Evaluation of Employer Satisfaction with the National Employer Training Programme / Train to Gain Brokerage – First Wave
A Report for the Learning and Skills Council
National Office

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Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary ................................................................. 1
   Background .............................................................................. 1
   Employer Characteristics ....................................................... 1
   Awareness of and access to the broker service ...................... 1
   Characteristics of the Broker Service ................................... 1

2 Background ............................................................................. 4
   Policy context .......................................................................... 4
   Survey background ................................................................ 6

3 Characteristics of Employers ................................................. 8
   Region ................................................................................ 8
   Sector .................................................................................. 9
   Size .................................................................................... 10

4 Awareness of and access to the Broker service ................. 11
   Hearing about the broker service ......................................... 11
   Accessing the service .......................................................... 12

5 Characteristics of the Broker Service ................................ 13
   Importance and Satisfaction ............................................... 13
   Impartiality ........................................................................... 19
   Responsiveness .................................................................... 23
   Knowledge ............................................................................ 26
   Overall Satisfaction ............................................................ 32

6 Improving the Train to Gain Broker Service ..................... 33

7 Annex .................................................................................. 34
   Regional Results .................................................................... 34
   A target for Satisfaction ....................................................... 34
Executive Summary

Background

The Train to Gain service is intended to build upon the experience of Employer Training Pilots, and is available to employers as an independent and impartial brokerage service to diagnose business needs and source appropriate training provision. Brokers are contracted by the LSC to deliver the service, which is presently moving from its pilot phase towards full national roll out. Train to Gain is available to all employers, but brokers will primarily target new, small and ‘hard to reach’ businesses.

This report documents the first of three waves of evaluation of the pilot phase of the service, and covers employers contacted in April and May 2006. Evaluation is intended to ascertain employer ratings of importance and satisfaction about eleven key measures related to the service.

In this first wave, 458 interviews were achieved with employers from a total of 1256 contacts provided by brokers.

Employer Characteristics

Reflecting the structure of the database of contacts supplied by brokers, the majority of respondent employers were in the North East, East Midlands and West Midlands.

Most sectors are represented in the sample, but more than two-fifths is made up of employers from the health and social care sector.

The majority of respondent employers have less than 50 employees.

Awareness of and access to the broker service

Training providers and Business Links are the most common first point of contact for the brokerage service, along with the LSC itself.

Word of mouth referral is already a significant first point of contact, suggesting that Train to Gain is being taken up by employers as a ‘good idea’ whose benefits are being spread through informal networks.

Telephone is predominantly the first means of contact with the Train to Gain broker service.

Characteristics of the Broker Service

Importance and Satisfaction

Employer evaluations of using the brokerage service were delivered using a simple questionnaire which assessed employer ratings of importance and satisfaction of a series of 11 measures, grouped under three headings – impartiality, responsiveness and knowledge.

Scores for both importance and satisfaction are for all criteria relatively high, barely falling below 8 out of 10 for any measure. For most measures the average importance score is a little higher than the average satisfaction score.
Consistently high importance scores suggest that we are evaluating aspects of the service which employers think are important. High satisfaction scores are a marker of widespread employer approval of the service, which is encouraging for a prototype service. However there remains room for improvement if satisfaction scores lag importance scores.

In terms of importance, employers rank broker knowledge criteria most highly, indicating that it is the specialist knowledge which a broker brings which is most valuable to employers. Other aspects such as responsiveness and impartiality are a little less important.

Employers find it easier to identify what they want than to assess what they get. Ranking satisfaction scores suggest that the biggest shortfalls are translating needs into action plans, and the speed of follow up activity.

Statistical analysis identifies that the priorities for service improvement should be the ability of the broker to identify funding to support training, to translate the needs of the company into an action plan, and the speed of follow up actions.

**Impartiality**

The broker’s understanding of employer training and development needs is the most important of the three impartiality criteria measured, and also the one where satisfaction falls furthest behind importance.

There also appears to be some modest level of dissatisfaction with broker ability to signpost a range of providers.

**Responsiveness**

Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries is relatively less important, perhaps being viewed as a ‘process’ issue with which employers are less concerned.

There is a clear shortfall between importance and satisfaction in relation to the speed of follow up actions – underlining that employers are particularly concerned with outputs, as opposed to process.

**Knowledge**

Knowledge measures are the most important aspects of the service according to employers, with funding identification, broker expertise and the ability to turn the needs of the employer into an action plan being the most important of all.

There is a clear shortfall between importance and satisfaction in terms of funding identification and translating corporate needs into an action plan. Improvements to these are likely to have a positive impact on the overall perception of Train to Gain.

