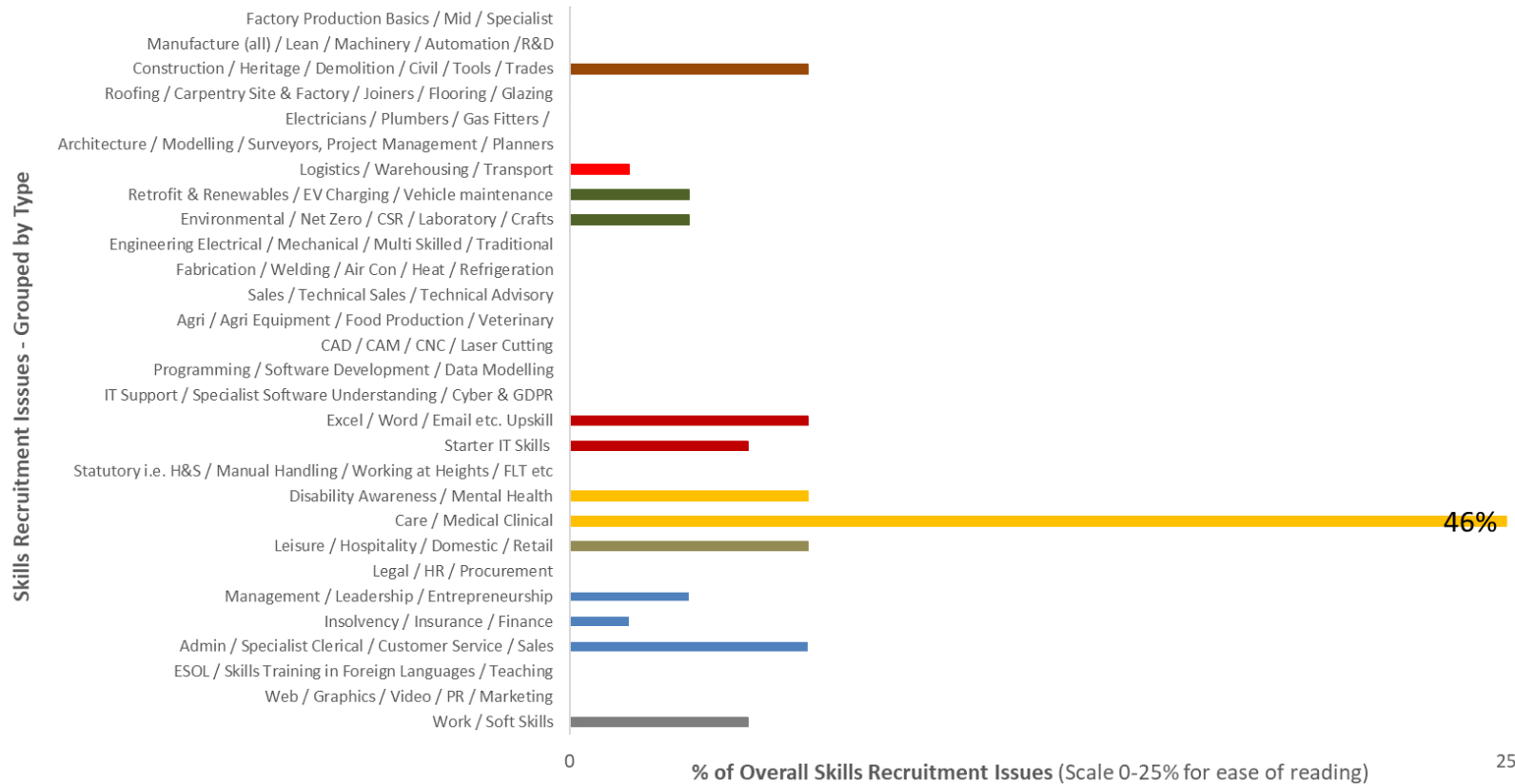


## Skills Shortages... Health & Social Care

Though a strong training pipeline for nursing disciplines, unskilled to skilled, is in place this is tending to provide staff to the NHS not the care sector, which is large but fragmented, as well as financially and geographically challenged hence a 9%+ vacancy rate. Innovative solutions are being investigated and implemented to try an ease this issue.

### Skills Shortages - Health & Social Care

Based on 57 interviews. 63 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 11 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.

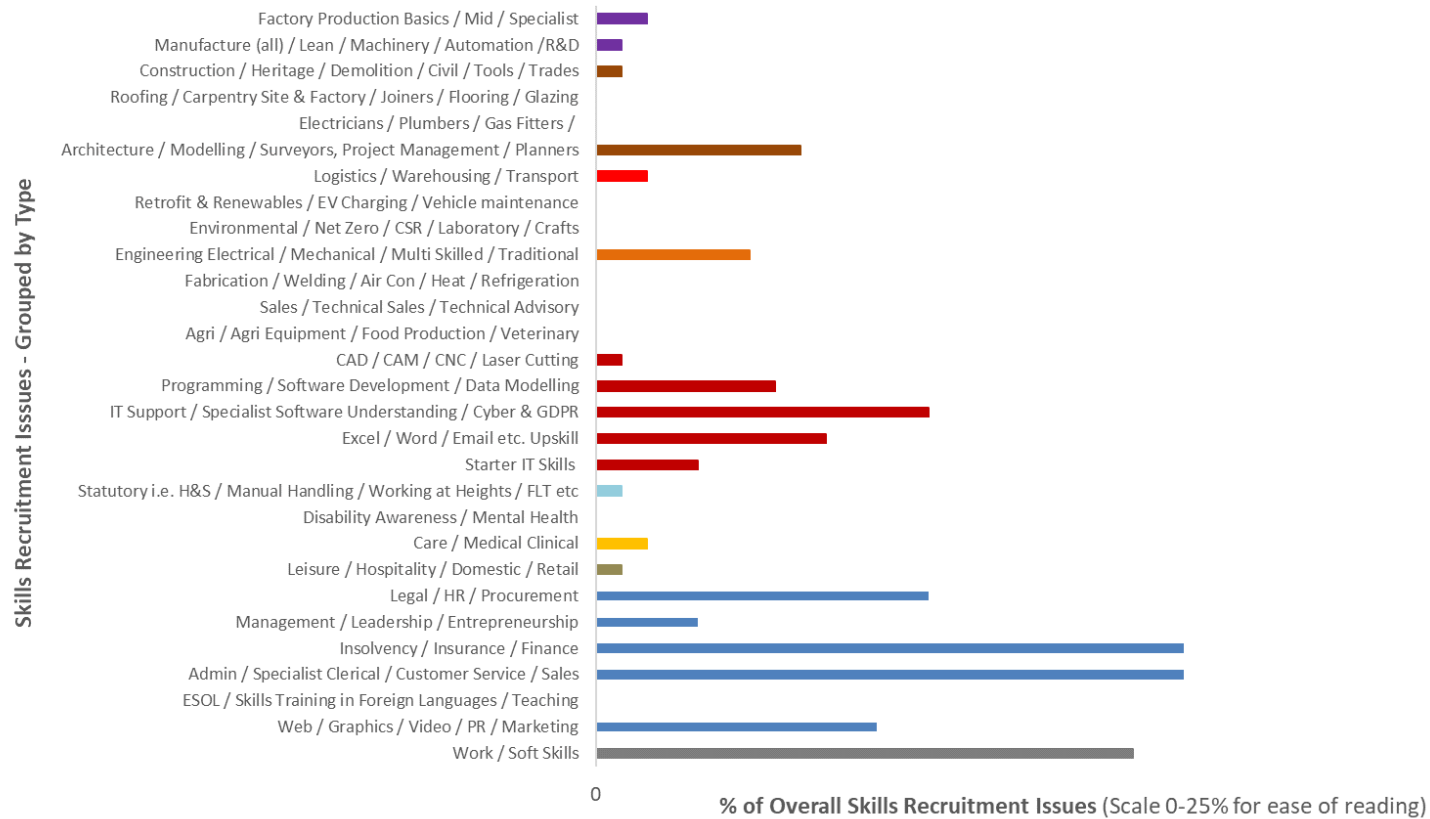


## Skills Shortages... Professional Services

Administration staff are proving to be in short supply and lower numbers training. IT is in demand for support in house and basic offices skills such as Excel and Word, not just for highly skilled engineers or programmers. The professions are finding it hard to compete with urban competitors on wages.

### Skills Shortages - Professional Services

Based on 112 interviews. 146 skill shortages or skills recruitment issues recorded and 28 interviewees stated they had no skills shortages or skills recruitment issues.

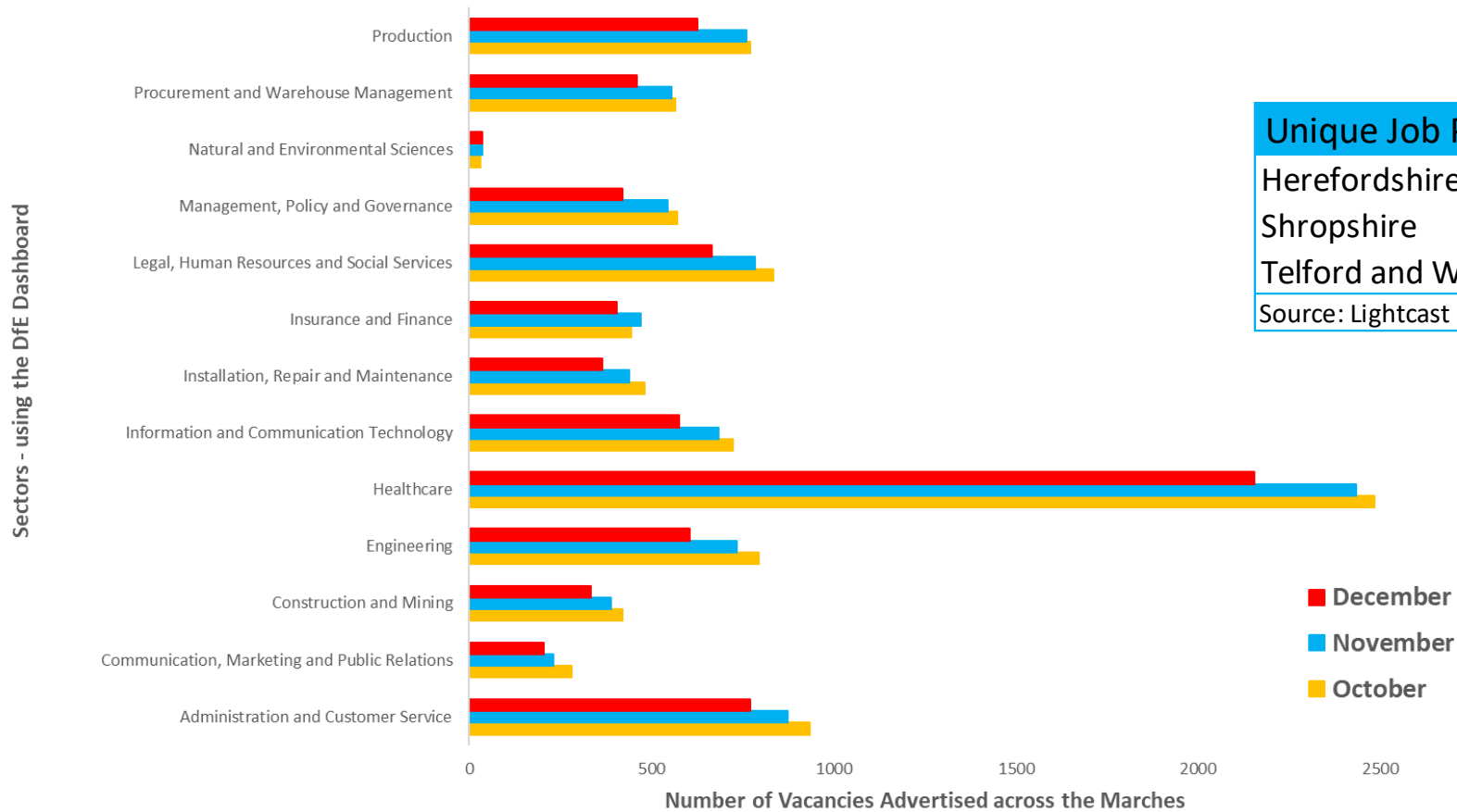


## Job Postings

### JOB VACANCIES - The Marches - October to December 2022

Data extracted from the DfE Dashboard

PLEASE NOTE - DfE categories do not directly replicate to the Marches LSIPs Project categories and are for reference only.



