



# Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2016

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

**The Skills and Training Research 2016 survey was commissioned by CITB NI and CITB GB and broadly replicates similar research conducted in 2009, 2011 and 2014. Over 1,000 construction sector employers took part in the research throughout the UK, including 85 interviews in NI.**

The research was carried out to provide up to date information on recruitment difficulties and skills shortages, skills gaps, upskilling, and training and development activity. The findings are used to address the skills and training needs of the industry and to identify areas which require action to be taken by CITB NI.

### Constraints on Output

Insufficient demand / uncertainty in the economy is still the biggest constraint limiting construction employers throughout the UK as a whole (where 12% reported this as a limiting factor). However in NI only 10% reported this as a constraint which is a major reduction compared to 2014 when 46% of employers in NI cited the economy as a limiting factor. This suggests a significant improvement in economic conditions.

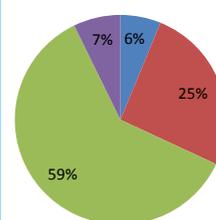
The largest output constraint mentioned by NI employers was labour shortages (12%), an increase of +10% on 2014. Other output constraints mentioned in 2016 included lack of funding / finance (9%), regulations / red-tape (6%), cash flow (5%) and availability of land (2%). All of these were mentioned significantly more often in NI than across the UK as a whole.

### Recruitment Activity, Difficulties and Skills Shortages

In terms of capacity, only 7% of NI employers reported that they did not have sufficient work for their workforce compared to 36% in 2014. 25% of employers (21% in 2014) did not have enough skilled workers for most or some of the last 12 months and 59% (44% in 2014) were operating at or near full capacity. 60% of NI employers had tried to recruit skilled or experienced direct / indirect labour during the last



#### SITUATION OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS



- For all or most of the last 12 months we did not have enough skilled workers for the work we had or could have had
- For some of that time we did not have enough skilled workers
- For most of the last 12 months we have been operating at or near full capacity
- For most of the last 12 months we have not had sufficient work for our workforce

12 months, up from 52% in 2014 and higher than the UK average of 55%.

46% of NI employers had actually recruited new employees in the last 12 months. 61% of these had experienced difficulties in filling the positions, statistically higher than the UK average of 47%. This has increased significantly from the 2014 survey where the comparable figure was 17% of all employers who had vacancies that were hard to fill.

UK wide the most frequent recruitment difficulties within the construction sector were experienced with regard to vacancies for carpenters / joiners (27%), bricklayers (18%) and labourers and general operatives (12%). The most frequently cited cause of these hard to fill vacancies is that applicants lack the skills required (88%), that not enough young people are being trained in the construction industry (79%) and that applicants lack the right attitude or motivation (73%).

## Skills Gaps and Up-Skilling

Across the UK the three main areas in which staff with skills gaps require further development include experience and knowledge in general (27%), personal skills (18%), and job specific / trade skills (16%). Qualifications and IT skills are reported as missing by 5% of employers with skill gaps.

In 2016, 16% of NI employers reported skills gaps within their existing workforce (7% in 2014). Employers in Northern Ireland are particularly likely to identify technical / trade-specific skills (28%) and these employers are also significantly more likely than average to feel that they need to improve or update the skills of their workforce with regard to IT / new software (21%) and green / ecological products and / or practices (12%).



Amongst employers in Northern Ireland, the most frequently cited drivers that would lead to the need to acquire new skills and knowledge were the development of new products and services (51%), the introduction of new technologies / equipment (50%), new legislative / regulatory requirements (50%), the introduction of new working practices (44%), and environmental requirements (43%).

## Workforce Training and Development

70% of all NI employers had funded or arranged training for staff in the last 12 months, up from 58% in the 2014 survey. 51% of employers had provided on the job training to their employees and 59% of NI employers had provided off the job training (multiple responses possible).

Just 30% of all employers had provided training in the last 12 months towards a nationally recognised qualification, a decrease from 40% in the 2014 survey, thus showing a decline in the provision of qualifications-based training.

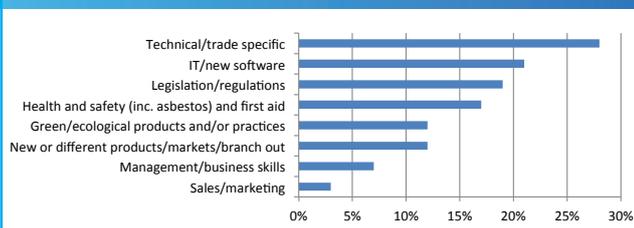
Of those NI employers that funded training in the last 12 months, 47% indicated that they would have provided more training if they had been able to do so. The main reasons for not providing more training across the UK were a lack of staff time and funds. For those NI employers that had not arranged training in the last 12 months, the main reason given for not doing so was that staff were already fully proficient (82% compared to the UK average of 63%).

## Apprenticeships

Only 16% of employers in NI currently have staff undertaking apprenticeships at their site however this is higher than the figure for 2014 (9%). For comparison, the UK average is 23%.

29% of employers in NI consider it likely / very likely that they will have someone starting an apprenticeship in the next 12 months (vs 40% in 2014 and 33% UK wide).

### WHICH SKILLS DO YOU FEEL WILL NEED IMPROVING OR UPDATING AMONGST YOUR STAFF OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



For a copy of the full report please go to the Research and Development section of our website: [www.citbni.org.uk](http://www.citbni.org.uk)

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