

## **Sector Skills Agreement**

### **Data Report 9: National and English regional perspective**

**September 2006**

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## **Data Report 9: National and English regional perspective**

### **1.Introduction**

This data report draws on different data sources in order to provide a geographical perspective on skills and training related issues within the Asset Skills sector. Separate sections of analysis are set out in relation to:

- England and the English Regions
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland

Analysis includes the use of the following surveys:

- The Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005, which provides a perspective for each country within the UK for Asset Skills employers
- The SSDA Employer Survey 2004 which provides a perspective for each country within the UK for both Asset Skills employers and an all sector average
- The National Employer Skills Survey NESS (2005) which provides a perspective for each region of England in relation to both the Asset Skills sector and an all sector average
- The Future Skills Scotland (2005) survey
- The Future Skills Wales (2005) survey

## **2.England and English Regions**

- Analysis of the extent to which Asset Skills establishments have formal human resource procedures and strategies in place indicates that the highest proportion of Asset Skills establishments with:
- Business plans are evident in the West Midlands (68%) and the lowest proportion in the East of England (45%). This compares with an average for England of 50% and 57% within the UK.
- A training plan is evident in the North East (39%) and the lowest proportion in the North West (30%) and South East (30%). This compares with an average for England of 29% and 34% within the UK.
- A budget for training expenditure is evident in London (43%) and the lowest proportion in the North West (20%) and South East (20%). This compares with an average for England of 25% and 28% within the UK.
- A formal staff appraisal process is evident in the East Midlands (49%) and the lowest proportion in the North West (32%). This compares with an average for England of 38% and 43% within the UK.
- A recruitment strategy is evident in the West Midlands (39%) and the lowest proportion in Yorkshire and the Humberside (19%). This compares with an average for England of 24% and 28% within the UK.
- None of the above is evident in the East of England (40%) and the lowest proportion in the West Midlands (22%). This compares with an average for England of 25% and 28% within the UK.

(See Tables 1 and 2)

Table 1: Formal human resource procedures and strategies by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England
A business plan	2955	1816	1162	3533	5385	2901	3342	2957	8556	32607
A training plan	2397	1129	762	1812	3164	1998	1950	1499	4473	19184
A budget for training expenditure	1416	975	660	1207	2073	1307	1401	1025	6102	16166
A formal staff appraisal process	2641	1782	918	1943	4372	2465	2297	1989	6506	24913
A recruitment strategy	1734	775	608	1285	2437	1715	1928	929	4381	15792
None of these	2670	1197	483	2025	2856	1456	1110	1133	3494	16424
All Asset Skills employers	6638	3628	1950	6051	10401	5576	4946	4883	14228	58301

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Table 2: Formal human resource procedures and strategies by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England	UK
A business plan	45%	50%	60%	58%	52%	52%	68%	61%	60%	50%	57%
A training plan	36%	31%	39%	30%	30%	36%	39%	31%	31%	29%	34%
A budget for training expenditure	21%	27%	34%	20%	20%	23%	28%	21%	43%	25%	28%
A formal staff appraisal process	40%	49%	47%	32%	42%	44%	46%	41%	46%	38%	43%
A recruitment strategy	26%	21%	31%	21%	23%	31%	39%	19%	31%	24%	28%
None of these	40%	33%	25%	33%	27%	26%	22%	23%	25%	25%	28%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Table 3: The incidence of training over the past 12 months by region

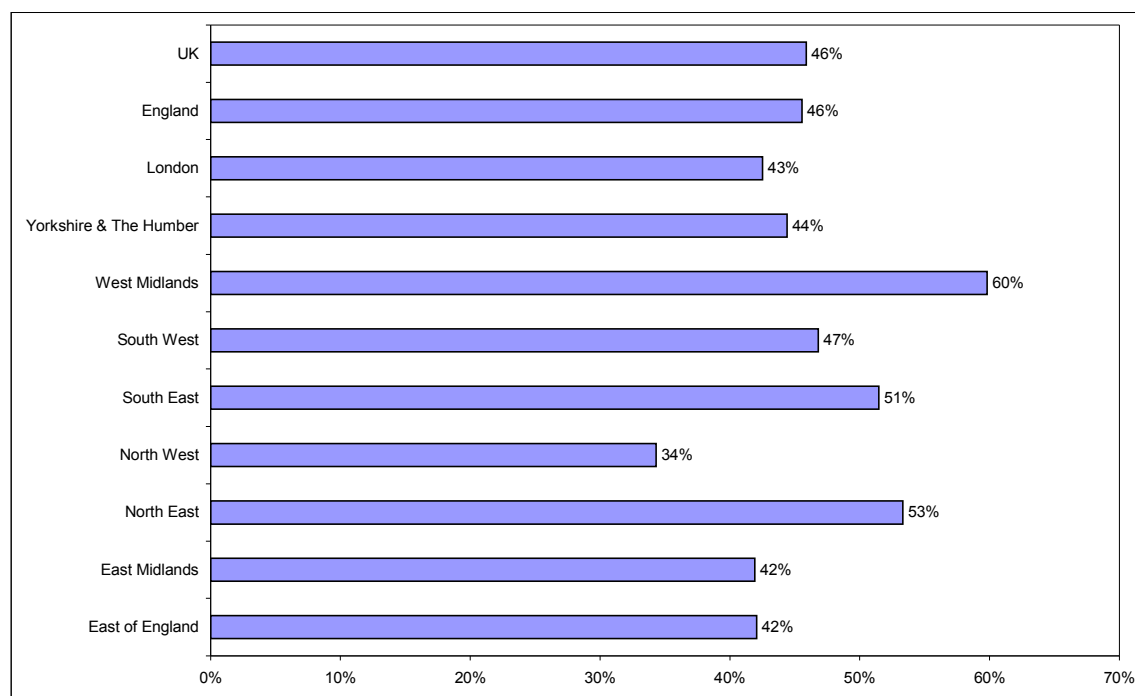
	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England
Yes	2906	1564	1048	2176	5542	2681	3057	2197	6282	27453
No	3992	2027	862	4130	5206	2796	2042	2747	8462	32264
Do not know/No response	12	140	55	34	18	250	11	5	29	554
All Asset Skills employers	6910	3731	1965	6340	10766	5727	5110	4949	14773	60271

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

In relation to the incidence of training over the last 12 months amongst all Asset Skills employers, the highest incidence is evident in the West Midlands (60%) and the lowest incidence in the North West (34%). (See Table 3 and Figure 1)

Figure 1: The incidence of training over the past 12 months by region



Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

In relation to the incidence of different types of training undertaken in the last 12 months the highest incidence of **management training** is evident in the West Midlands (29%) and the lowest incidence in the East Midlands (11%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 18%, mirroring the proportion for the UK.