Unique Job Postings Jan-Feb 2023	
Herefordshire	5,284
Shropshire	8,085
Telford and Wrekin	6,117
Source: Lightcast Data 2023	



## Training Needs... all 463 interviews

Though many stated they had no training needs, those who did state training needs were categorised into logical colour coded groupings on the following graphs, by skills type (see next page). Training needs relate to but are not always driven by skill shortages. Training needs are not always directly related to the occupation but additional skills such as leadership or IT. Training needs may be stated for many additional reasons, including but not limited to:

- course availability
- niche requirements
- lack of knowledge of courses or providers
- course content mismatched to employer need or employer cannot cover all elements of an apprenticeship
- company finance constraints
- staff churn requiring regular re staffing with training needs
- levy: hope for wider uses for larger employers in future. Understanding access to levy transfers by SME's
- issues with current provision
- difficulties in releasing staff due to staff shortages or course time mismatch with staff availability
- employers unable to navigate apprenticeship paperwork
- teaching method felt inappropriate or not delivering to a suitable standard
- mismatch of language / understanding between employers and providers



<b>KEY</b>
Factory Production Basics / Mid / Specialist
Manufacture (all) / Lean / Machinery / Automation / R&D
Construction / Heritage / Demolition / Civil / Tools / Trades
Roofing / Carpentry Site & Factory / Joiners / Flooring / Glazing
Electricians / Plumbers / Gas Fitters /
Architecture / Modelling / Surveyors, Project Management / Planners
Logistics / Warehousing / Transport
Retrofit & Renewables / EV Charging / Vehicle maintenance
Environmental / Net Zero / CSR / Laboratory / Crafts
Engineering Electrical / Mechanical / Multi Skilled / Traditional
Fabrication / Welding / Air Con / Heat / Refrigeration
Sales / Technical Sales / Technical Advisory
Agri / Agri Equipment / Food Production / Veterinary
CAD / CAM / CNC / Laser Cutting
Programming / Software Development / Data Modelling
IT Support / Specialist Software Understanding / Cyber & GDPR
Excel / Word / Email etc. Upskill
Starter IT Skills
Statutory i.e. H&S / Manual Handling / Working at Heights / FLT etc
Disability Awareness / Mental Health
Care / Medical Clinical
Leisure / Hospitality / Domestic / Retail
Legal / HR / Procurement
Management / Leadership / Entrepreneurship
Insolvency / Insurance / Finance
Admin / Specialist Clerical / Customer Service / Sales
ESOL / Skills Training in Foreign Languages / Teaching
Web / Graphics / Video / PR / Marketing
Work / Soft Skills



## Training Needs... all 463 interviews

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded (450 interviews)

Based on 463 interviews: **246 training needs stated and 219 interviewees stated they had no training needs. 80 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with others.**



## Training Needs by Sub Region

These vary by sub region for example:

Herefordshire



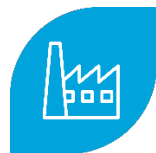
areas highlighted include management, construction, engineers & administration

Shropshire



areas highlighted include care & medical, manufacturing, statutory short courses

Telford & Wrekin



areas highlighted include manufacture, engineering, management & finance

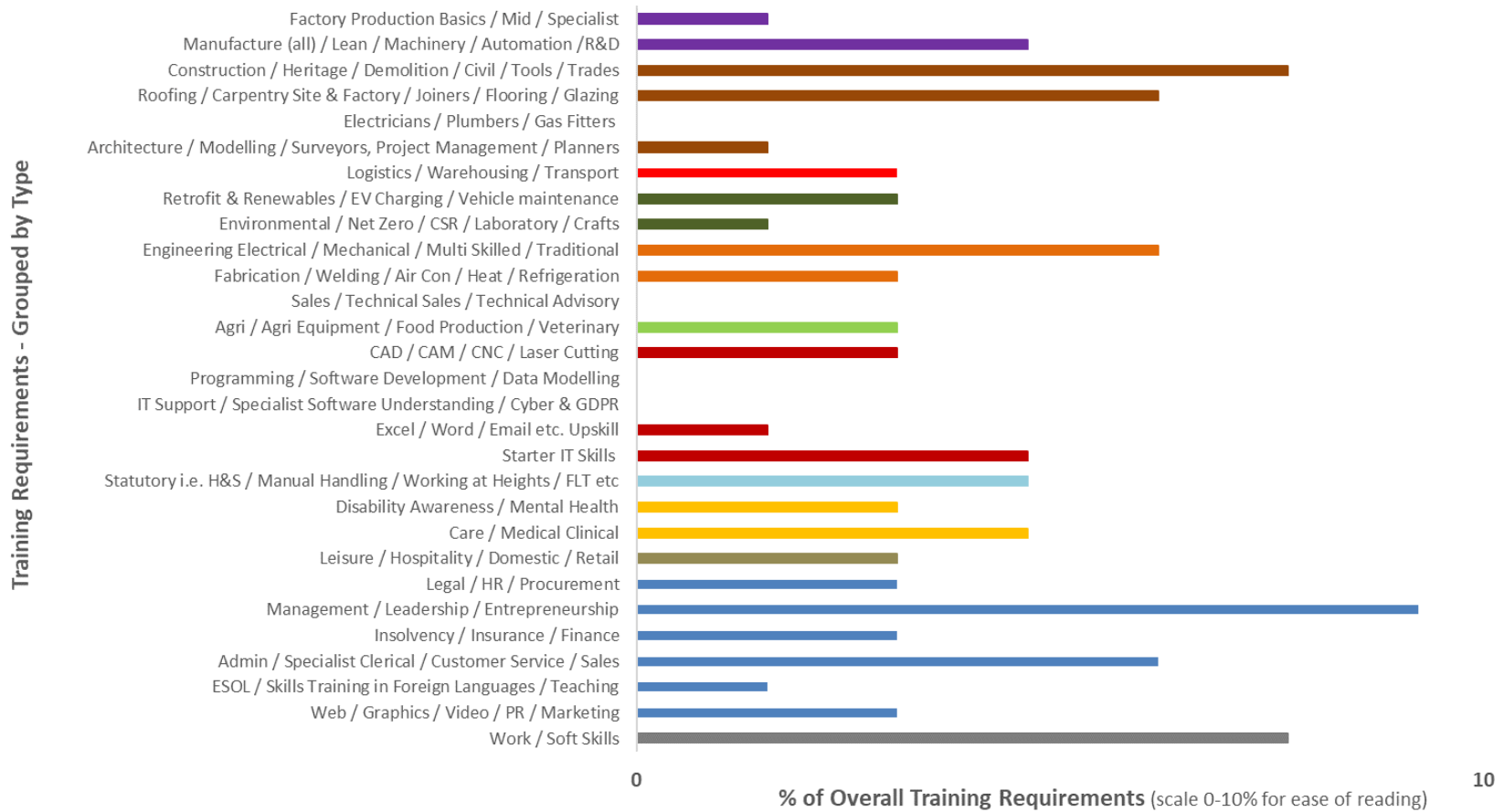


## Training Needs... Herefordshire

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded - HEREFORDSHIRE

Based on 136 interviews: 65 training needs stated and 66 interviewees stated they had no training needs.

16 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods. Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.

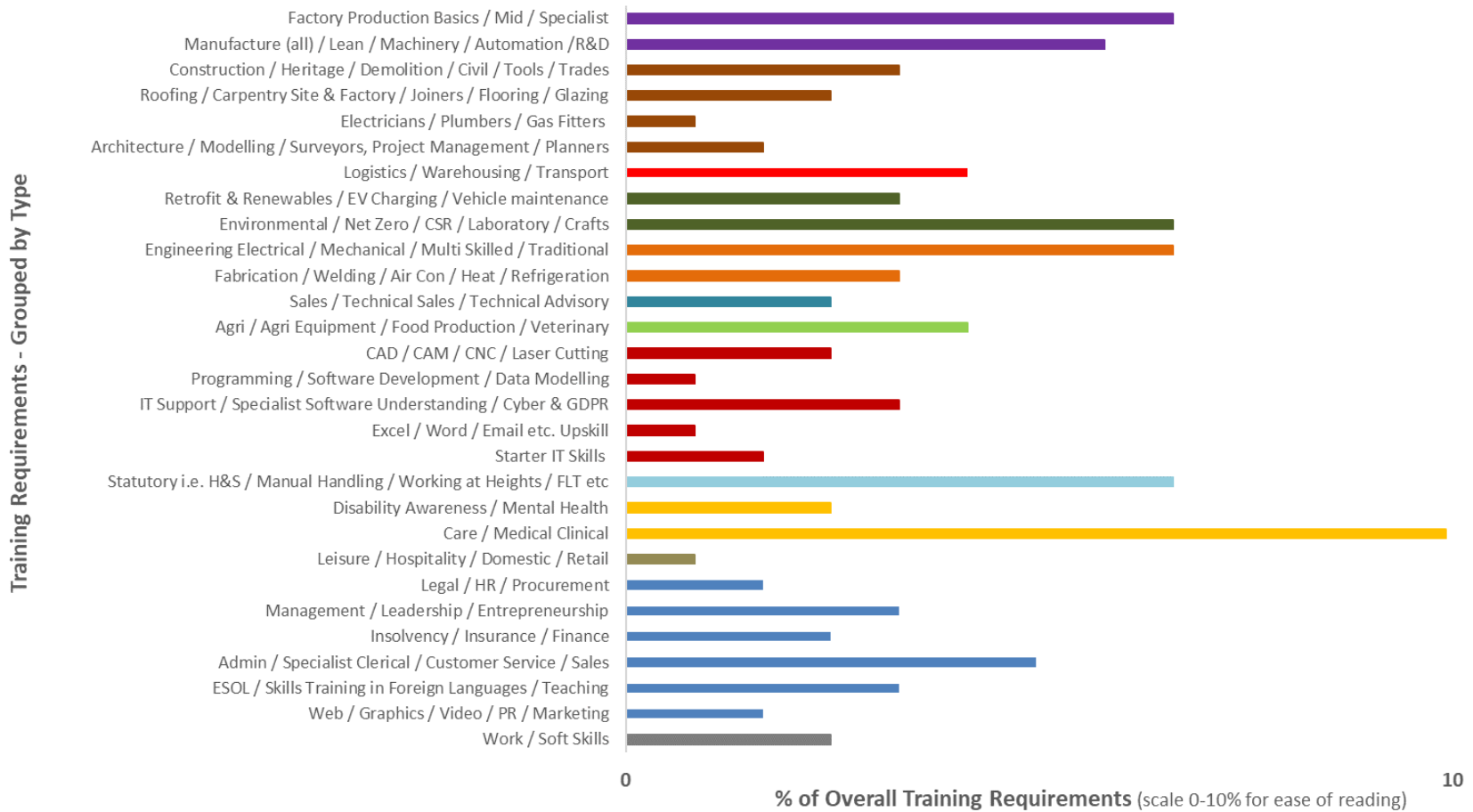


## Training Needs... Shropshire

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded - SHROPSHIRE

Based on 210 interviews: **121 training needs stated and 97 interviewees stated they had no training needs.**

**42 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods.** Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.

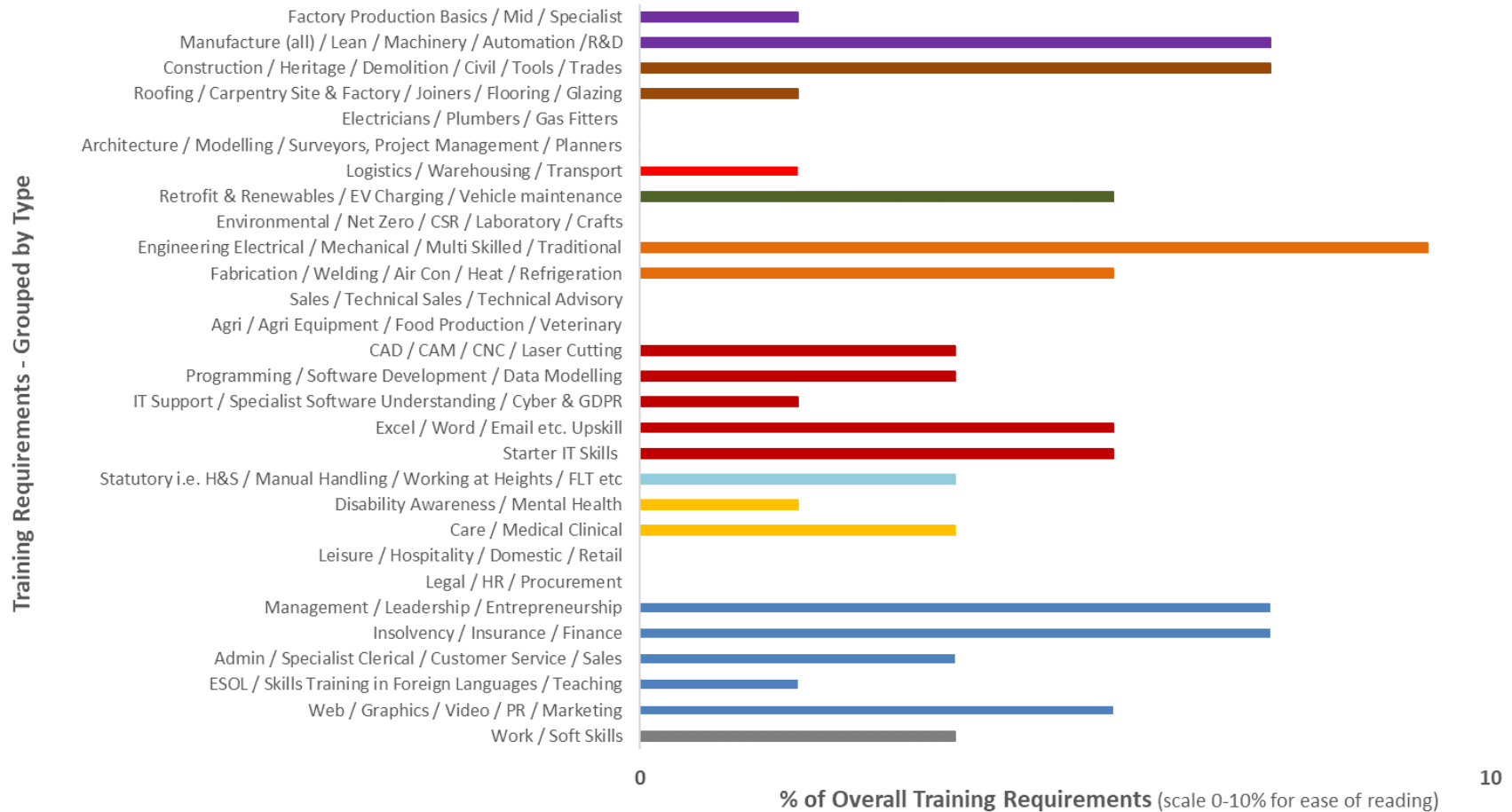


## Training Needs... Telford & Wrekin

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded - TELFORD & WREKIN

Based on 108 interviews: 54 training needs stated and 51 interviewees stated they had no training needs.

20 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods. Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.



