



T Level extended work placement research

Employer and college and training
provider survey findings and case
studies

May 2018





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Introduction



City and Guilds commissioned AELP Research to investigate and use a strong evidence-base to positively **support the policy formation and implementation** of T-level work placements, the part of T level proposals that is, in our view, most under-developed in government proposals.

More specifically, the project aims to:

- help the sector **learn lessons from existing** work placement practices
- **gather insights on proposed** T level extended work placements to assist policy, support and practice.

This PowerPoint report contains the findings from two online questionnaire surveys combined– one that was with 332 FE Colleges and independent training providers (who we will refer to collectively as “training providers” in this report) and the other with 81 employers. Almost all respondents had recent experience of managing and delivering work placements in England.

Key findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in a standalone **Executive Summary**.





Colleges and independent training provider survey results



About the colleges and independent training providers surveyed

The online survey of 332 colleges and independent training providers in England is broadly representative of the wider sector, by provider type and geography.

Respondents' organisations delivered courses / programmes in 18 main and some additional niche sector/subject areas:

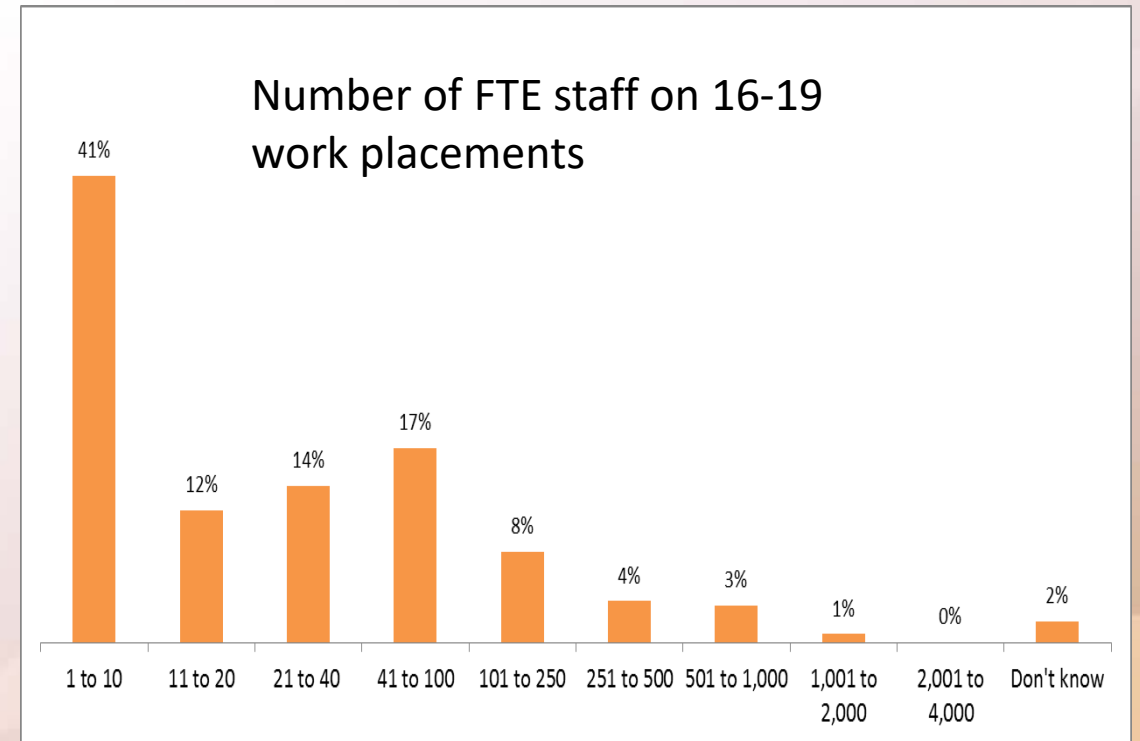
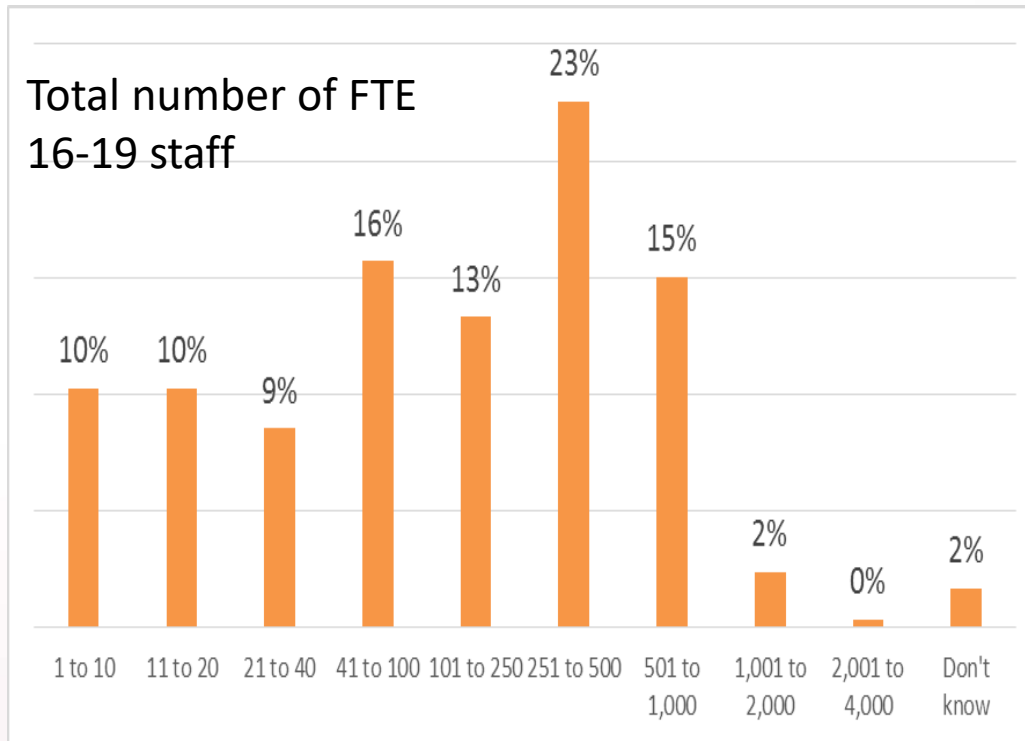
Industrial Sector	No.	%
Construction	123	9%
Business and Administrative	107	8%
Hair and Beauty	107	8%
Education and Childcare	103	7%
Sport, Recreation and Leisure	100	7%
Catering and Hospitality	96	7%
Digital and IT	95	7%
Engineering and Manufacturing	91	7%
Social Care	84	6%
Automotive	83	6%
Creative and Design	79	6%
Health and Science	79	6%
Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care	55	4%
Legal, Finance and Accounting	53	4%
Retail	45	3%
Protective Services	32	2%
Sales, Marketing and Procurement	25	2%
Transport and Logistics	15	1%
Other	12	1%
TOTAL	1384	100%

What type of organisation do you work in? base 332. Which sectors does your organisation deliver learning in? base 1384.

Staff supporting 16-19 year olds' work placements



At present, work placements for the 16-19 workforce are supported by a relatively small proportion of training providers, as can be seen by comparing the charts below. Around 40% of training providers have 10 or fewer staff supporting work placements/experience and another 50% had between 11 and 250.

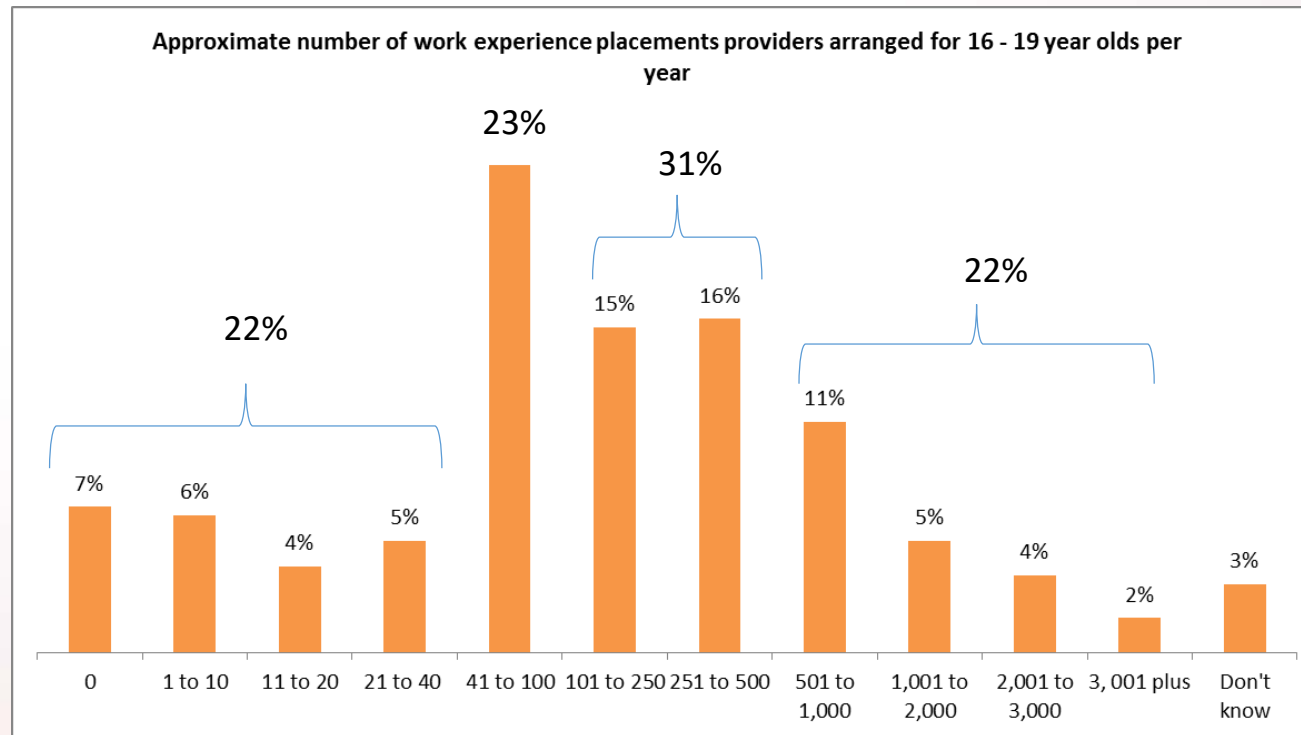


At present, how many staff in your organisation work to support 16-19 year olds, in total? Base 293. At present, approximately how many staff in your organisation work to support 16-19 work placements/experience? Base 278

Numbers of work placements



Approximately one fifth of training providers do 40 or fewer work placements per year (22%), and around a quarter do 41-100 (23%). About a third do 101 to 500 and the remaining fifth 501 or more.

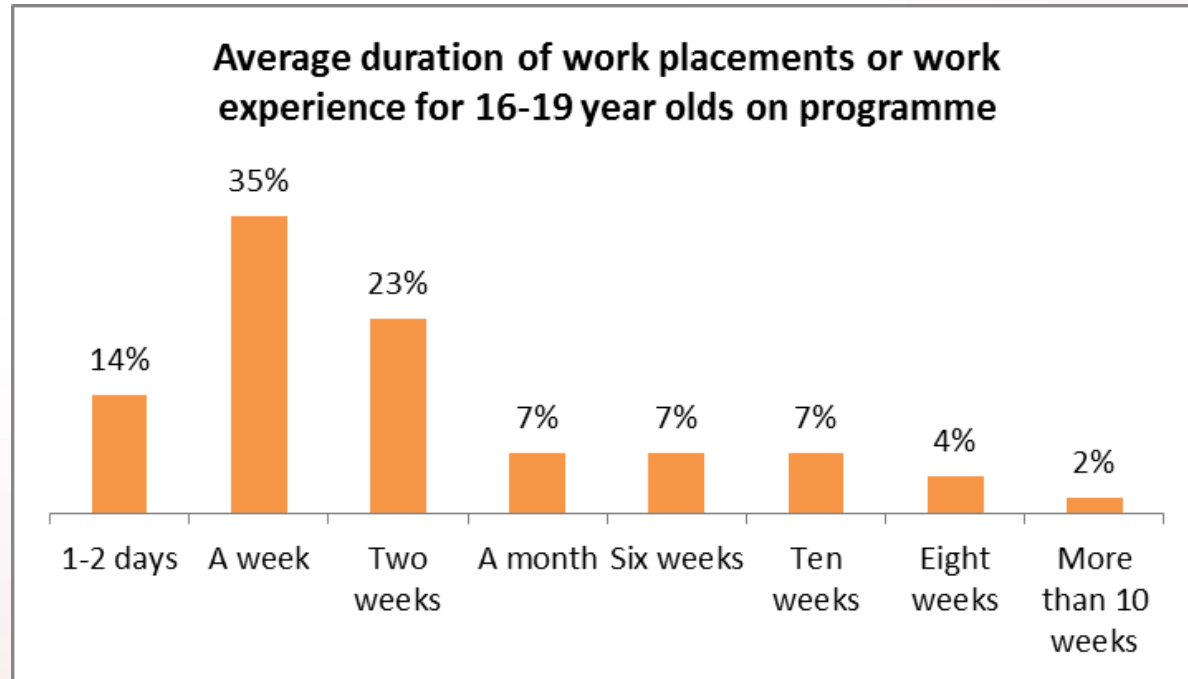


At present, approximately how many work experience/placements does your organisation arrange per year for 16-19 year olds? *Base 259*

Duration of work placements



Every T level must include a work placement of 45 to 60 days. At present, the most common duration of work placements/experience for 16-19 year olds is a week. Indeed, just under three quarters of respondents (72%) said the average for their learners is two weeks or less.