**Overall satisfaction**

Overall satisfaction with the Train to Gain service is high, and in numerical terms equal with the average for the eleven individual measures. A third of respondents score the service as 10 out of 10, whilst about 5% are clearly dissatisfied.

**Improving the Train to Gain broker service**

Issues raised by respondents in suggesting improvements to the service largely reflect issues raised in relation to individual performance measures. Many of
these are issues of service delivery which can be tackled by brokers, and include improving communication between brokers and employers, ensuring contacts are followed up, focusing more specifically on the business needs presented to brokers, and providing a faster and more efficient service.
2 Background

Policy context

Delivery of the National ‘Train to Gain’ programme begins in April 2006, initially in existing Employer Training Pilot (ETP) areas, and its national roll out is planned for November 2006.

Train to Gain focuses on developing the supply side capacity to meet employers’ needs, raising the demand for skills and supporting the introduction of a national network of brokers. It is anticipated that the programme will engage with 175,000 learners and 50,000 employers each year.

The central aim of the 2005 Skills White Paper¹ is to raise national skill levels to enable individuals to realise their potential and businesses to become more wealth creating and economically successful.

Work has been underway to achieve these goals, with an entitlement to training for a first full Level 2 (L2E) qualification having been trialled for low skilled adults (of whom there are an estimated 6.6 million in the workforce), in the South East and North East regions as part of a wider offer of support to individuals. This entitlement to training was extended across the whole of England in August 2005².

Focussing on the needs of employers, Employer Training Pilots (ETP) have been running since September 2002. These pilots have been used to test an offer to employers comprising a range of financial incentives and support designed to encourage them to release staff to take Skills for Life (including literacy and numeracy) and NVQ Level 2 training, delivered flexibly at a time and place to suit their needs.

Train to Gain has been developed from aspects of best practice from Employer Training Pilots (ETP). ETPs tested the effectiveness of an offer of free or subsided training to employees without a level 2 qualification, wage compensation (of various levels) to their employers for giving time off to train plus access to information, advice and guidance.

The Pilots have been administered by local Learning and Skills Councils in partnership with local Business Links and other agencies, through a network of local brokers or learning advisers and training providers. They were originally planned to run in six areas for a year, but were subsequently extended to cover 12 areas for an additional year and again, from September 2004, to run for a total of three years in the Phase 1 areas, two years in the Phase 2 areas and for a year in five new areas plus a regional pilot in the North East.

The Pilot LSC areas have been as follows:

- Berkshire
- Birmingham and Solihull
- Derbyshire
- Devon and Cornwall

¹ 2005 White Paper ‘Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work’
² LSC Level 2 Entitlement Design Framework
The first year evaluation of the pilots found that they used varied approaches to marketing which demonstrated that they needed to be active in approaching employers. The evaluation also found that employers were attracted to ETP mainly by the free and flexibly-provided training, although wage compensation can be important in some circumstances. It also identified that the vast majority of employers saw potential benefits in terms of providing employees with better skills and self-confidence and thought that this fitted well with their business plans.

The scope of Train to Gain

It is fundamental to understand that Train to Gain is a service to employers rather than a programme. Train to Gain is building on the lessons learned from the ETP pilots, and is not an extension of these pilots. Train to Gain marks a new way of working with employers, which is designed to put their business and skill development needs first through identifying clear and comprehensive solutions.

The Train to Gain core offer

The Train to Gain service available to employers is an independent and impartial brokerage service to diagnose business need and source appropriate training provision. The brokerage service provides:

- a comprehensive analysis of and solution to training needs;
- easy access to relevant and flexible, high quality training;
- information and support to access a wide range of training packages;
- information and advice to employees on qualifications and training;
- support for organisations wishing to work within the principles of Investors in People (IIP), and;
- support to develop ongoing strategies to address future training needs.

The skills brokerage element of Train to Gain is central to the service with 30 broker contractor delivering impartial demand led and business focused advice across England. The role of the broker is key in helping employers to assess their skills and training priorities. The role of brokers can be summarised as follows:

- use brokers working towards a national standard and participating in a national training and development programme;
- be impartial and easy to access;
- be integrated with the generalist brokerage service to be offered under the Business Link brand;
- build on resources currently available in each region;
- be underpinned by quality assurance arrangements, and;
- be governed by agreements setting out the delivery criteria for brokers and by employer satisfaction surveys.

Brokers may also provide specialist support on sector specific issues. This support could include information on qualification frameworks, delivery models, funding, availability of provision and up to date intelligence on their specific sectors.

Sector brokers will also be able to advise employers on the qualifications and mode of delivery etc which meet the industry standards and priorities set out in Sector Skills Agreements.

In all cases brokers will provide an independent and impartial service, regardless of the organisation employing them and will act on behalf of employers to:

- provide them with the best possible advice on the skills training that will support their business need;
- design and cost integrated training packages, which define clearly which elements are government funded and which the employer will have to pay for, and;
- source training from the most appropriate provider.

