

**LIVERPOOL
CITY REGION**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

METRO MAYOR
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Skills for Growth Action Plan

Employability 2018 - 2020



Contents

4	Summary	18	Recruitment
4	Key issues	22	Retention and succession planning
5	Employability skills required by employers	23	Future proofing and efficiency
7	Priorities	24	Responses to employability skills challenges
8	Introduction	24	From the skills sector
9	Employability Skills Definitions, Demands and Gaps	33	From employers
9	Defining employability skills	34	Key Actions
10	Scale of the employability skills gap	34	Summary of key issues
15	Demand for employability skills	35	Priorities
18	Skills Challenges	36	Actions

Foreword

As a Combined Authority, one of our key priorities is ensuring that people have the right skills to build well-paid, rewarding careers, and that employers have people with the skills they need to grow.

Better employability skills will help people find work and progress in those jobs, boosting the productivity and performance of our employers, and creating more high-value jobs, benefitting people across the city region.

This Action Plan sets out an ambitious programme to make that happen and secure fair and inclusive growth across all sectors.

The priorities identified here are challenging and will require input from many partners to deliver.

In some cases they will require public sector reform, and we will use the Ways to Work programme to provide vital intelligence and learning to help us do that effectively.

Working together we have made great strides in recent years, and there is more to be done to drive collaborative working across providers and employers for the benefit of us all.

A sustained collaborative effort is required to see our ambitions realised.



Steve Rotheram

Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor



Cllr Ian Maher

Liverpool City Region Portfolio Lead,
Skills and Apprenticeships

Summary

This Employability Skills for Growth Action Plan draws on existing evidence and primary research with key stakeholders across the City Region to identify actions to address existing employability skills gaps and potential future demands from employers. It sets out actions for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, local providers and employers to address the current and future employability skills needs in the City Region.

Key issues

Evidence from existing research and consultations with stakeholders identified a number of key issues contributing to and resulting from the employability skills gap in the Liverpool City Region:

- Employers and stakeholders across all sectors reported gaps in general employability skills of their employees, particularly in written and spoken communication, basic IT and general employability competencies. This highlights the need to improve the employability skills of residents already in employment, as well as those looking for work.
- Employers experience gaps in more intermediate as well as basic employability skills, such as leadership, people, project and conflict management, and more advanced communication and presentation skills. The demand for these higher-level skills look likely to grow with the future expansion of more technical and managerial roles in the City Region.
- The employability skills gap is likely to be linked to the generally lower qualification levels amongst residents in the Liverpool City Region compared to those in the North West and England as a whole. Therefore, it is important to link general employability skills training to the development of basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Gaps in employability skills amongst job applicants and employees are creating a range of challenges for employers, including hard to fill and skills gap vacancies across all sectors and occupation levels; difficulties in retaining staff and succession planning; and creating efficiencies and future proofing their organisation in times of fast-paced technological change.
- There is a range of good practice taking place in basic employability and skills provision across the Liverpool City Region. This includes standalone and embedded provision offered by further education, vocational training and community learning providers. This good practice needs to be replicated across the City Region to ensure that employability provision is holistic and addresses the full range of competencies required by employers.

- Strong links and collaboration between providers, employers and recruitment agencies were identified as key to the development and delivery of responsive and good quality employability provision. However, it can be challenging for organisations to find the capacity and build the links required for this to take place.
- Lack of access to employability skills provision for residents already in employment was highlighted as a challenge in ensuring that employees have opportunities to continuously improve their skills.
- Providers also experienced challenges in delivering effective employability skills provision, including in recruiting and retaining teaching staff, lack of funding to keep up with changes in technology and capacity to support migrant workers to develop their spoken English and broader employability skills.

Employability skills required by employers

The table overleaf sets out the general employability skills which employers in the Liverpool City Region appear to be searching for. They are divided into five broad categories: English, maths, IT/digital, knowledge and attitudes, and leadership and management. The first four categories are expected across entry level job roles, while the fifth category (leadership and management) includes skills expected at more intermediate and senior levels. As such, the table is split between entry level employability attributes and those required for middle and senior roles.



Entry level employability skills

Skill category	Specific skill required	Description
English	Communication	Using appropriate language and communication styles for different formats e.g. with customers or managers
	Reading	Understanding and following instructions, identifying key information in texts
	Writing for different audiences	Using appropriate style, accurate grammar and spelling
Maths	Mental arithmetic	Working out prices, salaries and stock levels, spotting numerical errors, calculating percentages
	Working with data	Analysing datasets and identifying trends
IT/digital	Word processing	Using software to write letters, reports and meeting minutes
	Spreadsheets	Using software to keep track of data, create graphs and tables
	Emails	Using software correctly and appropriate language in emails
	Social media	Using social media professionally, e.g. for marketing
Knowledge and attitudes	Understanding organisational processes	Including ways of working, expectations in the workplace
	Knowledge of products and services	Understanding of the business's purpose and how work contributes to this
	Positive attitude towards work	Including a willingness to learn, take on tasks and work your way up
	Ability to work as a team	Working with others in different roles and departments
	Respect for others	Behaving appropriately towards colleagues, particularly senior staff
	Reliability and time keeping	Arriving on time to work and meetings, phoning in if unable to attend a commitment
	Resilience	Being able to move on and learn from mistakes and knock-backs
	Appropriate use of technology	Not using mobile phone or accessing personal social media during work times

Middle and senior management levels

Skill category	Specific skill required	Description
English	Communication	Using appropriate language and communication styles, especially with team members, leaders and customers
	Reading	Assessing the overt and implicit messages in communications are understood
	Writing for different audiences	Ensuring that persuasive language is used in support
	Working with data	Analysing datasets and identifying trends
IT/digital	Word processing	Using software to write and amend letters, reports and meeting minutes
	Social media	Using social media professionally and in line with business expectations
	Website design	Maintaining and updating professional websites for business
Knowledge and attitudes	Understanding organisational processes	Including ways of working, expectations in the workplace and how these are communicated effectively
	Knowledge of products and services	Understanding and communication of the business's purpose and how work contributes to this
	Positive attitude towards work	Including a willingness to learn, take on tasks and inspire others
	Ability to work as a team	Working with others in different roles, departments and organisations
	Respect for others	Behaving appropriately towards colleagues, particularly team members
	Resilience	Being able to move on and learn from mistakes and knock-backs
Leadership and management	People management	Including effective line management and team management
	Project management	Ensuring that work is delivered to deadlines and is of high quality
	Conflict management	Dealing with challenging behaviour and any issues that arise in the workplace
	Advanced presentation skills	Ability to present more complicated information to (senior) audiences

Priorities

To address these issues, 12 key priorities have been identified for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, providers, employers and other stakeholders. Suggested actions to take these forward are included at the end of this plan.

1. Develop frameworks of the entry and intermediate employability skills required by employers in the Liverpool City Region, based on the tables above.
2. Identify any gaps in existing employability skills provision which need to be addressed in order to meet current and future skills needs in the City Region.
3. Work with providers to ensure that skills and employability provision covers the full range of skills and competencies required by employers.
4. Develop professional development programmes for employability tutors to gain industry expertise and tailor their provision to meet employer needs.
5. Facilitate communication between providers, recruitment agencies and employers about current and future employability skills needs in the City Region, and how provision can support the development of these.
6. Raise awareness of the importance of employability skills in the workplace – both for those looking for work and those already in employment – across the City Region.
7. Develop progression pathways to higher level employability and English, maths and digital skills for those in lower level roles, in order to support succession planning and address potential future skills gaps arising from the development of technical and professional jobs in the region.
8. Boost programmes which include work experience and industry placements to support young people to develop employability skills and transition into work, including apprenticeships.
9. Increase support for residents already in work to improve their employability skills.
10. Gain a deeper understanding of the basic digital employability skills needs of employers and how these can be met.
11. Ensure that employability and basic skills programmes deliver the skills needed by residents.
12. Develop basic skills and employability provision in the workplace.



Introduction

This Employability Skills for Growth Action Plan draws on existing evidence and primary research with key stakeholders across the City Region to identify actions to address existing employability skills gaps and potential future demands from employers. It sets out actions for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, local providers and employers to address the current and future employability skills needs in the City Region.

The evidence gathered for this plan suggests that, despite a general upwards trend in qualification levels across the Liverpool City Region, there remains a persistent employability skills gap amongst residents of working age. Stakeholders from across the learning, skills and employment sectors believe that issues with residents' attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, resilience,

reliability, communication and digital skills are resulting in considerable recruitment and retention challenges for employers. Moreover, gaps in more advanced employability skills, such as project and people management, is causing issues for employers' succession planning in the context of an ageing workforce.

This Employability Skills for Growth Action Plan is one of a set of sector-specific and thematic plans for the Liverpool City Region. These action plans provide a comprehensive analysis of supply and demand issues detailing what is specifically needed to capitalise on key growth opportunities within the City Region and the identification of Headline Actions to help achieve these. The plans can be accessed at: <http://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/documents>



Employability Skills Definitions, Demands and Gaps

Defining employability skills

The UKCES (2010) Employability Skills Briefing¹ explains that at a general level, employability relates to the ability to be in employment, and, in particular, the set of characteristics that increase the chances of an individual being in work. Sometimes definitions go a step further than simply focusing on the ability to secure employment, and specifically include the ability to sustain employment and to progress within work too.

In 2009 the UKCES² developed a theoretical framework of employability skills which included competencies such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, as well as general attitudes and behaviours which are conducive to the workplace – for example, readiness to participate, and a positive approach to work. In this framework, these

attributes and competencies are underpinned by the functional skills of literacy and numeracy. Other employability skills identified in various studies have included negotiating and persuading, leadership, planning, organising and self-belief³.

Previous work by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, including the Employer Skills Survey⁴, has evidenced skills shortages in particular sectors across the City Region. These identified gaps in the technical skills required for skilled trades and sector-specific professions, but also highlighted the importance for employers of the basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills which tend to underpin many general employability skills. As such, these basic skills have also been considered in the context of employability.

Previous work by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, including the Employer Skills Survey, has evidenced skills shortages in particular sectors across the City Region. These identified gaps in the technical skills required for skilled trades and sector-specific professions.



Scale of the employability skills gap

Given that many employability skills are underpinned by basic skills⁵, the scale of the employability skills gap could be the result of generally low qualification levels in the Liverpool City Region. Figures 1 and 2 compare the qualification levels of the working age population in the Liverpool City Region with Greater Manchester, the North West as a whole and England. They show that the City Region has a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications and a lower proportion with Level 2 and above qualifications than other areas. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of the working age population with no qualifications has fallen faster in the Liverpool City Region than in comparator areas, but remains higher than any area shown.