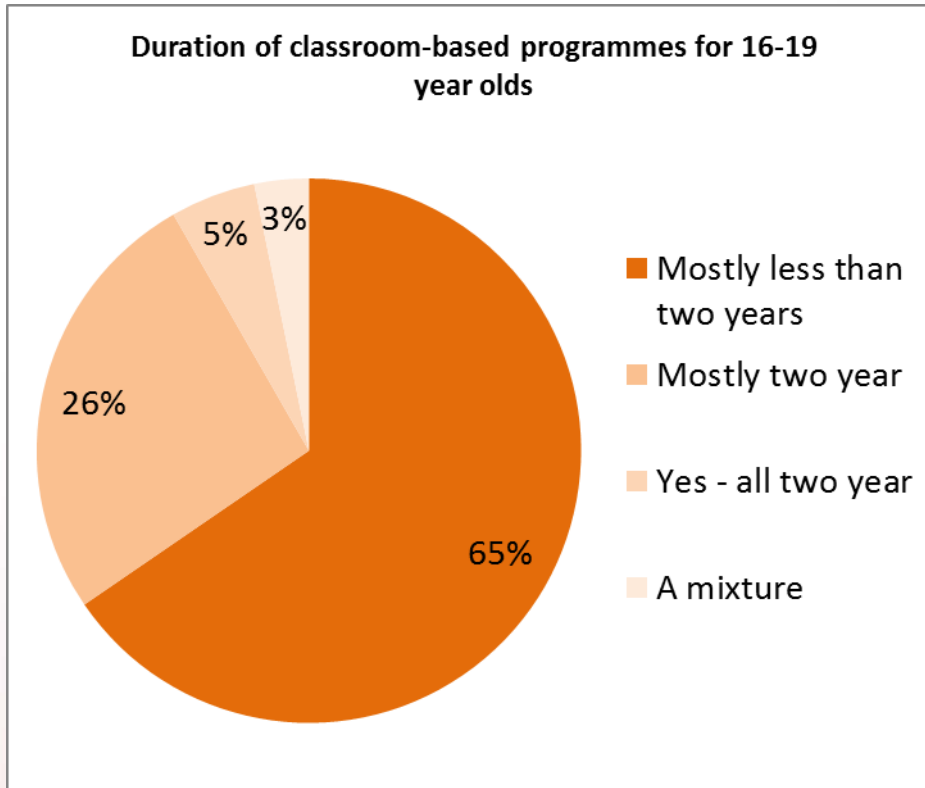


At present, on average, how long are work placements or work experience for 16-19 year olds on your programmes? *Please tick one answer. If you have hosted students for different lengths of time, please choose an average. Chart base 208. Chart excludes 'don't know' or 'n/a', 3 'varies according to programme', 6 not offering WPs at present.*

Duration of classroom-based programmes



All T levels are two-year programmes. On average, within and across training providers, the majority of classroom based programmes are currently less than two years.



Are your learning programmes for 16-19 year olds all two year classroom-based courses? Base 217 who do classroom-based programmes.

Success factors for work placements



All twelve success factors were rated as important by the majority of training providers. However, around a quarter put less priority on the availability of a job afterwards and a third on the need for learners to have a vocational skills base before starting.

	Not important	Neutral	Important
Work readiness: The learner is ready to meet behavioural and attitudinal expectations of employers	3%	3%	94%
Organisational support: Clear and timely support is provided to deal with any difficulties that may arise	2%	6%	92%
Relationship building: Good relations are established with employers, leading to open channels of communication used throughout placements	1%	5%	94%
Real experience: Learners get to do real tasks (under supervision) so improve their occupational/technical skills and knowledge whilst on the job	2%	6%	92%
Paperwork in place: Any essential insurance and DBS checks are done prior to a student starting their	3%	6%	90%
Feedback: That all parties give and receive regular feedback on progress, achievements and areas for	2%	7%	91%
Individual support: Checks are in place to ensure that there is a dedicated member of the employer's staff available to support the learner	3%	9%	89%
Career choices: as a result of the work placement, learners will ultimately be better placed to make informed career decisions	4%	8%	89%
Enough activities are planned: Checks are in place to ensure that there are suitable and sufficient activities to fill the full duration of the placement	3%	11%	86%
Matching: There is a good match between the job role of the placement and that which the student is	4%	11%	85%
Job availability: There will be job opportunities to apply for in the same or similar occupations in the	6%	22%	72%
Vocational skills base: That the learner has basic technical occupational skills and/or knowledge in place before starting the placement.	16%	23%	61%

In your view, how important is each of the following for work placements to be successful? Base 220 to 225.

Most critical aspects for success

The most critical success factors for work placements were found to be:

1. investing time and resource in planning upfront
2. ensuring employer suitability from the perspectives of:
 - a. practical arrangements
 - b. attitude (or 'willingness') to actively engage in skills development
 - c. matching up employers' and learners' personalities/aspirations/interests.

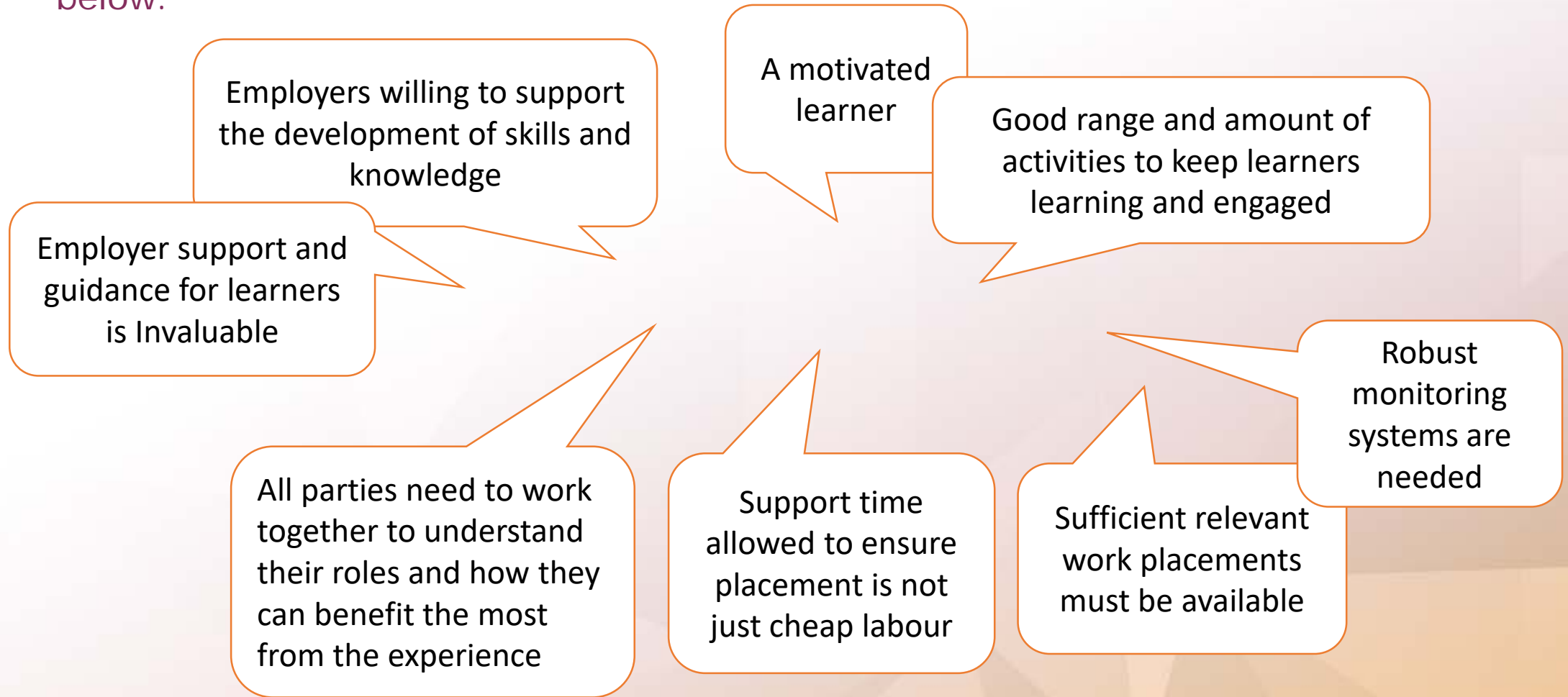
Critical aspects of management and delivery:	
Planning: organisation; administration; time; resources	20%
Employer suitability: availability, location; managing expectations	19%
Employers willingness/ability: to support learners	14%
Matching placement to learner: needs and demands	13%
Good working relationships: between providers; employers (and wider industry)	11%
Learners' workplace readiness: eg reliability	7%
Compliance: regulations; health & safety; insurance; mandatory requirements	6%
Communication: eg feedback, advice and guidance	5%
Learner support in place: financial; incentives; motivational	4%

In your view, what are the TWO most critical aspects of management and delivery for successful work placements for 16-19 year olds, and why? Base: 205

Reasons for choosing particular success factors



Quality issues underpin most success factors. Example quotes from training providers below.

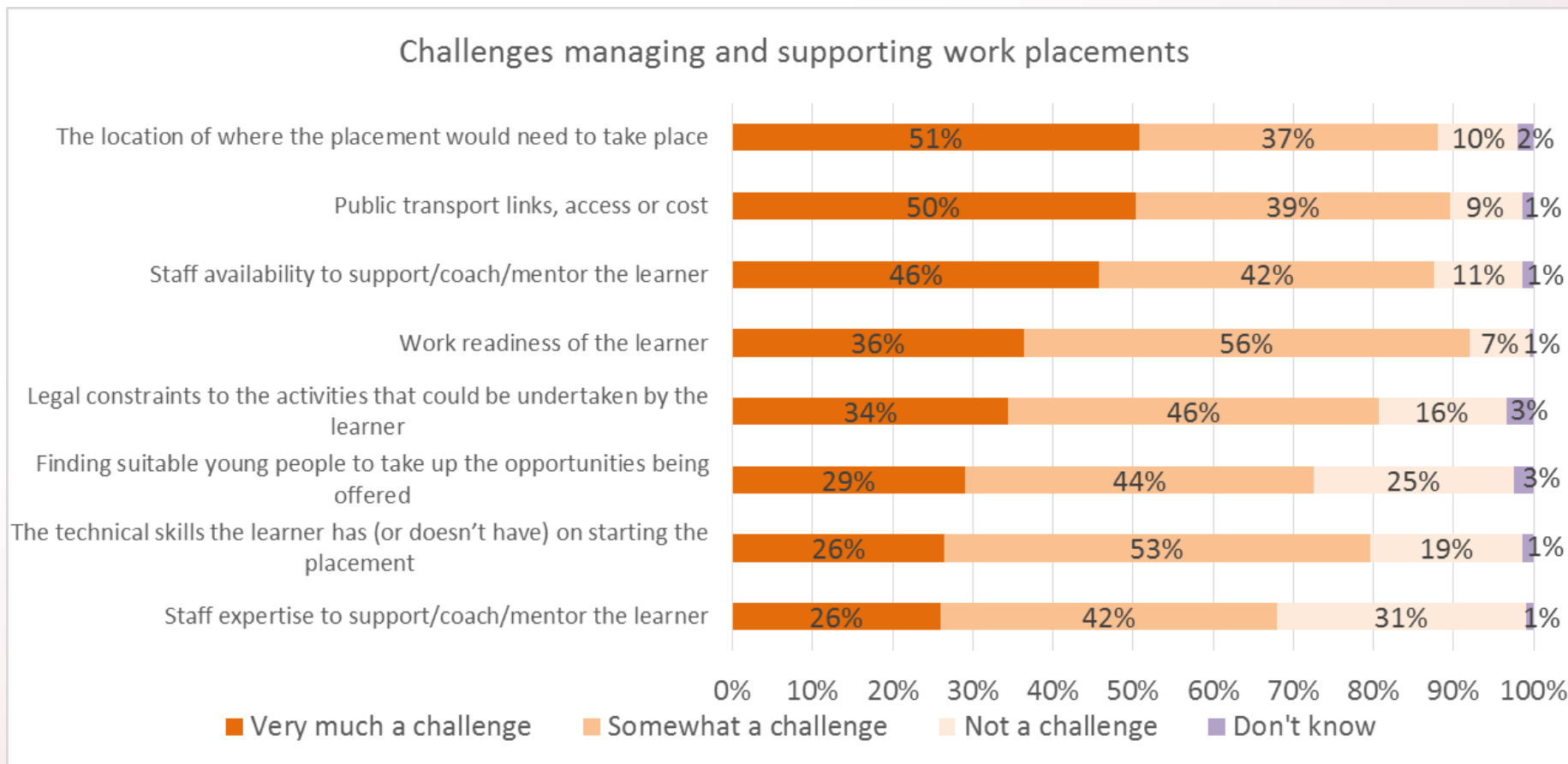


How much of a challenge are each of the following when managing and supporting work placements? Please answer per row.

Challenges managing and supporting work placements



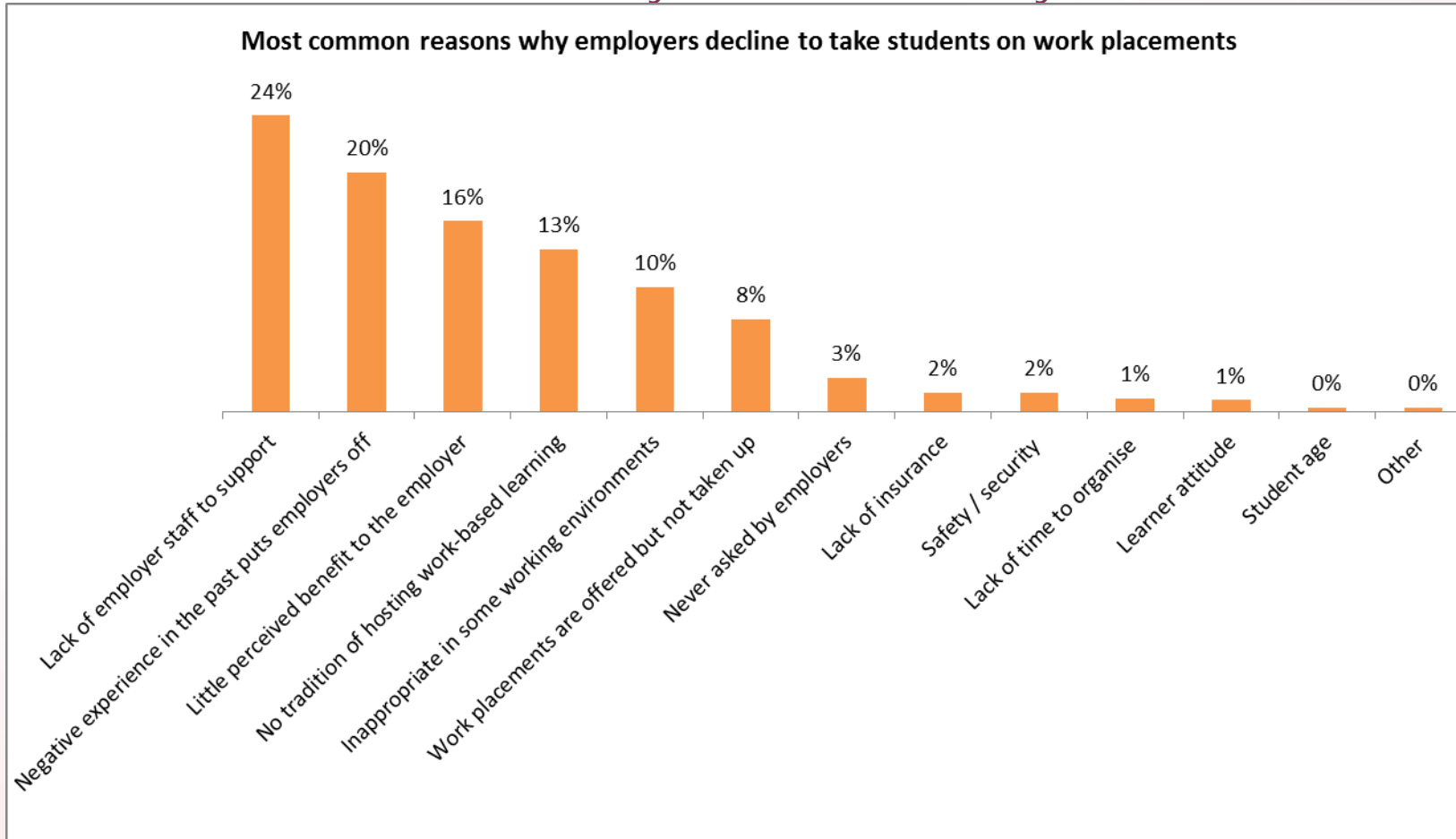
Work placement locations and (lack of) public transport are the most serious challenges. However, over two thirds were also challenged by: availability of staff with expertise; finding work-ready and skilled learners; and legalities.