Although it is recognised that many employers already go directly to a learning provider if they are clear about the training they need, Train to Gain will be available to all employers, although brokers will primarily target new and small and harder to reach businesses.

**Survey background**

**Purpose of report**

This report documents the first of three waves of evaluation of the pilot phase of the Train to Gain service, and hence is critical in understanding at an early stage the impact of the service, and any problems that are present in its delivery. This report covers contacts made by brokers during April and May 2006, with two
further waves of evaluation assessing contacts made in June and July, and then in August. These three waves of evaluation, and their associated reports, are intended to identify both employer ratings of importance of aspects of the service, and their satisfaction with the delivery of those elements, and to evaluate the relationship between the two. This will provide a basis for assessing the overall levels of satisfaction with the service, and also insight into those areas where improvement in delivery and hence satisfaction would improve the quality of the service overall.

**Methodology**

In total, in this wave of evaluation, we have been supplied with 1256 contacts from brokers, comprising their Train to Gain contacts with employers for the months of April and May. All of these employers were called to request an evaluation interview, delivered over the phone using BMG’s in-house CATI system and call centre. In addition to the 458 achieved interviews, a 9% of contact remained as potential appointments once fieldwork ceased. About 23% of contacts claimed to have no dealings with a broker, whilst the remainder either refused interview, or proved difficult to secure any form of direct contact with (answering machines, lines busy, no reply etc).

Each respondent was taken through a relatively short questionnaire, which in turn sought their evaluation of importance and satisfaction on a series of eleven measures in three groups, and also asked a series of supplementary questions about initial contact with brokers, overall satisfaction, and suggested improvements to the delivery of the service.
3 Characteristics of Employers

In total, the first wave of interviews in the project comprised 456 respondent employers. This chapter provides a brief description of their characteristics by region, sector and size.

Region

*Figure 1*

The distribution of respondents by region largely reflects the structure of the sample frame provided, with the large majority of interviews coming from employers based in the West Midlands, the North East and East Midlands.
Whilst there is broad representation across sectors in the sample of respondents, by far the largest sector in terms of number of respondents is the health and social work sector, comprising 191 of the 456 employers interviewed. The second and third largest sectors in the sample are then Manufacturing (52 respondents, 11.5% of the sample) and Wholesale, Retail and Repair (49 respondents, 10.8% of the sample). For clarity in Figure 2 a number of sectors have been combined. Thus:

- ‘Financial and Real Estate’ largely comprises the latter sector (41 of 43 respondents are in Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities);
- Public Administration and Education largely comprises employers in Education (25 of 27 respondents).
**Size**

*Figure 3*

The sample of respondents comprised a broad range in terms of size, including a proportion of micro-businesses (1-10 employees, representing about one quarter of the sample), and with a majority of SMEs, including nearly half of the sample between 11 and 49 employees, and a further fifth with between 50 and 199 employees.
4 Awareness of and access to the Broker service

Hearing about the broker service

Fig. 4

Respondents were questioned (without a prompted list) about the manner in which they first heard about the Train to Gain broker service, and the answers given are presented in Figure 4:

- Training providers and Business Links are the most common first point of contact with the brokerage service, and this is perhaps not surprising since these are in many cases the main contracted delivery agents for the service;

- Likewise LSCs are the fourth most common source of first contact – again to be expected given LSCs pivotal role in driving the Train to Gain service forward;

- More interesting is the number of respondents who already put ‘word of mouth’ down as the source of their first awareness of the service. Good ideas quickly move through informal networks, and this is an indication this is happening with Train to Gain – and since as later parts of this report show, there are already many satisfied customers out there, this is likely to continue in importance. Moreover, it is probably one of the most compelling ways in which ‘hard to reach’ employers will be engaged with the service. Similarly, the fact that some employers have first heard of the service through internal networks is promising since again, if Train to Gain delivers, any manager worth their salt will want to promote it within their organisation.
Accessing the service

Figure 5

First Means of Access to the Train to Gain Broker Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider referral</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal visit / meeting</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again without prompting, respondent employers were asked how they first accessed the broker service, and as Figure 5 makes clear, overwhelmingly the service is making use of telephone as its first contact medium. Provider referrals are also important, and thereafter the modes of contact comprise a host of relatively infrequently used methods.
5 Characteristics of the Broker Service

The primary aim of our work in evaluating employer satisfaction with the National Employer Training Pilots and the Train to Gain service is to assess employer satisfaction with the delivery of the service, and to establish the first of a set of time series measures which provide a clear understanding of levels of satisfaction over time. This chapter outlines the rationale and approach taken by the study in measuring both importance and satisfaction against a number of criteria falling into three measurement criteria – impartiality, responsiveness and knowledge of brokers – as reported by employers.