Qualification levels in basic skills vary across local authorities within the Liverpool City Region and in general appear to be improving. Figure 3 shows the proportion of 19 year olds qualified to Level 2 with English and maths. In the North West and England the general pattern has been upwards since 2013 (although this has slowed in the last few years). In St. Helens, Sefton, Wirral and Halton there was an upward trend for those aged 19 in 2013 to 2015 but proportions were lower in 2016 and 2017. Worryingly, Knowsley and Liverpool local authorities saw a consistent downward trend from 2013 to 2017.

Figure 1
Proportion of population with no qualifications, working age
 Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

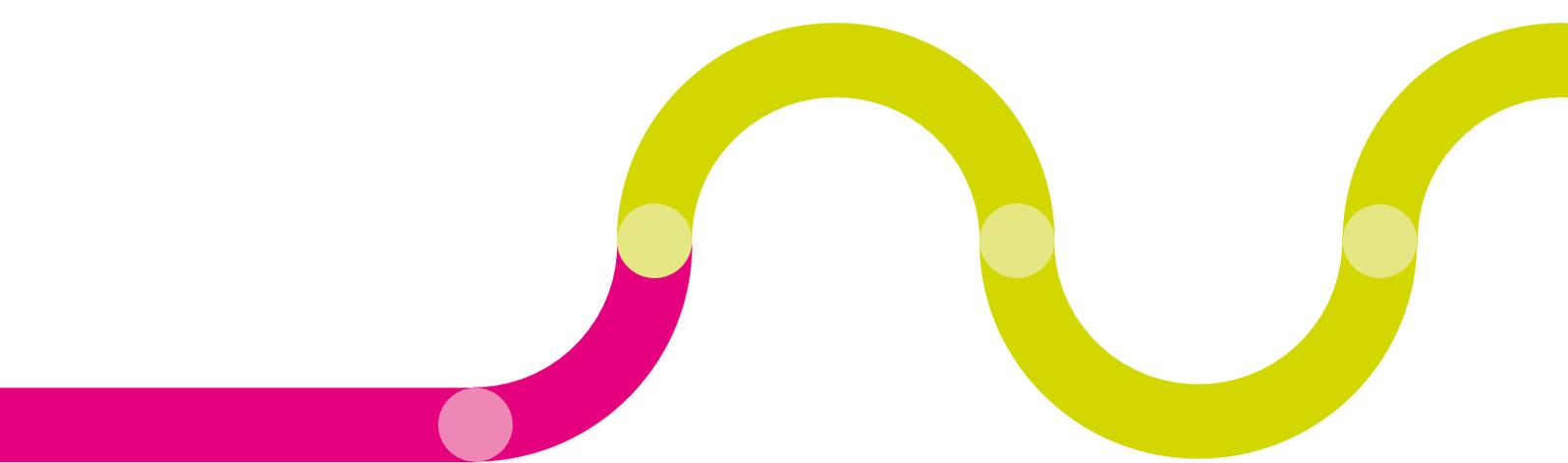
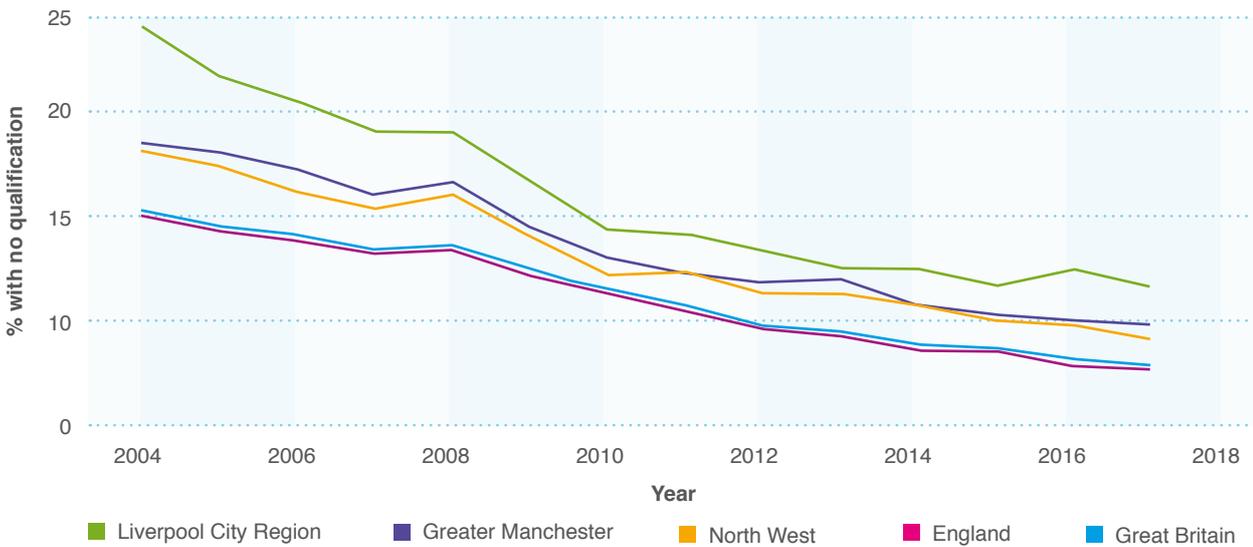


Figure 2
Proportion of population with Level 2 and above qualifications, working age
 Source: ONS Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

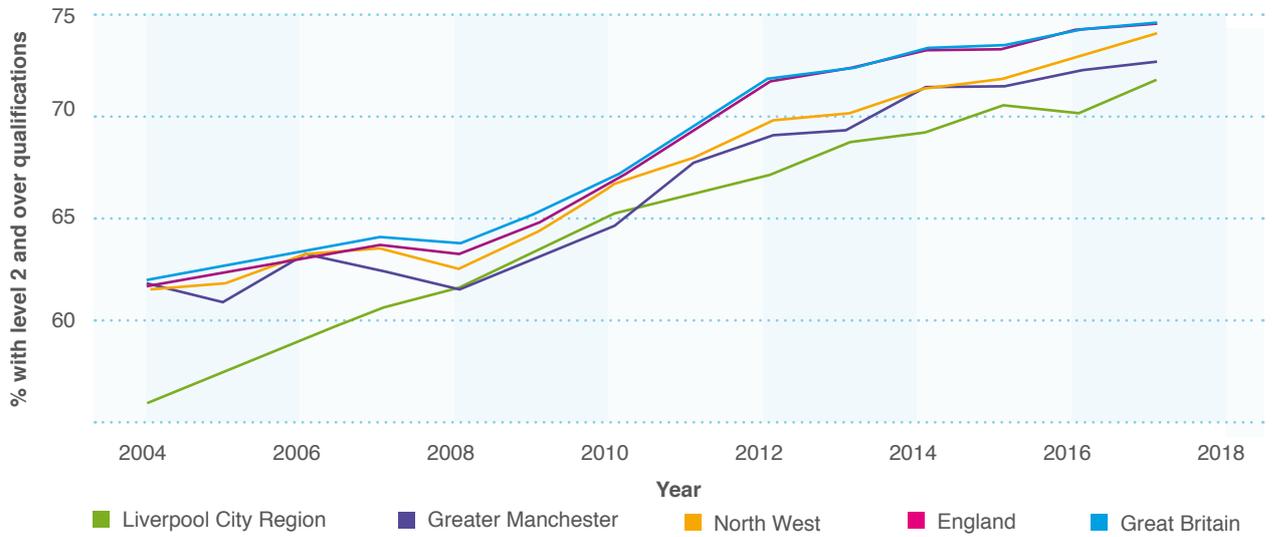
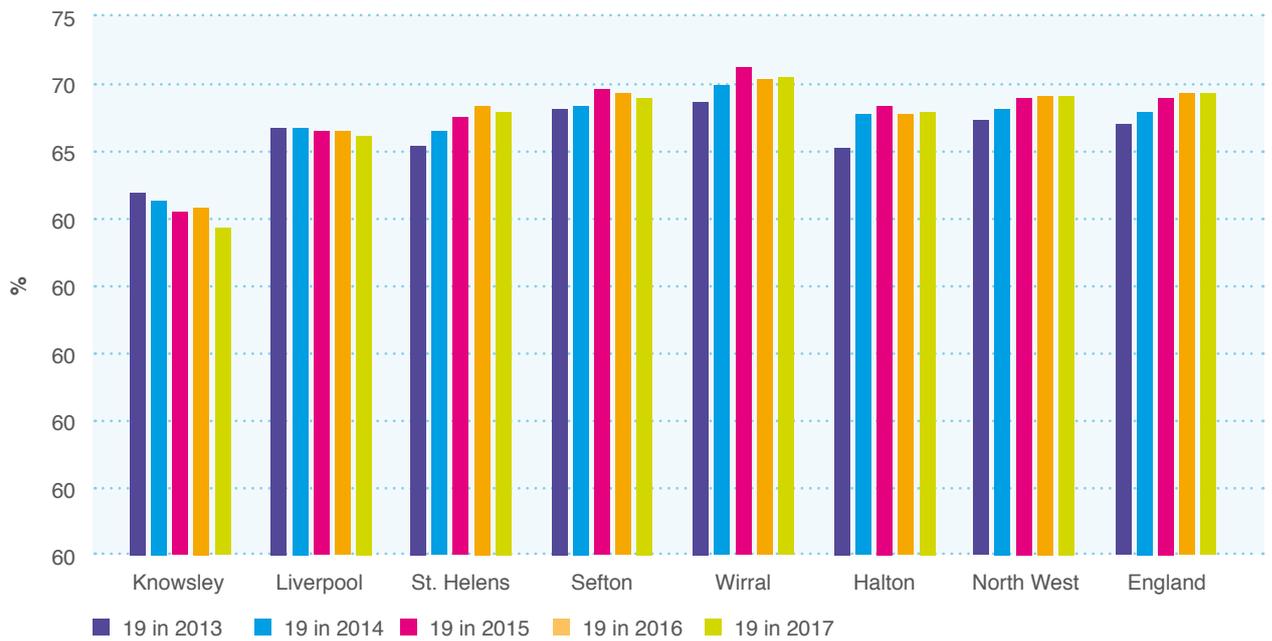


Figure 3
Percentage of 19 year olds qualified to Level 2 with English and maths
 Source: DFE



There is a more positive picture for those who had no Level 2 qualifications when aged 16 but subsequently obtained a Level 2 or above by the time they reached 19 (i.e. they obtained a Level 2 qualification after leaving school). Figure 4 shows that trends for all areas were generally upwards.