How much of a challenge are each of the following when managing and supporting work placements? Base 200-201.

Why training providers believe employers don't take learners

Reasons were varied but most common were: staff resource in employer organisations; poor prior experiences; and the business case had not been won. One in ten cited unsuitable environments for as-yet-unskilled 16-19 year olds.

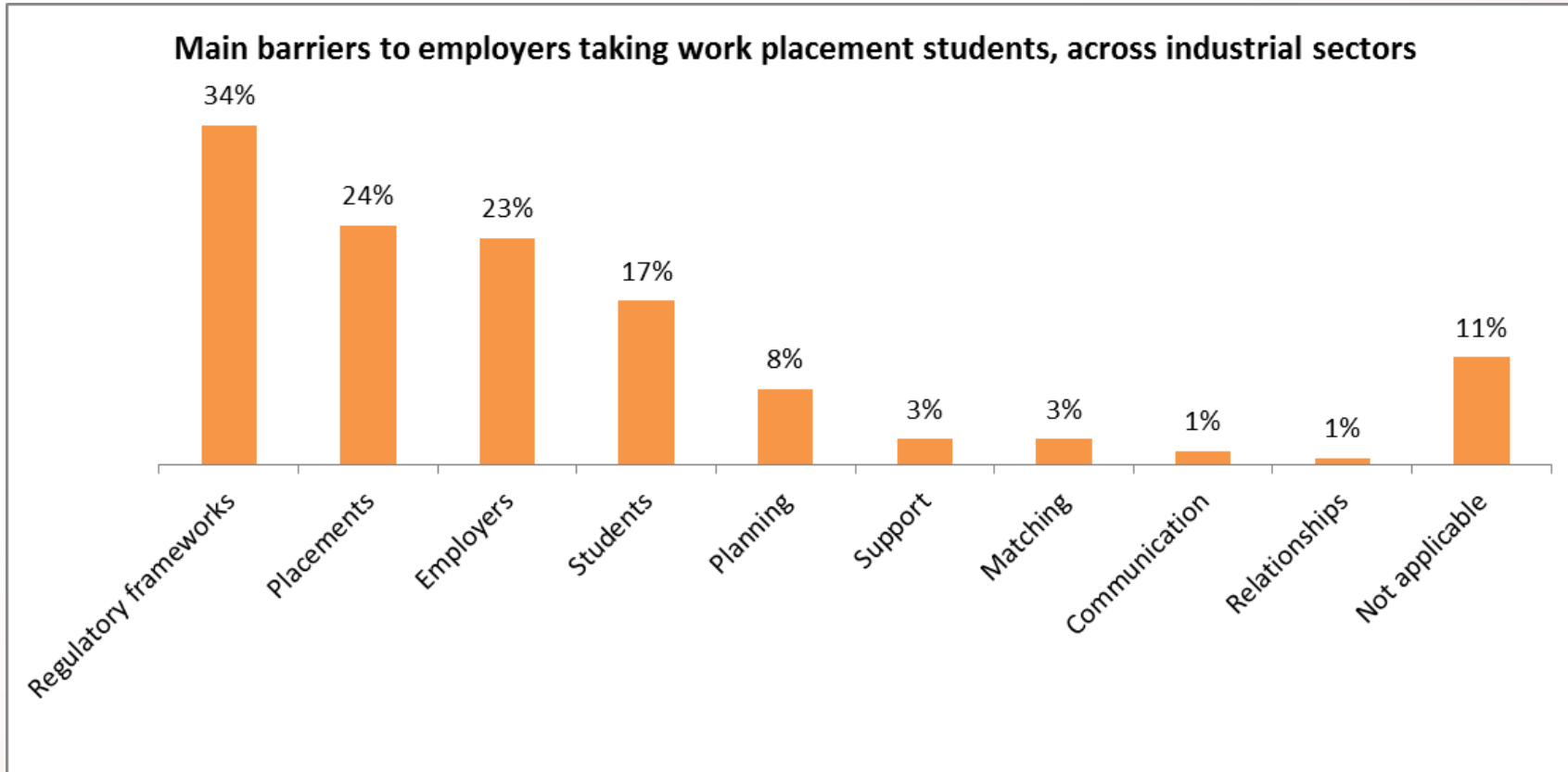


What are the most common reasons why employers decline to take students on work placements? 641

Sectoral barriers to work placements - overview



A third of respondents reported sector-related barriers to employers accepting 16-19 year olds on work placements, due to regulatory frameworks pertaining to those industries.

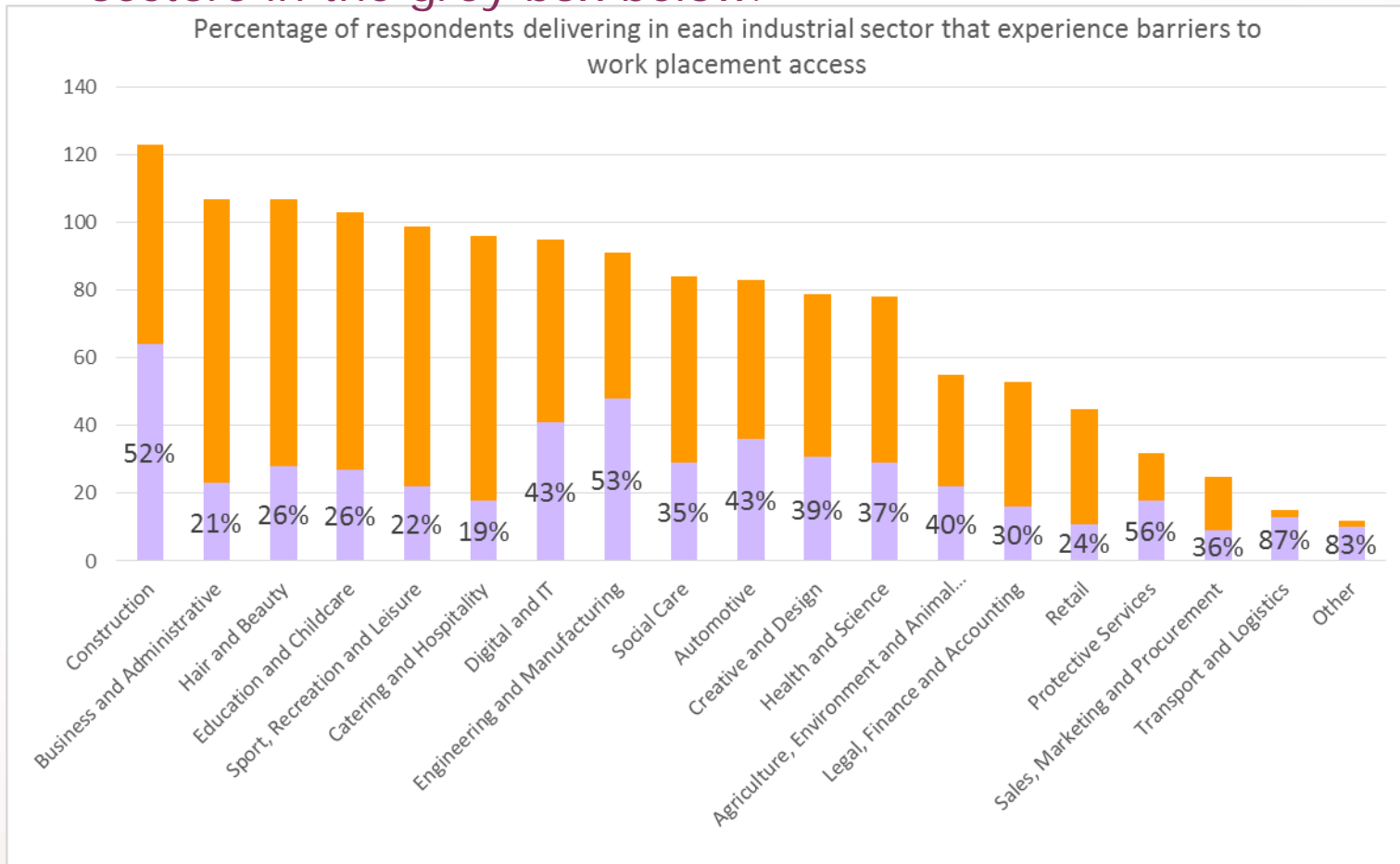


- Other sector-related barriers on the chart:
- 'Placements' – availability in the right industrial sector;
 - Employers – culture, concern with the bottom line and resourcing;
 - Students – readiness for particular work places (highlighted in case studies as maturity in potentially dangerous equipment)
 - Other organisational matters.

Are there major barriers *specific to that occupational sector* that would prevent a 16-19 years old going on a work placement?

Sector-specific barriers to work placements

Half of training providers delivering Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing, and significant minorities of most other sectors, said there were sector-specific barriers. Eight reasons were given, with example sectors in the grey box below.



Explanations of sector-specific barriers

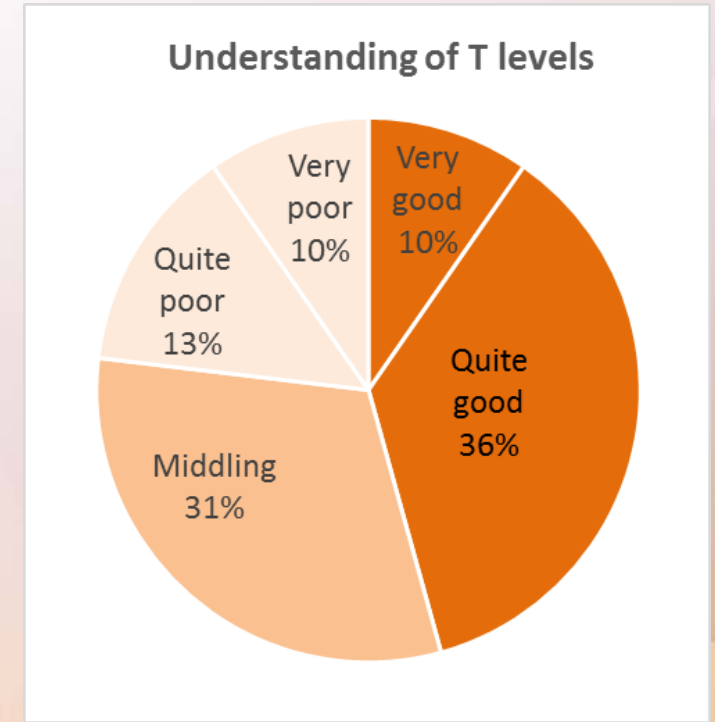
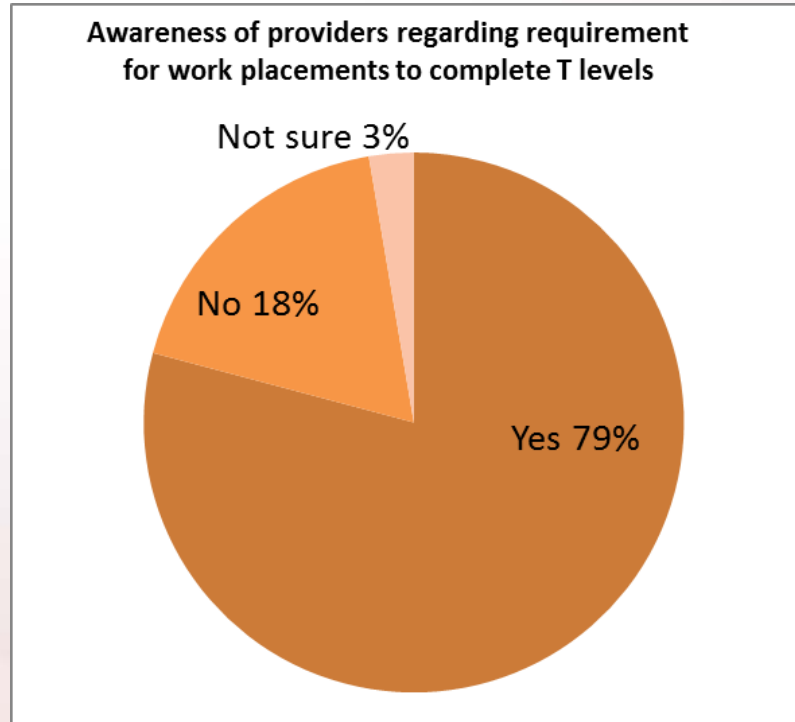
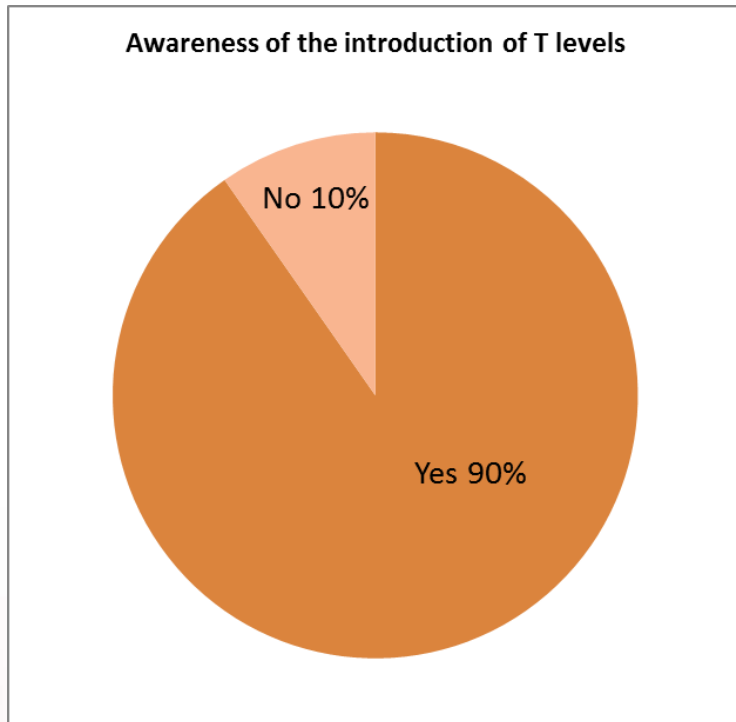
1. Seasonal industries: seasonal variations in tasks available, eg Horticulture
2. Seasonal industries: fluctuating demand, eg Game keeping, Floristry
3. Highly technical areas or when jobs relate to legal requirements, eg Automotive vehicle repair/maintenance
4. Safe behaviours required that 16-19s don't consistently comply with even under supervision, eg Construction, Catering.
5. Wherever application of legislation, policy and regulatory knowledge is required, eg Law.
6. Wherever work readiness is vital because of independent working expected, eg plastering
7. Personal services that could jeopardise client safety if not correctly done eg some Hairdressing skills.
8. Health and safety restrictions to access tasks, eg Engineering, most Construction trades.