Importance and Satisfaction

Employers’ evaluations of their experiences of the NETP/TTG brokerage service were delivered using a simple questionnaire, which assessed employer ratings first of the importance, and then of their satisfaction with the delivery, of a series of 11 broker performance measures, under three broad headings – impartiality, responsiveness and knowledge.

Our decision to measure both importance and satisfaction is fundamental to our approach, since expectations – what employers consider to be important – can have a central role in influencing satisfaction.

Sources of Expectations

As the diagram above indicates, expectations – what employers consider to be the most important factors in delivering the brokerage service – are driven by a range of issues, including the employer’s needs, their previous experience, and the manner in which the nature of the brokerage service is communicated to them.

In measuring both importance and satisfaction, we are able to go beyond an absolute measure of service satisfaction, to one which relates that level of satisfaction to the factors which are most important to employers – and hence whether delivery is meeting, exceeding or falling short of expectations.
In turn, this is important at a number of levels. Clearly where performance falls short of importance, then this flags a need to improve the perception of performance in service delivery (which may require a significant change in the actual level of performance for that change to be perceived by employers). Conversely, where performance exceeds levels of reported importance, this may flag to us that effort is being placed wrongly, and that resources are being consumed delivering an output which is not as important to the recipient in relative terms.

In putting together an overall picture of performance against importance for the Train to Gain Service, we have compared the average score given for performance and importance against each of the eleven assessment criteria, and plotted them on the chart shown overleaf.
In general, close correlation between importance and satisfaction

Average importance score = 8.7
Average satisfaction score = 8.3

- Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries
- Speed of agreed follow up actions
- Ability to translate company’s needs into action plan
- Broker’s understanding of training and development needs
- Ability to identify potential funding to support training
- Expertise and knowledge of broker
- Impartiality of advice
- Impartiality of advice
- Ease of getting hold of broker
- Knowledge of training solutions within TTG
- Ability to explain various accreditations & qualifications

Sample base: 456 (all respondent employers)
This presentation of average scores for importance and satisfaction for each of the eleven assessment criteria indicates a number of key findings:

- Scores for both satisfaction and importance are, for all criteria, relatively high on the 1 to 10 assessment scale provided, barely falling below 8 for any measure.

- Scores are thus closely grouped – there is only modest relative differentiation between the importance and performance scores against each assessment criteria, with most averages falling between 8 and 9.

- For most measures the average importance score is higher than the average satisfaction score, and for only one measure, the impartiality of advice offered by brokers, does the average performance score exceed the average importance score.

- For one measure, the ability to translate an employer’s needs into an action plan, it appears that there is a small but significant shortfall between satisfaction with the service delivered, and the level of importance accorded to this aspect of the service – since it falls into the ‘high importance, low satisfaction’ quadrant of our chart, being well above the average in terms of the importance accorded to it, but below the average in terms of satisfaction with the service delivered.

This provides us with a number of potential insights. Clearly, the factors which the LSC considers the most important about the Train to Gain service – those which it wishes to measure – are also thought to be important by employers accessing the service. There is little evidence that, on average, any of the service criteria are considered unimportant – though there is a modest hierarchy which places the ability to identify potential funding to support training as relatively most important, and ease of accessing other staff to help with queries as relatively least important. Moreover, satisfaction scores are also relatively high, indicating that there is no measured aspect of the service about which employers have substantial misgivings. Indeed, as we will establish below, given that this is a new, essentially prototype service, the levels of satisfaction reported are consistently high, and suggest a fundamental approval amongst employers of the approach being taken.

Nevertheless, since importance scores tend to exceed satisfaction scores slightly, this suggests that employers still expect more, either because a small number are not receiving the service they expect, or because the service has been oversold to them initially, and cannot, however good, quite live up to expectations.

**Ranking responses in order of importance and satisfaction**

Another way of presenting this data collectively is to look at the order in which respondents rank each measure both in terms of importance, and of satisfaction, relative to the other measures. We have already noted that the spread of average scores is not great, but nevertheless that even within a relatively tightly defined span of scores, there is a clear hierarchy.

In terms of importance, as Figure 7 shows, issues of broker knowledge are pre-eminent, with the only criteria not from the knowledge group to break into the top six being the level of broker understanding of the employer’s training and development needs. Clearly therefore, the most valuable parts of the Train to Gain offer, from the employer perspective, are that the broker brings specialist knowledge to bear on the employer’s position, and applies that with an understanding of their position. In relative contrast, other aspects of
responsiveness and impartiality are of less concern. Since we know that issues of staff training are of third or fourth order strategic importance for most companies, what we can surmise is most attractive to employers is that it offers the possibility of an outside expert coming in, examining the company with the benefit of their knowledge, and offering solutions to issues which would otherwise not be high enough up the strategic agenda to get the necessary attention.