In relation to the incidence of **new technology training** undertaken in the last 12 months the highest incidence of this is evident in the West Midlands (28%) and the lowest incidence in the North West (9%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 17%, mirroring the proportion for the UK.

In relation to the incidence of **basic job specific technical training** undertaken in the last 12 months, the highest incidence of this is evident in the East of England (20%) and the lowest incidence in London (11%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 15%, mirroring the proportion for the UK.

In relation to the incidence of **advanced job specific training** undertaken in the last 12 months, the highest incidence of this is evident in the East Midlands (12%) and the lowest incidence in the East of England (4%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 8%, mirroring the proportion for the UK.

In relation to the incidence of **adult literacy training** undertaken in the last 12 months, the highest incidence of this is evident in London (4%) and the lowest incidence in the East of England and Yorkshire and the Humber (both less than 1%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 1%, mirroring the proportion for the UK.

In relation to the incidence of **adult numeracy training** undertaken in the last 12 months, the highest incidence of this is evident in the North East (4%) and the lowest incidence in the East of England, North West, South East, South West and Yorkshire and the Humber (all less than 1%). The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 1%, mirroring the proportion for the UK. (See Table 5)

Wide variations are evident in the **importance attached to learning at work** within different regions. 77% or more of Asset Skills establishments in the South West, North East and West Midlands consider this to be 'very important', while this is the case for only 54% of establishments in London. The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 67%, somewhat lower than the figure for the UK of 76%. (See Tables 6 and 7)

Table 4: Types of training undertaken in the past 12 months by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England
Management training	1349	412	343	885	1999	1003	1494	1094	2304	10883
New Technology	1109	600	537	574	2154	936	1406	785	2022	10123
Basic job specific technical training	1370	606	368	1035	1368	1087	986	765	1616	9201
Advanced job specific training	256	457	195	428	1011	598	314	308	1167	4734
Adult literacy training	34	37	28	96	99	41	41	7	619	1002
Adult numeracy	33	94	81	29	38	23	31	7	75	411
Any other training	394	395	125	303	822	564	403	329	891	4226

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Table 5: Types of training undertaken in the past 12 months by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England	UK
Management training	20%	11%	17%	14%	19%	18%	29%	22%	16%	18%	18%
New Technology	16%	16%	27%	9%	20%	16%	28%	16%	14%	17%	17%
Basic job specific technical training	20%	16%	19%	16%	13%	19%	19%	15%	11%	15%	15%
Advanced job specific training	4%	12%	10%	7%	9%	10%	6%	6%	8%	8%	8%
Adult literacy training	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	4%	2%	2%
Adult numeracy	0%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Table 6: Importance attached to learning at work by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England
Very Important	4602	2599	1522	4269	7676	4497	3942	3406	7964	40477
Important	1376	809	267	1472	2232	712	800	945	5152	13765
Neither Important nor unimportant	496	173	73	252	357	230	187	170	1015	2953
Unimportant	292	5	43	97	402	0	169	229	396	1633
Very unimportant	7	8	0	67	0	0	11	0	29	122
Unable to say	136	137	2	183	82	288	0	79	143	1050
Do not know	0	0	59	0	0	0	0	120	73	252
No response	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	18

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Table 7: Importance attached to learning at work by region

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire & The Humber	London	England	UK
Very Important	67%	70%	77%	67%	71%	79%	77%	69%	54%	67%	76%
Important	20%	22%	14%	23%	21%	12%	16%	19%	35%	23%	14%
Neither Important nor unimportant	7%	5%	4%	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	7%	5%	1%
Unimportant	4%	0%	2%	2%	4%	0%	3%	5%	3%	3%	1%
Very unimportant	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unable to say	2%	4%	0%	3%	1%	5%	0%	2%	1%	2%	8%
Do not know	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
No response	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the SSDA 2004 employer survey for the UK, the benefit of training most frequently cited by Asset Skills establishments in England, by a wide margin, is improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce. Just over half (54%) of all Asset Skills establishments in England undertaking training over the previous 12 months cited this benefit, similar to the figure for the UK of 56%.

Other benefits cited by more than 10% of Assets Skills establishments undertaking training over the previous 12 months were:

- Improved labour productivity (20%).
- Better customer service (17%)
- More motivated staff (19%)
- Able to comply with legislation/regulations (12%)

(See Table 8 for more details)

Amongst all Asset Skills establishments in England, 86% identified at least one barrier to training, mirroring the figure for Asset Skills establishments in the UK as a whole.

The two most frequently cited barriers preventing training are:

- The financial costs involved, cited by 57% of Asset Skills employers in England
- Disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training, cited by 51% of Asset Skills employers

(See Table 9 for more details)

Table 8: Benefits for establishments of all training funded or provided in last 12 months (Unprompted)

	Asset Skills England	Asset Skills UK
Improved the level of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce	54%	56%
Improved labour productivity	20%	19%
More motivated staff	19%	18%
Better customer service	17%	17%
Able to comply with legislation/regulations	12%	10%
Improved profit margins on sales or service	8%	9%
Keeps the business going/enables survival/smooth running	9%	8%
Allows the meeting/understanding of company objectives/targets/standards	5%	4%
Reduced employee turnover	4%	4%
Staff development/increased opportunity for promotion/improved wages	1%	2%
Increased awareness of health and safety	2%	2%
Improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision	1%	1%
Better quality products/service	1%	1%
Allows company development/expansion/progress	<1%	1%
Improved company reputation/profile	1%	1%
Increased flexibility/staff able to work outside primary role/multi tasking	1%	<1%
Keeping up to date with modern development/technology	<1%	<1%
Cost control	<1%	<1%
Clarity/awareness of job roles	<1%	<1%
Increase/improved communication or support	0%	<1%
Other	<1%	<1%
Increased product/service knowledge/understanding	<1%	<1%
Lower absentee rates	<1%	<1%
Don't know	1%	1%
None/negligible	2%	2%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers undertaking training in the past 12 months

Table 9: Barriers to training

	Asset Skills England	Asset Skills UK
Financial cost of training	57%	56%
Disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training	51%	52%
Lack of knowledge about range of training provision available	32%	32%
Reluctance of staff to take up training opportunities	24%	22%
Lack of suitable training provision	27%	30%
Concern that investing in training will make staff susceptible to 'poaching' from competitors	40%	39%
Concern that acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages	25%	27%
Belief that formal training is not the best way to develop skills	18%	17%
Training done in the past has not delivered expected benefits	17%	18%
Establishment never really provided training for employees before	12%	12%
Any Barriers	86%	86%
No Barriers	14%	14%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

### 3.Scotland

In order to assess the extent to which Asset Skills employers utilise formal HR procedures and strategies, five indicators were examined. By comparison with the average for the UK, a higher proportion of employers within Scotland have adopted each HR procedure/strategy examined.