Please describe what the barriers are for each relevant sector. Base 100 respondents giving multiple responses each.

Awareness and understanding of T levels



While 90% of respondents had heard of T levels, 10% had not. Just under 80% were aware of work placement requirements within T levels, 21% weren't or weren't sure. Just under half rated their understanding of T levels as 'good'. This was in March 2018.

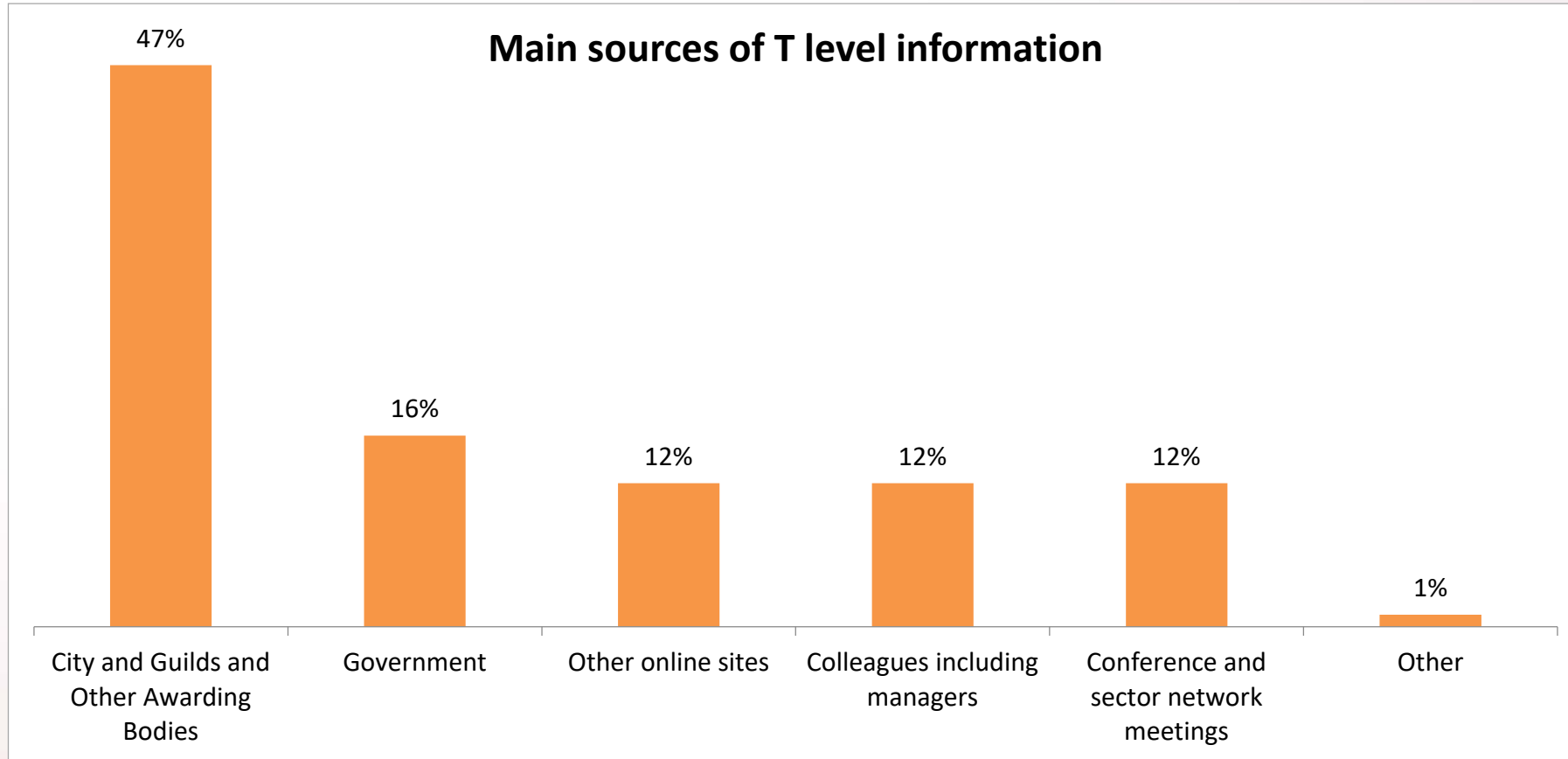


Before taking part in this survey, were you aware that the government is planning on introducing a new type of qualification for young people aged 16-19 in England called T levels? Before taking part in this survey, were you aware the government intends to require the completion of work placements as a condition of passing a T-level? Base 185 and 187.

Sources of information about T levels



Almost half of the respondents (47%) received their information on T-levels from awarding organisations.

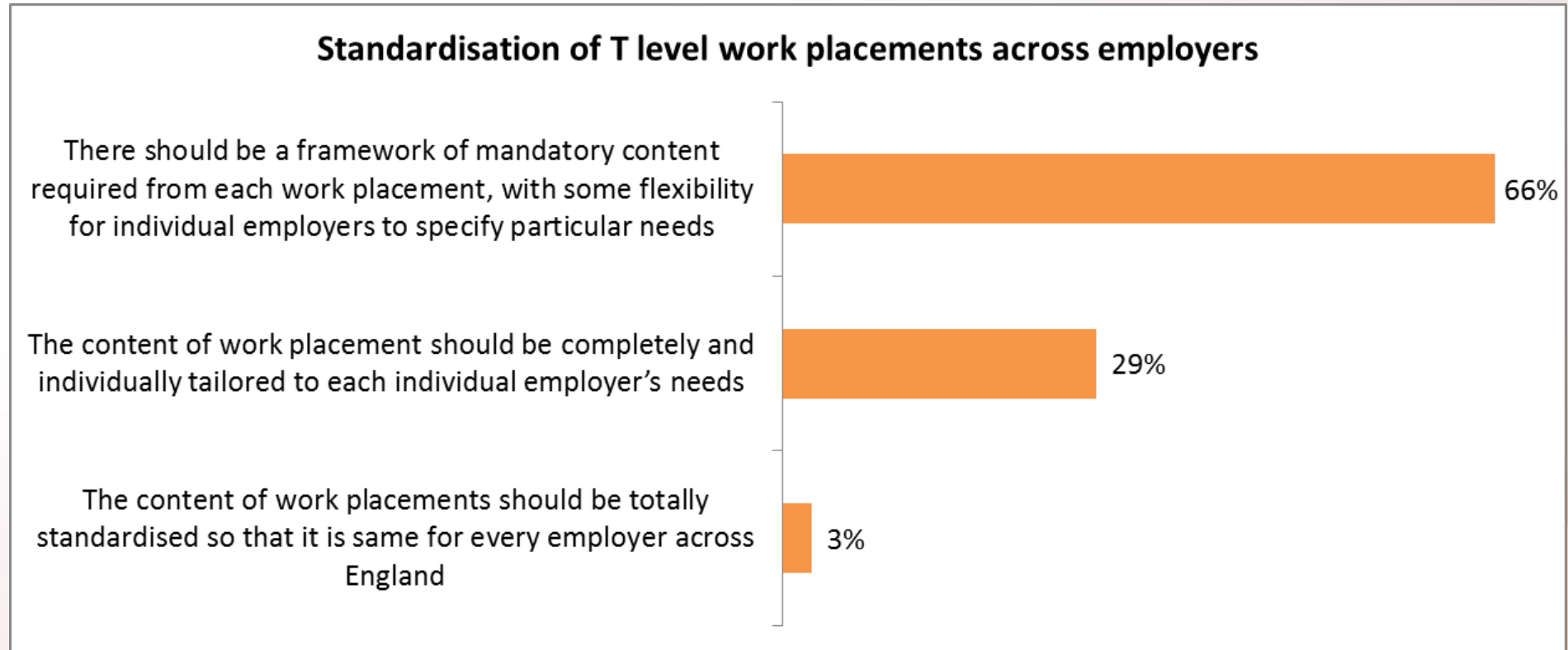


Where do you get most of your information about T levels? base 146

Training providers' view on standardisation across employers of T level work placement content



Two thirds of training providers said that all employers should work to a framework of mandatory work placement content and have some flexibility to tailor to individual employers' needs.

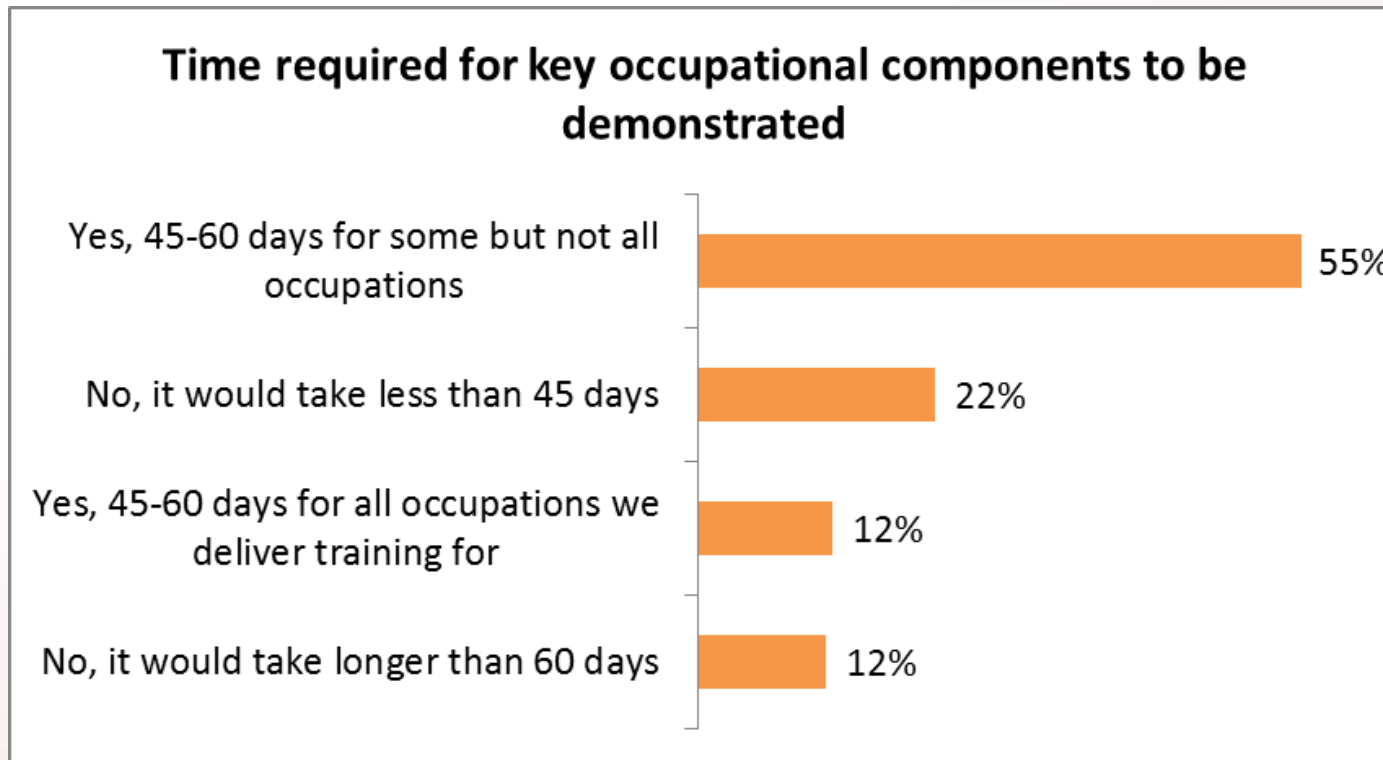


T levels are being designed to improve technical education across each occupational sector, and the work placement aspect is central to this aim. Which of the following statements do you agree with *most*? base 186

Work placement duration: is 45-60 days fit for purpose?