Figure 7

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 8, meanwhile, illustrates the same hierarchy, but this time on the basis of how satisfied employers are with the service delivered by Train to Gain. As we have established, scores are generally a little lower than for importance, and it is also evident that the spread of average scores is narrower – respondents are less discriminating for satisfaction than they are for importance. In other words, employers find it easier to identify what they want than to assess what they get.

There are also some discrepancies between the relative positions in this league table for satisfaction, compared with that for importance. Whilst issues of knowledge are, encouragingly, also highest rated for satisfaction, employers are satisfied with the delivery of the relatively unimportant criteria of impartiality of advice, but more equivocal about the ability of brokers to translate their needs into action plans, and the speed of follow up their importance suggests they ought to be.
Figure 8

**Train to Gain Assessment Criteria Ranked in Descending Order of Satisfaction for Employers, on the Basis of Average Score**

- Knowledge - Expertise and knowledge of the broker (8.55)
- Knowledge - Broker’s ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications (8.53)
- Knowledge - Broker’s knowledge of training solutions within T2G (8.50)
- Impartiality - Impartiality of advice (8.47)
- Knowledge - Broker’s ability to identify potential funding to support training activities (8.42)
- Impartiality - Broker’s understanding of training and development needs (8.36)
- Knowledge - Broker’s ability to translate company’s needs into action plan (8.24)
- Responsiveness - Ease of getting hold of broker (8.13)
- Impartiality - Ability to signpost to a range of providers (8.12)
- Responsiveness - Speed of agreed follow up actions (7.95)
- Responsiveness - Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries (7.91)

Sample Base = 456

Setting Priorities for Improvement

In understanding the results we have from the first wave of this survey, we have also applied a more sophisticated set of algorithms which provide a ranked list of the eleven measures in order of their priority for improvement. Essentially this uses the average importance and satisfaction scores and applies an algorithm to determine which are in greatest need of improvement to impact on the overall satisfaction with the service. This is a technique which BMG has used successfully in similar contexts in other projects, and it is a discriminating and sensitive approach.

Thus, in rank order, where the highest is the aspect of the service most in need of improvement (raw scores are provided to indicate the degree of difference between rank positions – for example there is very little difference between the fourth and fifth ranked issues, but a bigger gap between the eighth and ninth):

- The ability of the broker to identify the potential funding to support training activities (priority score 2.68);
- The ability of the broker to translate the needs of the company into an action plan (1.95);
- The speed of agreed follow up actions (1.48);
- The expertise and knowledge of the broker (0.78);
- The broker’s understanding of training and development needs (0.73);
- The broker’s ability to signpost to a range of providers (-0.03);
- The broker’s knowledge of training solutions within Train to Gain (-1.04);
- The ease with which employers could get hold of their broker (-1.16);
- The ease with which employers could access other staff to help with their query (-3.25);
- The ability of the broker to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications (-3.33);
- The impartiality of advice offered (-4.23).

Clearly these calculations underline our interpretation from other ways of looking at these figures, indicating that the main shortfalls in delivery against importance occur in identification of funding support for training, the broker’s ability to develop a sound action plan, and the speed of follow up activity. If the service is to improve further, then we would suggest that it is these elements on which action for improvement needs to be concentrated. Many process issues need no attention.

**Impartiality**

The first of the three evaluation themes assessed was broker impartiality, measured for importance and satisfaction against three factors:

- The broker’s understanding of your training and development needs;
- The impartiality of advice offered;
- The broker’s ability to signpost you to a range of providers.
## PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS SCORING THEIR PERCEPTION OF IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION AGAINST THREE ‘IMPARTIALITY’ CRITERIA, ON A SCORING SCALE OF 1 TO 10, WHERE 1 IS HIGHLY UNIMPORTANT OR HIGHLY DISSATISFIED AND 10 IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT OR HIGHLY SATISFIED, WITH AVERAGE SCORES PROVIDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Criteria</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
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<td>0.7</td>
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<td>12.1</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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Figure 9

AVERAGE SCORES FOR IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION AGAINST MEASURES OF BROKER IMPARTIALITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
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<td>Understanding of training and development needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impartiality of advice</td>
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<td>8.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to signpost a range of providers</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456

Figure 10

PROPORTION OF EMPLOYERS SCORING 8 OR MORE FOR IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION OF IMPARTIALITY MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of training and development needs</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impartiality of advice</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to signpost a range of providers</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456
Table 1, and Figures 9 to 11 above illustrate in more detail the responses from employers in relation to the three measures of impartiality. A number of points are apparent:

- Understanding by the broker of an employer’s training needs is significantly the most important of the three impartiality criteria – with more than half of respondent employers scoring it as 10 out of 10 in terms of importance, the highest average importance score, and the largest proportion of respondents scoring its importance as 8 or over;

- Of the three measures, it is this understanding by the broker of an employer’s training needs where satisfaction is furthest behind importance in terms of average score;

- There also appears to be some issue in relation to broker’s ability to signpost a range of providers, where a relatively modest 63% are sufficiently satisfied to score 8 or more, and nearly 5% of respondents sufficiently displeased to score this aspect of the service at 4 or below;

- Here, as with other measures, it is however important to note high levels of satisfaction with all measures, providing a strong base to build upon further.

Verbatim comments from those dissatisfied

For each measure, where respondents offered a score of 4 or less in terms of satisfaction, a follow up question was asked, probing the reasons for that dissatisfaction.

In terms of understanding training and development needs, two comments of the small number received stand out, and read as follows:
The broker did not give advice correctly regarding granted funding and that I had to choose from their Business Link brochures, I had about ten minutes to decide. Later I was made aware that I could have chosen courses elsewhere. Then Business Link cancelled the courses due to lack of sufficient people taking part so the courses did not go ahead.

“I phoned the LSC and was contacted back by the broker. She phoned to say that she would come to see me but then said she was not able to come. A few weeks later she sent details of an initiative whereby I could get funding, but then when I tried to follow it up she told me that they no longer offered that initiative so I felt she built my hopes up but then it fell through. I felt it was a waste of time.”

In terms of comments on the impartiality of the service, these seem to focus on the poor quality of advice, its lack of depth, and lack of follow up, rather than partiality.

Amongst the comments provided to explain a lack of satisfaction about the ability of brokers to signpost to a range of providers, again the comments are diverse, and seem to reflect a more diffuse set of concerns, again about the depth or quality of the advice offered, and the extent of follow up – though there are specific concerns expressed about the limited number of options on offer.

**Responsiveness**

The second of the three evaluation themes assessed was broker responsiveness, which measured importance and satisfaction against a further three factors:

- The ease with which employers could get hold of their broker;
- The ease with which employers could access other staff to help with their query; and
- The speed of agreed follow up actions.

Table 2, and Figures 12, 13 and 14 below illustrate in detail the response of employers in assessing these measures. As has already been established, the ease of accessing other staff to help with queries is relatively least important to employers – this may be viewed as a ‘process’ issue which they would expect brokers to handle for them, and being able to get hold of the broker themselves is more important. Given that, it is perhaps instructive that the proportion scoring highly on the ability to access their broker easily is modest in this context, and 1 in 20 are clearly unhappy with this aspect of the service.

There is too clearly a shortfall between expectations and delivery in terms of the speed of follow up actions – only 64% are really pleased with this aspect, compared with 80% who think it is very important, and more than 6% are really not satisfied with this aspect of the service. Once again, this underlines the conclusion that employers are most concerned about outputs, and less about process – and where they are concerned about process, it is the direct relationship with the broker, and the broker’s ability to understand an organisations position and priorities, which are most important.
## PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS SCORING THEIR PERCEPTION OF IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION AGAINST THREE ‘RESPONSIVENESS’ CRITERIA, ON A SCORING SCALE OF 1 TO 10, WHERE 1 IS HIGHLY UNIMPORTANT OR HIGHLY DISSATISFIED AND 10 IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT OR HIGHLY SATISFIED, WITH AVERAGE SCORES PROVIDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Criteria</th>
<th>1 %</th>
<th>2 %</th>
<th>3 %</th>
<th>4 %</th>
<th>5 %</th>
<th>6 %</th>
<th>7 %</th>
<th>8 %</th>
<th>9 %</th>
<th>10 %</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting hold of your broker</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of accessing other staff to help with your queries</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>8.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting hold of your broker</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of accessing other staff to help with your queries</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>16.2</td>
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<td>22.4</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed of agreed follow up actions</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>31.4</td>
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</table>
Figure 12

AVERAGE SCORES FOR IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION AGAINST MEASURES OF BROKER RESPONSIVENESS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting hold of broker</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>8.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>7.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed of agreed follow up actions</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456

Figure 13

PROPORTION OF EMPLOYERS SCORING 8 OR MORE FOR IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION OF RESPONSIVENESS MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of getting hold of broker</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of accessing other staff to help with queries</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed of agreed follow up actions</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456
Figure 14

Verbatim comments from those dissatisfied

For each measure, where respondents offered a score of 4 or less in terms of satisfaction, a follow up question was asked, probing the reasons for that dissatisfaction.