- 65% of Asset Skills establishments in Scotland have a business plan in place compared with 57% in the UK as a whole
- 39% of such establishments in Scotland have a training plan in place compared with 34% in the UK as a whole
- 30% of such establishments in Scotland have a budget for expenditure compared with 28% in the UK as a whole
- 45% of such establishments in Scotland have a formal staff appraisal process compared with 43% in the UK as a whole
- 34% of such establishments in Scotland have a recruitment strategy compared with 28% in the UK as a whole

(See Table 10)

Table 10: Formal human resource procedures and strategies

	Scotland (Numbers)	Scotland (%)	UK
A business plan	2703	65%	57%
A training plan	1645	39%	34%
A budget for training expenditure	1276	30%	28%
A formal staff appraisal process	1894	45%	43%
A recruitment strategy	1421	34%	28%
None of these	862	21%	28%
All Asset Skills employers	4185	65%	57%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Scotland is also higher than the average for the industry in the UK – 51% in Scotland compared with 46% in the UK.

Analysis of the Future Skills Scotland 2005 Survey puts the figure of Asset Skills employers that have arranged or funded training over the previous 12 months at 48%. However, this is significantly lower than the figure of 62% for all sectors in Scotland. (See Table 11)

Table 11: The incidence of training over the last 12 months

	Scotland (Numbers)	Scotland (%)	UK
Employers training over the last 12 months	2214	51%	46%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

In relation to the different types of training undertaken by Asset Skills establishments in Scotland, training in new technology (21% of establishments) and basic job specific technical training (21%) are the most frequently undertaken. The proportion of Scottish establishments undertaking both these types of training is somewhat higher than the incidence amongst Asset Skills establishments in the UK as a whole.

Management training (16%) and advanced job specific training is also undertaken by a significant minority of Scottish establishments. (See Table 12)

Table 12: Types of training undertaken in the past 12 months

	Scotland (Numbers)	Scotland (%)	UK
Management training	676	16%	18%
New Technology	904	21%	17%
Basic job specific technical training	924	21%	15%
Advanced job specific training	452	10%	8%
Adult literacy training	47	1%	2%
Adult numeracy	54	1%	1%
Any other training	180	16%	18%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Evidence from the SSDA (2004) provides some insights into different methods, or approaches used to develop skills of employees amongst Asset Skills employees in Scotland. In relation to:

- Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time - 48% of Asset Skills establishments in Scotland indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 73%.
- Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles - 71% of Asset Skills establishments in Scotland indicate that adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 75%.
- Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong - 82% of Asset Skills establishments in Scotland indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 78%.

Table 13: Methods/approaches used to develop skills of employees

	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills UK
Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time	48%	73%
Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles	71%	75%
Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong	82%	78%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Comparison of Asset Skills employers in Scotland with those in the UK as a whole indicates that:

- Broadly the same proportion of Asset Skills employers in Scotland (58%) and such employers in the UK as a whole (60%) undertake both formal training and wider workforce development activity
- A somewhat lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Scotland undertake wider workforce development activities only - 30% compared with 35% within the UK as a whole.
- Less than 1% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland undertake formal training only. This compares with 2% for Asset Skills employers within the UK as a whole.
- A somewhat higher proportion of Asset Skills employers in Scotland undertake neither formal training or wider workforce development activity - 12% compared with 3% within the UK as a whole.

Table 14: Workforce development activity

	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills UK
Formal training and wider workforce development activity	58%	60%
Wider workforce development activity only	30%	35%
Formal training only	<1%	2%
Neither	12%	3%
Don't know	0%	<1%

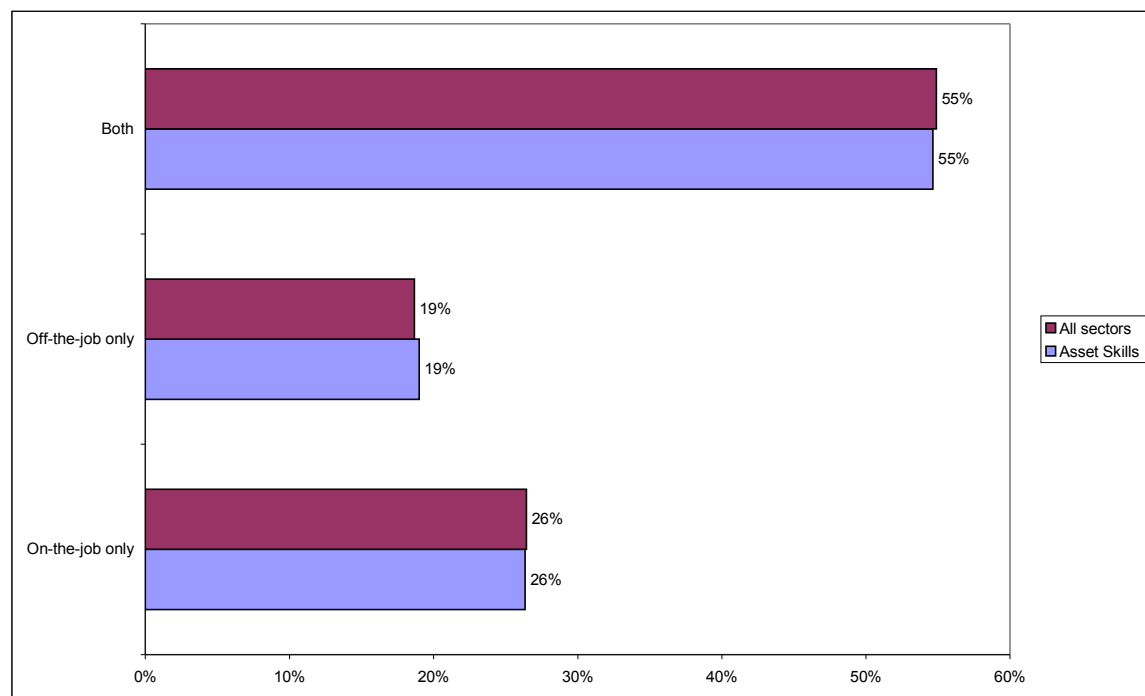
Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Evidence from the 2005 Future Skills Scotland survey indicates that 41% of employees within the Asset Skills sector in Scotland received on the job training compared with 37% in other sectors.