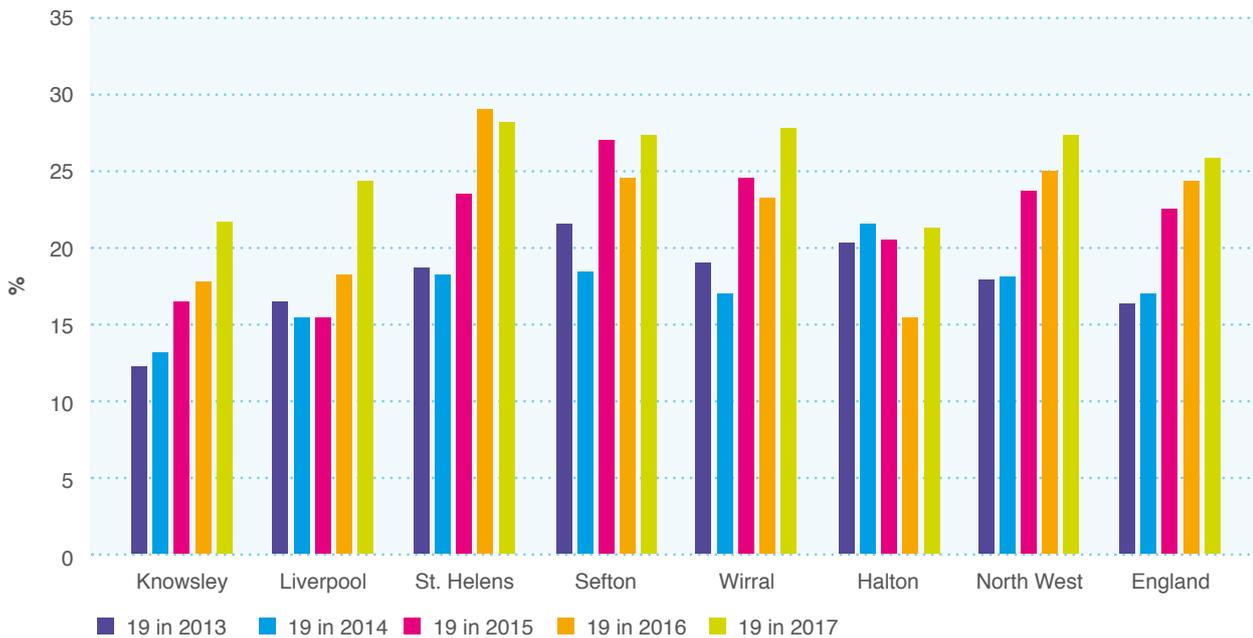
The 2017 Liverpool City Region Employer Skills Survey found considerable levels of skills shortages amongst employers. While many of these skills are likely to be technical and sector-specific, the survey report also found a high demand for basic and employability skills. For example, while hard to fill vacancies tend to be skewed towards skilled, technical and professional trades, 'care, leisure and other' occupations account for the highest proportion of hard to fill vacancies of any occupational category (see Figure 5). Given that this occupational category

is generally not highly skilled, we can assume that a good proportion of Skills Shortage Vacancies are the result of gaps in general employability skills amongst potential recruits.

Figure 5 also suggests that these skills gaps vary by profession. Interestingly, while stakeholders considered employability skills gaps to affect all occupations, there was a suggestion that the issue was more pertinent in occupations that were otherwise unskilled or low-skilled. This was because employers were generally willing to train employees in the specific skills needed when entering the workforce at a lower level, as long as they had sufficient employability skills to secure their first position in the company. Without employability skills, however, candidates would not be able to hold down a position at even the most basic level.

Figure 4
Percentage attaining GCSE or other Level 2 qualifications in English and maths at age 19, for those who had not achieved this level by age 16

Source: DFE

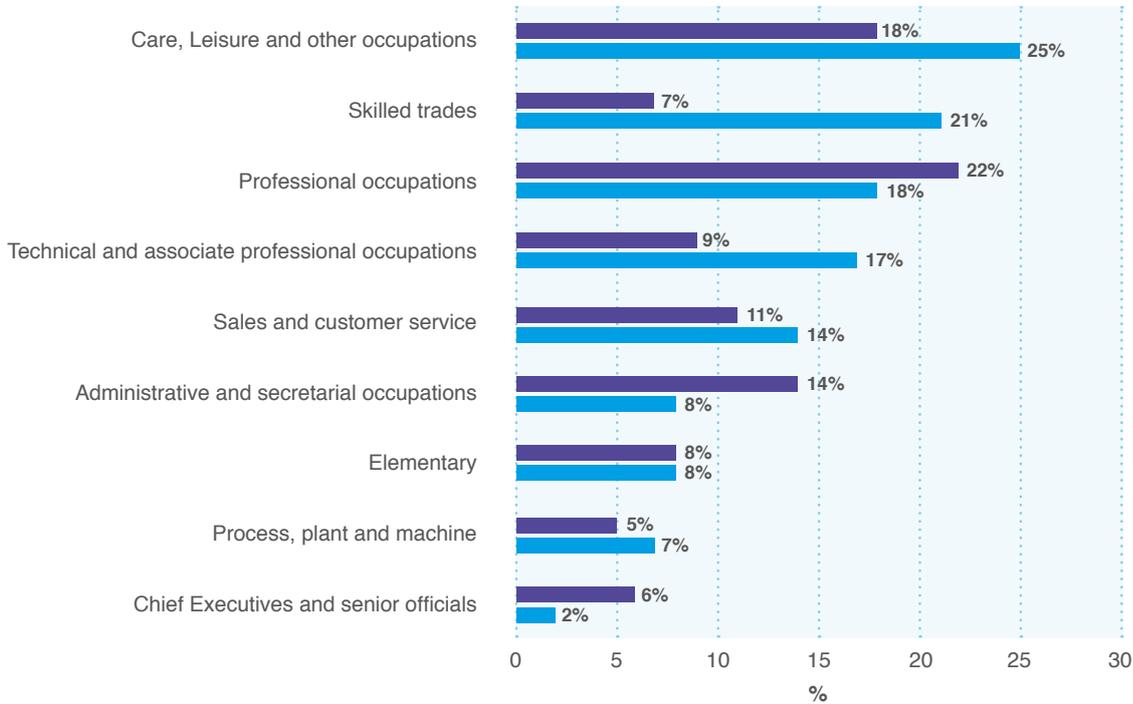


The LCR Employer Skills Survey findings suggest that skills gaps vary across sectors. Figure 6 shows the perceived lack of skills by sector, as a percentage of all businesses in that sector. The sectors experiencing the greatest internal skills gaps are Business administration and support services (31 per cent), Mining, quarrying, and utilities (31 per cent), Education (27 per cent), Wholesale and retail trades (26 per cent), and Construction (26 per cent). Stakeholders generally felt that, as employability skills were required for all

roles, the employability skills gap affects all sectors in equal measure. However, the science industry was highlighted as particularly susceptible to low aspirations of potential employees, who were deterred from applying for a position in the sector because they assumed they needed to have Level 2 qualifications, which in fact they did not for lower-level positions. Similarly, the construction industry often did not expect recruits to have construction skills, but needed them to have basic employability skills and be willing to learn.

Figure 5
Hard to fill vacancies, by profession, 2017

Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by LCR



“Some of the skills gaps, for instance in the chemical industry and in sciences, aren’t being met... it’s massive in Halton, the science industry, and yet not a lot of our students feel they could go for those jobs...they probably think they need level two... and yet when I’ve spoken to employers of science industries, they say, “We can accept applications from lower level, lower skilled levels and there are positions for lower skilled levels,” so I think it’s an aspiration issue really.”

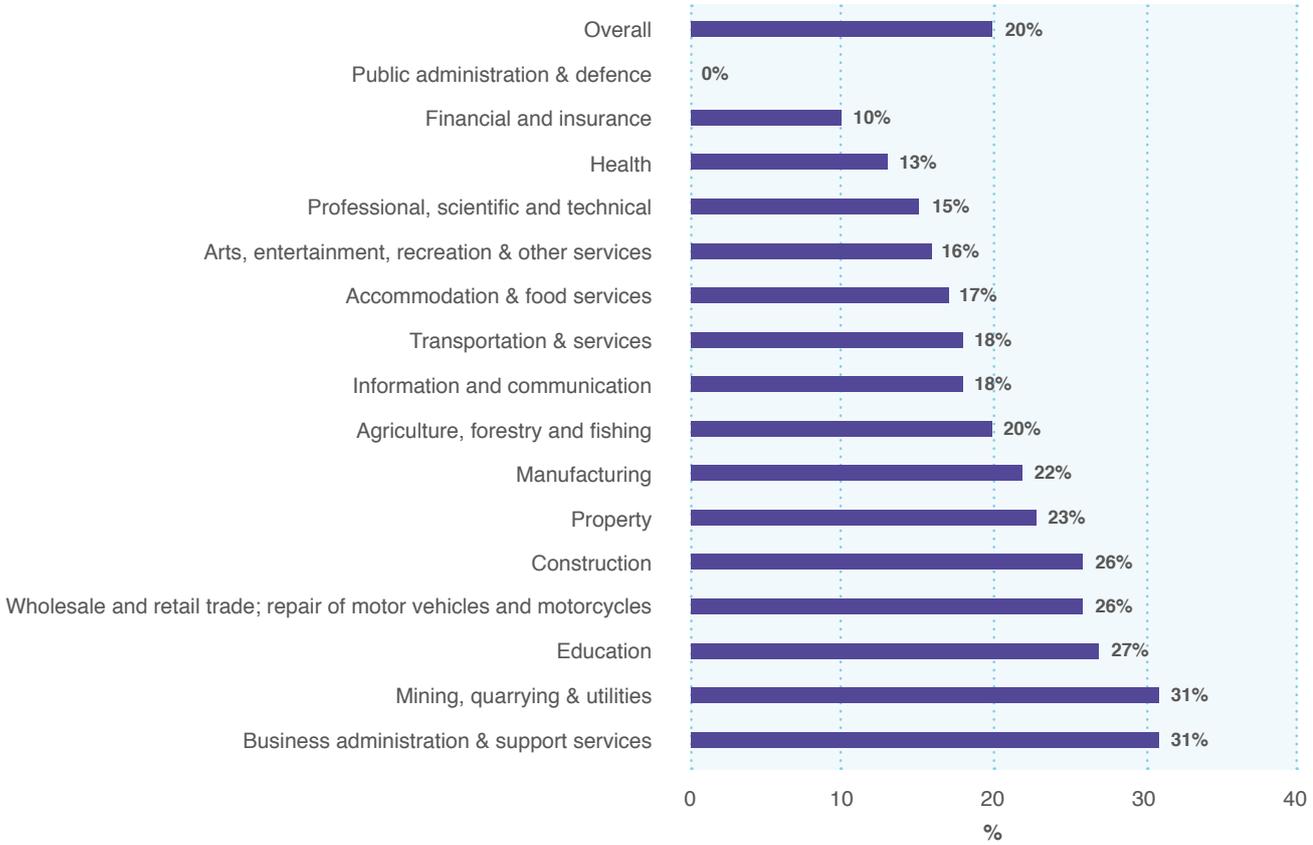
Community learning provider

Figure 6

Reported skills gaps, by sector, 2017

Base: respondents who had had vacancies in the past 12 months and answered 'yes' or 'no' (N)

Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by LCR



Demand for employability skills

Our research explored which employability skills were in particular demand amongst employers in the Liverpool City Region. Businesses that identified skills gaps in the LCR Employer Skills Survey were asked which skills they felt were lacking. The results of this question are displayed in Figure 7.