In terms of explaining dissatisfaction with the ease of getting hold of the broker, the reasons are straightforward – either employers found their contact difficult to get hold of, or were thwarted by a lack of response to telephone messages left.

Where employers were unhappy with the ease of accessing other staff, reasons given were that there wasn’t anyone else able to help, or that they weren’t provided with any alternative contacts.

Dissatisfaction with the speed of follow up actions is driven largely by the absence of feedback or follow up, and to a lesser extent by feedback which was too slow. Some concern also resulted from difficulties in contacting the broker, relating to concerns above.

Knowledge

The final one of the three evaluation themes assessed is that of the knowledge of brokers, consisting of five elements:

- The expertise and knowledge of the broker;
- The ability of the broker to translate the needs of the company into an action plan;
- The broker’s knowledge of training solutions within Train to Gain;
- The ability of the broker to identify the potential funding to support training activities;
- The ability of the broker to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Criteria</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise and knowledge of the broker</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>9.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to translate company's needs into an action plan</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>8.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of training solutions with TTG</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to identify potential funding to support training activities</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
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<td>17.1</td>
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<td>Ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications</td>
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<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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<td>8.59</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise and knowledge of the broker</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>8.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to translate company's needs into an action plan</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>30.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of training solutions with TTG</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
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<td>17.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to identify potential funding to support training activities</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications</td>
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<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>8.53</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 15

AVERAGE SCORES FOR IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION AGAINST MEASURES OF BROKER KNOWLEDGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expertise and knowledge of the broker</td>
<td>9.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to translate company's needs into action plan</td>
<td>8.69</td>
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<td>Ability to identify potential funding to support training activities</td>
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<td>8.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>8.53</td>
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</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456

Figure 16

PROPORTION OF EMPLOYERS SCORING 8 OR MORE IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION OF KNOWLEDGE MEASURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expertise and knowledge of the broker</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to translate company's needs into action plan</td>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of training solutions within TTG</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to identify potential funding to support training activities</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE BASE = 456
In terms of importance, employers clearly rank these knowledge measures as the most important aspects of the service, with identification of funding, the expertise of the broker, and the ability to turn the needs of the employer into an action plan being the most important of all. There appears to be some shortfall between importance and delivery on two key issues – the identification of funding to support training activity, and translating corporate needs into an action plan. The difference between average importance scores and average satisfaction scores was highest of all for these two measures. Since there is a shortfall on these two most important measures, it seems reasonable to suggest that improvements here will have the greatest impact in the overall positive perception of the delivery of the Train to Gain service.

Again however, it is important to note the generally high average satisfaction scores, high proportions of respondents giving high scores, and very small proportions of dissatisfied employers. It is a reasonable assumption that improvements to the delivery of the service will be from a sound base, and in the context of a service which is already generally well thought of.

**Verbatim comments from those dissatisfied**

For each measure, where respondents offered a score of 4 or less in terms of satisfaction, a follow up question was asked, probing the reasons for that dissatisfaction.

Concern about the expertise and knowledge of the brokers is summed up by a number of comments:

- "I was offered one suggestion and even that fell through";
- "The broker was in a new post and did not have the knowledge required";
- "The skills broker was selling a service not providing one";
- "She gave us some basic information and ditched us. She did not even point us in the right direction, we had to do it all ourselves".

Concerns relating to progressing employer needs towards an action plan are typified by frustration that no action plan has been forthcoming, and perhaps best summed up by the respondent who said "There was no action plan. There was just one visit and basic information was given. They introduced us to a college and we were left to deal with it ourselves." Comments also reflect broker contacts where it appears that the broker quickly came to the conclusion that there was little they could do to help, which sometimes frustrated employers.

The small number of comments received about brokers’ knowledge of training solutions within Train to Gain indicate the occasional frustration felt by employers when what is available to the broker does not match with expectations – “the broker could offer NVQs in certain subjects but simply ignored company requirements”.

The range of concerns about the ability of the broker to identify potential funding to support training activity was much broader and covers issues of slow response (“They had a problem in providing funding for us and it took 4 months to get back to us”), late payment (“No funding has been provided yet and we had to book our courses in advance”, and a lack of any funding support (“We got no funding whatsoever”). Comments suggest a clear gap between the expectations of some employers, and what could realistically be delivered.

The concerns of those who rated their satisfaction low in relation to their broker’s ability to explain accreditations and qualifications are best expressed by the pithy comment of one respondent – “Did not explain”.

**Overall Satisfaction**

Overall satisfaction with the Train to Gain service appears to be high, with an average score on overall satisfaction of 8.31 – almost exactly the same as the average of the satisfaction scores for all 11 measures taken together (8.29). Three-quarters of respondents (75%) scored the service overall between 8 and 10 out of 10, with a third (33%) giving it full marks. At the other end of the scale, just under 5% scored it between 1 and 4, indicating overall dissatisfaction.