Evidence from the same data source relating to the incidence of on and off the job training provided by employers indicates that 55% of Asset Skills employers within Scotland that undertake any training, undertake both on and off the job training, 19% off the job only and 26% on the job only. These figures are mirrored by all sectors within Scotland. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Incidence of on and off the job training



Source: Future Skills Scotland

Base: All establishments undertaking training

Analysis of the source of training undertaken by Asset Skills employers in Scotland indicates that use of private training providers/external consultants is more common amongst Asset Skills employers than other sectors – 65% compared with 48%. This is also the case with respect to industry bodies/professional associations, FE and HE provision.

By contrast a lower proportion of Asset Skills employers utilise internal staff or a dedicated company or Government owned training centre. (See Table 15)

Table 15: Providers of off the job training

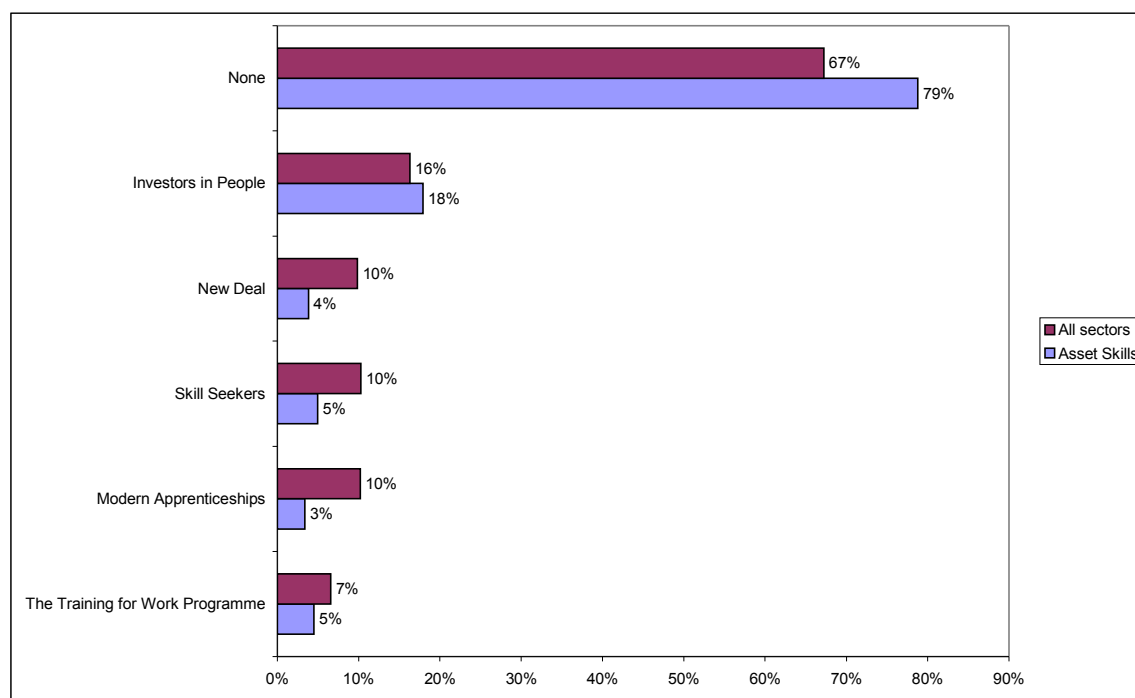
	Asset Skills	Other sectors
Private training providers/external consultants	65%	48%
Industry bodies / professional associations	34%	30%
Staff at this site	30%	36%
FE College	29%	24%
Dedicated company/Govt owned training centre	28%	34%
HE University	11%	7%
None of these	2%	4%
Don't know	0%	1%

Source: FSS 2005

Base: % of employers providing off the job training

With the exception of Investors in People (IIP) a lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Scotland take part in Government Schemes or programmes than is the case with all sectors. (See figure 3)

Figure 3: Participation in government schemes or programmes



Source: Future Skills Scotland  
Base: All establishments

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Scotland, 74% of employers indicated it was very important and 16% important. These figures are broadly in line with figures for the UK as a whole.

Table 16: Importance attached to learning at work

	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills UK
Very Important	3216	74%	76%
Important	787	16%	14%
Neither Important nor unimportant	131	2%	1%
Unimportant	42	1%	1%
Very unimportant	32	1%	0%
Unable to say	96	1%	8%
Do not know	0	6%	0%
No response	8	0%	0%
Total	4312	100%	100%

Source: SSDA 2004  
Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the SSDA 2004 employer survey for the UK, the benefit of training most frequently cited by Scottish Asset Skills employers is improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce. Just over half (54%) of all such employers undertaking training over the previous 12 months cited this benefit, a similar proportion to the UK as a whole.

Table 17: Benefits for establishments of all training funded or provided in last 12 months (Unprompted)

	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills UK
Improved the level of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce	54%	56%
Improved labour productivity	10%	19%
More motivated staff	6%	18%
Better customer service	9%	17%
Able to comply with legislation/regulations	<1%	10%
Improved profit margins on sales or service	16%	9%
Keeps the business going/enables survival/smooth running	0%	8%
Allows the meeting/understanding of company objectives/targets/standards	<1%	4%
Reduced employee turnover	6%	4%
Staff development/increased opportunity for promotion/improved wages	13%	2%
Increased awareness of health and safety	<1%	2%
Improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision	0%	1%
Better quality products/service	0%	1%
Allows company development/expansion/progress	6%	1%
Improved company reputation/profile	0%	1%
Increased flexibility/staff able to work outside primary role/multi tasking	0%	<1%
Keeping up to date with modern development/technology	0%	<1%
Cost control	0%	<1%
Clarity/awareness of job roles	0%	<1%
Increase/improved communication or support	3%	<1%
Other	2%	<1%
Increased product/service knowledge/understanding	0%	<1%
Lower absentee rates	0%	<1%
Don't know	<1%	1%
None/negligible	3%	2%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers undertaking training in the past 12 months

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Scottish Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cited improved profit margins (16% compared with 9%), staff development/increased opportunities for promotion/improved wages (13% compared with 2%)
- A lower proportion cites improved labour productivity (10% compared with 19%), more motivated staff (6% compared with 18%) and better customer service (9% compared with 17%).