Almost half of the businesses (47 per cent) who identified current skills gaps said that the primary skills lacking in their existing workforce are specialist skills or knowledge needed to perform the role, which is almost exactly the same as the figures reported in the national 2015 Employer Skills Survey (48 per cent).

However, a considerable proportion of employers also identified gaps in more general employability skills. For example, almost a third (32%) said that their workforce lacked communication skills and 29% reported that their staff lack basic computer and IT skills. In total, 63% of employers (1,170/1,856)

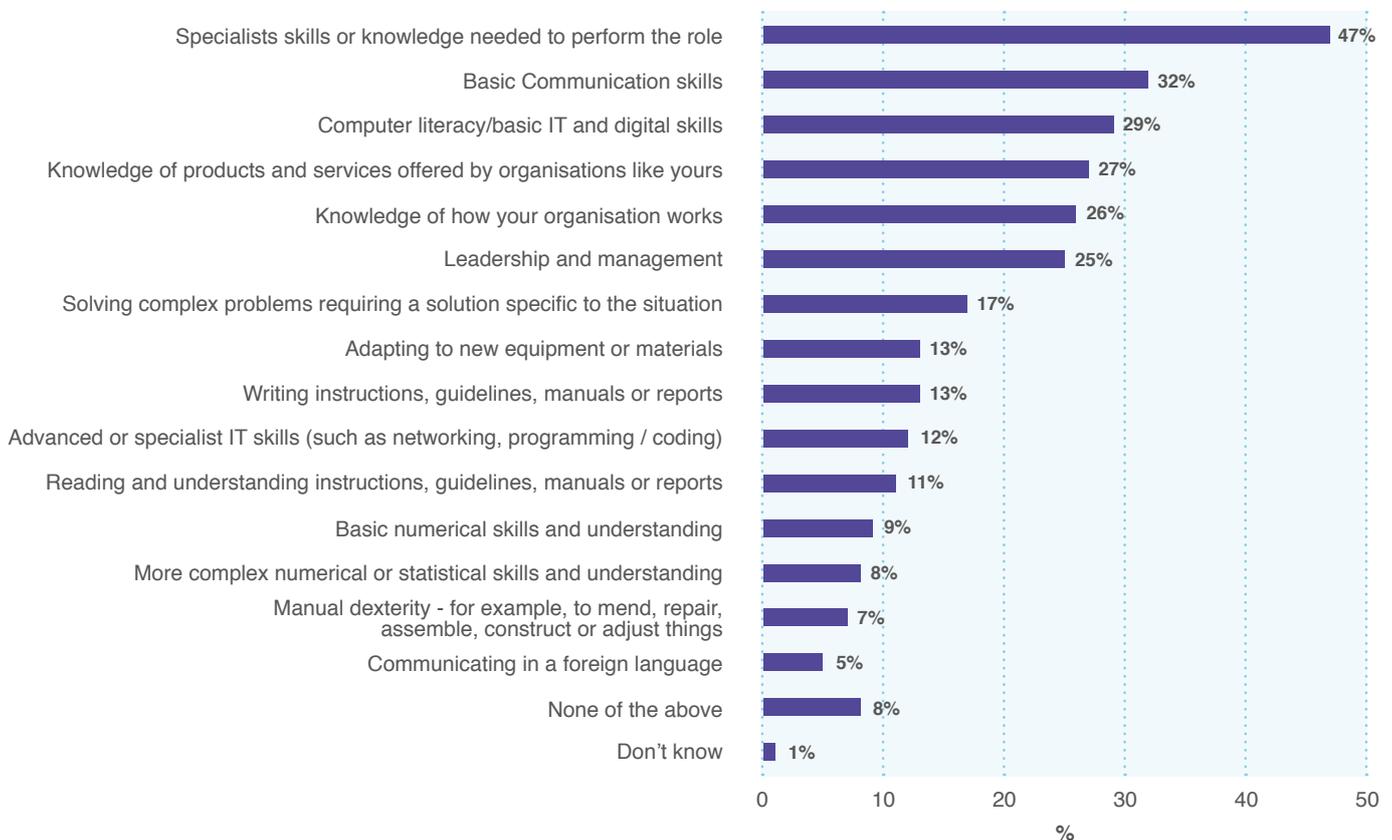
said that it was very important that all or most of their employees should have at least some basic knowledge of how to use everyday technology. Interestingly, the data from the survey suggests that employers feel these skills are generally not hard to find among young people (84% reported little or no problem recruiting from this group), while the picture is more nuanced for older/experienced workers, with 29% experiencing difficulty in recruiting those with the necessary technological skills from among this group. A different picture again emerged from the interviews with stakeholders, who reported that employers faced challenges recruiting people with sufficient digital skills, that is, beyond the basics of using social media or accessing a website on a mobile phone. The skills they required included website design, the ability to use social media for marketing purposes, the ability to manipulate data in spreadsheets and use an electronic till.

Figure 7

Which of the following skills needs improving? (Multiple responses allowed), 2017

Base: all respondents with current skills gaps (N=373)

Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by LCR



Interestingly, complex problem solving was cited as a gap by 17% of Liverpool City Region employers, less than half of the rate in the national Employer Skills Survey (39%).

A quarter of employers involved in the Liverpool City Region survey identified leadership and management skills as lacking, presumably amongst their more senior staff. Stakeholders also reflected that more senior roles, including those in management, required additional employability skills, which were found to be lacking in some cases. These included project management, time management and conflict management skills, as well as more advanced interview and presentation skills.

Of concern is the perception that many new recruits (those employed in the last three years) lack basic communication skills, particularly school leavers (57 per cent of employers citing this), Further Education leavers (48 per cent), and those new to employment (46 per cent) – see Table 1. This was reflected in consultations with stakeholders, who reported that employees, particularly younger ones, lacked understanding of how to interact and communicate appropriately with others in the workplace, particularly management or anyone in a position of authority. They were also found to lack awareness of how to address management properly and respect their position.

Table 1

Skills lacking in new recruits, 2017

Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by Liverpool City Region

Type of worker	School leaver	FE leaver	HE	Experienced	New	Returners	LTU
Knowledge of products and services	42%	28%	50%	33%	51%	39%	31%
Manual dexterity	9%	8%	9%	0%	11%	0%	3%
Writing instructions, guidelines, manuals or reports	18%	23%	10%	7%	25%	4%	20%
Computer literacy / basic IT skills	9%	5%	1%	15%	15%	36%	20%
Knowledge of how your organisation works	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Basic communication skills	57%	48%	22%	22%	46%	25%	38%
Basic numerical skills and understanding	18%	14%	4%	7%	19%	7%	20%
Specialist skills or knowledge needed	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Other	30%	33%	24%	30%	16%	14%	32%

“If you asked a young person if they’re IT literate they’d say they are. Put them in an employer’s premises and ask them to run some Microsoft packages, I think their perception of being IT literate is quite different.”

Employer-provider

“I think people know how to use an iPhone and they know how to go on Facebook but they just don’t know how to turn that into a business context.”

Chamber of Commerce

Given that employability skills are required across all roles and sectors, it is safe to assume that these basic competencies will continue to be required by employers in the Liverpool City Region. This will also require the ongoing development of the basic English and maths skills which underpin these competencies. Our research found a demand amongst employers for staff who can communicate appropriately in the workplace, both when speaking and in writing, and who have good skills in writing and reading instructions, guidelines, manuals or reports. Maths skills were also viewed as important for all levels of staff, from the more technical skills required for higher-level roles in the engineering, science and finance sectors (including calculus, equations, and statistics that relate to the job role), to the requirement for mental arithmetic skills to add up prices, stock and wages in lower-level positions.

However, a particular focus may need to be paid to digital skills, which stakeholders reported to be growing at all levels and types of position, particularly in lower-skilled roles which traditionally did not require such skills of employees.

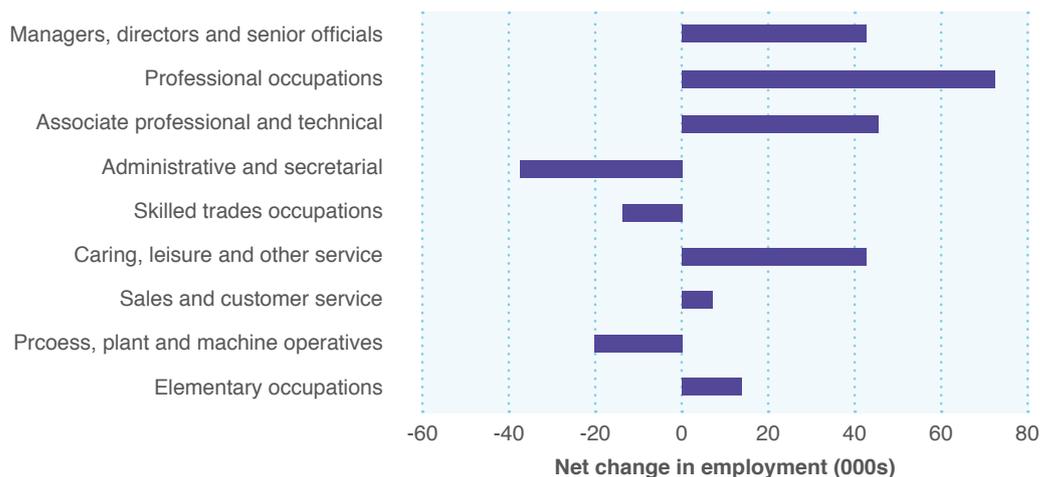
Employment projections for the North West by occupation show that over the next eight years there will be a demand for higher end skills associated with managerial roles and professional occupations. There will also be a demand for technical skills, especially related to IT and new technologies as a rise in technical occupations is predicted. This suggests a need

to develop progression pathways for residents who currently have lower levels of skills to develop the knowledge and competencies required for these growth sectors. There will still also be opportunities with entry level jobs and customer facing jobs which will require basic employability skills, communication skills and knowledge of products (see Figure 8). The growth in caring, leisure and other service occupations will cause further challenges for the City Region, given that this category already has the highest reported level of hard to fill vacancies.

“We’re seeing more requests for people to have digital skills, even at low level jobs because of communication devices and things like that but also people needing to do reports, so even security or cleaning jobs or whatever they need to be able to maybe use handheld devices or in warehouses and things like that but then they also need to be able to have more functional skills in terms of maybe just writing a basic report and sending that in to the supervisor. So jobs where traditionally you would think you wouldn’t really need those digital type skills, it’s now becoming more of a requirement really. Things in the construction sector for instance, you know, the methods of doing things are changing as well. So there’s more new innovation, there’s more technology in the sector.”

