

SKILLS for JUSTICE

Developing skills for a safer and fairer society



Skills for Justice 2013 Employer Skills Survey: Forensic Science Sector Headlines Report

Headlines Report

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Abstract

The Skills for Justice Employer Skills Survey (ESS) is a biennial consultation that seeks to provide insight and knowledge on trends of skills issues across the United Kingdom (UK) Justice and Community Safety sector (JCS sector).

The purpose of this headlines report is to summarise the Forensic Science sector findings for the 2013 ESS. The document does not provide detailed narratives on operational, strategic or other contextual factors associated with the variables analysed and reported in it. Detailed analysis will be available in a full report which will be published as soon as possible.

Early findings presented in this headlines report signify that the skills agenda must continue to sit at the heart of a vibrant and efficient Forensic Science sector and will continue to play a pivotal role in rebalancing the UK economy.

1. Targeted Employers, Respondents and Response Rates

The ESS was sent to nearly 1000 different employers within the JCS sector.

Organisations that participated were from the following sectors:

- Courts, Tribunals, Prosecution and Related Witness Care
- Fire and Rescue Sector
- Forensic Science
- Legal Services
- Local and Central Government
- Offender Management, Youth Justice, Custodial Care and Children's Workforce

- Policing and Law Enforcement
- Voluntary Community Services, Victims, Survivors & Witnesses and Restorative Justice

Nearly one-quarter of all targeted employers responded to the consultation resulting in an overall response rate of 23.1%. Employers within the Forensic Science sector had a higher than average response rate of 50% when compared to those employers targeted within the sector.

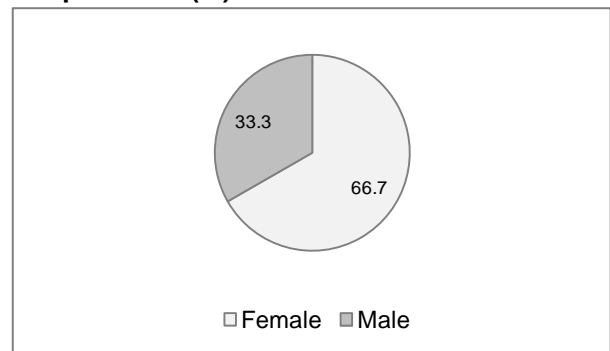
2. Respondents Demographics

The gender profile of participants from the Forensic Science sector shows that female respondents were approximately double the number of male participants.

Additional analysis of demographic information showed that:

- 91.7% of respondents are White British
- 8.3% of respondents chose not to indicate their ethnicity

Figure 2.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents (%)

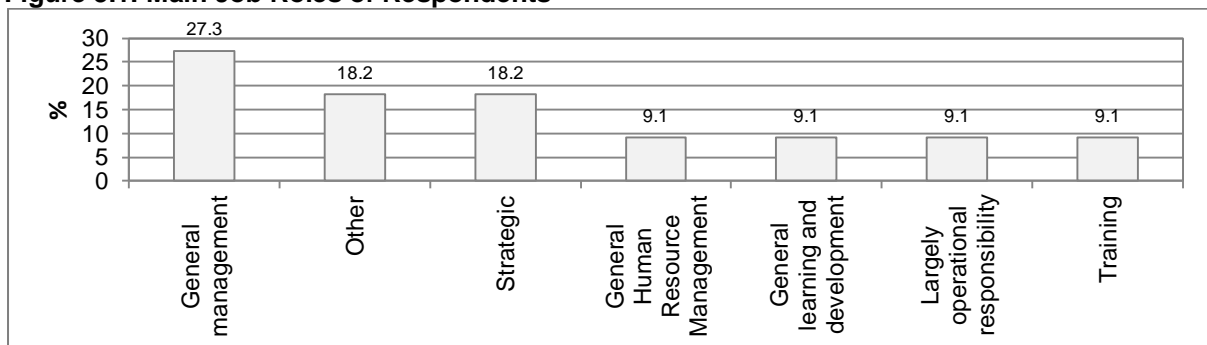


3. Survey Population and Organisational Characteristics

The ESS was largely targeted at people who have responsibility for issues around training, qualifications, Human Resource

Management (HRM) and those with a wider strategic remit.