## Training Needs by Four Sectors

These vary by sector for example:

Manufacture



areas highlighted include automation, skilled manufacture, engineering, CAD, CAM, laser

Construction



areas highlighted include all trades & specialisms, off site fabrication, retrofit, statutory

Health Care



areas highlighted include care staff and clinical staff, starter IT skills, administration

Professional



management & leadership all levels, marketing, graphics, finance, administration



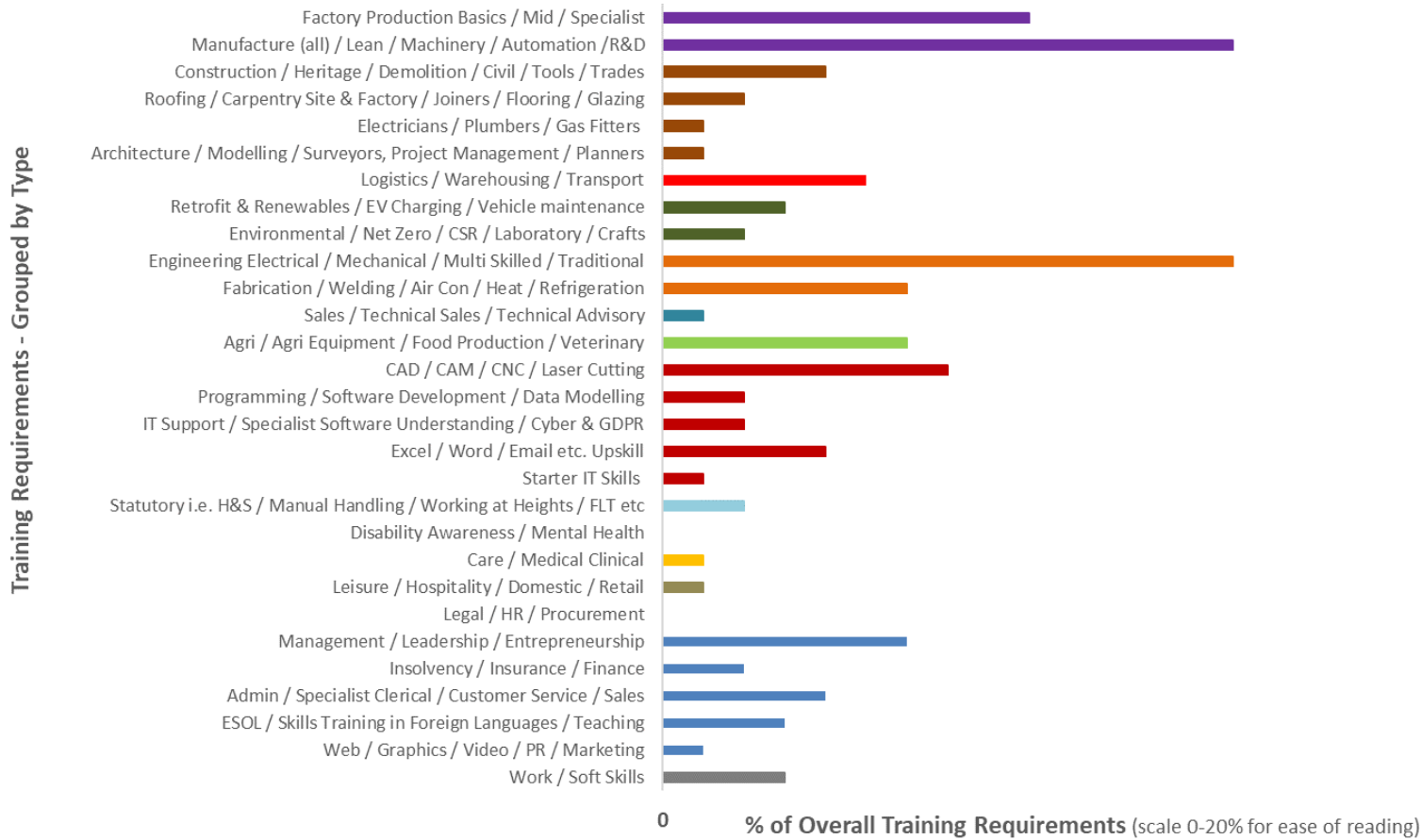
## Training Needs... Manufacturing / Engineering including food & drink

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded

#### Manufacturing / Engineering including food & drink manufacture

Based on 162 interviews: **107 training needs stated and 76 interviewees stated they had no training needs.**

**27 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods.** Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.



20



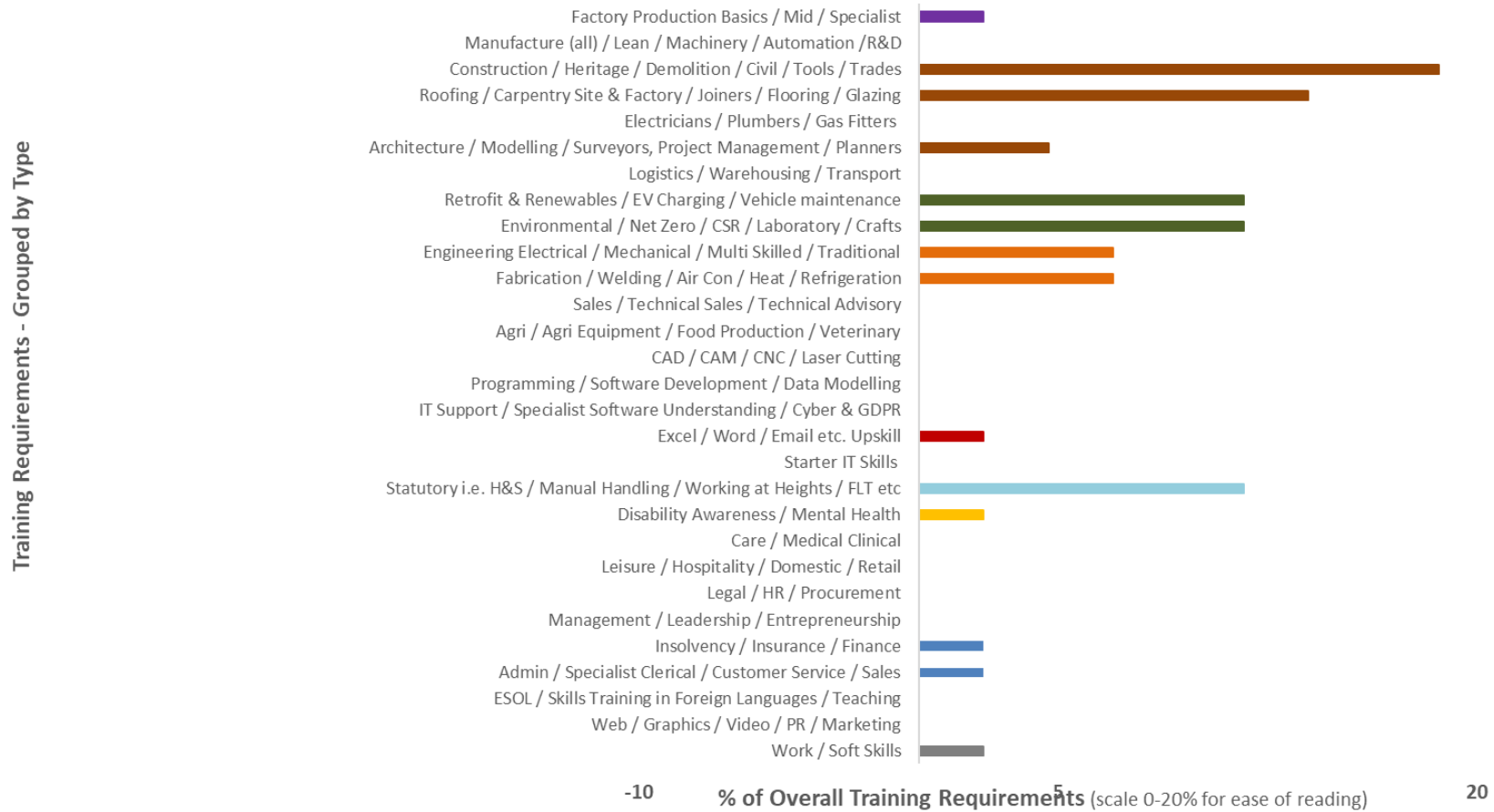
## Training Needs... Construction including environment technologies

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded

#### Construction including environment technologies

Based on 93 interviews: 43 training needs stated and 41 interviewees stated they had no training needs.

25 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods. Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.



## Training Needs... Health & Social Care

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded

#### Health & Social Care

Based on 57 interviews: 40 training needs stated and 23 interviewees stated they had no training needs.

12 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods. Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.



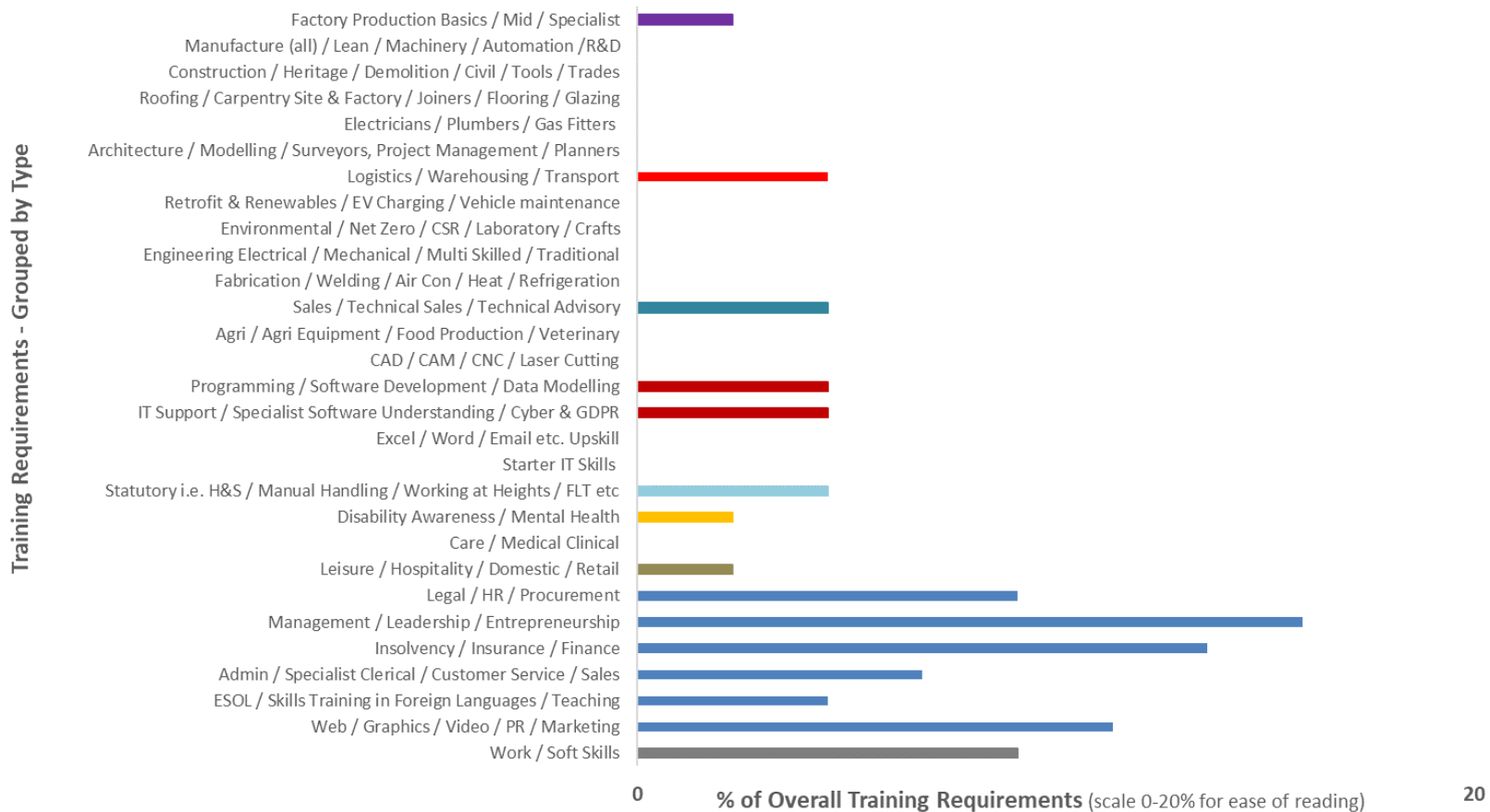
## Training Needs... Professional Services

### Training Needs as Stated as a % of those who responded

#### Professional Services

Based on 114 interviews: **44 training needs stated** and **60 interviewees stated they had no training needs.**

**14 specifically stated they train in house solely or in conjunction with other training methods.** Gaps indicate no responses for those training needs.



## Apprentices and Graduates... employment levels extracted from the Employer Voice interviews

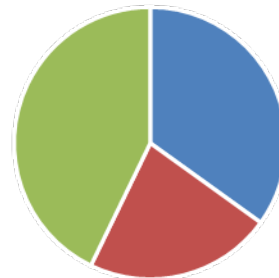
TYPES - HAD, HAVE OR INTEND TO EMPLOY SHORTLY			
	Graduates	Higher Apprenticeships	Standard Apprenticeships
Yes	53.15	37.00	64.97
No	46.85	63.00	35.03
<b>By % of those who said Yes or No</b>			

Herefordshire % of YES responses



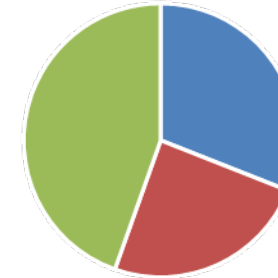
- Graduates
- Higher Apprenticeships
- Standard Apprenticeships

Shropshire % of YES responses



- Graduates
- Higher Apprenticeships
- Standard Apprenticeships

Telford & Wrekin % of YES responses



- Graduates
- Higher Apprenticeships
- Standard Apprenticeships



## Apprentices and Graduates...

Recruiting comments direct from employers to highlight their understanding. For example, on occasion they are misinformed as courses are available, when they think there are none locally. This is a quick win as easy to remedy. Some may want what is impractical to deliver due to low numbers and others find solutions to recruitment in unexpected places. Issues navigating paperwork for apprentices was a common theme, quick wins can easily help resolve this issue.