Local authority

Figure 8
Net change in employment (000s) by occupation, North West, 2014 to 2024
 Source: UKCES labour market projections for the North West



Skills Challenges

Evidence from the Employer Skills Survey and our consultations with stakeholders suggests that the employability skills gap is creating a number of challenges in the Liverpool City Region, particularly in terms of recruitment, retention and succession planning for businesses.

Recruitment

The view of stakeholders was that employers faced significant recruitment and retention issues due to employability skills gaps in a number of areas, including attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, resilience, reliability, communication and digital skills. More senior positions faced other employability skills gaps, such as a lack of project management skills.

This view amongst stakeholders is supported by the Liverpool City Region Employer Skills Survey, which shows high proportions of employers reporting vacancies across sectors. Figure 9 shows the proportion of businesses reporting a vacancy in the last 12 months and shows quite a substantial variation across sectors. For example, in the accommodation and food services sector, which is part of the Visitor Economy and characterised generally by a large rate of churn, 79 per cent

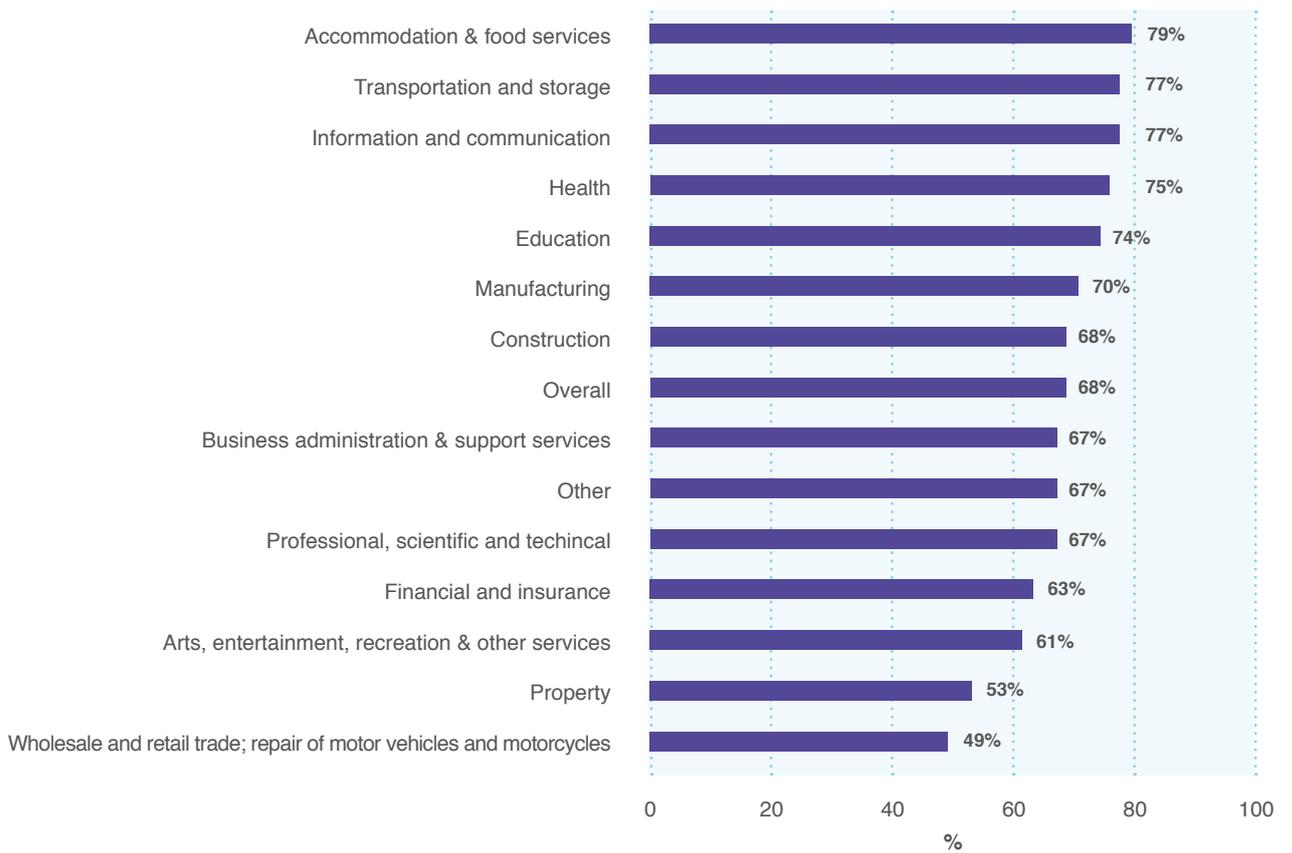
(99/125) of survey respondents say that they have had vacancies in the last year, compared to the wholesale and retail trade, where the proportion of respondents reporting vacancies is 49 per cent (92/186). Across the Visitor Economy as a whole, 74 per cent of businesses reported vacancies which is again significantly greater than the overall average.

A higher proportion of businesses from the health sector are reporting vacancies than the survey average (75 per cent vs 68 per cent) amid widely publicised concerns in the national media regarding recruitment in the health service, particularly in relation to care workers and nurses. Looking across the six local authority areas within the City Region, the rate of businesses with vacancies reported is highest for Halton (77 per cent) and lowest for Knowsley (61 per cent).



Figure 9
Proportion of businesses by sector who had had vacancies in the last 12 months, 2017

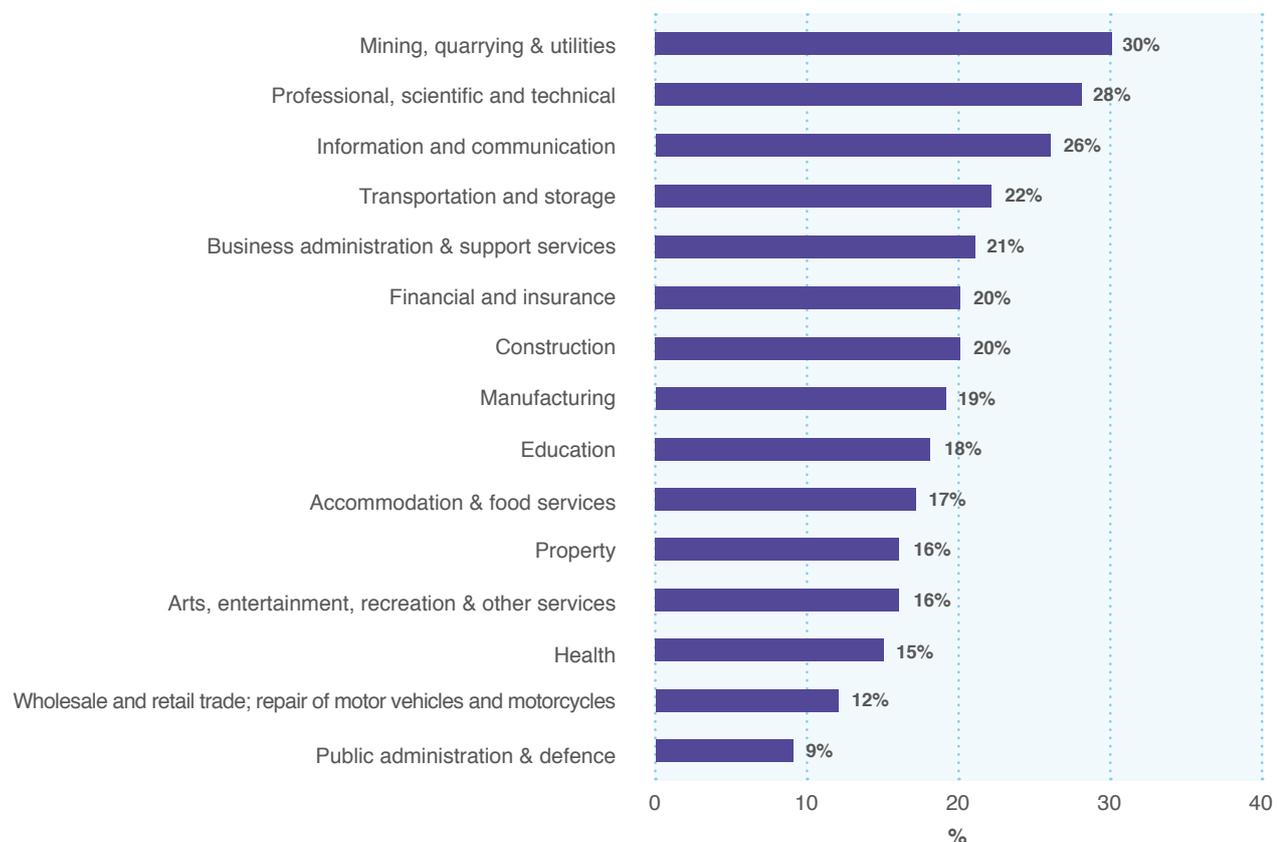
Base: respondents with available data (N = 1,855)
 Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by LCR



In some sectors, these vacancies appear to be the result of skills shortages. Figure 10 shows the incidence of Skills Shortage Vacancies (SSV), as a proportion of all vacancies, across sectors, as reported in the survey. Sectors with the highest incidence of SSV as a proportion of all 'hard to fill' vacancies are mining and quarrying, professional, scientific, and technical services, and information and communications technology, while those with the lowest incidence of SSV are health, and the public sector. This differs quite markedly from the UK wide portrait painted from the 2015 national Employer Skills Survey, where the sectors with the highest SSV were mining and utilities (35 per cent) and construction (35 per cent). Of the six local authorities, Halton (27 per cent) is the one that is experiencing the highest incidence of SSV, while Sefton has an SSV rate that is almost half (14 per cent) of that.

Stakeholders felt that a key challenge employers experienced when trying to recruit and retain employees was a lack of awareness and understanding of appropriate attitudes and behaviours in an interview situation and in the workplace. When interviewing candidates, employers struggled to find people who could present themselves appropriately, make eye contact and conversation, and communicate appropriately in a business context. Similarly, there were reported issues with candidates' attitudes towards work, such as that they expected to be paid more than they were offered for unskilled or low-skilled positions, and were not willing to learn on the job and work their way up to better pay.

Figure 10
Incidence of skills shortage vacancies, by sector, 2017
 Source: Employer Skills Survey commissioned by LCR



Stakeholders reported that employees lacked reliability; they failed to arrive for work on time, and attendance would be poor. Young employees in particular were considered more likely to have poor attendance rates, showing a lack of awareness of the responsibility and commitment involved in having a job.

Another example of a failure to understand the expectations of the workplace reported by a stakeholder was not understanding employers' requirements of employees to telephone to report an absence.

"Under 25s. Years of age. It's just it's the classic first payday, go missing for two days once you get paid and stuff like that. We deal with a lot of that."

Local authority

"If something happens to them... say if... whoever it was in the family was supposed to be minding a child for instance was late or didn't turn up, they just wouldn't come to something that had been set up for them but quite often will not even think to give us a call to say, "Sorry, I can't make it." So it's the basic things that you kind of assume would be the real basic attitude to things, we often find are missing."