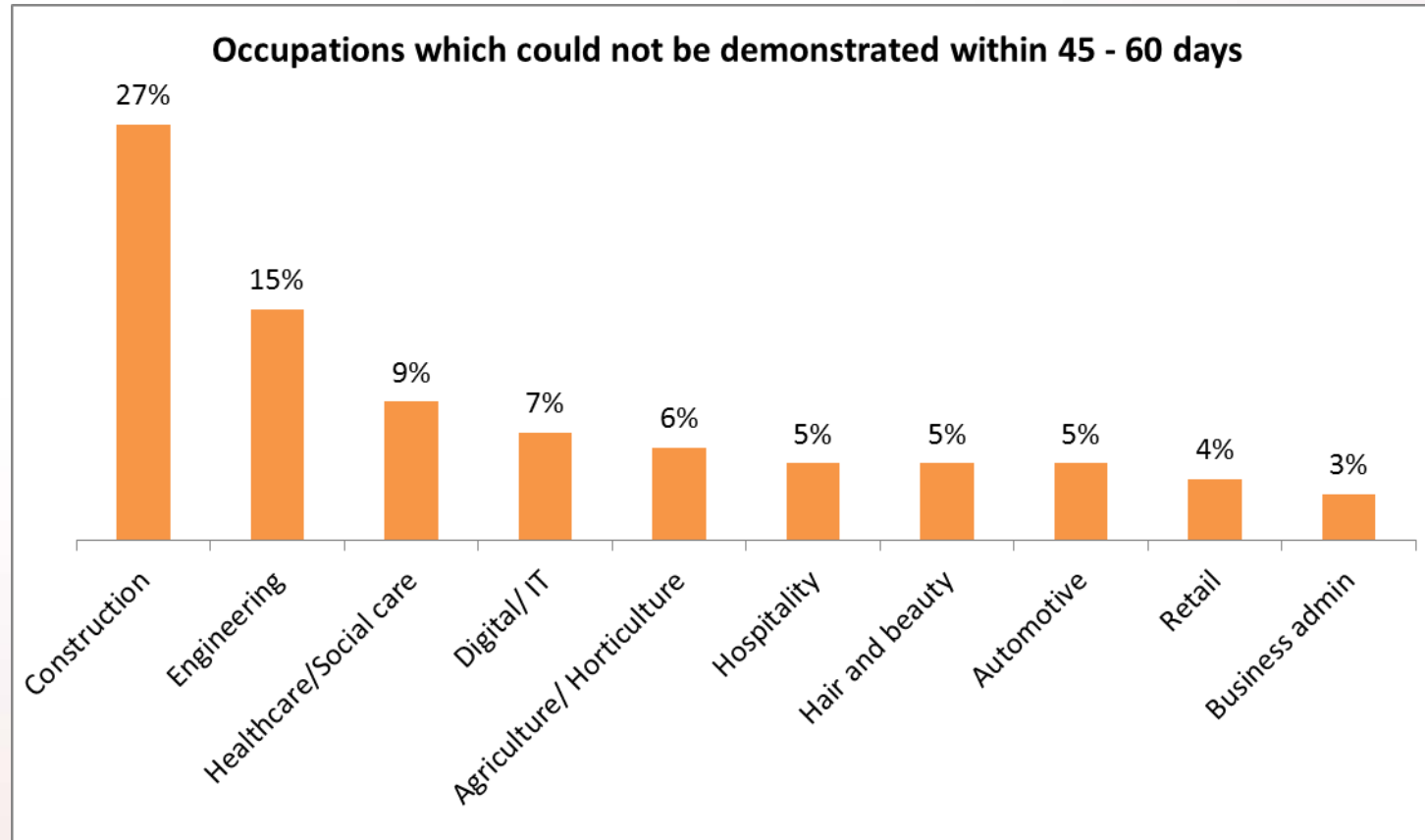
For little over half (55%) of training providers, the length of T level work placements, which has been set at 45 to 60 days, is correct for key occupational components to be demonstrated in most, but not all occupations. Only 12% said 45-60 days was right for all sectors. Indeed, a significant minority said it would take less (22%) or more (12%).



In your opinion could the key occupational components (i.e. skills and knowledge) of entry-level jobs be demonstrated to work placement students within a 45-60 day period, or would it take longer or shorter?

Occupations that could not be demonstrated in 45-60 days

Over a quarter of respondents said that Construction couldn't be covered in under 60 days (27%). Notable minorities said similar for Engineering and Healthcare/Social Care (15% & 9%).



Other, given by 2% or 1% of respondents:

Childcare
Catering
Protection services
Media/creative/design
Pharmacy technician
Veterinary
Law
Finance
Sales
Marketing
Transport and logistics

If applicable, please tell us which occupations could not be demonstrated within 45 to 60 days and why? Base 101

Essential information for employers to share with training providers



Legislative requirements; details of the role; activities planned and nominated staff support are the most important things that employers can share with training providers before work placements start.

Most important information from employers for providers	%
Health and safety / insurance details or any other legislative requirements	20%
Details of the role that the work placement student is to take on	19%
Tasks/activities/projects planned for the student	18%
Identified staff mentors to work with or support the learner in placement	17%
Expectations re dress code and core hours plus breaks etc	7%
Travel and location details for the placement	6%
Company briefing	5%
Any expectations re digital awareness or competence that might require additional training on software etc	4%
On-site facilities such as drinks, canteen, lockers etc	4%

What are the THREE most important things that you would want employers to share with you before they take a T level student on work placement? Base 683

Training provider involvement in T level delivery - overview



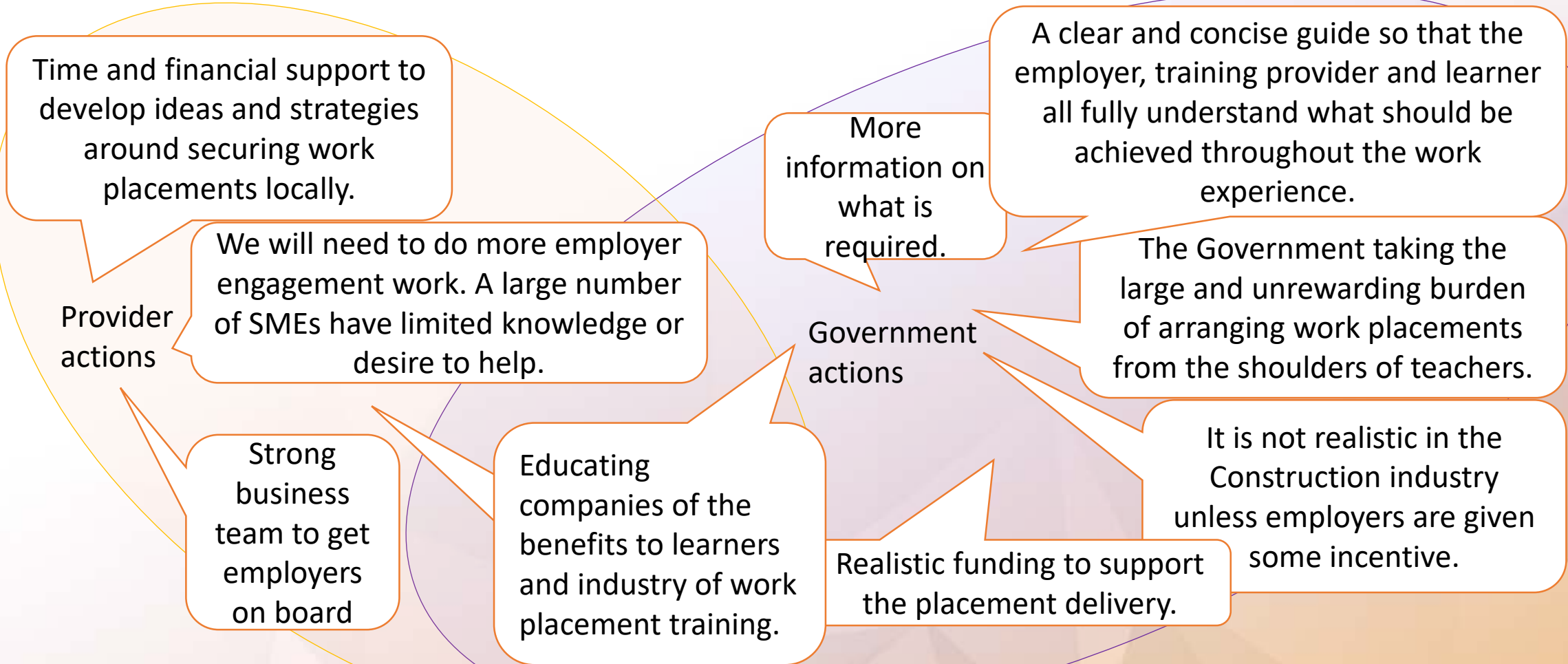
The Government wants T levels to closely mirror employers' skills needs. In this context, training provider engagement would be most likely if employers were willing and able to support and there were sufficient financial incentives (for all parties).

What would ensure providers become engaged with T level delivery	%
Employers' willingness and ability to support	66%
Financial incentive: from Government to provider; for learner, etc.	66%
Communication, information and guidance	44%
Planning: organisation, administration, time and resources	37%
Quality placement availability: eg suitable location, shared expectations	34%
Good working relationships: providers; employers/ industry, learner	20%
Regulatory framework compliance, health & safety, insurance	15%
Students' reliability and readiness for work	7%



With regard to T level content reflecting the skills needs of employers, what would help ensure that your organisation become engaged with T level delivery?

What would ensure training provider involvement in T level delivery?



With regard to T level content reflecting the skills needs of employers, what would help ensure that your organisation become engaged with T level delivery? Please write in your own words. Selected quotes.

Training provider engagement in T levels: how to help ensure sufficient local employers in the right sectors?



Training providers' past experience is that there will not be enough employers to meet learner demand but appropriate funding, communications and support will maximise T level work placements.

Broad theme	No.	Explanations
Funding – for learner access, employer engagement and provider quality	44	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel expenses for learners (some or all) 2. Employer incentive payments (some sectors and sizes or all) 3. Adequate funding for Training providers to provide quality, eg support staff to source employers, on-site learner support time.
Communications system for relationship building and management	38	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear guidance for Training providers from Government on the policy itself. 2. Effective national awareness raising campaigns targeted at employers and general public. 3. Development and sharing of databases of interested employers in each locality and sector. 4. Marketing by Training providers to add and sustain employer engagement.
Dedicated funded support to recruit and sustain maximum possible Work Placements.	10	Support infrastructure, eg employer database, meetings with local industry, local designated placement manager. Once on-programme, Training providers keep employers engaged (eg updated, smooth out issues).

With regard to there being sufficient employers in the right sectors that are local enough for students to travel to, what would help ensure that your organisation gets involved in T level delivery? *Please write in your own words.*

Any other comments on T level work placements?



There were, in general, more positive than negative comments. The main themes from other comments are below.

Broad theme	No.	Explanations
Volume of extended work placements will required hard to fulfil.	24	Too few employers willing/see NET benefits. Some learners aren't work-ready; 1-2 weeks already tough. Be 'realistic' about likely employer volumes.
Design needs flexibility for geographies, sectors & learners <i>and</i> structure /regulation to protect and support.	13	Non-mandated or flexible implementation of work placement needed. All industries aren't in all localities. Employers shouldn't 'use' learners (free labour) and other quality issues in employers. Not all learners are work ready, some with LLDD are harder to place. T level qualification must be 'fit-for-purpose'.
Communications from government	8	Information, guidance and development support for Training providers. Awareness raising to and promoting buy-in from employers.
Financial incentives for employers and learners	4	Essential for T level programme to succeed, based on existing work placements.
Appropriate amount of funding of qualifications / provider delivery	3	'A good idea if funded and administered effectively.'
Displacement from other learning programmes	3	T levels will compete with apprenticeships and other Level 3 programmes for the same pool of 16-18 year olds. Employers will take the cheapest programme.

Any other comments about T level work placements?

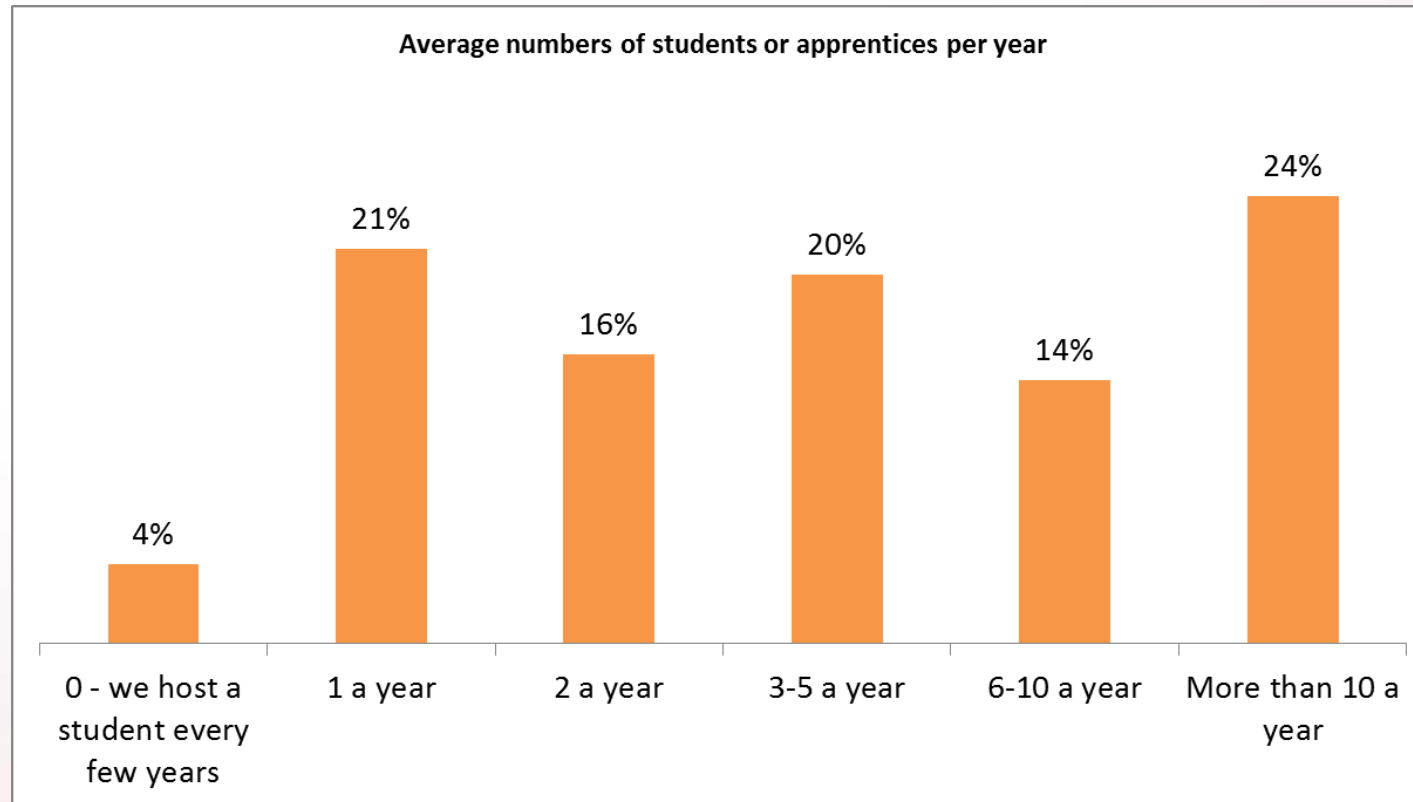


Employer survey results

Number of students or apprentices per year



Around a fifth of employers surveyed take 1 work placement student per year and another third take 2 to 5 per year. About a quarter take more than 10.