- “For Digital Marketing roles we used to recruit graduates but found it better to recruit more 'life experienced' people after trying several graduates.”  
*Professional Services*
- “We have decided to stop taking on youngsters below 21 as they do not stick and it is demoralising for the staff who do their training. We have had good success with older apprentices.” *Manufacturing / Engineering*
- “The company has taken on apprentices in L2 and L3 carpentry roles. Skills are not great, but they can be taught practical skills whilst working to build on the basics taught in college. It can be difficult for SME’s as there are a lot of costs to cover for the first 2 years as the apprentices are not bringing any money into the business and are learning. It is only in third year that they bring money into the business. Some apprentices do not see out the course as they receive offers from other companies, often larger, and go as they are paid slightly higher. However, apprentice model works well for us”  
*Construction*



## Apprentices and Graduates...



**Do you provide training to any of these sectors?**



Engineering /  
Manufacturing  
including Food &  
Drink Production



Professional  
Services



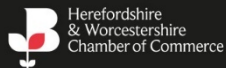
Construction  
including  
Environmental  
Technologies



Health &  
Social Care

**Do you provide training to employers?  
Then we need YOUR help**

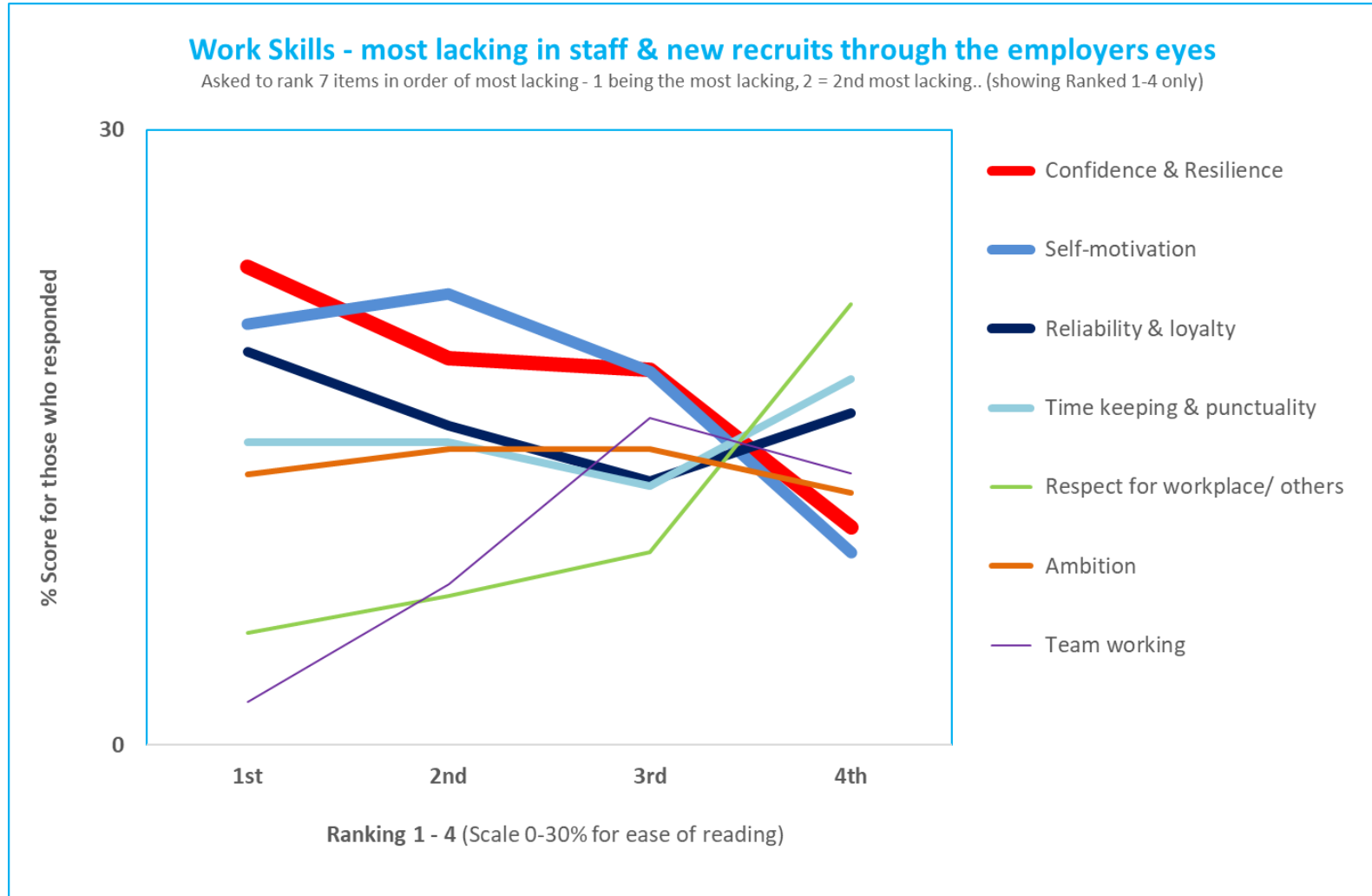
**Marches LSIPs**  
Local Skills Improvement Plan



- “Currently have an Engineering Apprentice and are looking for a Customer Service Apprentice and Accounts Apprentice”. *Manufacturing / Engineering*
- “Apprenticeships are an option for legal roles from 2021 and we therefore need providers to step up and offer them to the sector.” *Professional Services*
- “A welder focused apprenticeship which includes MIG welding would deliver a higher degree of competency and skill. Most companies in the steel fabrication now use laser cutting technology, as far as I am aware there are no apprenticeships on offer for this.” *Manufacture / Engineering*
- “The chartered surveying team take on a number of excellent graduates from a specialist local university, an unlikely source and only discovered by chance as not the normal place to look for surveyors.” *Construction*
- “The company recruits graduates for specialist high-level advanced manufacture and engineering roles. There are less British nationals post-graduate now and more foreign students graduating masters which is causing difficulties with visas and work permits.” *Professional Services*



**Work Skills...** employers ranking as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> skills most lacking in current staff and staff being recruited... Though not a standalone subject(s) work skills were mentioned in most interviews.



## Work Skills

### Herefordshire

**Work Skills** - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes  
Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



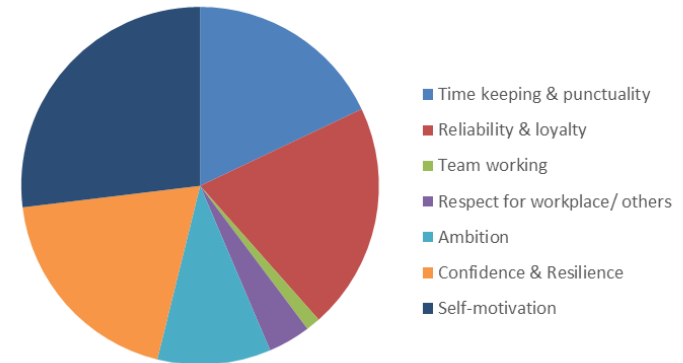
### Shropshire

**Work Skills** - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes  
Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



### Telford & Wrekin

**Work Skills** - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes  
Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses

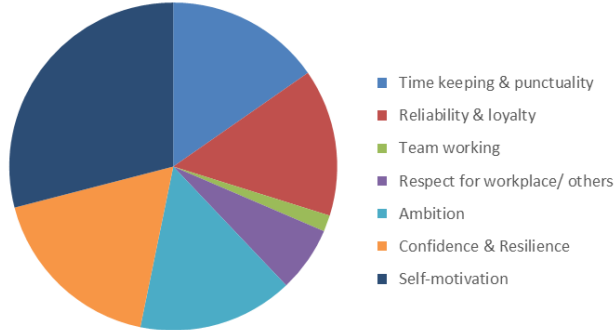




### Manufacturing / Engineering including food & drink manufacture

Work Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes

Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



### Construction including environment technologies

Work Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes

Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



### Health & Social Care

Work Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes

Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



### Professional Services

Work Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes

Showing what each sub-sector ranked in first place by % of responses



**Soft Skills...** employers ranking as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> skills most lacking in current staff and staff being recruited... Though not a standalone subject(s) soft skills were mentioned in most interviews.

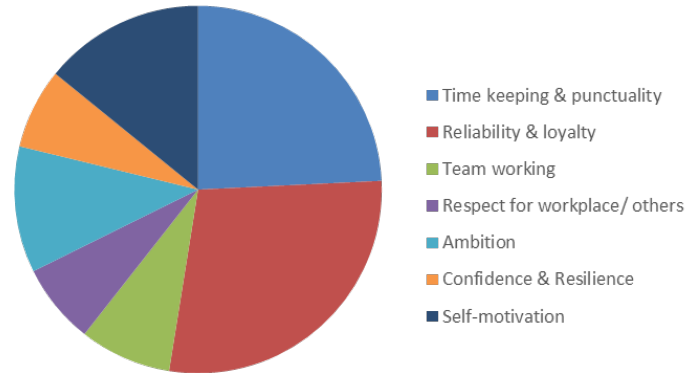


## Soft Skills

### Herefordshire

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



### Telford & Wrekin

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



### Shropshire

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only

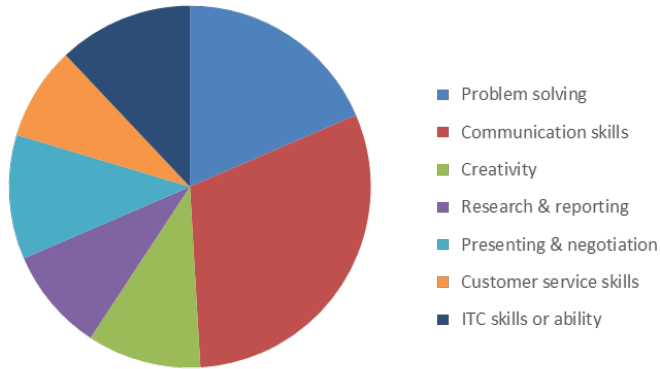




### Manufacturing / Engineering including food & drink manufacture

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

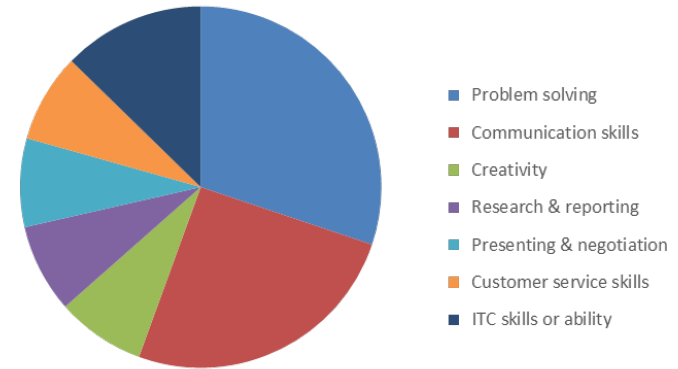
Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



### Construction including Enviromental Technologies

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

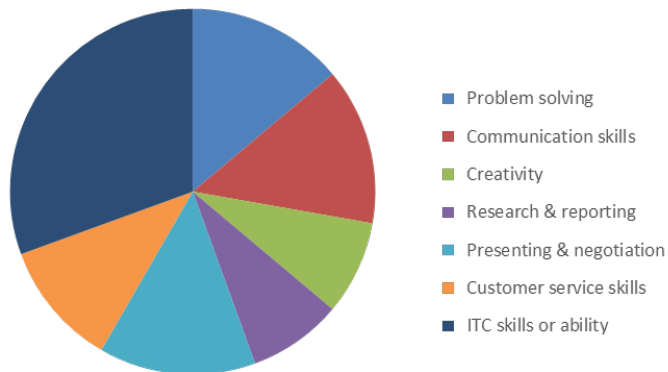
Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



### Health & Social Care

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

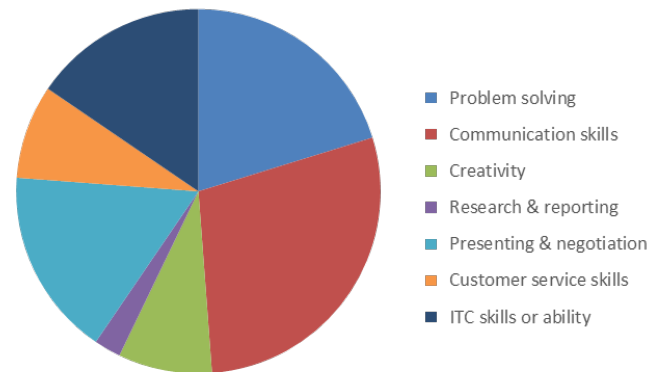
Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



### Professional Services

Soft Skills - most lacking in staff & new recruits through the employers eyes.