Figure 3.1: Main Job Roles of Respondents

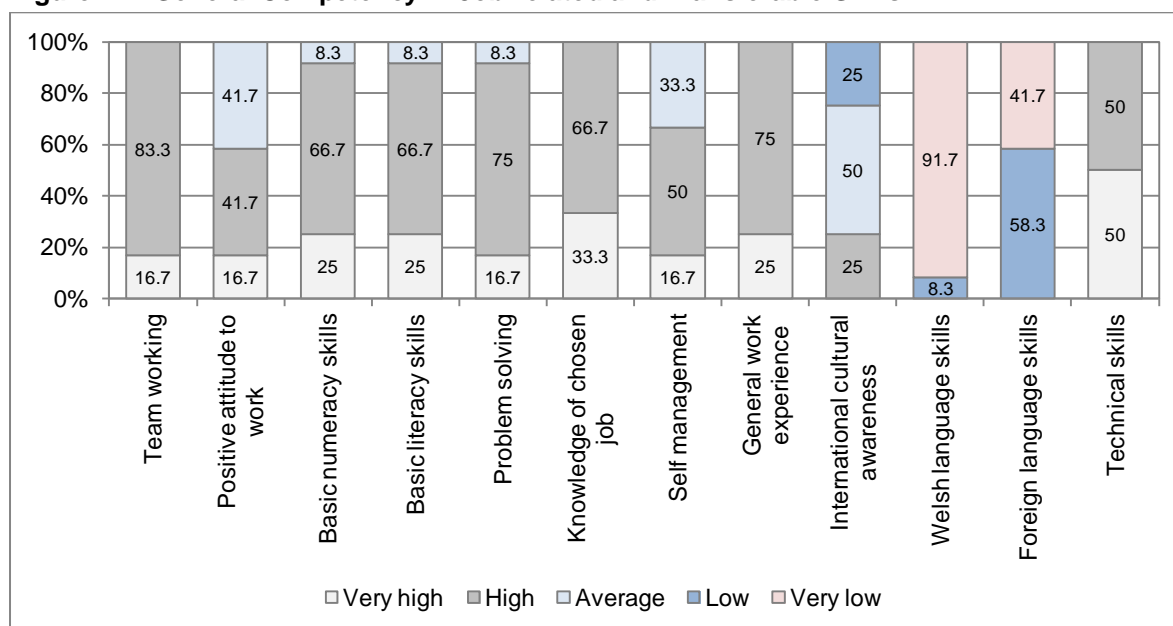


4. Skills Gaps: Their Causes and Implications

Respondents to the survey rated their general competency for a range of job-related and transferable skills. Results for the Forensic Science sector are summarised in Figure 4.1. Skills for which 40% or more employees indicated a less than high rating include:

- Welsh language skills (100%)
- Foreign language skills (100%)
- International cultural awareness (75%)
- Positive attitude to work (41.7%)

Figure 4.1: General Competency in Job-related and Transferable Skills



5. Steps Taken to Mitigate Impact of Skills Gaps

Approximately 36.4% of Forensic Science sector employers are not taking any steps to reduce the impact of skills gaps. Amongst those employers tackling skills gaps, the

specific steps being taking and the proportion of employers adopting these strategies are summarised in Table 5.1.