In relation to barriers to training 94% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat higher proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Scotland is disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training (56% of employers, similar to the figure for UK establishments in the industry of 52%).

This is followed by lack of suitable training provision, cited by 40% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland, a somewhat higher proportion than is the case for the UK as a whole (30%).

The financial cost of training is cited as a barrier by 38% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland, a somewhat lower proportion than is the case for the UK as a whole (56%).

(See Table 18)

Table 18: Barriers to training

	Asset Skills Scotland	Asset Skills UK
Financial cost of training	38%	56%
Disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training	56%	52%
Lack of knowledge about range of training provision available	23%	32%
Reluctance of staff to take up training opportunities	18%	22%
Lack of suitable training provision	40%	30%
Concern that investing in training will make staff susceptible to 'poaching' from competitors	33%	39%
Concern that acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages	30%	27%
Belief that formal training is not the best way to develop skills	<1%	17%
Training done in the past has not delivered expected benefits	20%	18%
Establishment never really provided training for employees before	16%	12%
Any Barriers	94%	86%
No Barriers	6%	14%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

## 4. Wales

In order to assess the extent to which Asset Skills employers utilise formal HR procedures and strategies the five indicators were examined. With the exception of a budget for training expenditure, by comparison with Asset Skills establishments in the UK as a whole, a similar proportion of employers within Wales have adopted each HR procedure/strategy examined.

- 58% of Asset Skills establishments in Wales have a business plan in place compared with 57% in the UK as a whole
- 35% of such establishments have a training plan in place compared with 34% in the UK as a whole
- 22% of such establishments in Wales have a budget for expenditure compared with 28% in the UK as a whole
- 43% of such establishments in Wales, have a formal staff appraisal process, mirroring the proportion in the UK as a whole
- 28% of such establishments in Wales have a recruitment strategy compared with 28% in the UK as a whole

(See Table 19)

Table 19: Formal human resource procedures and strategies

	Wales	Wales	UK
A business plan	1208	58%	57%
A training plan	728	35%	34%
A budget for training expenditure	465	22%	28%
A formal staff appraisal process	884	43%	43%
A recruitment strategy	586	28%	28%
None of these	627	30%	28%
All Asset Skills employers	2072	58%	57%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Wales is similar to the average for the industry in the UK – 47% in Wales compared with 46% in the UK. (See table 20)

Table 20: The incidence of training over the last 12 months

	Wales	Wales	UK
Employers training over the last 12 months	1017	47%	46%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

In relation to the different types of training undertaken by Asset Skills establishments, training in new technology (18%) and management training (14%) are the most frequently undertaken. Basic job specific training is also undertaken by 10% of Asset Skills establishments in Wales. (See Table 21)

Table 21: Types of training undertaken in the past 12 months

	Wales	Wales	UK
Management training	294	14%	18%
New Technology	388	18%	17%
Basic job specific technical training	223	10%	15%
Advanced job specific training	90	4%	8%
Adult literacy training	7	0%	2%
Adult numeracy	8	0%	1%
Any other training	142	14%	18%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Evidence from the SSDA (2004) provides some insights into different methods or approaches used to develop skills of employees amongst Asset Skills employees in Wales. In relation to:

- Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time - 96% of Asset Skills establishments in Wales indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 73%.
- Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles - 89% of Asset Skills establishments in Wales indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 75%.
- Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong, 86% of Asset Skills establishments in Wales indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 78%.

(See Table 22)

Table 22: Methods/approaches used to develop skills of employees

	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills UK
Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time	96%	73%
Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles	89%	75%
Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong	86%	78%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Comparison of Asset Skills employers in Wales with those in the UK as a whole indicates that:

- A higher proportion of Asset Skills employers in Wales (78%) undertake both formal training and wider workforce development activity than is the case amongst such employers in the UK as a whole (60%)
- A somewhat lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Wales undertake wider workforce development activities only - 22% compared with 35% within the UK as a whole.
- 1% of Asset Skills employers in Wales undertake formal training only. This compares with 2% in the UK as a whole.

(See Table 23)

Table 23: Workforce development activity

	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills UK
Formal training and wider workforce development activity	78%	60%
Wider workforce development activity only	22%	35%
Formal training only	1%	2%
Neither	0%	3%
Don't know	0%	<1%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

According to evidence from the Future Skills Wales Employer Survey (2005), about 60% of Asset Skills employers within Wales arranged off the job training over the previous 12 months. See Table 24.

Table 24: Establishments that have arranged off the job training over the last 12 months

Asset Skills	Asset Skills	All sectors
1704	59.9	57.9

Source: FSS Wales 2005

Base: All establishments

The same data source identifies patterns of off the job training by occupational group. The analysis indicates that off the job training is most likely to be undertaken by Asset Skills employers in Wales in relation to managerial occupations (About 40% of employers). Table 25 below outlines these findings in more detail.

Table 25: Establishments that have arranged off the job training over the last 12 months by occupation

	Asset Skills	Asset Skills	All sectors
Managerial occupations	1148	40.4	37.5
Professional occupations	329	11.6	14.5
Associate professional and technical occupations	308	10.8	8.7
Administrative and secretarial occupations	720	25.3	20.4
Skilled trade occupations	147	5.2	11.2
Personal service occupations	10	0.4	7
Sales and customer service occupations	365	12.8	12.5
Process, plant and machine operatives	68	2.4	4.9
Elementary occupations	207	7.3	9.7

Source: FSS Wales 2005

Base: All establishments

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Wales, 67% of employers indicated it was very important and 23% important. By comparison with figures for the UK as a whole, a somewhat lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Wales indicate that learning at work for their employees is very important. (See Table 26)

Table 26: Importance attached to learning at work

	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills UK
Very Important	1603	67%	76%
Important	345	23%	14%
Neither Important nor unimportant	43	5%	1%
Unimportant	21	3%	1%
Very unimportant	21	0%	0%
Unable to say	16	2%	8%
Do not know	128	0%	0%
No response	0	0%	0%
Total	2177	100%	100%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the SSDA 2004 employer survey for the UK, the benefit of training most frequently cited by Welsh Asset Skills employers is improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce. Almost three quarters (74%) of all such employers undertaking training over the previous 12 months cited this benefit, a much higher proportion to the UK as a whole.