Local authority



Retention and succession planning

Challenges in finding recruits with appropriate levels of employability skills had also led to issues in retaining staff. Stakeholders reported that employers struggled to find people who were reliable, who could respect the rules of the workplace and conditions of their contract, and understand what was expected of them in the world of work. For example, employees (particularly young ones) would use their mobile phone in the workplace inappropriately, which could lead to dismissal.

Stakeholders also reported a lack of resilience and endurance among employees in the longer term, so that they might do well in a position for the first few weeks, but when they experienced a challenge, however minor, in their personal lives or in the workplace, they were unable to continue in their role.

The advanced employability skills required in more senior roles meant that employers could face challenges with succession planning, as junior employees lacked the skills they would need in a more senior role.

"We have had numerous problems, our key workers have been intervening with post-employment where specifically a lot of young people have an issue with the use of mobile phones in work, perhaps even referencing things that have happened in work. They shouldn't be on their social media accounts or even taking pictures of things that are happening in work on their social media accounts. So, for some people... it is just a bit of a culture shift. They have to realise that... there are different policies at different employers in relation to that."

Local authority

"We also find that when people start work, anything like a slight bump in the road, say they haven't got on with the supervisor or, something to do with the pay or they're not sure about something or they don't know where to turn to for information will often just be a really minor thing which will push them back to the life that they've had previously, and they'll say, "Well, I'm not going there because the supervisor challenged me," or whatever, and then they'll just not go to work the next day."

Local authority

"Where we have got an ageing workforce, I think we are seeing a lot of succession planning going on and I find where businesses come to us with a certain requirement it is usually around that, staff who might have been operational and they have now been promoted. So, where I think the requirements that businesses need are those softer skills, so people management, project management... time management, conflict management. So, I feel like within work a lot of people have the skills to do their job. It is when it comes around changing and having to deal with people. That is the kind of skill I think we would like to help them with."

Chamber of Commerce

Future proofing and efficiency

Many stakeholders expressed concern about the level of digital skills amongst employers. Digital skills gaps meant that employers were unable to take full advantage of developments in technology that could improve business efficiency and competitiveness in the marketplace. For example, a company that wanted to introduce tablets for staff to use, would be unable to do so if their staff lacked the skills to use them. This barrier to utilising innovative technology would have a detrimental impact on productivity and efficiency.

“I think it is all about productivity... businesses are trying to increase these skills, so they can increase productivity, minimise waste and a lot of businesses are keen to get digital for those reasons and when the individuals don't have those skills they are just not able to improve productivity... In health and social care they are trying to make their care plans on an iPad, so... Those people now are lacking the digital skills, which businesses feel in turn they can't increase their digitisation because their people don't have the skills.”

Chamber of Commerce



Responses to employability skills challenges

This section sets out the ways in which providers and employers in the Liverpool City Region are tackling the employability skills gap. It starts with an overview of employability skills provision in the City Region, followed by the response to the skills challenge from the skills sector and then from employers.

From the skills sector

The skills sector provides employability skills support both as standalone provision and embedded in courses in particular skills and sectors. Various programmes have been commissioned in the Liverpool City Region with at least part of their aim being to address the employability skills gap and equip individuals with the skills they need to gain and sustain employment. This provision commonly includes assistance with confidence building, job-searching, interview skills and CV-writing. Many programmes also offer work experience placements and employer-led pre-recruitment training to give participants experience of the world of work. Some examples of employability provision in the region include:

- **The Ways to Work programme** – delivered by the six Local Authorities across the Liverpool City Region, this programme provides a range of services to residents across the City Region to enhance their employability skills and assist them in gaining employment. The project is designed to assist unemployed people, and people not in education, employment or training, aged 16 plus. Support provided includes mentoring and coaching, interview skills training, confidence building, employer-led pre-recruitment training leading to guaranteed job interviews; work experience placements; transitional employment placements (e.g ILMs) and financial assistance for expenses, such as clothing, equipment, licenses, DBS checks and travel costs.
- **The Working Futures programme** – delivered by a partnership of 21 not-for-profit training providers based in the Liverpool City Region, Working Futures supports people aged 16 to 29 who are not currently in employment, education or training (NEET) to take control of their own lives and move towards a better future. The programme of support focuses on the skills, attributes and confidence needed to look for and secure employment, training, or apprenticeships. It includes help with applications, CVs and interview preparation, identifies and develops individual skills and qualities to maximise potential, and increases awareness of the employment market and opportunities available, including work placements. Once participants have progressed into learning or work, Working Futures staff can continue to offer one-to-one mentoring and support for up to 3 months to help participants keep, and continue to develop in, their jobs or training.
- **Building Better Opportunities** – this UK-wide programme of ESF and Big Lottery funding has invested in the Liverpool City Region to deliver a number of programmes, including those to improve employability. One of the BBO-funded projects in the region is Better Off Finance, which supports people who lack financial capabilities, and as a result struggle to find and keep a job. The project supports individuals to improve their financial management and financial resilience, helping them to access training, education and volunteering opportunities, gain digital skills and become more work ready.

Another cohort of employability provision in the Liverpool City Region is funded by the EU Structural and Investment Funds Strategy (ESIF) 2014-2020 funding stream, and examples of projects include:

- **Pathways to Success** – this project brings together a range of Prince's Trust programmes to provide support to 16-24 year olds who are not in employment, education or training and need intensive and sustained help to overcome the barriers that prevent them moving into employment. The project helps young people with intensive personal development, coaching and mentoring, employability and job-related training. On completion of the support, young people have the opportunity to access a trained volunteer mentor for up to six months.
- **The Access to Work project** – delivered by the Neighbourhood Service Company, this project helps disadvantaged young people aged 16-29 years old, who are not in education, employment or training, access work experience and training. Placements are for 26 weeks in a range of sectors and there are a small number of 52 week placements available depending on individual circumstances and barriers to employment. Participants receive a needs analysis to identify any barriers to employment they are experiencing and are then allocated a supervisor who provides mentoring support whilst they are on placement. The mentor also provides additional advice and guidance for progression into employment or training.
- **The Single Parent Employment Pathway project** – delivered by Gingerbread, this project aims to give single parents the skills and confidence to access employment, education and training. Four days of training are delivered by Gingerbread experts, including confidence building and work skills. All support is tailored to the needs of the participant and is followed by a two-week placement at a top UK employer, such as Marks and Spencer and Royal Mail. All expenses are covered, such as childcare, lunch and travel, and placements/training only take place during school hours. Participants can then access volunteering and training schemes with organisations such as Merseyside Children's Centre and Tomorrow's Women. They also receive support in finding employment through job clubs, help with CV writing, application forms and interview skills.



Approaches to delivery

Employability skills provision is offered both to people seeking work, and to employed people who need support with employability skills in order to maintain their job role. It can be delivered in a range of ways, included discrete or standalone courses, as part of a wider programme, as in-work provision or through community learning provision, and take a sector-specific or even employer-specific approach.

Discrete employability provision

Standalone or discrete provision includes Entry Level and Level 1 courses in employability skills. These can be tailored to individuals' needs but broadly cover basic skills, behaviours and competencies that employers require in the workplace, including managing time, working

in a team, being managed by others and appropriate communication in the workplace⁶. One provider described a foundation employability qualification they offered to students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The qualification was tailored to the particular barriers to employability faced by the students, which often centred around immaturity, anxiety or mental health issues, and provision could include referrals to counselling if that was what a student needed to overcome barriers to employment. Another example of general employability skills training includes joint working between Liverpool City Council's and Jobcentre Plus, whereby participants in job clubs can take part in courses in employability skills which cover themes such as how to present yourself in the workplace, CV writing and interview skills.

CASE STUDY

Digi-bus – Adult Learning Service, Liverpool City Council

Liverpool City Council's Adult Learning Service deliver Ways to Work; an employment support provision within which they operate a mobile facility called Digi Bus. Since its inception in 2010, the bus was primarily used for marketing purposes, but in 2017, a change in community needs prompted the bus to be revamped and equipped with laptops. The bus now travels to various locations to offer employment support such as CV advice and digital skills training. The bus also delivers a Universal Credit roadshow, travelling to children's centres and schools to provide parents with basic digital skills required to access Universal Credit online. In addition, the bus travels to Job Centres where there are staff or equipment shortages in order to supplement support provision. The bus engaged with around 900 learners in 2017 and has received much positive feedback.



Embedded employability provision

Providers explained that most of their provision has embedded employability skills elements. Some of this provision covers general employability skills, for example, involving learners in team-building exercises such as fundraising events, and covers skills such as confidence, personal and social development, and themes such as how the welfare state and National Insurance system works, what it means to be a good citizen and the value of employment to society. It was noted that employability skills training to long-term unemployed people or those with particular barriers to employment needs to help learners understand the basic expectations of employees in the workplace. It was noted that support with these skills needed to be relatively long-term and in-depth, particularly when aiming to change attitudes towards work.

In addition, as part of employability skills training, providers arrange a variety of employer engagement opportunities, including visits to workplaces, guest speakers, work placements, and volunteering opportunities. This is designed to give learners a better understanding of what is required of employees in the workplace, including appropriate behaviour and expectations, as well as increase their understanding of the need for employability skills and therefore their motivation to acquire such skills.

“It’s a case of having to really go back to basics and explain to them, this is the expectation of you, if you want to come to this course or you want to engage in our services, or you’re about to go into employment for instance.”

Local authority

“They need a lot of support and help. It’s not a half hour CV workshop and half hour interview techniques. It’s more fundamental than that. It’s understanding what work is, understanding how you behave, that type of stuff. So that takes a lot more time and resources as well.”

Local authority

CASE STUDY

Work and Health programme – Halton Adult and Community Learning Service

Halton Adult and Community Learning Service deliver the Work and Health Programme; an employment support provision for those with health conditions which may limit their ability to work. The support provider initially collects information on clients’ health conditions and how these conditions affect their lives, and in particular their ability to work. Support is then tailored to each client’s individual needs and places an emphasis on helping clients to manage their conditions, think positively and identify what they can do despite their conditions rather than what their conditions prevent them from doing. The provider then supports clients to look for jobs that they are able to do or that they can work towards doing. Ofsted recognise this support provision as Good.

In-work provision

Employability skills provision also includes support for existing employees in the workplace. This can take the form of formal training of employees, such as that provided by a Chamber of Commerce, which, based on a training needs analysis of a business can deliver apprenticeships and training to existing employees, including accredited and non-accredited qualifications. Employability skills support in the workplace can also take the form of in-work mentoring from external providers. For example, one employment support service assigns a RAG rating to new starters in positions with employers, and those who are rated amber or red are provided with ongoing support in their new role to ensure their position remained sustainable and employers successfully retain their staff.