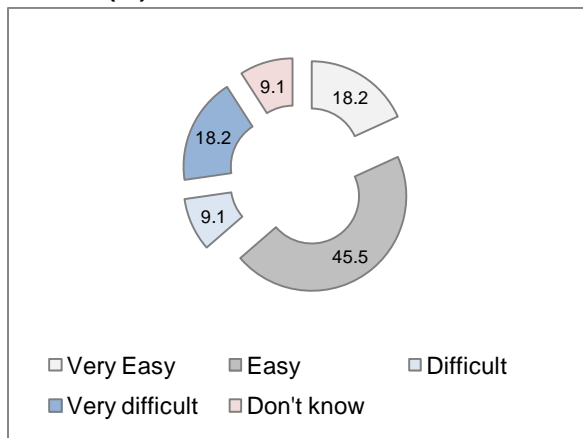
Table 5.1: Strategies Being Used to Address Skills Gaps

How Skills Gaps are Being Addressed	Proportion of Employers (%)
Changing work practices	45.5
Implementation of coaching and mentoring schemes	36.4
Building team spirit and motivation	27.3
Increased training spend and activity	18.2
More staff appraisal	18.2
Staff redundancies and replacement	18.2
Disciplinary action	9.1

6. Skills Shortages

Although just over half of employers within the Forensic Science sector found it relatively easy to fill vacancies over the last year, some employers struggled with filling vacant positions.

Figure 6.1: Ease or Difficulty with Which Vacancies Have Been Filled in Last Twelve Months (%)



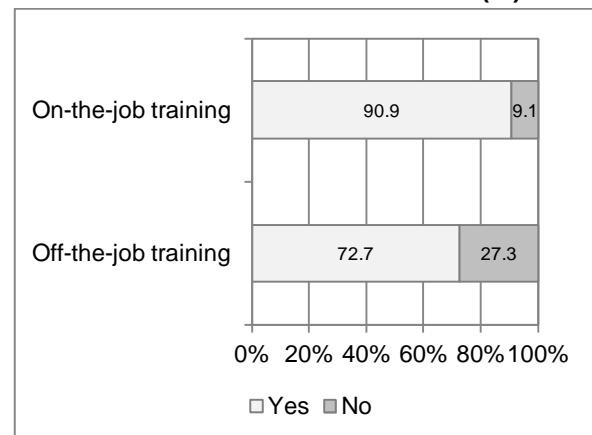
Different reasons contribute at different rates to difficulty in filling vacancies.

- 3 in 10 employers could not fill posts because applicants lacked the required skills.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill vacancies because candidates felt the terms and conditions of working were poor.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill posts because applicants lacked the required attitude.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill vacancies due to challenges with working patterns.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill posts because they were not full-time positions.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill advertised positions due to geographical proximity to the residences of candidates.
- 3 in 10 employers could not fill posts because candidates felt the positions would not allow for good career progression.

7. Employer Investment in Training and Skills

The survey sought to quantify the proportion of employees that had received training away from their immediate workplaces and those that had received training whilst working on their jobs. Results on training provision in the last twelve months are summarised in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: On and Off-the-Job Training Provision in the Last Twelve Months (%)

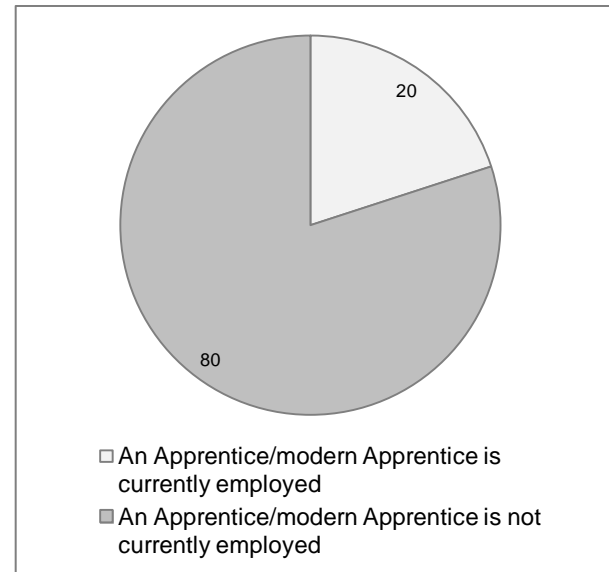


8. Apprenticeships

In relation to Apprenticeships, early results reveal that:

- 77.8% of employers have little or no understanding of funding issues surrounding Apprenticeships.
- 77.8% of employers have little or no understanding of different levels of Apprenticeships.
- 77.8% of employers have little or no understanding of eligibility for Apprenticeships.
- 77.8% of employers have little or no understanding of Apprenticeships costs.
- 77.8% of employers have little or no understanding of the structure/framework for Apprenticeships.
- 66.7% of employers have little or no understanding of where Apprenticeships can add value.