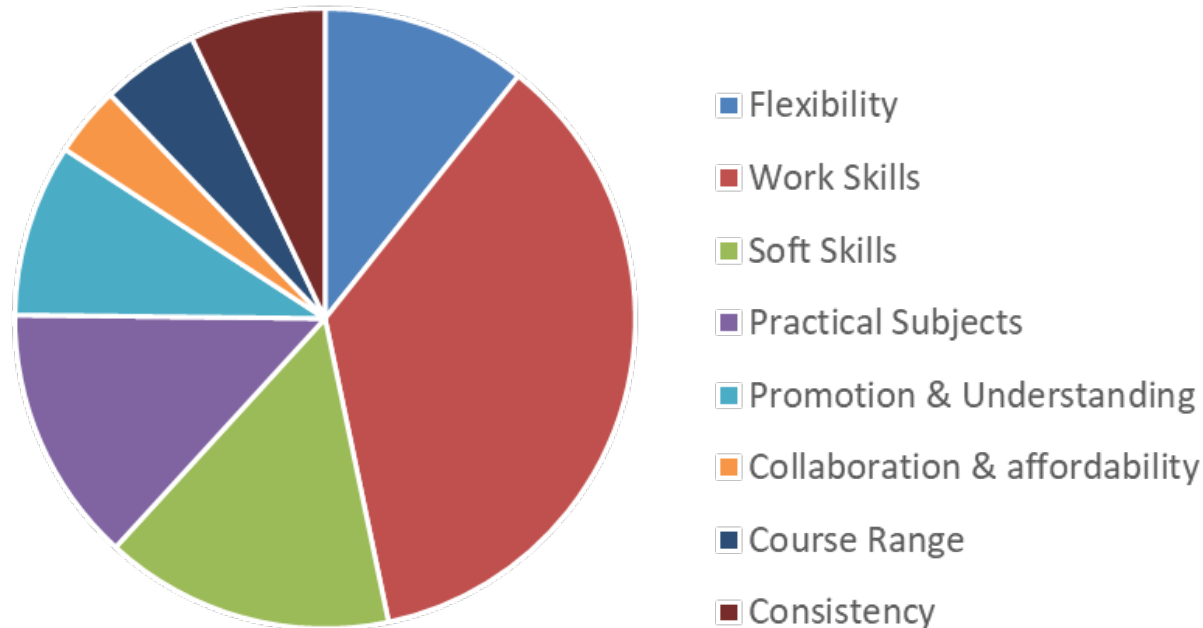
Showing what each sub-sector - Ranked in first place only



## How do you think current training could be improved?

These are the general views of the employers and they are aware that Providers (Public, Private, Large & Small) do have strict criteria to meet, funding rules to abide by and nationally decided course content, therefore they cannot always be flexible or accommodate every request. However, it was felt important for them to express their needs and wishes. They also articulated that some elements could be quickly achieved by ensuring greater cooperation and understanding between both parties.

Training Improvements - % of those who stated these requirements 463 interviews



## Training Improvements context...Employers wishes for the future.

- **Flexibility:** Due to time constraints short courses are welcome. Flexible methods to work with rural areas, sectors with chronic staff shortages so cannot release, to support younger staff who have no means of travelling. Block provision was favoured by some, over day release as it allowed the employers to manage workloads more effectively. Multiskilled and modular training was favoured to cover for skills shortages, give the work force more interest, career progression, aid retention and overall ensure greater productivity. Modular to allow for the many companies who cannot provide all elements of an apprenticeship but would like to take apprentices or where courses only have partial value for the employer's needs. More flex with apprenticeships to allow for short term contracts or partial placement availability, like the CITB model for shared apprenticeships. FE providers given more freedom to flex courses or budgets to meet local needs and sectors, if the area became devolved in the future, meanwhile use AEB 3% flex & other funding streams.
- **Work skills:** Employers felt strongly that more emphasis should be put on teaching students to understand the demands of a full working day, realities of work and the reasons for having a career. Less emphasis on the unattainable and far more on reality. Society acknowledged as part of the issue. Reliability, respect, understanding hierarchy and team working are all elements to ensure an easy transition into the world of work. Especially important the ability to problem solve, not just regurgitate information, this point was mainly in respect of Graduates. Work skills and work reality employers felt should start in junior school and continue throughout. Bootcamps locally have proven especially helpful for sector entry promotion and ensuring potential staff remain as they understand the workplace before arrival.
- **Soft skills:** Communication and the ability to communicate face to face, effectively and clearly was the biggest issue. Customer service, team working, base level IT skills, competent use of Word, Excel, and the ability to email professionally. Good standard of English. Team working and presentation also featured. Bootcamps, 1 to main using IT and upskilling programmes have and continue to help embed better soft skills and a key focus of the Quick Wins.



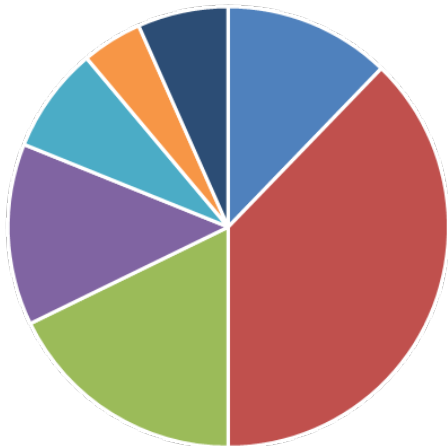
## Training Improvements context... Employers wishes for the future.

- **Practical Subjects:** Employers starting to look for a greater emphasis on practical skills, less on academic exam driven study. Ensure learning methods that have legacy of knowledge not just a qualification. Give students/school children more exposure to the honest realities of the world of work (virtual or live). Employers articulated that they are very willing to assist with this, such as working with FE/HE to create video blogs of the industry sector and career pathways.
- **Promotion & Understanding:** Providers to strive to have better understanding of the various businesses they provide services to. More co-working between providers and employers. Appreciation employers are not always familiar with education. Levy support and understanding; improve using best practice to ensure simple misunderstanding is not the issue.
- **Collaboration & Affordability:** Providers unite to run courses (virtual, interactive, or live) across a wider area to ensure greater numbers and therefore lower more affordable costs for businesses. Advise on funding for post 19 apprenticeships and how to access if available.
- **Course Range:** Right student on right course for the student. More skill refresher courses. Wider range of apprenticeships on offer. If courses cannot be run explain to the employers and communicate timely to ensure they can function productively.
- **Consistency:** Consistency of course content between all providers. Ensure course content meets latest statutory regulations. Course content information written by someone who has direct understanding of the industry being delivered into.

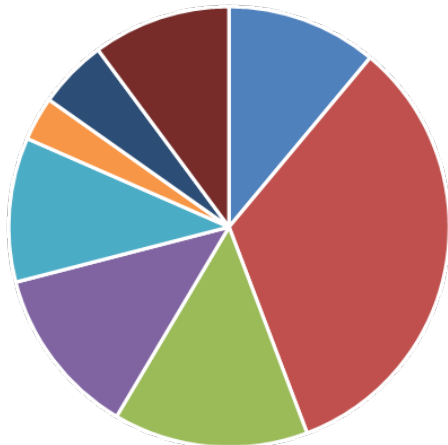


## Training Improvements by Sub Region - % of those who stated these requirements

Training Improvements  
Herefordshire

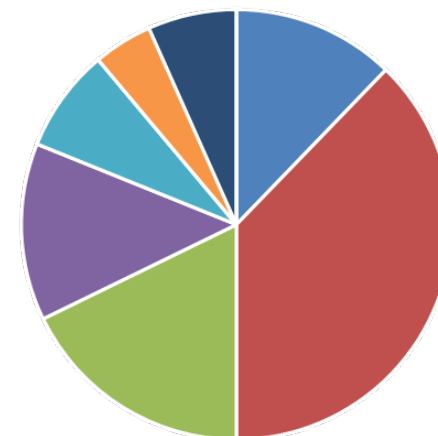


Training Improvements  
Shropshire



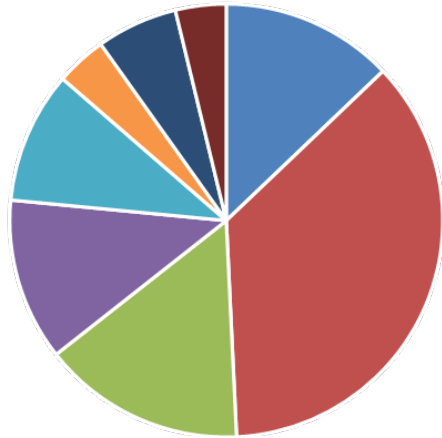
- Flexibility
- Work Skills
- Soft Skills
- Practical Subjects
- Promotion & Understanding
- Collaboration & affordability
- Course Range
- Consistency

Training Improvements  
Telford & Wrekin

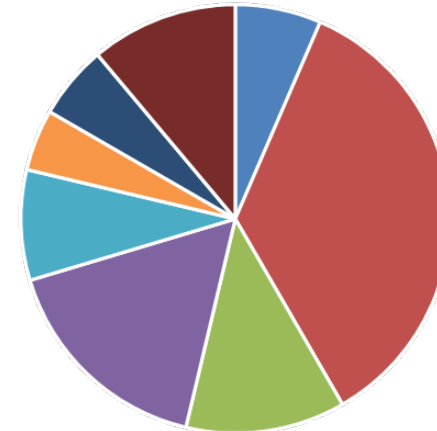


## Training Improvements by Sectors - % of those who stated these requirements

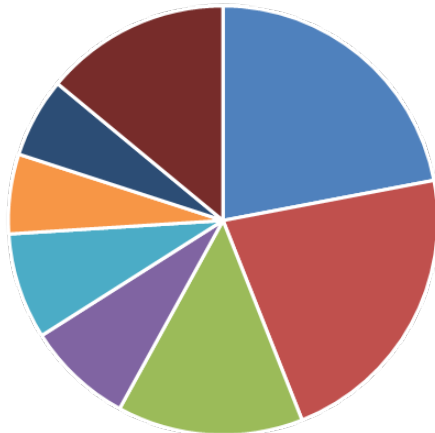
Training Improvements  
Manufacturing / Engineering  
including food & drink manufacture



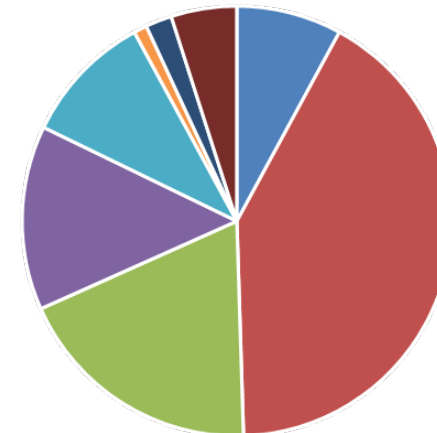
Training Improvements  
Construction  
including environment technologies



Health & Social Care



Professional Services



- Flexibility
- Work Skills
- Soft Skills
- Practical Subjects
- Promotion & Understanding
- Collaboration & affordability
- Course Range
- Consistency

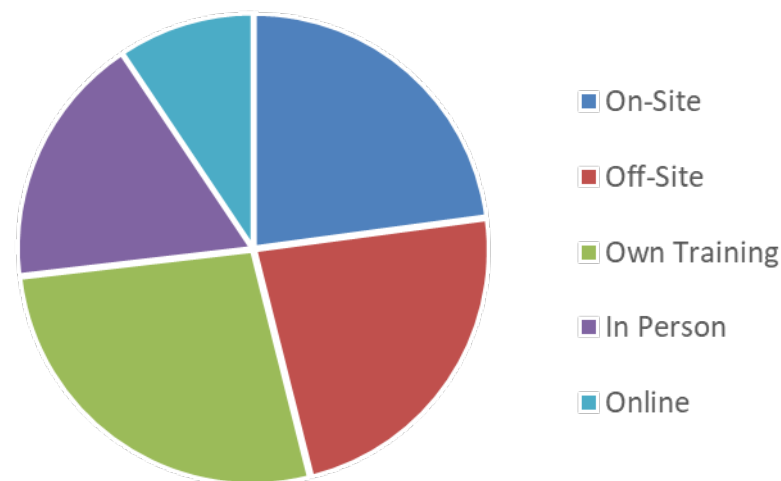


## Training Styles – which works best for your company?

Comments were also made about:

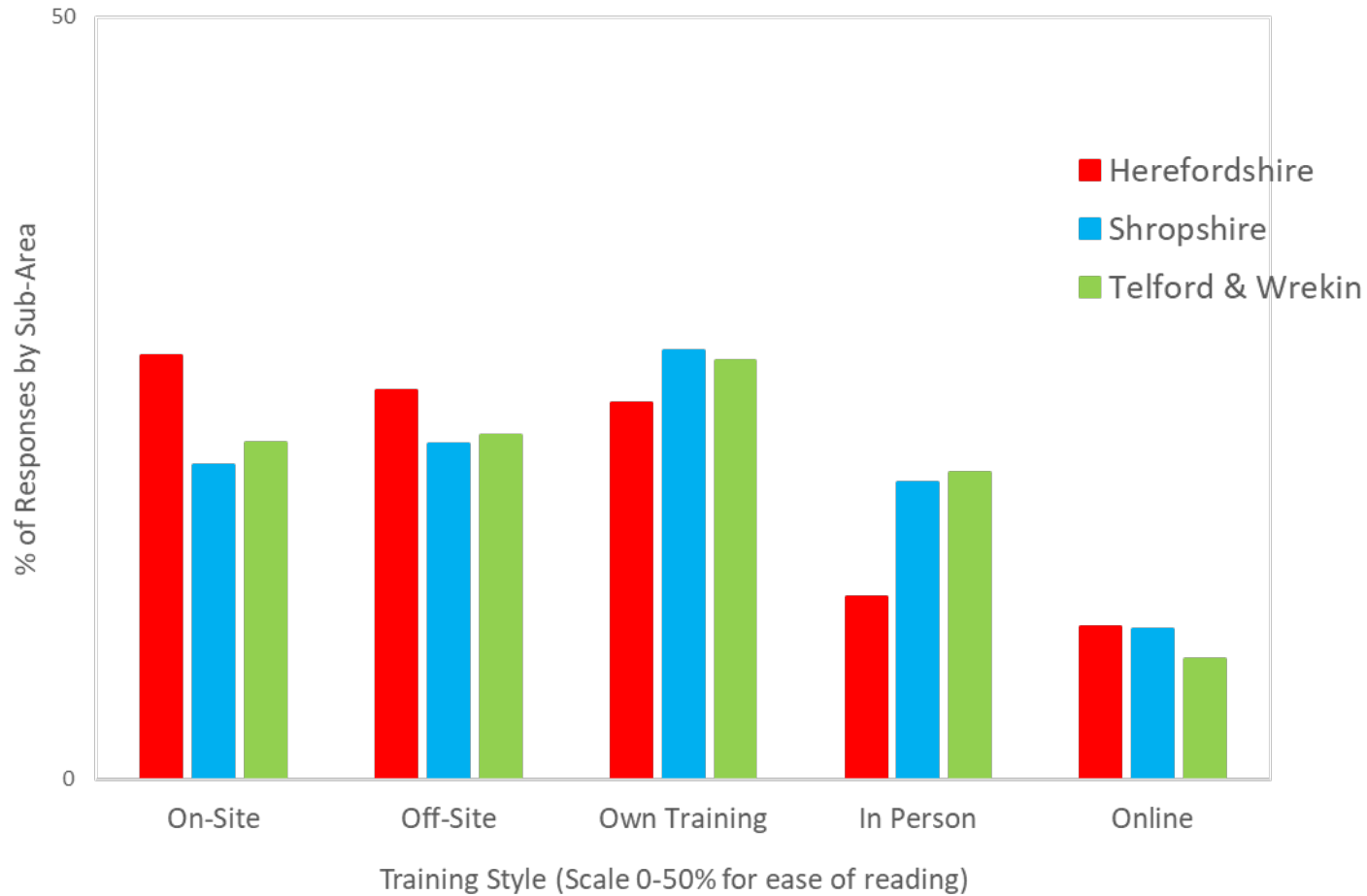
- A preference for modular courses to ensure training is business relevant.
- Despite a lack of interest in online, this referred far more to tick box courses than courses with live or timely feedback, interactive or accompanied by workbooks and other materials.
- Online tick box course was felt not to deliver a good retention of knowledge, yet some statutory or industry standard courses use this method.
- Move to more in-house training to meet bespoke, quality needs and to keep staff on-site.
- In-house using current staff's experience and knowledge was deemed the best way to train new recruits on the specific needs for that business.
- In-house also meant staff off-site far less and was therefore better for productivity, especially in manufacturing. Block release over day release for apprentices better for some sectors.
- Off-site ensures staff meet others and gain from their knowledge. Staff benefit from the interaction with employees from different types or styles of businesses. Concentration may be better when off site, course style dependant.