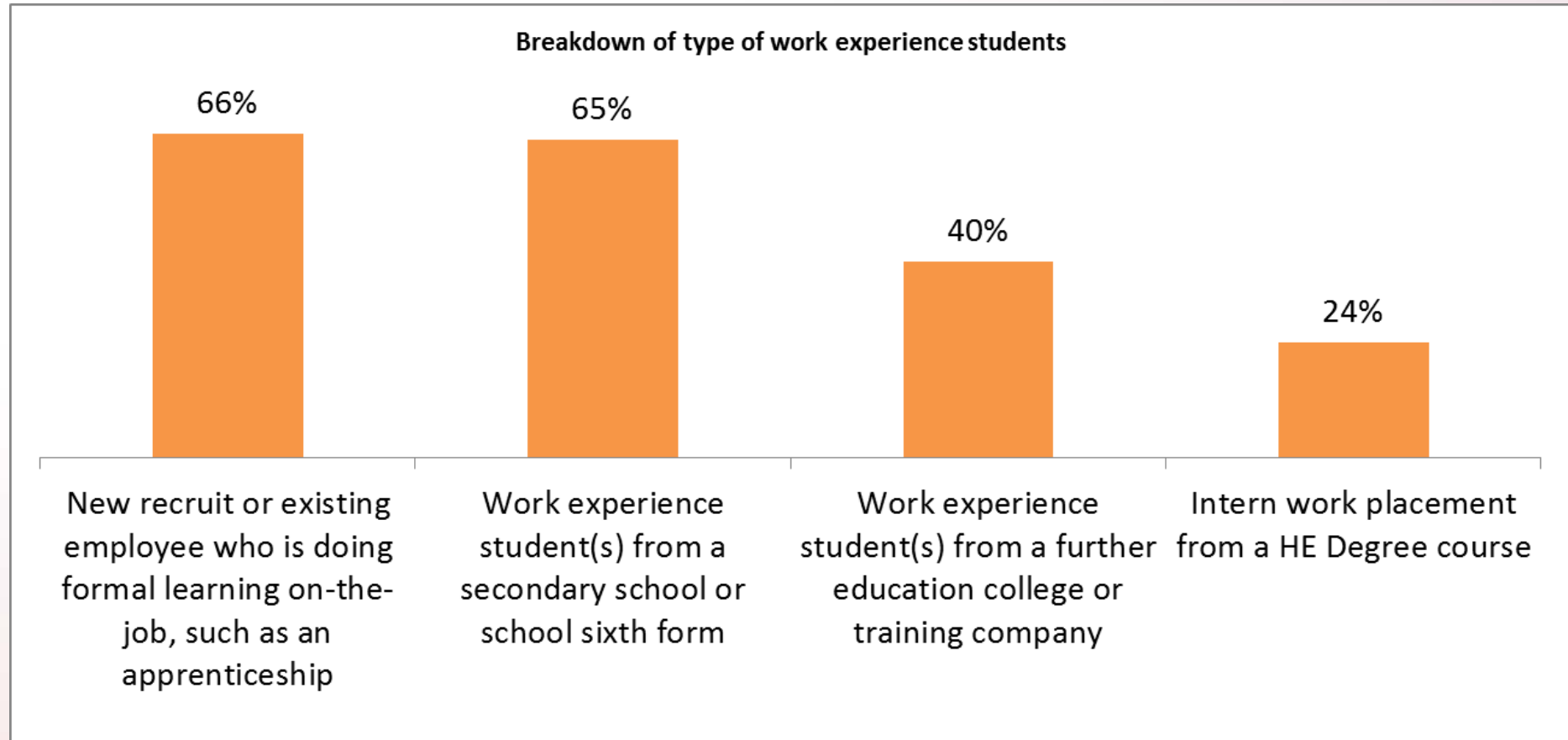


On average over the past three years, approximately how many work experience/placement students or apprentices has your company had *per year*?
Base 70.

Types of work-based learners



Two thirds of employers had employees in learning programmes (e.g. apprentices) and took school students for work experience. Notably fewer had students from college or training companies (40%).

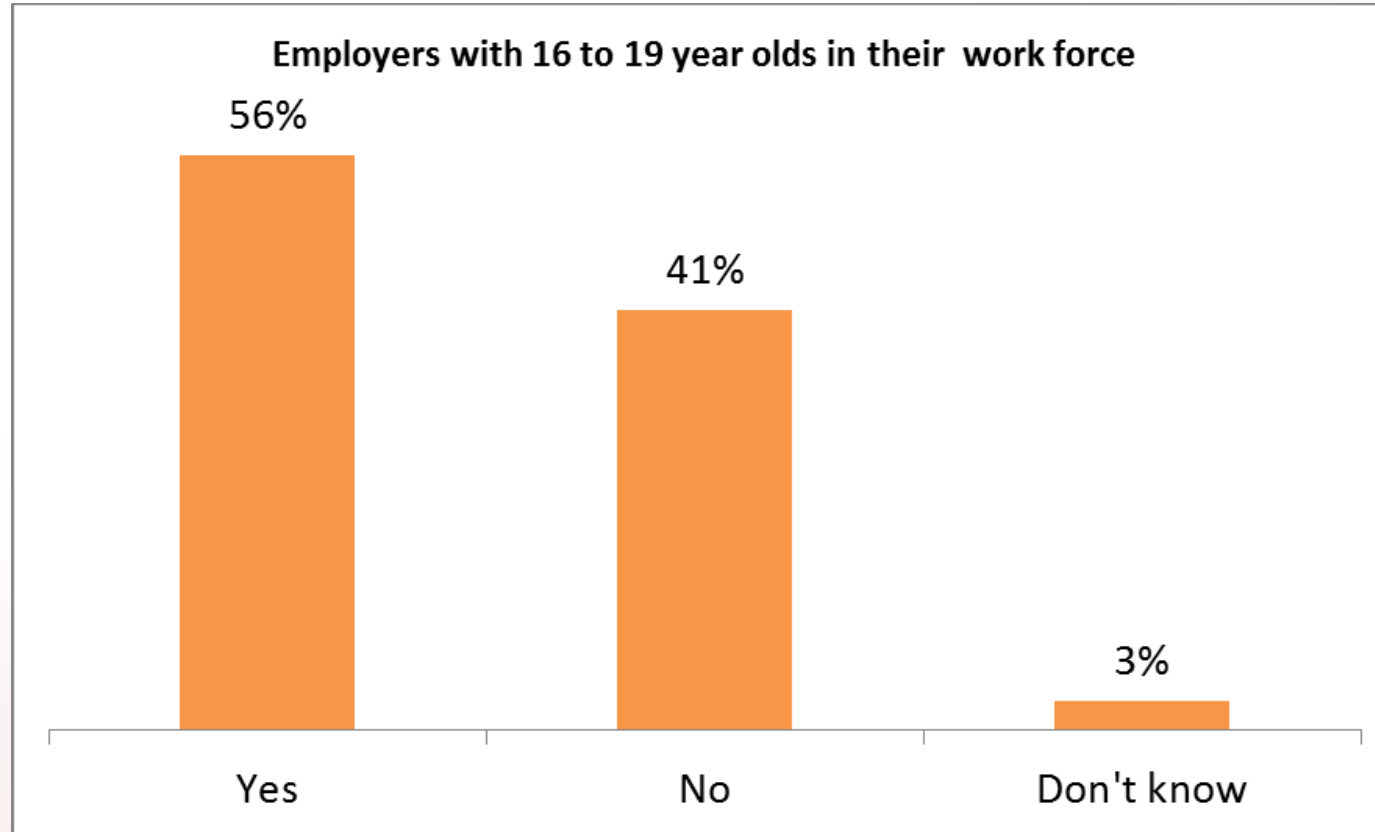


Who were they? Base 68.

Proportion of employers that employ 16-19 year olds



A little over half of the employers surveyed currently have 16-19 year olds in their workforce.

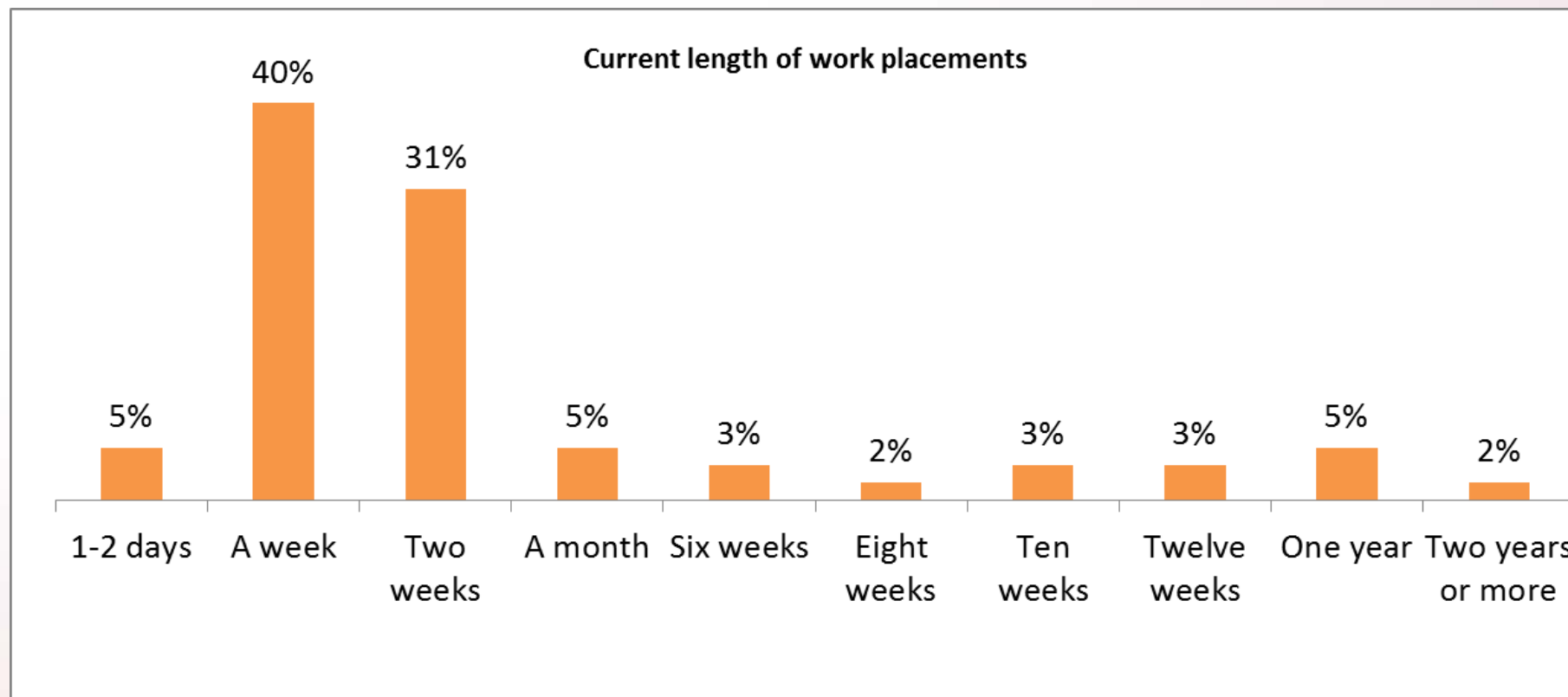


Do you currently have any 16 to 19 year olds in your work force? Base 73

Current length of work placements



For these employers with a track record of work-based learning, the typical average length of placement is one or two weeks. Only 8% currently do 8-12 weeks, the duration required for T levels.



Typically, how long does one work experience student spend with you? *Please tick one answer. If you have hosted students for different lengths of time please choose an average.*

Sectors with barriers to work placements

A very wide range of industrial sectors were identified as having barriers to work placements for young people. Construction and Engineering and Manufacturing were most common. This data takes into consideration the core business of each employer.

Construction	Education and Childcare
Engineering and Manufacturing	Sales, Marketing and Procurement
Transport and Logistics	Catering and Hospitality
Health and Science	Creative and Design
Agriculture, Environment, and Animal Care	Digital and IT
Legal, Finance, and Accounting	Hair and Beauty
Social Care	Protective Services
Automotive	Retail
Business and Administrative	Sport, Recreation and Leisure

Are there major barriers that would prevent you taking a 16-19 years old on work placement in these sectors?

Occupational areas within employer organisations

Regardless of their core business, each employer employs staff in a range of occupations. The 73 employers surveyed reported having staff working in a total of 201 occupational areas, thus a wide range of potential work placement specialisms.