Figure 8.1: Rates at Which Organisations Currently Employ Apprentices (%)



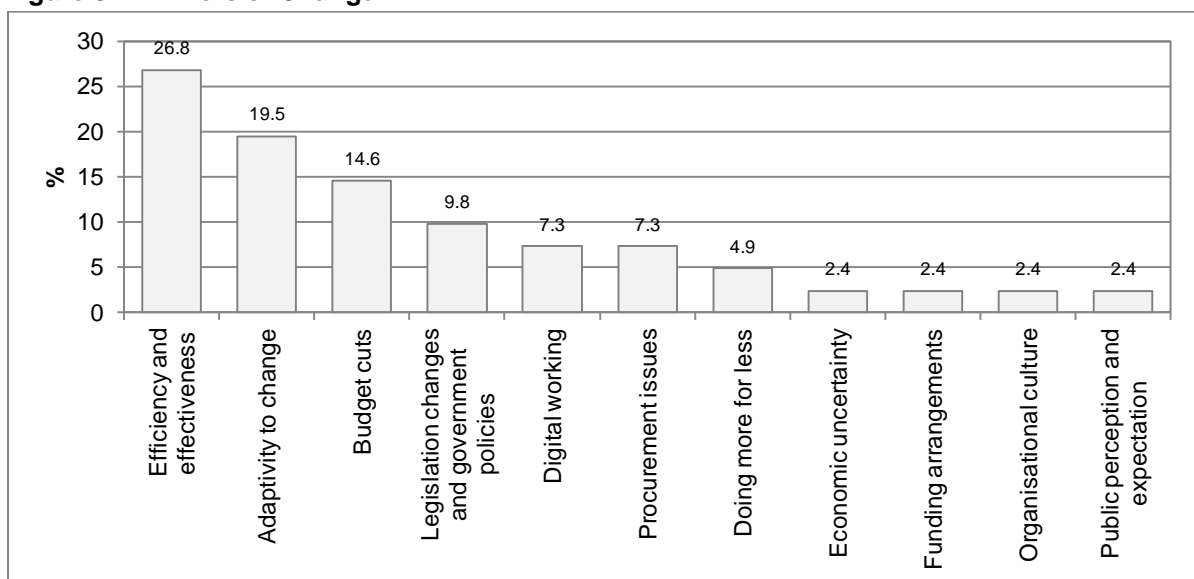
These statistics probably explain in part some of the reasons for the low rate of employing Apprentices.

9. Drivers of Change and Strategic Priorities

The level of incidence with which diverse drivers of change are influencing the decisions and actions of organisations within

the Forensic Science sector is summarised in Figure 9.1.