Training Styles % of respondents selecting each answer



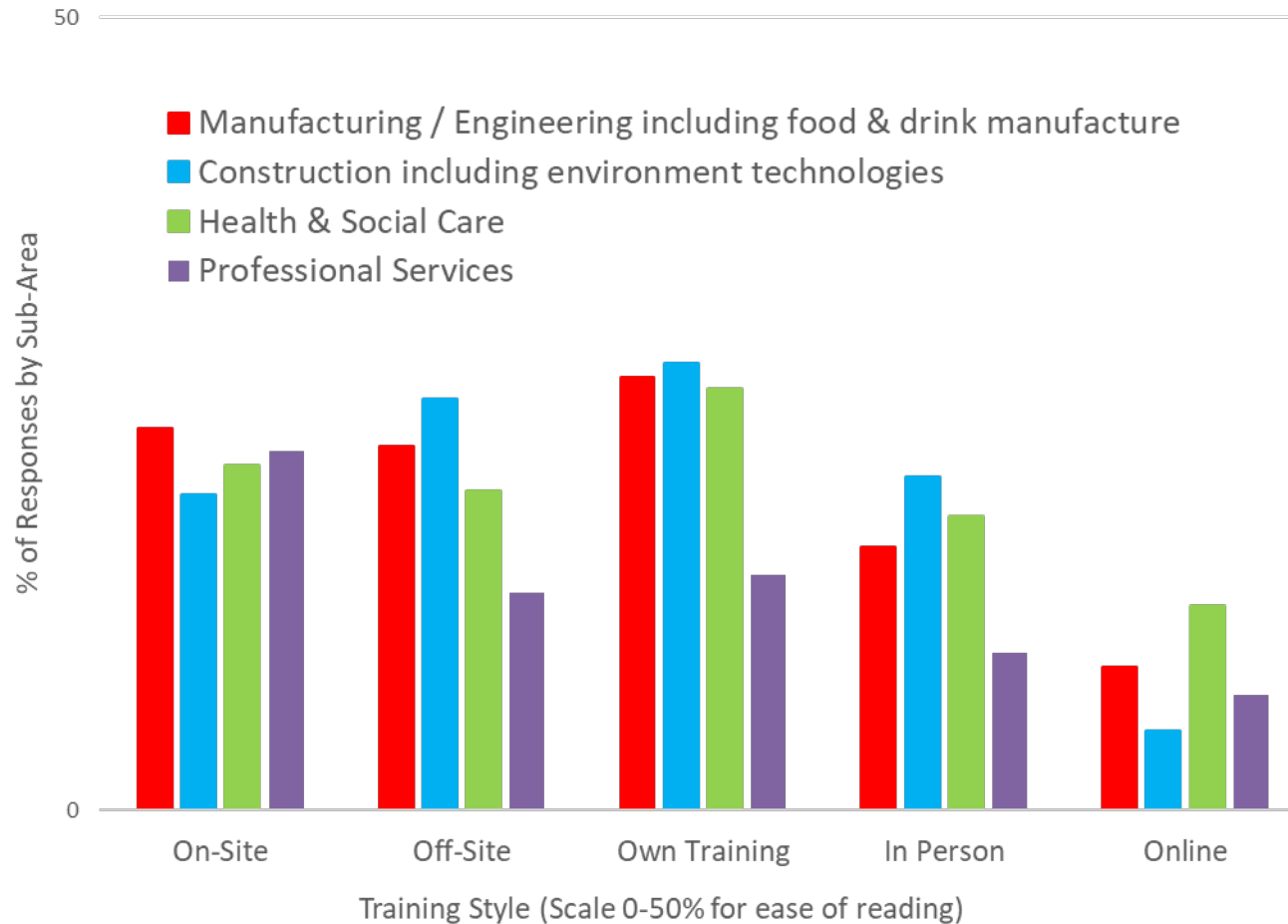
## Training Styles – which works best for your company? Sub Regions

Training Styles - which works best for your company?



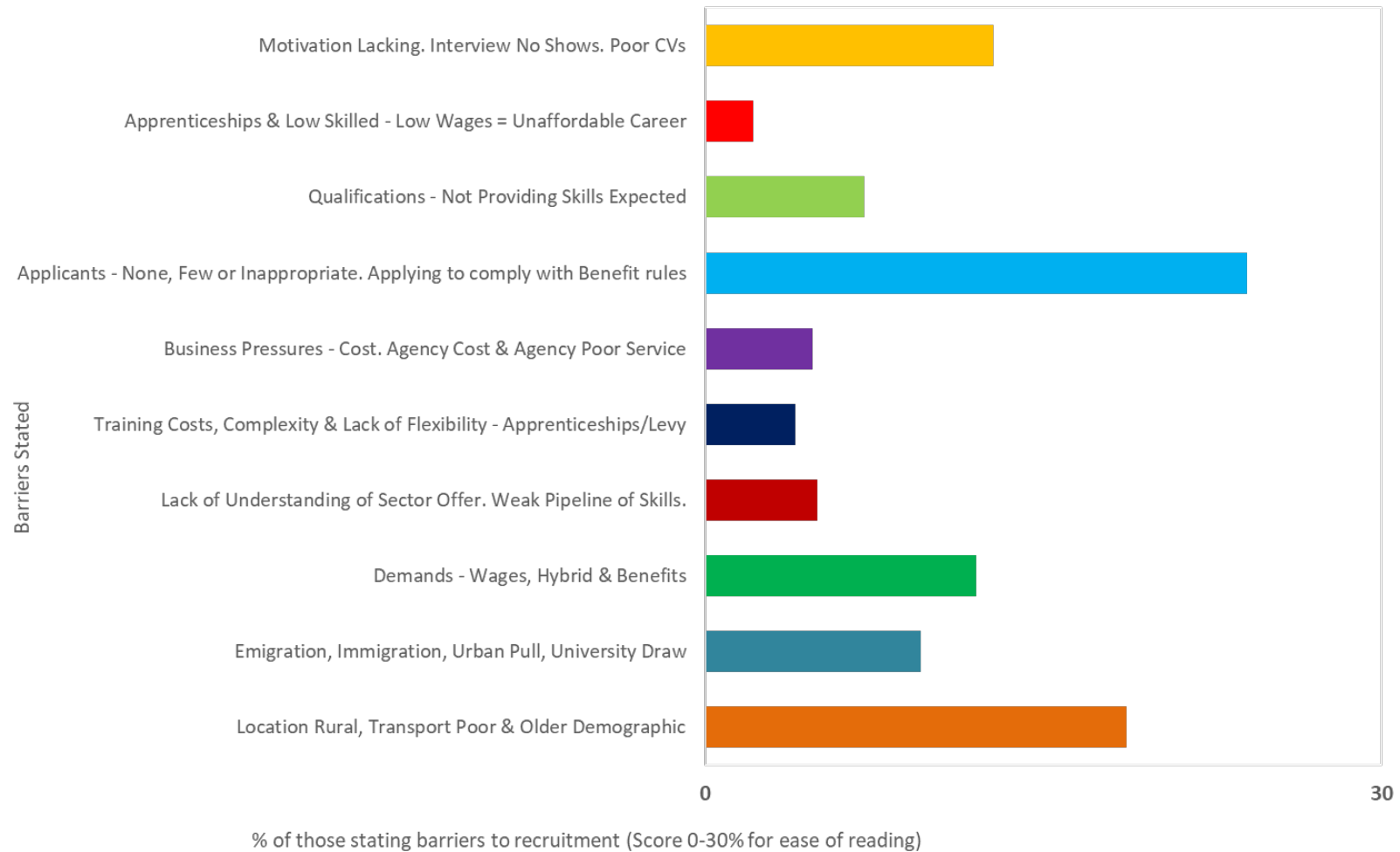
## Training Styles – which works best for your company? Sectors

Training Styles - which works best for your company?