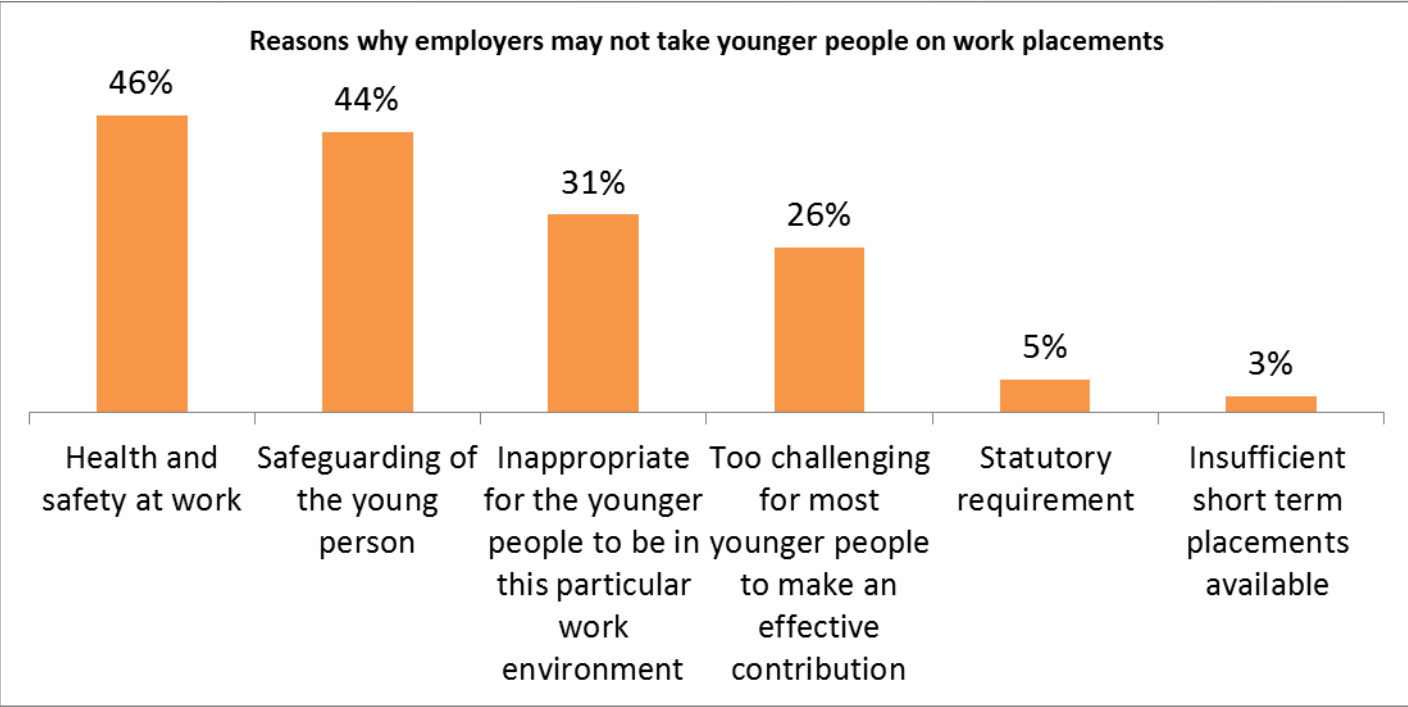
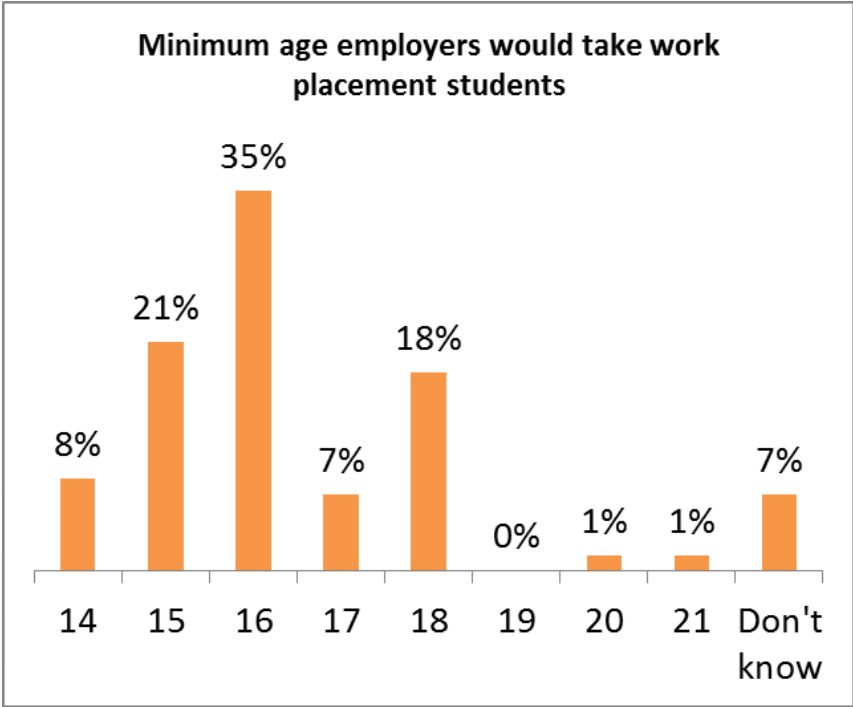
Occupational area	% of employers
Business and Administrative	48%
Digital and IT	36%
Sales, Marketing and Procurement	33%
Legal, Finance, and Accounting	30%
Catering and Hospitality	18%
Engineering and Manufacturing	18%
Transport and Logistics	16%
Health and Science	15%
Creative and Design	13%
Education and Childcare	13%
Retail	13%
Construction	12%
Social Care	12%
Agriculture, Environment, and Animal Care	6%
Sport, Recreation and Leisure	6%
Automotive	4%
Hair and Beauty	4%

In which of the following sectors does your organisation employ workers? Base 73

Minimum age of work placement students



The most common minimum age for work experience/placements is 16, which is in line with the age of expected T level learners. However, 20% of employers take learners at 18-plus. The three most common reasons for not taking younger learners are Health and Safety; safeguarding and inappropriate settings.

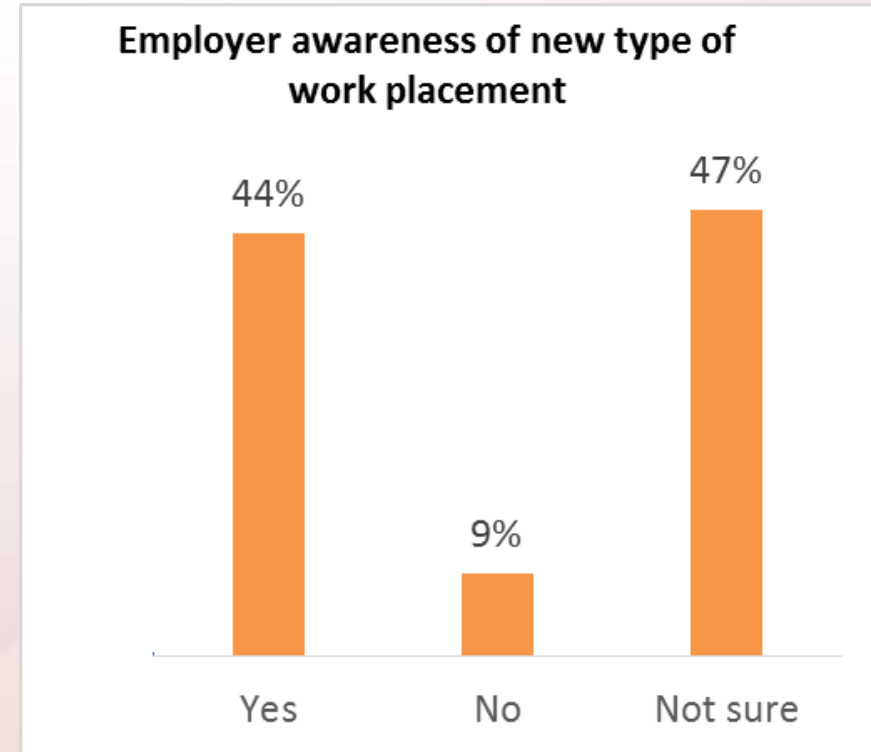
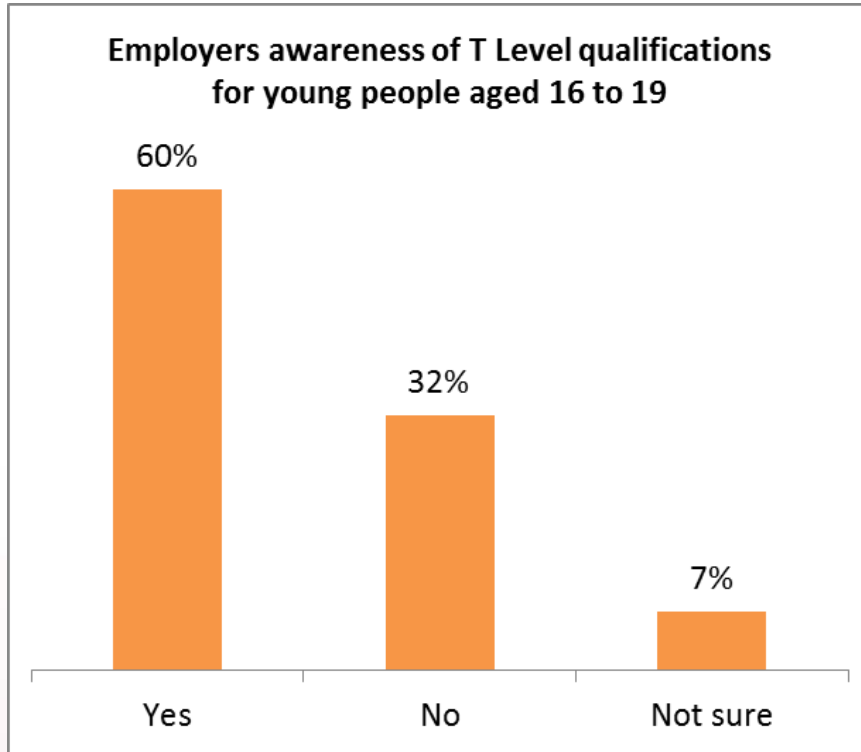


What is the minimum age that you would take someone on work experience/placement, if you were to have someone in the future? Why would you not take anyone younger? Bases 73 and 71, respectively.

Employer awareness of T levels and the associated new types of work placement



Six in ten employers completing the survey were aware of plans to introduce T levels. Most employers didn't know or weren't sure about the new types of work placements.



Before taking part in this survey, had you been made aware that the government is planning on introducing a new type of qualifications for young people aged 16 to 19 in England called T levels? And Before taking part in this survey, had you been made aware that the government is currently designing a new type of work placement for the new T level? Base 81

Employers' descriptions of successful work placements



Realistic experience of a workplace and sector; assisting career decisions and developing learners' skills and motivation were the most common themes.

The ability to take part in working life , understand culture and actively participate in a working learning environment. This is a two way relationship where the work placement person achieves 'growth' whilst contributing to the business.

Both the young person and employer get something from the placement.

We run work "inspiration" not work experience. We aim to motivate young people so that they feel more confident and more excited about pursuing their own career. We also help them to become entrepreneurial in their approach to learning and development.

A successful placement is one in which the student is genuinely interested and has an opportunity to undergo 'real' work and have a fulfilling experience.

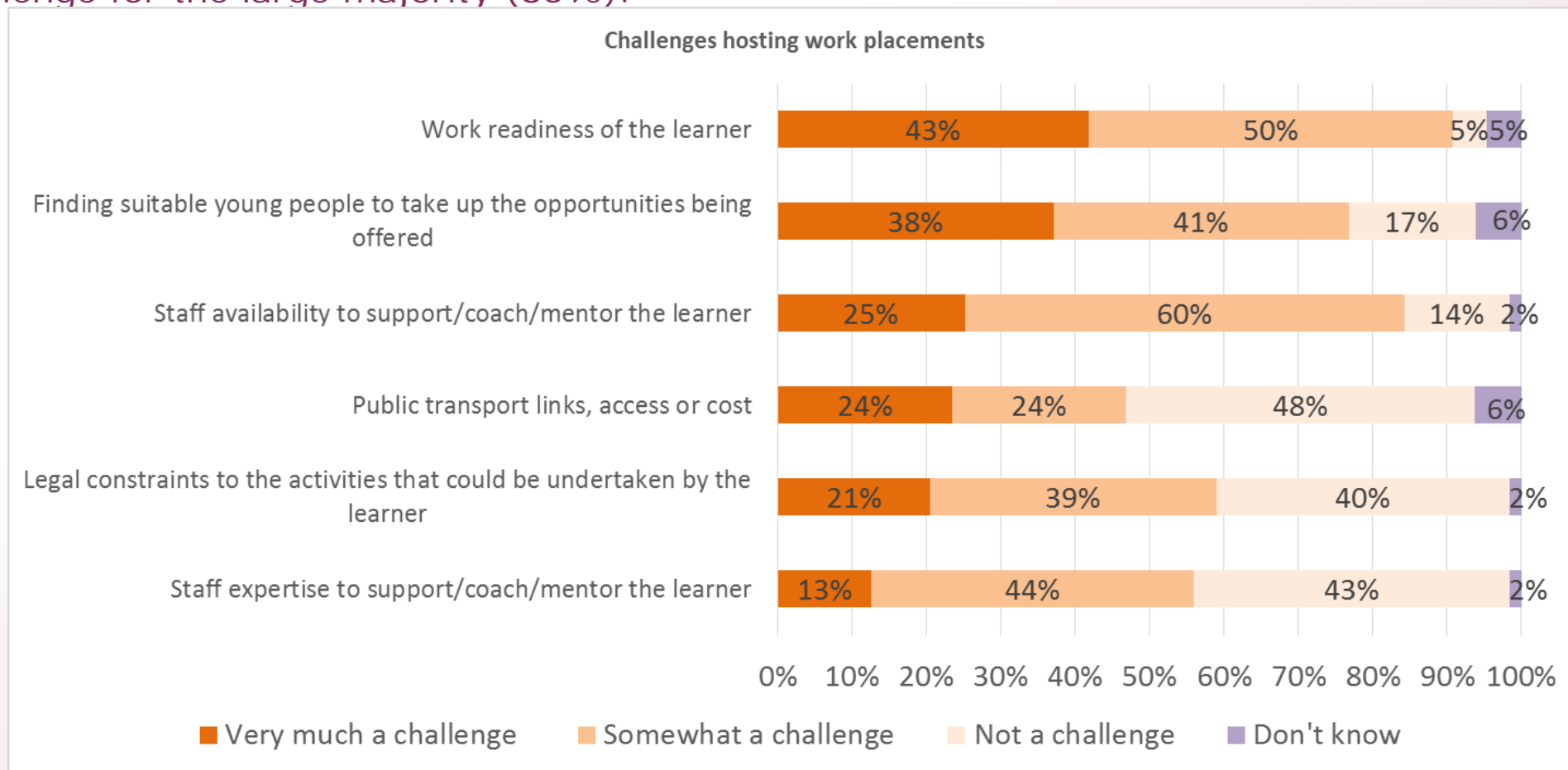
Show students the reality of working in their chosen field at an age where they can easily choose to change their path.

The learner undertakes meaningful activity which enables them to develop skills and knowledge to help make informed choices about future careers choices as well as develop confidence in a work place.