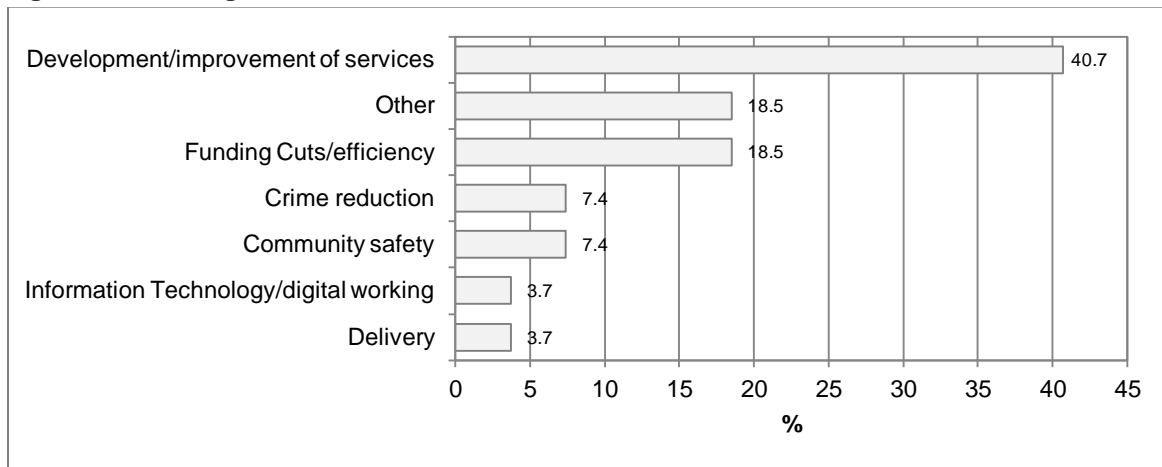
Figure 9.1: Drivers of Change



These drivers of change influence the strategic priorities of different organisations as shown in Figure 9.2. The main strategic

priority of organisations within the Forensic Science sector is the desire to improve service provision.

Figure 9.2: Strategic Priorities



10. Collaborative Working

All Forensic Science sector respondents to the survey indicated that they work in collaboration with other organisations.

The top factors that encourage collaborative working between organisations include:

- Partnership culture (91.7% of employers)

- Awareness of what other agencies can contribute (83.3% of employers)
- Willingness to work together (75% of employers)
- Mutual trust (66.7% of employers)
- Understanding aims and objectives (58.3% of employers)

11. Use of Business Improvement Tools

Employers were asked questions a range of questions about six business improvement tools. These include:

- ISO Standards
- LEAN/Six Sigma
- Investors in People (IiP)
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Coaching
- National Occupational Standards (NOS)

All respondents indicated that ISO standards have been implemented.

Figure 11.1: Implementation of LEAN/Six Sigma

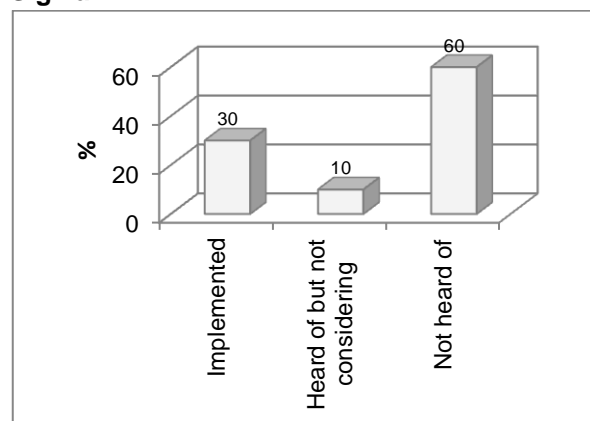


Figure 11.2: Implementation of Investors in People (IiP)