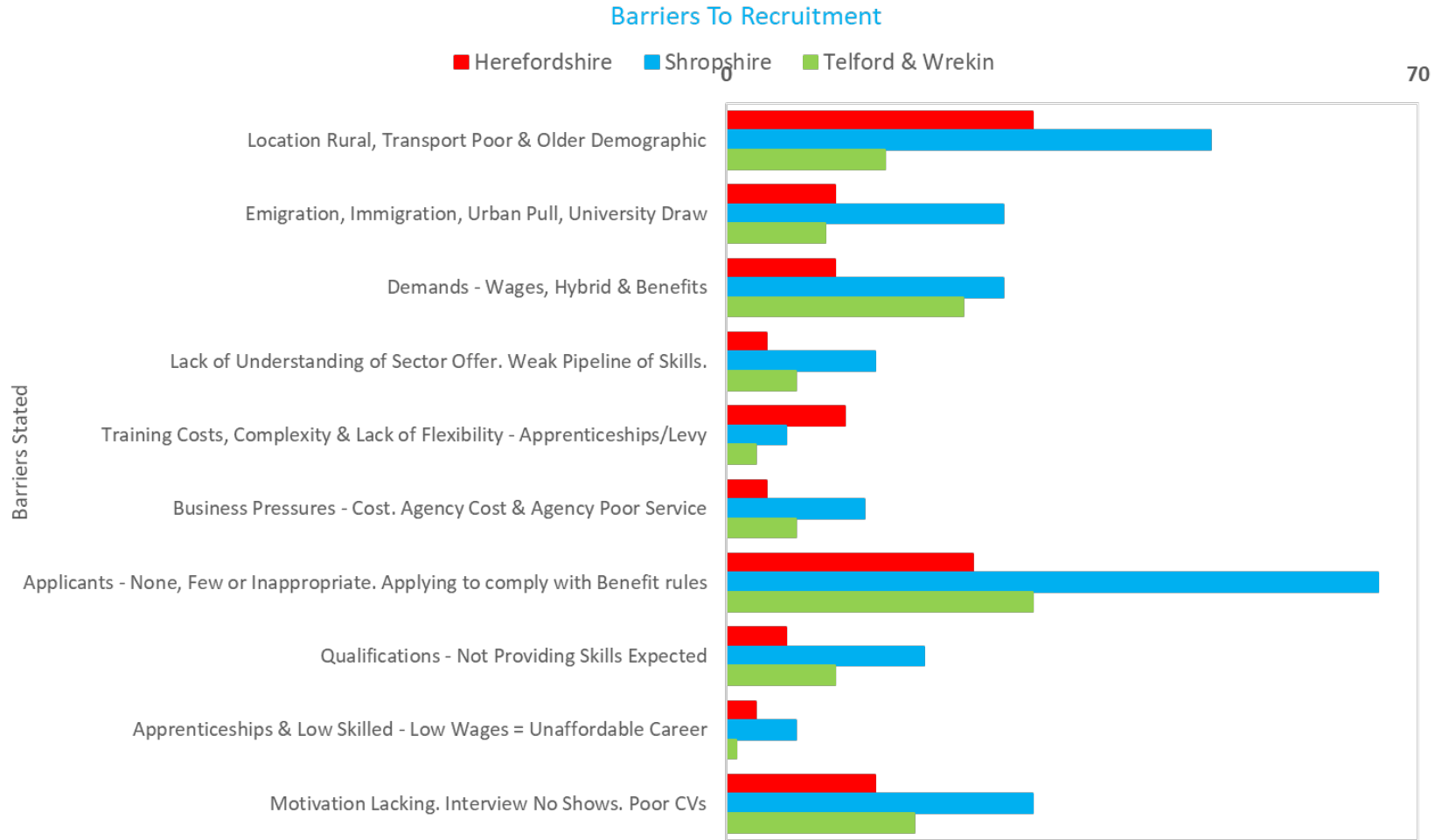


## Barriers to recruitment and retention.

Barriers To Recruitment - 48 stated they had no barriers to recruitment



## Barriers to recruitment and retention. Sub Regions

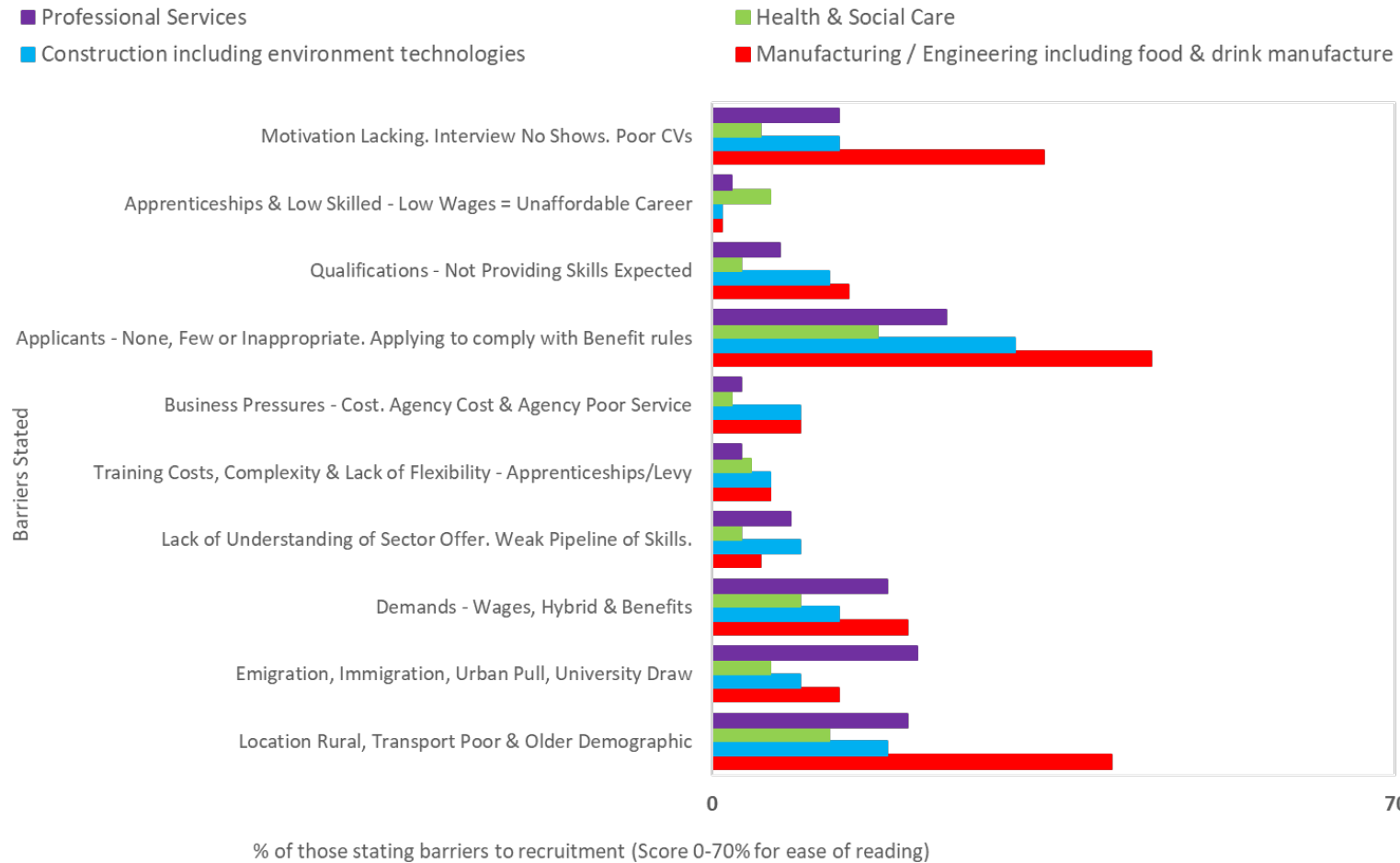


% of those stating barriers to recruitment (Score 0-70% for ease of reading)



## Barriers to recruitment and retention. Sectors

Barriers To Recruitment



## Do you feel career guidance in England, helps or hinders people from joining your sector?

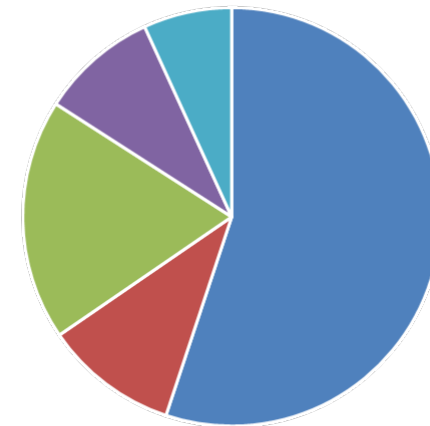
Employers comments on local careers advice. Easy wins achieved through collaboration, sector promotion & one to many solutions.

“It is simplistic and groups many different careers into single categories. For example, Marketing is a huge field that needs a wide variety of people from communicators, creatives, analysts, IT developers. It's not just 'colouring in'.” *Professional Services*

"I love animals" seems to incorrectly signpost naive individuals towards the veterinary sector. Schools need to be more up to date” *Other Services*

“Careers guidance is good as colleges and schools run careers fairs that are helping introduce people to the industry and get people in front of potential employers.” *Manufacturing*

Does Careers Guidance Hinder or Help  
% of those who gave a response



- Hinders skills pipeline
- Helps skills pipeline
- Does not promote/understand/narrow view of our sector
- Careers advisors out of touch or have a negative attitude to certain sectors
- Giving inflated expectations /push to university/desk only careers promoted



"I feel that the manufacturing sector is viewed by career advisors as a mundane, production line, low skill level work and that there is a lack of opportunity and progress available. This is the complete opposite and there is so much opportunity to grow and develop in this industry, !"

*Manufacturing*

"We have such a good relationship with our local college that we support their careers advisers and we work together to encourage people to join our sector."

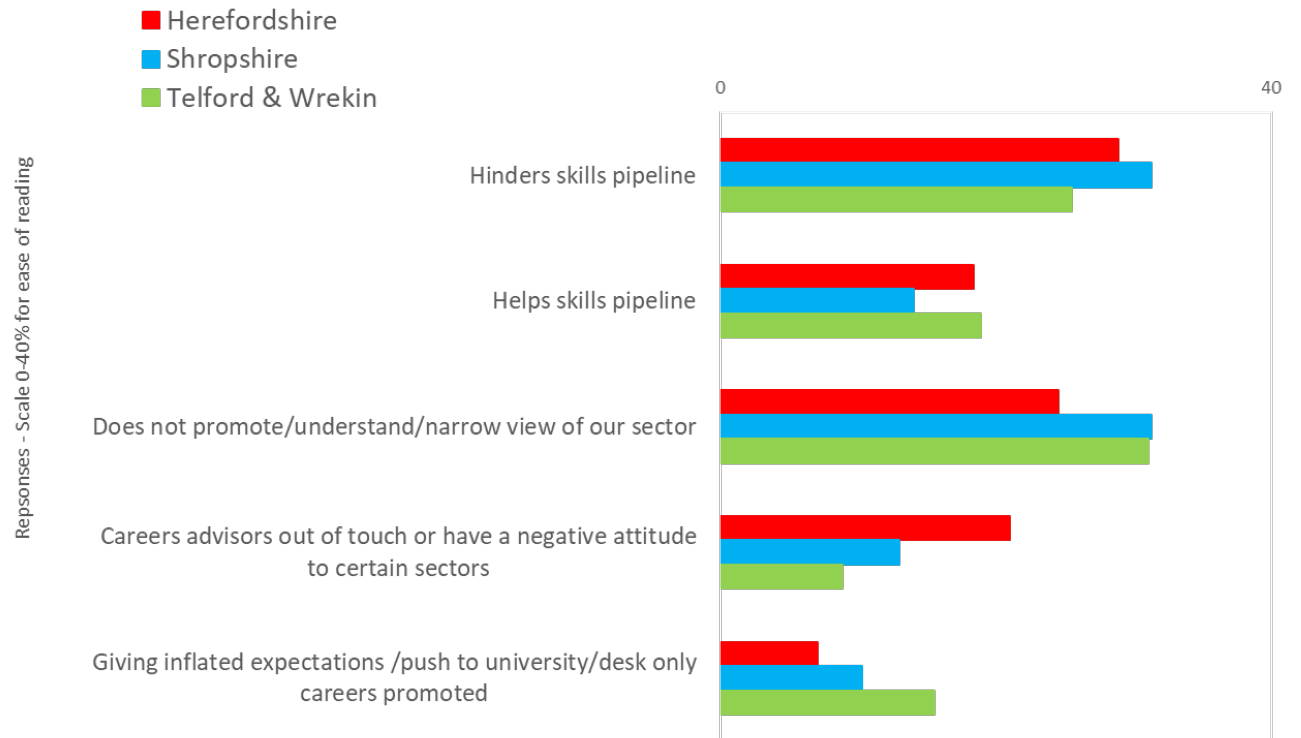
*Manufacturing*

"Career guidance hinders my sector - accountants are regarded as boring."

*Professional Services*

## Careers Advice

Does Careers Guidance Hinder or Help % of those who gave a response

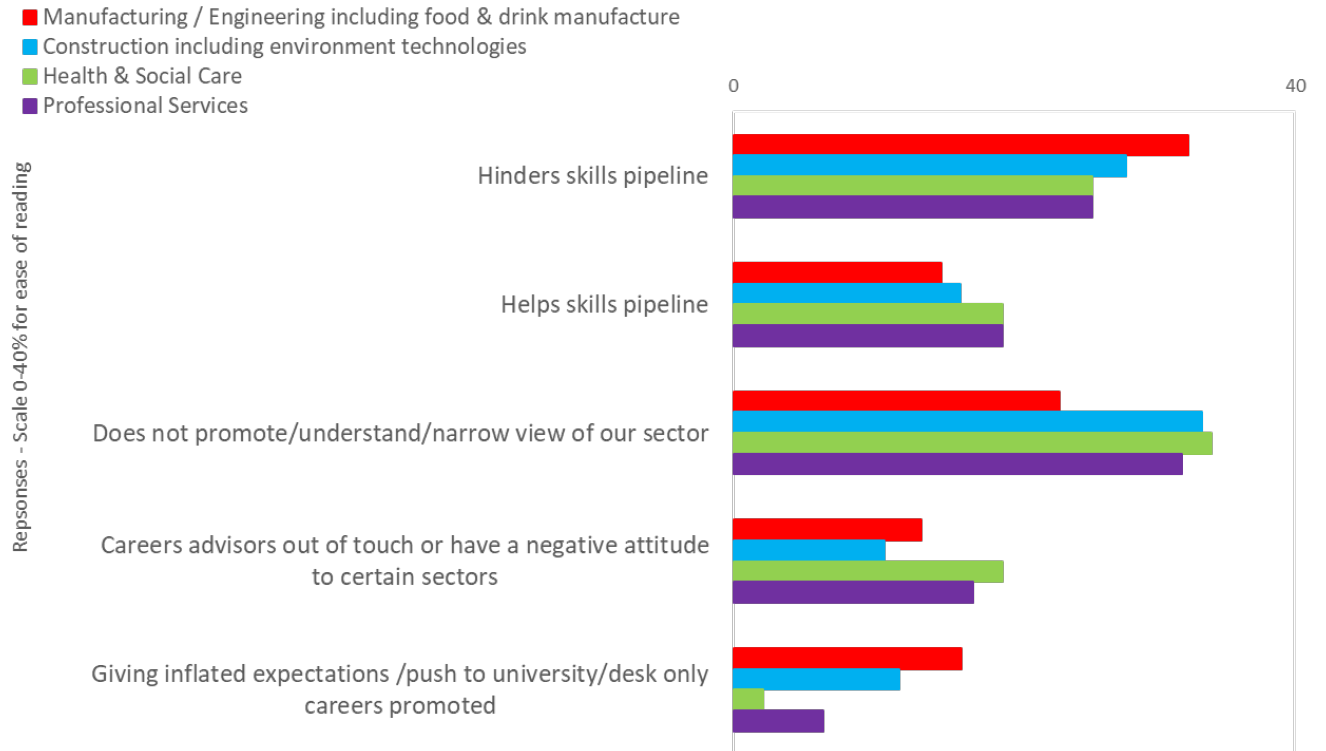




“We attend careers fairs across the region and at one recent one with 250 sixth formers in the room, not one person put their hand up when I asked who wanted to explore marketing as a career option - not even when I said they could be on social media all day! Clear better vision of our industry needs broadcasting” *Professional Services*

“The company does a lot of work with local colleges to provide work placements for students which is helping raise awareness of jobs within the care sector. As a whole, more could be done by local councils or the central government to promote care as they are not targeting these sectors with careers guidance.” *Health & Social Care*