This type of In-work support can also be provided to help employees achieve their potential by progressing to further opportunities identified by the employer, such as gaining qualifications or promotion to more senior roles.

For employees who are found to be lacking in certain employability skills, mentors can provide more in-depth support than an employer is able to offer. Mentors will spend time talking to the employee to uncover any personal issues they are experiencing that might be affecting their work performance. Mentors can then communicate these issues back to the employer and work with the employee to encourage them to change their behaviour, to help maintain their position of employment.

“We have got people who we would rate in the red category, where you may have people who have fairly chaotic lives and... we are aware that if one of those instances arises that would probably involve them no longer attending work because they just fall into this state of panic, or whatever it may be. We are able to carry on working with them and supporting them, both for their benefit, but also for the employer’s benefit if any issues do start to arise, so that then we can try and prevent them losing that employment opportunity and hopefully increase their opportunity of that becoming a sustainable outcome.”

Local authority

“[An employer] will call us often before they dismiss someone and say, “Can you send one of your mentors out? We need to sort this out”... the automatic position would be to dismiss but often we can bring it back and save the person’s job that way.”

Local authority

CASE STUDY

Employer Support – St Helens Chamber of Commerce

St Helens Chamber of Commerce work with businesses to perform a full training needs analysis, taking into consideration an employer’s skills needs and skills gaps, as well as their short, medium and long-term goals. The chamber then helps employers recruit new staff, and/or deliver accredited training to existing staff. The chamber, for example, delivers fully-funded digital training to the workforce of employers who have identified a lack of digital skills amongst their workforce. A survey is conducted before and 3 months after training in order to measure impact.

Community learning provision

Community learning provision is often the first hook for people to engage in a learning pathway that can lead to employment, and therefore includes employability elements in its courses. For example, a jewellery class would include a focus on how to set up a business to sell the jewellery, including employability skills required to set up a market stall. Community learning courses, like all other provision, also have an expectation of punctuality, high attendance rates, and cooperation with tutors and classmates, as would be required in the workplace.

Sector-specific provision

Other employability skills provision has a specific focus on a particular sector, for example, a welding course would cover the health and safety requirements of the sector. City and Guilds qualifications in Skills for Working in various industries, including construction, retail and hospitality and catering, also cover industry-specific employability skills. For example, those taking the qualification in retail will study customer service, using a till, handling money and stock-taking. Another example of this

is the sector routeways pre-employment learning programmes delivered through local sector-based work academies (SBWA). These academies are a partnership of employment services (such as Jobcentre Plus), learning providers and employers. The routeways programme can last up to six weeks and includes classroom learning as well as workplace visits or work experience and a guaranteed job interview. It is designed to give learners an introduction to, and thereby realistic expectations of, working in the particular sector.

Employer-specific provision

Another form of employability skills provision is pre-employment training designed through collaboration between providers and employers in order to fill specific vacancies. The providers will offer courses that cover the employability skills required in specific roles, including an understanding of what the role would entail and what would be required of them, and training in any specific interview techniques the employer will use, such as telephone interviews.

CASE STUDY

Halton Employment Partnership Awards – Halton Adult and Community Learning Service

Halton Adult and Community Learning Service deliver the Halton Employment Partnership Awards, wherein the provider works directly with employers to identify job vacancies at least 6 weeks prior to those vacancies being advertised, as well as identify the skills required to fulfil those jobs. A short programme is then designed and implemented in order to provide job-searchers with the skills, accredited qualifications and work experience to fulfil the jobs identified, as well as a guaranteed interview where possible. Each programme has minimum entry requirements which reflect the level of skill required to be able to complete the programme within the period required and perform the job to a satisfactory standard. A programme will generally be delivered 3 days a week for 5 weeks, but duration is flexible.

Key considerations and challenges

A key view among stakeholders was that dialogue and collaboration between employers and providers, enables providers to understand employers' skills needs. This is critical in ensuring learners are gaining the skills that will be required of them in the workplace and moreover, needs to increase. This was particularly pertinent in the area of IT skills, which is a broad, diverse, and an ever-changing category of skills.

"I've also had an employer who stated that she'd spoke to a uni to say, "Listen, you're delivering these quals in the digital, technical sector and they're not fit for purpose for me as a business," and the uni sort of said, "We know, but this is what we have to deliver, this is our curriculum," and I just think there needs to be a shift. I think education and employment just need to come together and look at curriculum better and whether it's fit for purpose in the world of work."

Employer-provider

CASE STUDY

Elevate (formerly Sefton Education Business Partnership)

Elevate oversee the Enterprise Advisor Network; an employer-provider partnership supported by the Careers and Enterprise Company wherein employers' senior representatives work with the senior leadership teams of local education providers in order to inform providers of what skills those employers need, but also so that providers can inform employers of the regulations and restrictions which affect how education can be provided. Occasionally, teachers are supported to gain industrial placements in sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, and engineering in order to gain first-hand sectoral and business knowledge to be shared with education providers and students. Outcomes are recorded and the partnership project evaluated.



Stakeholders identified a lack of funding for providers to afford the technologies and teaching resource required to keep IT skills courses up to date with developments in the sector. It was explained that IT professionals, such as coders, could generally earn much higher salaries in industry than in teaching roles, with the result that providers struggled to recruit teachers of digital skills. It was also a challenge to be able to continue to invest in the latest technology that employers want their employees to be able to use.

“IT moves at such a pace that there’s new software, hardware technologies coming out monthly in some cases. How do we as a college and all the other colleges in the area invest in that level of technology, keep it up to date and find people who can teach it?”

**Further education
college**



There is a benefit then to considering alternative employment models for such tutors to ensure that students are being taught by informed individuals.

There were other barriers identified by stakeholders to individuals' engagement with employability skills provision, which the skills sector itself could only partially, if at all, assist with. These included:

- Lack of access to training for people in work - this was partly due to it not being financially viable for employers to put on training for small cohorts of learners. In addition, people in work often did not have the time to travel to a provider to attend a course and providers found it challenging to offer provision which is flexible, accessible and continues to be relevant to the changing needs of the workplace. To overcome this barrier, one provider is planning to trial the use of video conferencing to deliver courses in the near future, so that learners who would not be able to physically travel to a classroom can still attend a class via online video conferencing.
- Migrant workers – these learners are often highly qualified in their country of origin face a lack of recognition of their qualifications in this country. This results in migrants who are highly skilled and qualified applying for low skilled jobs such as cleaners, representing a severe mismatch of employability skills to employer needs.

- Childcare - although funding is available for providers to supply crèche facilities for learners studying under the adult skills budget, there is no funding for childcare for learners on community learning courses. Those with childcare responsibilities also rely on provision being available at suitable times, for example within school hours and term time only. One provider explained that they provide family learning courses in schools to engage with learners with childcare commitments.
- Travel costs – learners on low incomes were reported to struggle to afford to travel to unpaid work placements or even paid positions, and buy appropriate clothes for interviews. Some providers were able to contribute towards some travel costs, but this form of support was not universal.

When asked about future changes in the employability skills needs of employers, stakeholders most commonly identified digital literacy as an area of skills needs that would most likely increase and evolve in the future. It was explained that because IT is rapidly and continually changing, the need for digital skills would only grow and become more diverse as workplace systems become increasingly digitised. As discussed, providers explained that they faced a challenge in investing in and keeping pace with changing technology to equip learners with up-to-date digital skills.

"...we've invested quite heavily in a lot of engineering equipment and programable logic controllers, thermal dynamics, all of that kind of stuff. CAD testing, non-destructive testing – all of that relies on a computer and literacy based knowledge to be able to perform the tasks and understand what the recorder is saying. So, I think it's only going to grow and all of those companies, certainly if there is any kind of economy of scale there, are reliant on those types of systems to keep things moving. So, our students being able to repair them, understand them, programme them, it's huge."

Further education college



From employers

Because only large organisations enjoyed the economy of scale to provide skills training in house, stakeholders reported that the majority of employers relied on providers and employment support agencies to help them respond to employability skills challenges. It was felt that employers had a key role to play in working with providers to maximise the value of the support they offer.

A key approach identified was employers working with providers to explain what skills they needed from employees, so that providers could train learners in the required skills. This included employers participating in employer engagement activity that providers offered, such as employer talks, visits and work experience placements. It also involved collaborating with providers to design course syllabuses.

Another key employer response identified by providers was engaging in dialogue with recruitment support agencies about the specific skills needs for particular roles. By discussing with recruitment support agencies what they required of a candidate, employers could be supported in finding people with suitable skills. Stakeholders explained that in some cases, employers could mistakenly judge a candidate as unsuitable for a role because they were using inappropriate criteria to form their judgement. One employment support service gave an example of a candidate with Asperger's who had been supported in applying for a data entry role. The employment support service had explained to the employer that although she did not have the skills required for a job interview, she was highly competent in data entry and therefore would be proficient in the role. Discussion between the employment support service and the employer enabled the employer to focus on the skills they needed rather than be deterred by a lack of skills that they would ordinarily look for but actually did not need for the particular role.



Key Actions

Summary of key issues

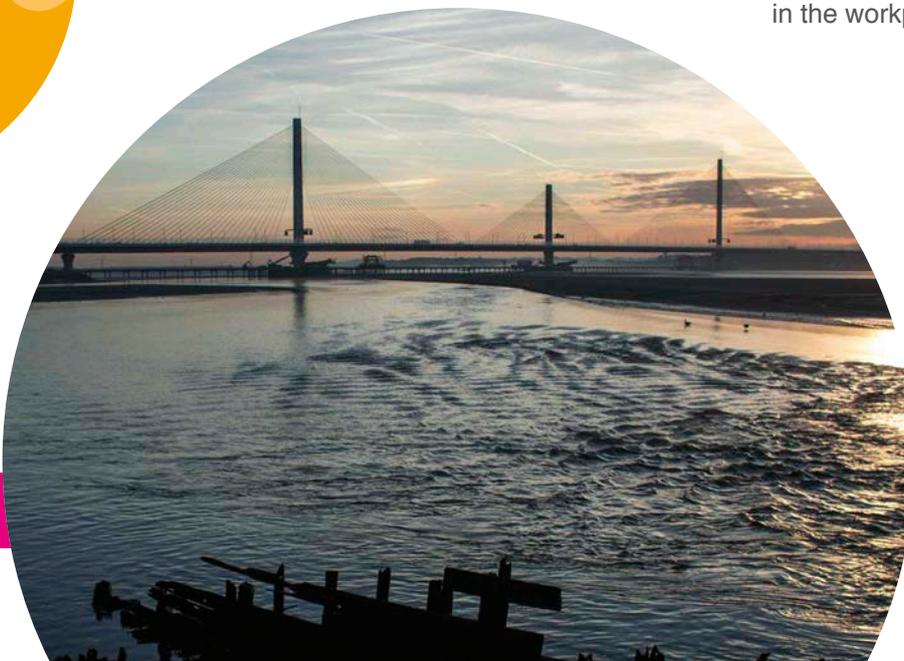
Evidence from existing research and consultations with stakeholders identified a number of key issues contributing to and resulting from the employability skills gap in the Liverpool City Region:

- Employers across all sectors reported gaps in general employability skills of their employees, particularly in communication and basic IT. Stakeholders also suggested that employers experience issues with the quality of employees' written and spoken English, basic digital skills and more general employability competencies, such as time keeping, presentation and attendance. This highlights the need to improve the employability skills of residents already in employment, as well as those looking for work.
- Employers also experience gaps in more intermediate employability skills, such as leadership, people, project and conflict management, and more advanced communication and presentation skills. The demand for these higher-level skills look likely to grow with the future expansion of more technical and managerial roles in the City Region.
- The employability skills gap is likely to be linked to the generally lower qualification levels amongst residents in the Liverpool City Region compared to those in the North West and England as a whole. Therefore, it is important to link general employability skills training to the development of basic literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Gaps in employability skills amongst job applicants and employees are creating a range of challenges for employers, including hard to fill and skills gap vacancies across all sectors and occupation levels; difficulties in retaining staff and succession planning; and creating efficiencies and future proofing their organisation in times of fast-paced technological change.
- There is a range of good practice taking place in basic employability and skills provision across the Liverpool City Region. This includes standalone and embedded provision offered by further education, vocational training and community learning providers. This good practice needs to be replicated across the City Region to ensure that employability provision is holistic and addresses the full range of competencies required by employers.
- Strong links and collaboration between providers, employers and recruitment agencies were identified as key to the development and delivery of responsive and good quality employability provision. However, it can be challenging for organisations to find the capacity and build the links required for this to take place.
- Lack of access to employability skills provision for residents already in employment was highlighted as a challenge in ensuring that employees have opportunities to continuously improve their skills.
- Providers also experienced challenges in delivering effective employability skills provision, including in recruiting and retaining teaching staff, lack of funding to keep up with changes in technology and capacity to support migrant workers to develop their spoken English and broader employability skills.

Priorities

To address these issues, 12 key priorities have been identified for the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, providers, employers and other stakeholders to take forward.

1. Develop frameworks of the entry and intermediate employability skills required by employers in the Liverpool City Region, based on the table included in the Appendix.
2. Identify any gaps in existing employability skills provision which need to be addressed in order to meet current and future skills needs throughout the City Region.
3. Work with providers to ensure that skills and employability provision covers the full range of skills and competencies required by employers.
4. Develop professional development programmes for employability tutors to gain industry expertise and tailor their provision to meet employer needs.
5. Facilitate communication between providers, recruitment agencies and employers about current and future employability skills needs in the City Region, and how provision can support the development of these.
6. Raise awareness of the importance of employability skills in the workplace – both for those looking for work and those already in employment – across the City region.
7. Develop progression pathways to higher level employability and English, maths and digital skills for those in lower level roles, in order to support succession planning and address potential future skills gaps arising from the development of technical and professional jobs in the region.
8. Boost programmes which include work experience and industry placements to support young people to develop employability skills and transition into work, including apprenticeships.
9. Increase support for residents already in work to improve their employability skills.
10. Gain a deeper understanding of the basic digital employability skills needs of employers and how these can be met.
11. Ensure that employability and basic skills programmes deliver the skills needed by residents.
12. Develop basic skills and employability provision in the workplace.



Actions

To meet the 12 priorities set out above, the Liverpool City Region should complete the actions outlined below, which include suggestions as to what success should look like and measures of impact.

Priority	Action	What does success look like?	How do we measure success?
Develop frameworks of the entry and intermediate employability skills required by employers in the Liverpool City Region.	Conduct further consultations with stakeholders and reviews of evidence to identify the skills required by employers. This could be based on the table in the Appendix of this action plan, which sets out the skills identified by stakeholders involved in this consultation.	A comprehensive framework of the employability skills required at entry and intermediate levels in Liverpool City Region.	Engagement of stakeholders and development of frameworks.
Identify any gaps in existing employability skills provision which need to be addressed in order to meet current and future skills needs in the City Region.	Undertake a mapping exercise of employability provision across the Liverpool City Region against the employability frameworks at entry and intermediate levels. This should identify the needs and provision available to specific groups, such as people with higher levels of technical skills, but who would benefit from improving their employability skills.	A detailed map of existing employability provision at different levels across the City Region.	Map of provision developed and gaps identified.
Work with providers to ensure that skills and employability provision covers the full range of skills and competencies required by employers.	Share case studies of the good practice already taking place across the City Region and work with providers to develop more comprehensive employability skills provision which covers attitudes and behaviours as well as writing CVs and job applications.	More opportunities for residents to access holistic employability provision which meets the full needs of employers.	Gaps in the map of employability provision are filled.
Develop professional development programmes for employability tutors to gain industry expertise and tailor their provision to meet employer needs.	Identify how national programmes of professional development (such as Teach Too) are being used in the City Region by providers to encourage industry experts in priority sectors (e.g. digital) to share their expertise with learning providers – or consider the development of a similar local scheme that has a greater focus on sector employability skills rather than higher level technical skills.	More opportunities for employment, learning and skills providers and practitioners to benefit from industry input.	Number of opportunities created, number of providers and practitioners, industry experts and sectors participating. Monitoring of impact on curriculum offer/content.
Facilitate communication between providers, recruitment agencies and employers about current and future employability skills needs in the City Region, and how provision can support the development of these.	Set up a forum of providers, recruitment agencies and employers which meets biannually to support the development of provision for the new academic year and review its progress mid-way through delivery. It could meet more frequently at times when decisions need to be made regarding provision that does not follow the academic year.	Improved communication between providers, recruitment agencies and employers about current and future employability skills needs.	Regular meetings of the forum and strong engagement from stakeholders. Feedback from forum members on its usefulness in developing provision and meeting skills needs.
Raise awareness of the importance of employability skills in the workplace – both for those looking for work and those already in employment – across the City region.	Run a joint campaign between Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, providers, Jobcentre Plus, employers and other stakeholders to highlight the need for employability skills at all levels and in all sectors. This could be led by the stakeholder forum suggested in the previous action.	Greater awareness amongst residents and wider stakeholders of the employability skills required across sectors and job levels.	Feedback from members of the forum, residents and wider stakeholders suggests that views of the importance of employability skills have changed.

Priority	Action	What does success look like?	How do we measure success?
Develop progression pathways to higher level employability and English, maths and digital skills for those in lower level roles, in order to support succession planning and address potential future skills gaps arising from the development of technical and professional jobs in the region.	Work with providers and other stakeholders (possibly via the stakeholder forum mentioned previously) to scope the potential for developing progression pathways to higher level employability skills and develop approaches to achieving this.	Employees have opportunities to gain intermediate employability skills and progress into more senior roles.	Progression pathways exist. Participation and outcomes data. Feedback from employers suggests they are confident employees have the intermediate employability skills required for more senior roles.
Boost programmes which include work experience and industry placements to support young people to develop employability skills and transition into work, including apprenticeships.	Work with learning and skills providers, employers and key stakeholders such as Jobcentre Plus to: understand current opportunities and challenges in the work experience element of 16-19 study programmes in FE provision; ensure that young people are able to benefit from traineeships, which offer work experience, English and maths qualifications and prepare them to progress into an apprenticeship or job; and facilitate greater collaboration.	High quality work experience is available in all employment and skills provision that requires or would benefit from it, and in sectors with hard to fill vacancies.	Provider reports on work placement availability. In the longer term, employers' perceptions of work readiness of prospective employees improve.
Increase support for residents already in work to improve their employability skills.	Consider further development of employability skills provision to include follow-up support for new starters in the workplace, for example, in-work mentoring and ongoing training. This could include exploring how the use of technology could support the delivery of in-work employability training, particularly for those in smaller businesses which cannot afford tailored, in-house training.	More opportunities for residents in work to access employability provision and improve their skills in the workplace.	More provision for, and increased participation amongst, employed learners.
Gain a deeper understanding of the basic digital employability skills needs of employers and how these can be met.	Undertake further work with employers to map out the basic digital employability skills required by employers locally (drawing on the new national standards, when available), and support employability and skills training providers to include relevant content in their programmes. Consider how the forthcoming basic digital skills entitlement, funded through the Adult Education Budget, can be used to support this.	A comprehensive map of basic digital employability skills required by employers exists and is used to inform the commissioning of the basic digital skills entitlement.	Map of basic digital employability skills developed. Commissioning plan for basic digital skills entitlement references the map.

Priority	Action	What does success look like?	How do we measure success?
Ensure that employability and basic skills programmes deliver the skills needed by residents.	<p>Consider how the devolved Adult Education Budget can be used to provide integrated basic skills programmes of study which address a range of basic digital, literacy, numeracy and other skills needed for employment (rather than providing separate courses). This could include non-accredited elements where appropriate, to deliver employability skills more efficiently and with reduced accreditation costs.</p> <p>Identify the extent to which employability programmes embed basic skills to equip participants with an improved and wider range of skills in literacy, numeracy and digital which can be sustained into employment, in addition to specific employability literacy skills (such as CV and application form writing).</p>	Employability and adult basic skills programmes deliver relevant basic and employability skills that meet the needs of residents and employers.	Stakeholder, employer and residents' feedback.
Develop basic skills and employability provision in the workplace	Consider how the devolved Adult Education Budget can be used to provide ongoing support for adults in work, with recent rule changes now permitting delivery of English and maths learning in the workplace. Providers should be supported to work with employers to develop and pilot new models of workplace basic skills provision, in collaboration with trade unions and other workplace representatives, and deliver these courses in ways which are linked to the job roles of employees.	New models of workplace basic skills provision developed, piloted and available. Providers are proactive in engaging with employers around the basic skills needs of their workforce. Employers contribute to development of programmes, and where appropriate, make a matched contribution to facilitate delivery (e.g. employee time for training, facilities for training). Providers and employers work with trade unions and other workplace representatives to promote learning in the workplace, engage employees and identify learning needs.	Provider data on courses delivered. Feedback from employer stakeholders on impact, with longer term potential to measure efficiency savings, reductions in absenteeism, staff turnover. Feedback from employees. Potential to measure in-work progression in the longer term.



Endnotes

1. UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2010) Employability Skills: A Research and Policy Briefing, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Wath upon Dearne
2. UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) The Employability Challenge, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Wath upon Dearne
3. Youth Employment UK (2017) The Youth Employment UK Employability Review; and University of Kent, Employability Skills webpage, available at: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skillsmenu.htm>
4. Available at: http://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/uploadedfiles/Documents/lcrca_emp_ski_surv.pdf
5. UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2009) The Employability Challenge, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, Wath upon Dearne
6. For example, see the Employability Skills qualifications on offer from City & Guilds.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide>