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Welsh Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cite improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce (74% compared with 56%) and better customer service (31% compared with 17%), cost control (9% compared with less than 1%), improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision (7% compared with 1%) and clarity/awareness of job roles (7% compared with less than 1%).
- A lower proportion cite improved labour productivity (6% compared with 19%), more motivated staff (9% compared with 18%). (See Table 27)

Table 27: Benefits for establishments of all training funded or provided in last 12 months (Unprompted)

	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills UK
Improved the level of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce	74%	56%
Improved labour productivity	6%	19%
More motivated staff	9%	18%
Better customer service	31%	17%
Able to comply with legislation/regulations	0%	10%
Improved profit margins on sales or service	9%	9%
Keeps the business going/enables survival/smooth running	0%	8%
Allows the meeting/understanding of company objectives/targets/standards	<1%	4%
Reduced employee turnover	0%	4%
Staff development/increased opportunity for promotion/improved wages	0%	2%
Increased awareness of health and safety	1%	2%
Improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision	7%	1%
Better quality products/service	0%	1%
Allows company development/expansion/progress	0%	1%
Improved company reputation/profile	0%	1%
Increased flexibility/staff able to work outside primary role/multi tasking	0%	<1%
Keeping up to date with modern development/technology	0%	<1%
Cost control	9%	<1%
Clarity/awareness of job roles	7%	<1%
Increase/improved communication or support	<1%	<1%
Other	0%	<1%
Increased product/service knowledge/understanding	0%	<1%
Lower absentee rates	0%	<1%
Don't know	1%	1%
None/negligible	0%	2%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers undertaking training in the past 12 months

In relation to barriers to training 77% of Asset Skills employers in Wales identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat lower proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Wales is lack of suitable training provision (60% of employers, a significantly higher figure than the UK as a whole at 30%). Lack of knowledge about the range of provision available was also an issue (51% compared with 32% in the UK as a whole). Other barriers cited by Asset Skills employers in Wales more frequently than is the case for the UK as a whole are concern that the acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages and the perception that training undertaken in the past has not delivered expected benefits.

(See Table 28)

Table 28: Barriers to training

	Asset Skills Wales	Asset Skills UK
Financial cost of training	43%	56%
Disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training	46%	52%
Lack of knowledge about range of training provision available	51%	32%
Reluctance of staff to take up training opportunities	7%	22%
Lack of suitable training provision	60%	30%
Concern that investing in training will make staff susceptible to 'poaching' from competitors	38%	39%
Concern that acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages	48%	27%
Belief that formal training is not the best way to develop skills	13%	17%
Training done in the past has not delivered expected benefits	45%	18%
Establishment never really provided training for employees before	<1%	12%
Any Barriers	77%	86%
No Barriers	23%	14%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

## 5. Northern Ireland

In order to assess the extent to which Asset Skills employers utilise formal HR procedures and strategies five indicators were examined. A number of differences in the proportion of employers within Northern Ireland adopting each HR procedure/strategy by comparison with the UK are evident.

- 61% of Asset Skills establishments in Northern Ireland have a business plan in place compared with 57% in the UK as a whole
- 42% of such establishments have a training plan in place compared with 34% in the UK as a whole
- 24% of such establishments in Northern Ireland have a budget for expenditure compared with 28% in the UK as a whole
- 38% of such establishments in Northern Ireland have a formal appraisal process in place compared with 43% in the UK as a whole
- 51% of such establishments in Northern Ireland have a recruitment strategy compared with 28% in the UK as a whole

(See Table 29)

Table 29: Formal human resource procedures and strategies

	Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	UK
A business plan	761	61%	57%
A training plan	525	42%	34%
A budget for training expenditure	302	24%	28%
A formal staff appraisal process	477	38%	43%
A recruitment strategy	642	51%	28%
None of these	205	16%	28%
All Asset Skills employers	1251	61%	57%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland is slightly lower than the average for the industry in the UK – 41% in Northern Ireland compared with 46% in the UK. (See Table 30)

Table 30: The incidence of training over the last 12 months

	Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	UK
Employers training over the last 12 months	519	41%	46%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

In relation to the different types of training undertaken by Asset Skills establishments, training in new technology (17%) and management training (16%) are the most frequently undertaken. Basic job specific training and advanced job specific training is also undertaken by 10% of Asset Skills establishments in Northern Ireland in each case. (See Table 31)

Table 31: Types of training undertaken in the past 12 months

	Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	UK
Management training	203	16%	18%
New Technology	217	17%	17%
Basic job specific technical training	127	10%	15%
Advanced job specific training	131	10%	8%
Adult literacy training	65	5%	2%
Adult numeracy	0	0%	1%
Any other training	25	16%	18%

Source: Asset Skills Employer Survey 2005

Base: All employers

Evidence from the SSDA (2004) provides some insights into different methods or approaches used to develop skills of employees amongst Asset Skills employees in Northern Ireland. In relation to:

- Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time - 71% of Asset Skills establishments in Northern Ireland indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 73%.
- Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles - 89% of Asset Skills establishments in Northern Ireland indicate that adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 75%.
- Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong - 77% of Asset Skills establishments in Northern Ireland indicate they adopt this approach. The average for all Asset Skills employers is 78%. (See Table 32)

Table 32: Methods/approaches used to develop skills of employees

	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills UK
Supervision structures to ensure that employees are guided through their job role over time	71%	73%
Opportunities for staff to spend time learning through watching others perform their job roles	89%	75%
Allowing staff to perform tasks that go beyond their strict job role, and providing them with feedback on what they have done right or wrong	77%	78%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Comparison of Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland with those in the UK as a whole indicates that:

- A slightly higher proportion of Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland (64%) undertake both formal training and wider workforce development activity than is the case amongst such employers in the UK as a whole (60%).
- A similar proportion of Asset Skill employers in Northern Ireland undertake wider workforce development activities only - 33% compared with 35% within the UK as a whole.
- 1% of Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland undertake formal training only. This compares with 2% in the UK as a whole. (See Table 33)

Table 33: Workforce development activity

	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills UK
Formal training and wider workforce development activity	64%	60%
Wider workforce development activity only	33%	35%
Formal training only	1%	2%
Neither	0%	3%
Don't know	1%	<1%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Northern Ireland, 75% of employers indicated it was very important and 18% important. By comparison with figures for the UK as a whole, a slightly higher proportion Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland indicate that learning at work for their employees is important and a similar proportion very important. (See Table 34)

Table 34: Importance attached to learning at work

	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills UK
Very Important	956	75%	76%
Important	172	18%	14%
Neither Important nor unimportant	17	3%	1%
Unimportant	11	1%	1%
Very unimportant	0	1%	0%
Unable to say	103	2%	8%
Do not know	0	0%	0%
No response	0	0%	0%
Total	1259	100%	100%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

Based on evidence from the SSDA 2004 employer survey for the UK, the benefit of training most frequently cited by Northern Ireland Asset Skills employers is improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce. About three quarters (76%) of all such employers undertaking training over the previous 12 months cited this benefit, a much higher proportion to the UK as a whole.

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Northern Ireland Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cite improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce (76% compared with 56%), better customer service (23% compared with 17%), more motivated staff (23% compared with 18%), improved profit margins (13% compared with 9%), keeping up to date with modern development/technology (18% compared with less than 1%) and allows company development/expansion (9% compared with 1%).
- A lower proportion cited improved labour productivity (10% compared with 19%).

(See Table 35)

Table 35: Benefits for establishments of all training funded or provided in last 12 months (Unprompted)

	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills UK
Improved the level of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce	76%	56%
Improved labour productivity	10%	19%
More motivated staff	23%	18%
Better customer service	23%	17%
Able to comply with legislation/regulations	9%	10%
Improved profit margins on sales or service	13%	9%
Keeps the business going/enables survival/smooth running	0%	8%
Allows the meeting/understanding of company objectives/targets/standards	0%	4%
Reduced employee turnover	0%	4%
Staff development/increased opportunity for promotion/improved wages	0%	2%
Increased awareness of health and safety	4%	2%
Improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision	0%	1%
Better quality products/service	<1%	1%
Allows company development/expansion/progress	9%	1%
Improved company reputation/profile	0%	1%
Increased flexibility/staff able to work outside primary role/multi tasking	0%	<1%
Keeping up to date with modern development/technology	18%	<1%
Cost control	0%	<1%
Clarity/awareness of job roles	0%	<1%
Increase/improved communication or support	0%	<1%
Other	0%	<1%
Increased product/service knowledge/understanding	0%	<1%
Lower absentee rates	0%	<1%
Don't know	0%	1%
None/negligible	1%	2%

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers undertaking training in the past 12 months

In relation to barriers to training, 95% of Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat higher proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland is the financial cost of training (76% of employers, a significantly higher figure than the UK as a whole at 56%), lack of suitable training provision (54% compared with 30% in the UK as a whole) disruption to work patterns (50% compared with 52% in the UK as a whole) and lack of knowledge about the range of training provision available (42% compared with 32%). (See Table 36)

Table 36: Barriers to training

	Asset Skills Northern Ireland	Asset Skills UK
Financial cost of training	76%	56%
Disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training	50%	52%
Lack of knowledge about range of training provision available	42%	32%
Reluctance of staff to take up training opportunities	8%	22%
Lack of suitable training provision	54%	30%
Concern that investing in training will make staff susceptible to 'poaching' from competitors	39%	39%
Concern that acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages	43%	27%
Belief that formal training is not the best way to develop skills	15%	17%
Training done in the past has not delivered expected benefits	17%	18%
Establishment never really provided training for employees before	3%	12%
<b>Any Barriers</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>No Barriers</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>14%</b>

Source: SSDA 2004

Base: All employers

## **6. Conclusions**

To summarise the findings so far Table 37 sets out an assessment of key skills and training indicators across the Asset Skills sector by nation and by English region. It indicates a number of differences between nations in relation to the benefits of training and the importance of cost as a barrier to training activity. There also appears to be a higher proportion of employers in Northern Ireland that have developed formal human resource procedures and strategies.

It should also be noted that the most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Wales is lack of suitable training provision (60% of employers, a significantly higher figure than the UK as a whole at 30%). Lack of knowledge about the range of provision available was also an issue (51% compared with 32% in the UK as a whole).

However, it is also apparent from Table 37 that the most significant differences occur between different English regions where there appears to be a marked contrast between different regions on key skills and training related issues. This perhaps best exemplified in the contrast between the East of England and the West Midlands:

- In the East of England about 45% of employers had developed a business plan compared with 68% in the West Midlands and 57% in the UK.
- In the East of England about 40% of employers had not developed any formal human resource procedures and strategies which compared with 22% in the West Midlands and 28% in the UK.

Overall the evidence contained in Table 37 does lend weight to the view that there are not any significant differences between the four nations in the UK in terms of employer attitudes towards different aspects of skill development and training within the Asset Skills sector.

Table 37: An assessment of key skills and training related indicators – national and regional perspectives.

	East of England	East Midlands	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Humberside Yorkshire & The	London	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	UK
A business plan	45%	50%	60%	58%	52%	52%	68%	61%	60%	50%	65%	58%	61%	57%
A training plan	36%	31%	39%	30%	30%	36%	39%	31%	31%	29%	39%	35%	42%	34%
A budget for training expenditure	21%	27%	34%	20%	20%	23%	28%	21%	43%	25%	30%	22%	24%	28%
A formal staff appraisal process	40%	49%	47%	32%	42%	44%	46%	41%	46%	38%	45%	43%	38%	43%
A recruitment strategy	26%	21%	31%	21%	23%	31%	39%	19%	31%	24%	34%	28%	51%	28%
None of these	40%	33%	25%	33%	27%	26%	22%	23%	25%	25%	21%	30%	16%	28%
Incidence of training over the past 12 months	42%	42%	53%	34%	51%	47%	60%	44%	43%	46%	51%	47%	41%	46%
Learning at work – Very important	67%	70%	77%	67%	71%	79%	77%	69%	54%	67%	74%	67%	75%	76%
Learning at work - Important	20%	22%	14%	23%	21%	12%	16%	19%	35%	23%	16%	23%	18%	14%
Benefits of training -Improve the level of skills										54%	54%	74%	76%	56%
Barriers to training - Cost										57%	38%	43%	76%	65%
Barriers to training - Disruption										51%	56%	46%	50%	52%

## **6.1 England and English regions**

The extent to which Asset Skills establishments in England have formal human resource procedures and strategies in place varies quite widely by region. Analysis of five key indicators for each region in England indicates that the proportion of establishments with none of the identified HR procedures/strategies varies from 40% in the East of England to 22% in the West Midlands (22%). This compares with an average for England of 25% and 28% within the UK.