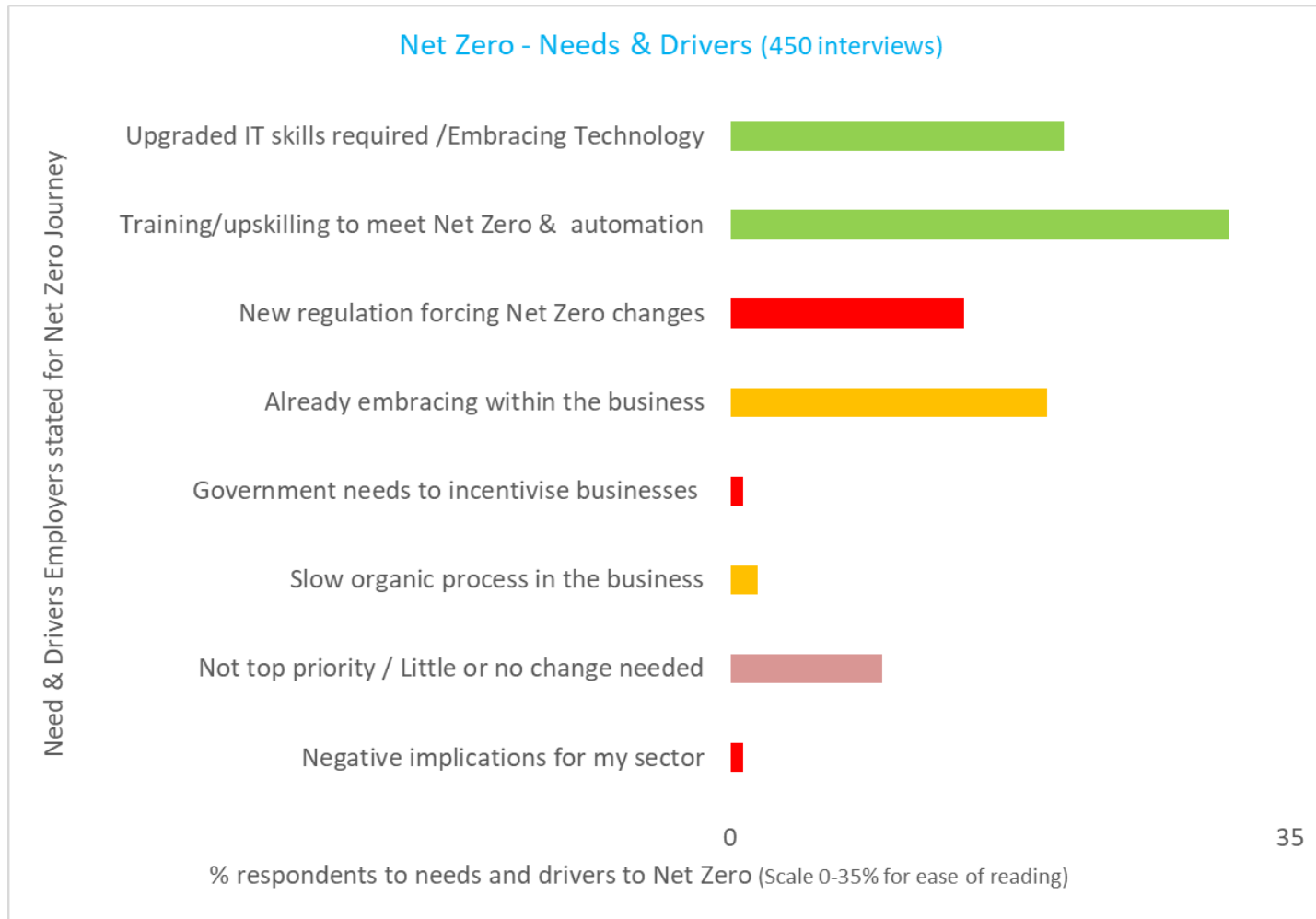
Does Careers Guidance Hinder or Help % of those who gave a response



Responses - Scale 0-40% for ease of reading

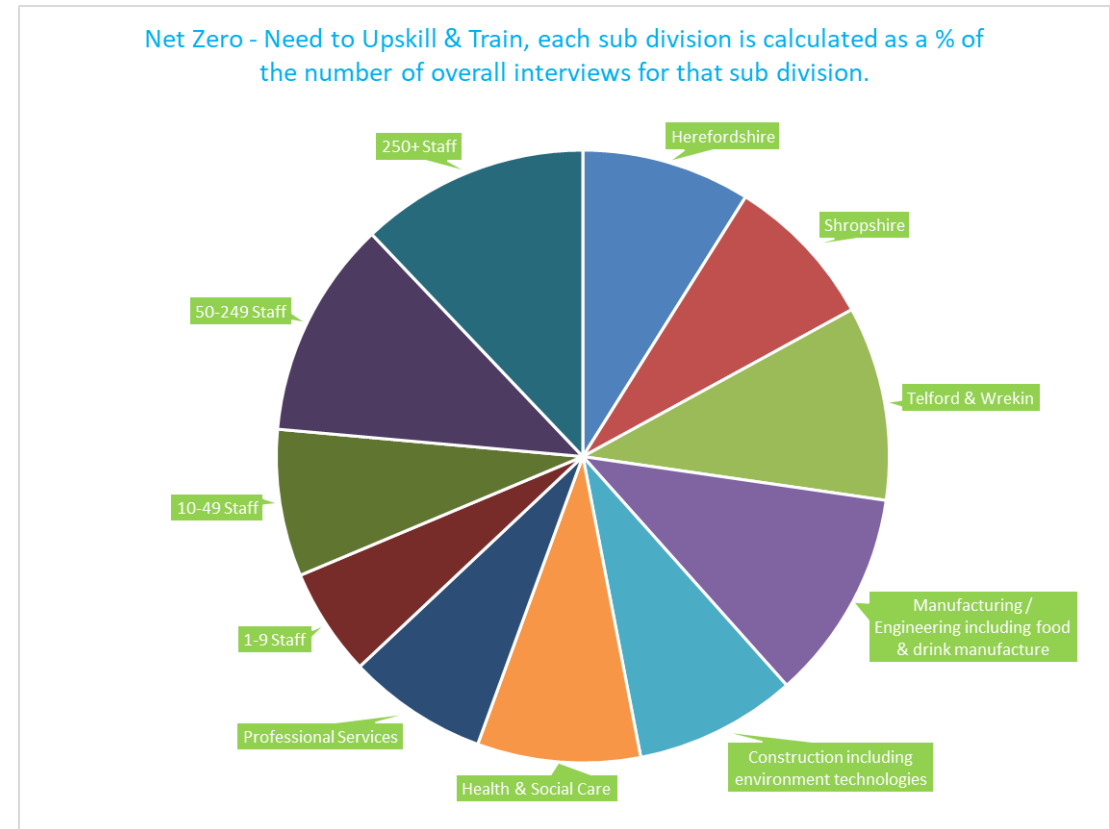


## Net Zero – how will this affect your business and what will be needed to support your business to meet requirements?



## Net Zero – understanding which sub-sectors by company size, sector type or location feel the greatest need to upskill to meet net zero

- Large employers feel greatest need to upskill to meet Net Zero
- Manufacturing and Engineering feel greatest need to upskill to Net Zero
- Telford & Wrekin lead on the need to upskill for Net Zero
- Larger employers have greater legislation to adhere to
- Health & Construction driven to change to achieve waste reduction
- Small companies have less understanding of requirements
- IT upskilling important to allow further automation, to drive down business travel and centralise electronic records
- IT upskilling needed to embrace new technology to enhance techniques and productivity



## How can employers help themselves – employers views

- “Employers need to first understand what it is they want their employees to be able to do and where improvements can be made, then find suitable training tailored for those needs.”  
*Manufacture & Engineering*
- “Employers could build closer working relationships with local colleges and training providers. This would allow training to be tailored specifically to the sector.” *Health & Social Care*
- “Inclusion of staff in the business plans so staff understand the business needs and staff skills needs.” *Professional Services*
- “Embracing the latest technology to encourage younger people to move in to engineering by offering modern/clean working environments were possible.” *Manufacture & Engineering*

**Only one in three (29%)**

organisations claim to have clear learning and development (L&D) plans for their employees, according to the report, Learning and Skills at Work 2020, from the CIPD and Accenture.

8 Jun 2020



## How can employers help themselves – employers views

# 56%

of businesses interviewed across the West Midlands stated they had no plans around T levels.

Extracted from the British Chambers of Commerce National Workforce Survey West Midlands Results April-May 2022

- “Promote a more inclusive working environment to those not familiar with the industry. There is currently no link between our business and any local colleges, yet we have opportunities in all aspects of the leisure industry.” *Other*
- “Employers need to pool together to create a skills hub to meet the need of the sector and take the initiative to train people. It would be good for employers to run taster workshops to encourage people into the sector.” *Construction*
- “Training is not all about courses - they can give the technical and basic knowhow. Companies need to ensure that internal mentoring and continuous development is embedded within the Company.” *Professional Services*



## Looking back is there any training model or qualification, that your Company can no longer access, that you would like to be able to access once again?

These are the employer's views of training they feel is no longer available but appreciated when available. Ideas and innovation can be derived from understanding what worked in the past. Sometimes it is purely a lack of understanding of what is currently available.

- “Specific sector admin/clerical/secretarial courses – used to be a Medical Secretary for example.” *Health & Social Care*
- “The Manufacturing Advisor Service used to offer some very useful practical courses for manufacturers.” *Manufacture & Engineering*
- “The company finds that City & Guilds qualifications are not widely available anymore which they would like to be able to easily access. The company does not like that many courses and certifications have time constraints for renewal as past qualifications were often permanent.” *Manufacture & Engineering*
- “The company finds that National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are not widely available post covid lockdowns. The company is not sure what NVQs are available now as there seems to be less information available around these.” *Health & Social Care*



## Looking back.....

- “Previously the company had access to a foundation degree in manufacturing through a local University who delivered the course through part-time evening and weekend classes, but this is no longer available. Part-time evening and weekend courses seem to have stopped in engineering and manufacturing.” *Manufacture & Engineering*
- “Apprenticeship system to understand older qualifications, having to put staff through functional maths/English to be able to take a course as qualifications such as O’levels not recognised. Level 2 business admin as Level 3 is too big a jump for many to start with.”  
*Construction*
- “We have paid for employees to do Masters (one an MBA and one in Marketing). Both have performed very well, but neither have managed to translate their learning into something relevant for their work. It seems too theoretical to them and they can't apply it in the real world.” *Professional Services*



# Conclusions

drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews



## Conclusions drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews

- Skills, though the Marches mirrors national skill shortages, there is still a special rural and historical element to local skills shortages. Historically low skilled manufacture and agriculture provided much of the work force, which commanded lower wages, as this has evolved the area has not been able to keep pace with urban wages and conditions, and this is detrimental for local employers when recruiting.
- Retention of skills in the area is key. There are already good in roads into this with the arrival of NMITE, nurse training returning to being local and the expansion of some of our local University offers. Other avenues are starting to open up such as non-University routes into professions such as law, allowing more to train locally which raises the chances of recruits remaining local.
- Many feel that the drive to get young people to university has gone too far to the detriment of many industries. Technical alternative training routes are not being heralded as equal to university, but rather than a less option or last resort. T levels and apprenticeships are helping to address this.



## Conclusions drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews

- Apprenticeships are very much welcomed but there is a need for a wider range of apprenticeships. Some smaller companies find the course content cannot always be fully covered within the work the company does, and so they tend not to take apprentices. Flex to share an apprentice between providers or employers or more flex in the modules would be welcome in the future and allow more to engage apprentices.
- The levy; smaller businesses are not finding it easy to access or understand levy share and larger levy monies uses sometimes restrictive correctly or incorrectly. Providers not always willing to support SMEs through the paperwork or understanding, which SME's find daunting. Quick wins to address this.
- Higher and degree apprenticeships less well known about, and funding or availability not always understood. Where used it is valued by employers.
- T Levels are not widely understood or known about. Smaller companies do not see how placements of the length expected can happen. More flex required on the placement element. Clearer explanation and employer focused marketing required. Quick wins to dispel myths.



## Conclusions drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews

- Careers advice is seen as lacking for some sectors, promoting out of date views, or devaluing certain career paths. Where employers engage actively in careers events and advice this perception alters to show a much more positive picture. Increase employer involvement to raise understanding and awareness, to support careers advisors.
- Reality of work is a barrier, as the leap from the lesser hours of school, college or university is too big a leap for many recruits and they struggle to grasp the requirements of work. Bootcamps and one to many information to support.
- Soft skills, IT especially Microsoft suite, email etiquette and communication are highlighted by many employers as lacking but vital. The ability to communicate in the under 25 age group especially, is seen as something having a very negative impact on business, productivity, and career progression. Short courses, bootcamps and upskilling to aid this.
- Creativity is seen as lacking in secondary schools, this is seen as hindering many areas especially engineering, construction, and manufacturing. The skills to research, absorb and then put to practical use are seen as greatly lacking. Use our creative resources to enhance.



## Conclusions drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews

- Communication is clearly one of the biggest issues. There is a clear language and cultural understanding gap between many employers and the public sector / providers, this creates barriers, misconceptions, and false expectations. Looking at this issue and understanding the reasoning could offer quick wins to improve the take up of training, see a rise in skills availability and competence levels. It could dispel myths and undo past poor experiences.
- Cooperative working, providers already work in groupings to make best use of provision, estate and more. There is further room for cross working both for employers and providers. Networking between providers is useful and cross pollinates allowing training to reach right across the vast expanse, mainly rural, that is the Marches. Quick win would be to encourage and support rural employer groupings to share training.
- Specialist providers such as Hereford Arts College and Harper Adams University can all become useful parts of this cross pollination and providers of an untapped source of recruits for employers due to the uniqueness of their offer.



## Conclusions drawn from the Employer Voice Interviews

- Other specialist providers such as Derwen College can be a bridge for a Marches FE provider health care assistant (HCA's) student cohort to gain vital skills at the nearby specialist NHS hospital by providing accommodation. This would give the Derwen students further experience plus giving the HCA students a broader depth of experience.
- Employers would benefit from being helped to understand where to look for new recruits, how to see and evaluate alternative sources.
- Simple messaging to raise awareness of courses available, be their locally delivered or online national Government courses such as Skills for Life. Simply providing a website listing does clearly not reach all employers and assisting those employers in understanding where to look would ensure less misunderstanding. Trying to avoid multiple messages from individual providers would help. Awareness by providers of the need to simplify messaging around qualification levels, course content etc. would also help more to understand availability and value. Many of these issues are quite easily resolved issues, to the benefit of all parties.



Primary Report Author Rosie Beswick - on behalf of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce  
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# THE EMPLOYER'S VOICE

## MARCHES LSIPs PROJECT