Those dissatisfied were again questioned as to the reasons lying behind this concern, with the primary issues being a lack of follow up or concrete progress, a perception of being misinformed, a lack of financial support, and the inability of the service to cater for the specific business needs of the respondent employer.
6 Improving the Train to Gain Broker Service

All respondent employers were asked whether they had any suggestions for improving the Train to Gain skills broker service. Nearly three-quarters, 72%, offered no further comment, and thereafter, the most common groups of answers were as follows:

- Better communication links (24 responses);
- Make more funding available (19 responses);
- More follow up support (14 responses);
- Make employers more aware of what is available (13 responses);
- Be more specific to our business needs (12 responses);
- Provide a faster or more efficient service (10 responses).

Largely these issues raised reflect the issues for concern raised by respondents in answers to earlier questions, and arising from perceived shortfalls in service delivery.

Providing more funding to support employer training activity may not be possible (and indeed may be counter productive given a strategy of trying to mainstream spending on training into corporate budgets and planning), but clearly it may be possible to improve the delivery of the service to improve communication between brokers and employers, to ensure contacts are followed up, to focus more specifically on the business needs presented to brokers, and to provide a faster and more efficient service. Many of these outcomes may follow at least partially as the service beds in and brokers become more experienced and confident in their new roles. Making employers more aware of what is available in terms of training and support for training should be a natural outcome of the Train to Gain brokerage reaching more and more employers, providing those contacts are meaningful and constructive.
7 Annex

Regional Results

The size of the sample, and its uneven distribution across the regions, provides only limited opportunity for regional comparison of regions. As successive waves increase the number of respondents interviewed, so the ability to provide outcomes at regional level and at individual broker level, will increase.

The average overall satisfaction with the Train to Gain broker service is, as reported above, 8.31. For the three regions where we have a sufficient sample to undertake a meaningful calculation, the average satisfaction scores are:

- North East, 8.25 (on 92 cases);
- East Midlands, 7.87 (on 89 cases);
- West Midlands, 8.23 (on 202 cases).

Clearly both the North East and West Midlands are close enough to the average that no inference can be drawn from their relative position. The lower level of satisfaction displayed by respondent employers in the East Midlands may be significant, but will need to be confirmed by similar findings on the next wave of interviews.

A similar analysis can be undertaken on the basis of company size (based on the number of employees). This suggests that lower levels of satisfaction are present amongst smaller employers, but again, the sample sizes are not sufficient to draw substantive conclusions from at this stage. By size band (for those size bands where there is a reasonable sample size) average overall satisfaction scores are:

- 1-5 employees, 7.85 (on 54 cases);
- 6-10 employees, 7.91 (on 65 cases);
- 11-49 employees, 8.33 (on 206 cases);
- 50-199 employees, 8.23 (on 93 cases).

A target for Satisfaction

The LSC wishes to agree targets for service user satisfaction measured as the proportion of respondents surveyed whose satisfaction score is above a given level. In order to inform discussion on appropriate service targets, we provide the following table, which indicates the proportion of respondents whose satisfaction scores are more than or equal to 6, 7 and 8, for each of the 11 measures, and overall. Where proportions are already above a nominal figure of 90%, we have indicated these in red type.
### Measurement Criteria

<table>
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<th>IMPARTIALITY</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 6-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 7-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 8-10</th>
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<td>Broker’s understanding of your training and development needs</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impartiality of advice offered</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Broker’s ability to signpost you to a range of providers</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>63.4</td>
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<table>
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<th>RESPONSIVENESS</th>
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<th>Proportion with scores 7-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 8-10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>82.1</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>66.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of accessing other staff to help with your queries</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>49.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speed of agreed follow up actions</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>74.6</td>
<td>64.1</td>
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<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
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<th>Proportion with scores 7-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 8-10</th>
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<tr>
<td>Expertise and knowledge of the broker</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>77.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to translate company’s needs into an action plan</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of training solutions with TTG</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>72.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to identify potential funding to support training activities</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to explain various types of accreditation and qualifications</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 6-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 7-10</th>
<th>Proportion with scores 8-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the report has already indicated, some measures appear to flag significant priorities for improvement, and it would seem rational to link any targeting regime to ensuring improvement, above all, in these priority areas, and varying the target level for each measure depending on priority and current position.

Clearly if the target is to be set purely on the overall satisfaction score, 90% is effectively achieved if satisfaction is defined as being a score of 6 or above. A stretching but achievable target should either raise the target percentage, or narrow the definition of satisfaction to a higher range of scores, or a combination of both.