In relation to the incidence of training over the last 12 months amongst all Asset Skills employers, the highest incidence is evident in the West Midlands (60%) and the lowest incidence in the North West (34%).

Wide variations are evident in the importance attached to learning at work within different regions. 77% or more of Asset Skills establishments in the South West, North East and West Midlands consider this to be 'very important', while this is the case for only 54% of establishments in London. The average for Asset Skills employers in all regions in England is 67%, somewhat lower than the figure for the UK of 76%.

Based on evidence from the SSDA 2004 employer survey for the UK, the benefit of training most frequently cited by Asset Skills establishments in England, by a wide margin, is improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce. Just over half (54%) of all Asset Skills establishments in England undertaking training over the previous 12 months cited this benefit, similar to the figure for the UK of 56%.

Amongst all Asset Skills establishments in England, 86% identified at least one barrier to training, mirroring the figure for Asset Skills establishments in the UK as a whole.

## **6.2 Scotland**

In order to assess the extent to which Asset Skills employers utilise formal HR procedures and strategies, five indicators were examined. By comparison with the average for the UK, a higher proportion of employers within Scotland have adopted each HR procedure/strategy examined.

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Scotland is also higher than the average for the industry in the UK – 51% in Scotland compared with 46% in the UK.

Analysis of the Future Skills Scotland 2005 Survey puts the figure of Asset Skills employers that have arranged or funded training over the previous 12 months at 48%. However, this is significantly lower than the figure of 62% for all sectors in Scotland.

With the exception of Investors in People (IIP) a lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Scotland take part in Government Schemes or programmes than is the case with all sectors.

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Scotland, 74% of employers indicated it was very important and 16% important. These figures are broadly in line with figures for the UK as a whole.

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Scottish Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cited improved profit margins (16% compared with 9%), staff development/increased opportunities for promotion/improved wages (13% compared with 2%)
- A lower proportion cites improved labour productivity (10% compared with 19%), more motivated staff (6% compared with 18%) and better customer service (9% compared with 17%).

In relation to barriers to training 94% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat higher proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training identified by Asset Skills employers in Scotland is disruption to work patterns caused by people being away from work for training (56% of employers, similar to the figure for UK establishments in the industry of 52%).

This is followed by lack of suitable training provision, cited by 40% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland, a somewhat higher proportion than is the case for the UK as a whole (30%).

The financial cost of training is cited as a barrier by 38% of Asset Skills employers in Scotland, a somewhat lower proportion than is the case for the UK as a whole (56%).

### **6.3 Wales**

With the exception of a budget for training expenditure, by comparison with Asset Skills establishments in the UK as a whole, a similar proportion of employers within Wales have adopted each of five HR procedure/strategy examined.

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Wales is similar to the average for the industry in the UK – 47% in Wales compared with 46% in the UK.

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Wales, 67% of employers indicated it was very important and 23% important. By comparison with figures for the UK as a whole, a somewhat lower proportion of Asset Skills employers in Wales indicate that learning at work for their employees is very important.

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Welsh Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cite improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce (74% compared with 56%) and better customer service (31% compared with 17%), cost control (9% compared with less than 1%), improved staff confidence/ability to work without supervision (7% compared with 1%) and clarity/awareness of job roles (7% compared with less than 1%).
- A lower proportion cite improved labour productivity (6% compared with 19%), more motivated staff (9% compared with 18%).

In relation to barriers to training 77% of Asset Skills employers in Wales identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat lower proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Wales is lack of suitable training provision (60% of employers, a significantly higher figure than the UK as a whole at 30%). Lack of knowledge about the range of provision available was also an issue (51% compared with 32% in the UK as a whole). Other barriers cited by Asset Skills employers in Wales more frequently than is the case for the UK as a whole are concern that the acquisition of new skills through training tends to make employees demand higher wages and the perception that training undertaken in the past has not delivered expected benefits.

#### **6.4 Northern Ireland**

In order to assess the extent to which Asset Skills employers utilise formal HR procedures and strategies five indicators were examined. A number of differences in the proportion of employers within Northern Ireland adopting each HR procedure/strategy by comparison with the UK are evident.

Based on evidence from the Asset Skills employer survey the incidence of training amongst Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland is slightly lower than the average for the industry in the UK – 41% in Northern Ireland compared with 46% in the UK.

Asset Skills employers were asked to consider how important learning at work is for their employees. Within Northern Ireland, 75% of employers indicated it was very important and 18% important. By comparison with figures for the UK as a whole, a slightly higher proportion Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland indicate that learning at work for their employees is important and a similar proportion very important.

The main differences between perceived benefits of training amongst Northern Ireland Asset Skills employers and those within the UK as a whole are:

- A somewhat higher proportion cite improved levels of skills or proficiency amongst the workforce (76% compared with 56%), better customer service (23% compared with 17%), more motivated staff (23% compared with 18%), improved profit margins (13% compared with 9%), keeping up to date with modern development/technology (18% compared with less than 1%) and allows company development/expansion (9% compared with 1%).

- A lower proportion cited improved labour productivity (10% compared with 19%).

In relation to barriers to training, 95% of Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland identified at least one barrier to training, a somewhat higher proportion to Asset Skills employers in the UK (86%).

The most frequently cited barrier preventing training, identified by Asset Skills employers in Northern Ireland is the financial cost of training (76% of employers, a significantly higher figure than the UK as a whole at 56%), lack of suitable training provision (54% compared with 30% in the UK as a whole) disruption to work patterns (50% compared with 52% in the UK as a whole) and lack of knowledge about the range of training provision available (42% compared with 32%).