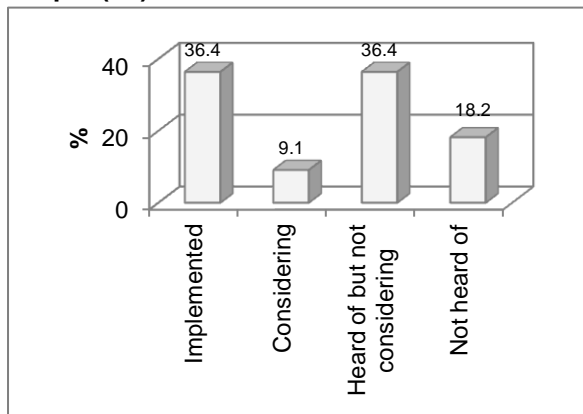


Figure 11.4: Implementation of Coaching

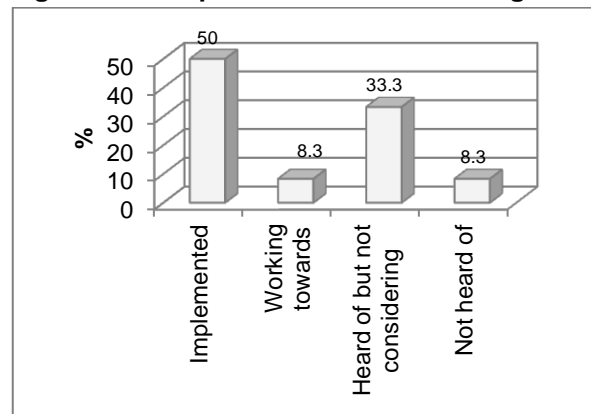


Figure 11.3: Implementation of Appreciative Inquiry

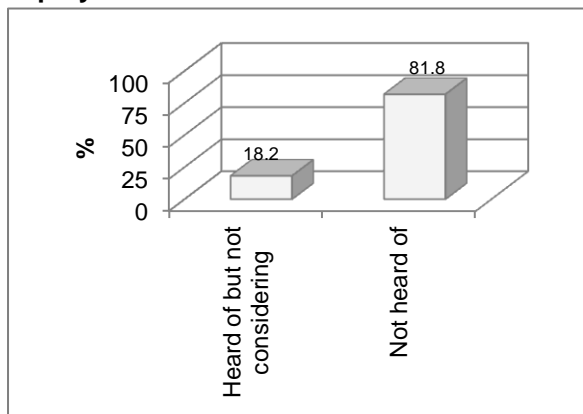
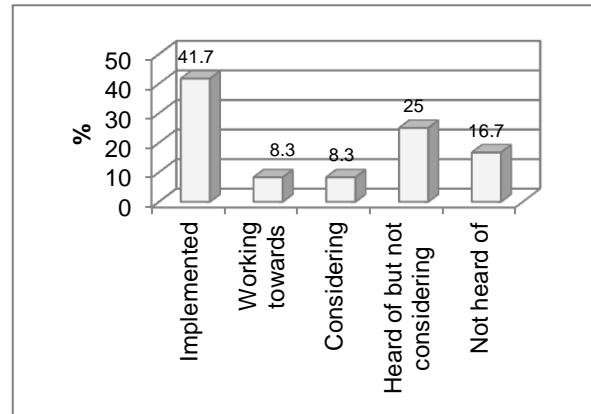


Figure 11.5: Implementation of National Occupational Standards (NOS)



12. Recruitment and Careers Information

Some of the challenges presented by the global economic crises means that labour markets are becoming more fluid and more challenging to understand or predict. Some jobs are disappearing whilst others are being created. This in part underscores the significance of Careers, Information Advice and Guidance (IAG). Forensic Science sector employers provided an indication of how they provide careers information for job applicants.

- 4 in 10 employers do not have any dedicated Careers IAG service

- 3 in 10 employers have a dedicated phone line/number for providing Careers IAG
- None of the respondents indicated that they have dedicated Careers Advisors
- 4 in 10 employers make use of publicity materials
- 4 in 10 employers make use of media adverts and related publicity
- 2 in 10 employers regularly attend career fairs where they disseminate information

13. Equality and Diversity

Equality is about creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Employers and employees within the JCS sector recognise that by eliminating prejudice and discrimination, the sector can deliver services that are fair and diverse and a society that is safer and indeed stronger.

Employers provided an indication of the significance, nature and strategies being used to address Equality and Diversity problems within their organisations. Results are presented in Figures 13.1 and 13.2.

Figure 13.1: Level of Significance of Equality and Diversity Problems (%)

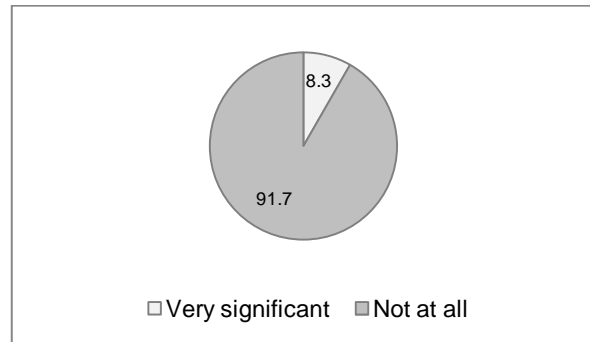


Figure 13.2: Strategic Approach to Addressing Equality and Diversity Challenges