In your view, what would constitute a "successful " work placement for a 16-19 year old? Please write in your own words. Base 87

Challenges to hosting work placements

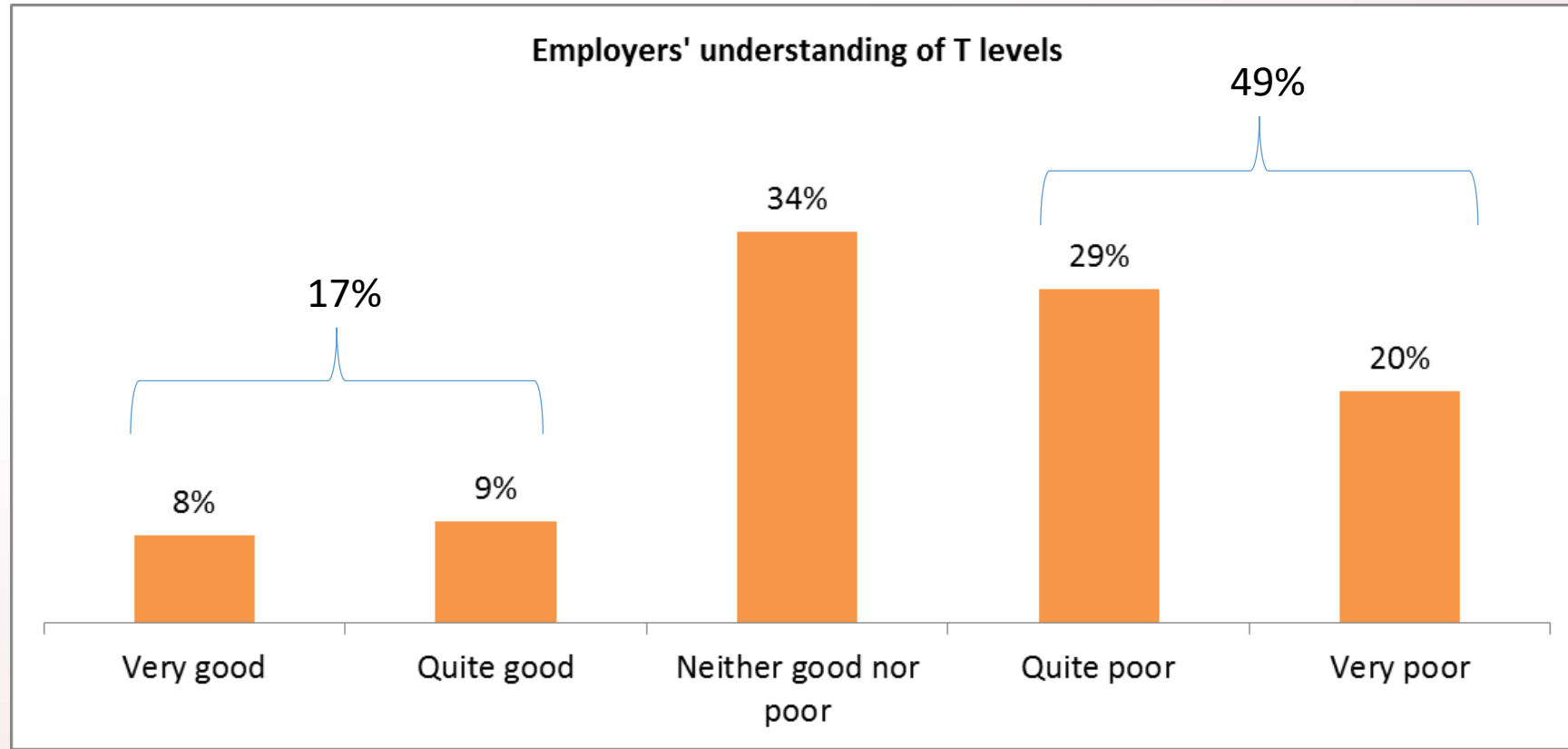
'Work readiness' of learners is the greatest challenge (93% say 'very much' or 'somewhat') followed by the similar issue of finding suitable young people (79%). Staff availability was also a challenge for the large majority (85%).



How much of a challenge are each of the following when hosting work placement students at your company? *Base 63*

Employers' levels of understanding of T levels

Almost half of employers said that at the time of the survey in March 2018 their understanding of T levels was 'poor', with a further third saying 'neither good nor poor'. Just 17% said that their understanding was 'good'.



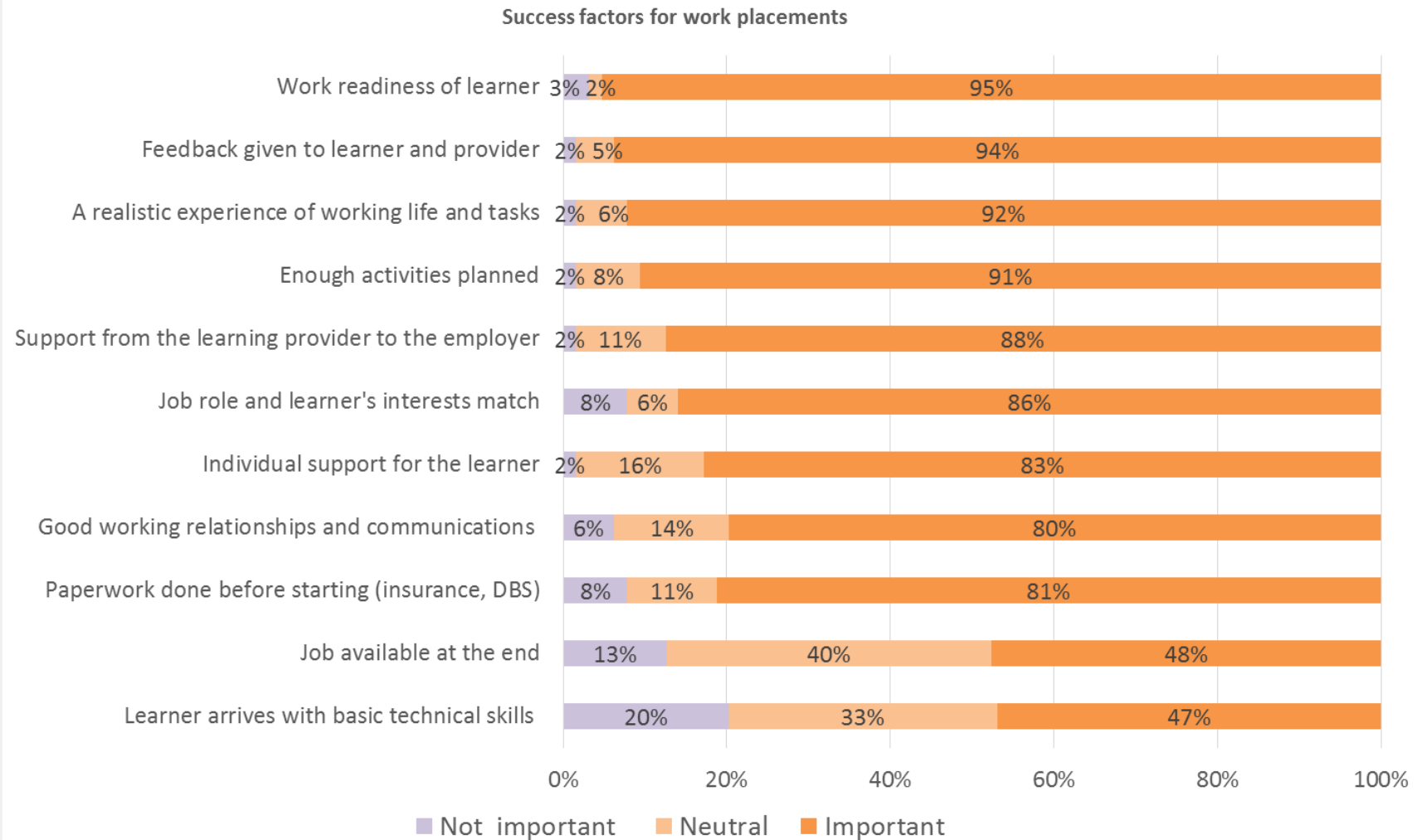
So, how would you rate your own understanding of T levels, at present? Base 79



The data indicates nine cross-sector success factors:

1. Work readiness of learners
2. Giving feedback
3. Providing a real experience
4. Having enough activities
5. Being supported by the learning provider
6. Matching learners' interests
7. Providing individuals with support
8. Good relationships and communications
9. Paperwork done

Arriving with technical skills and having a job available at the end matter to far fewer (approx. half).

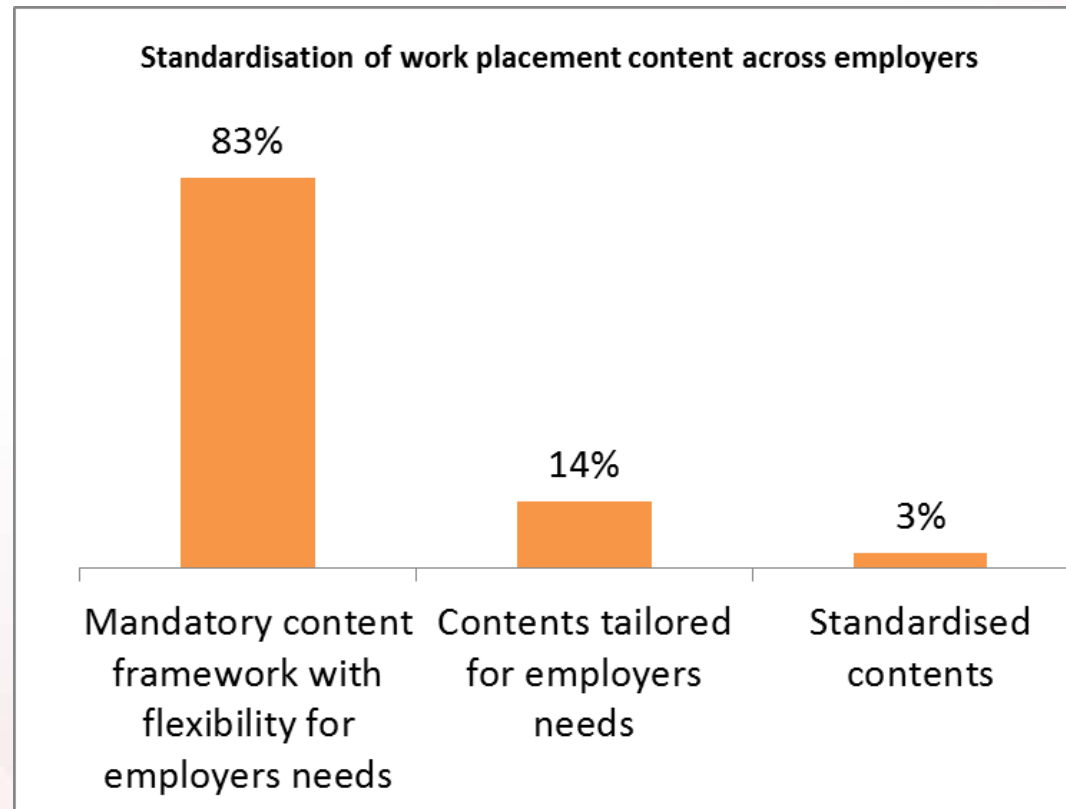


How important are each of the following for work placements to be successful?

Standardisation of work placement content



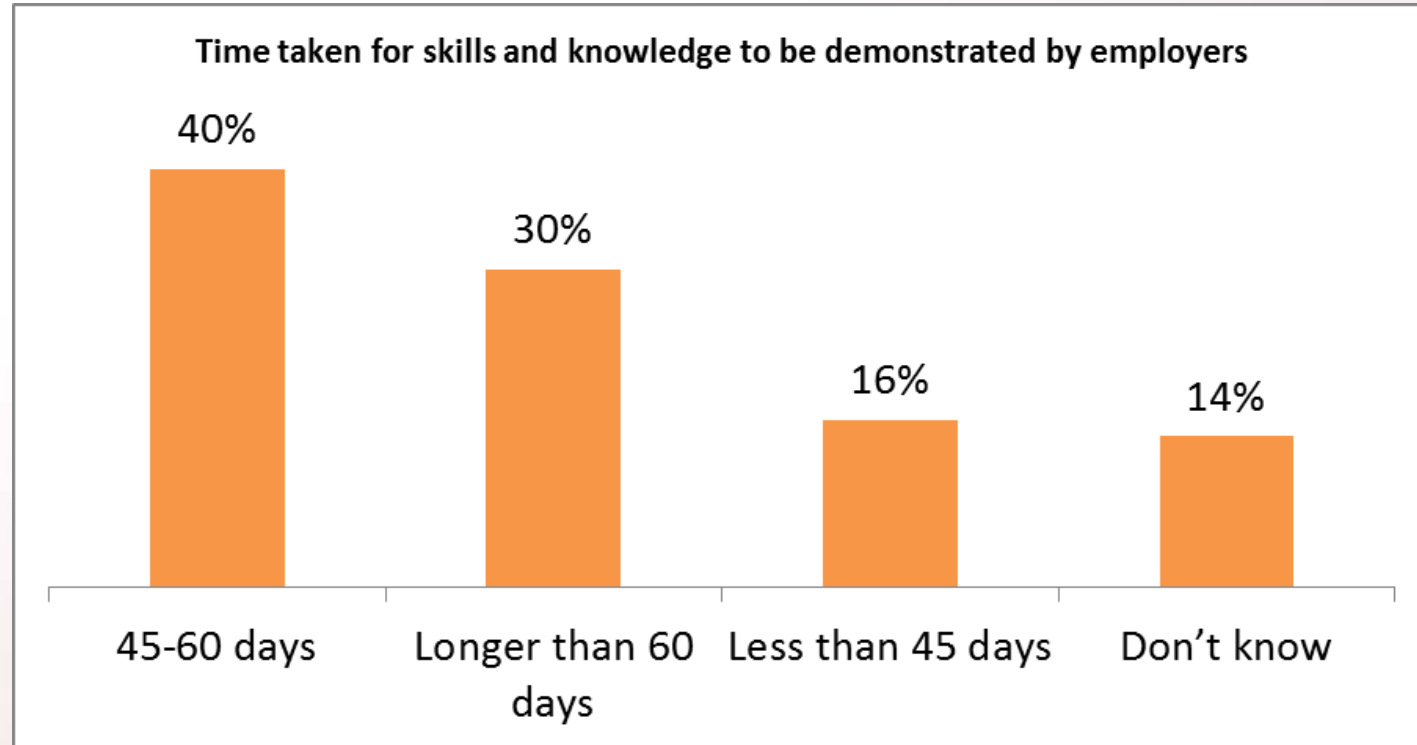
The large majority of employers said there should be a mandatory framework of content with flexibilities that meet individual employers' needs.



New qualifications called T levels are being designed to improve technical education across each occupational sector, and the work placement aspect is central to this aim. Which of the following statements best reflects your own view? Base 63

Length of placement needed to demonstrate key occupational components of entry-level roles

T level work placements have been set at 45-60 days and 40% of employers agree with this being the necessary amount of time for learners to develop the key skills and knowledge required. However, more were in disagreement with 30% saying it would take longer and 16% less.

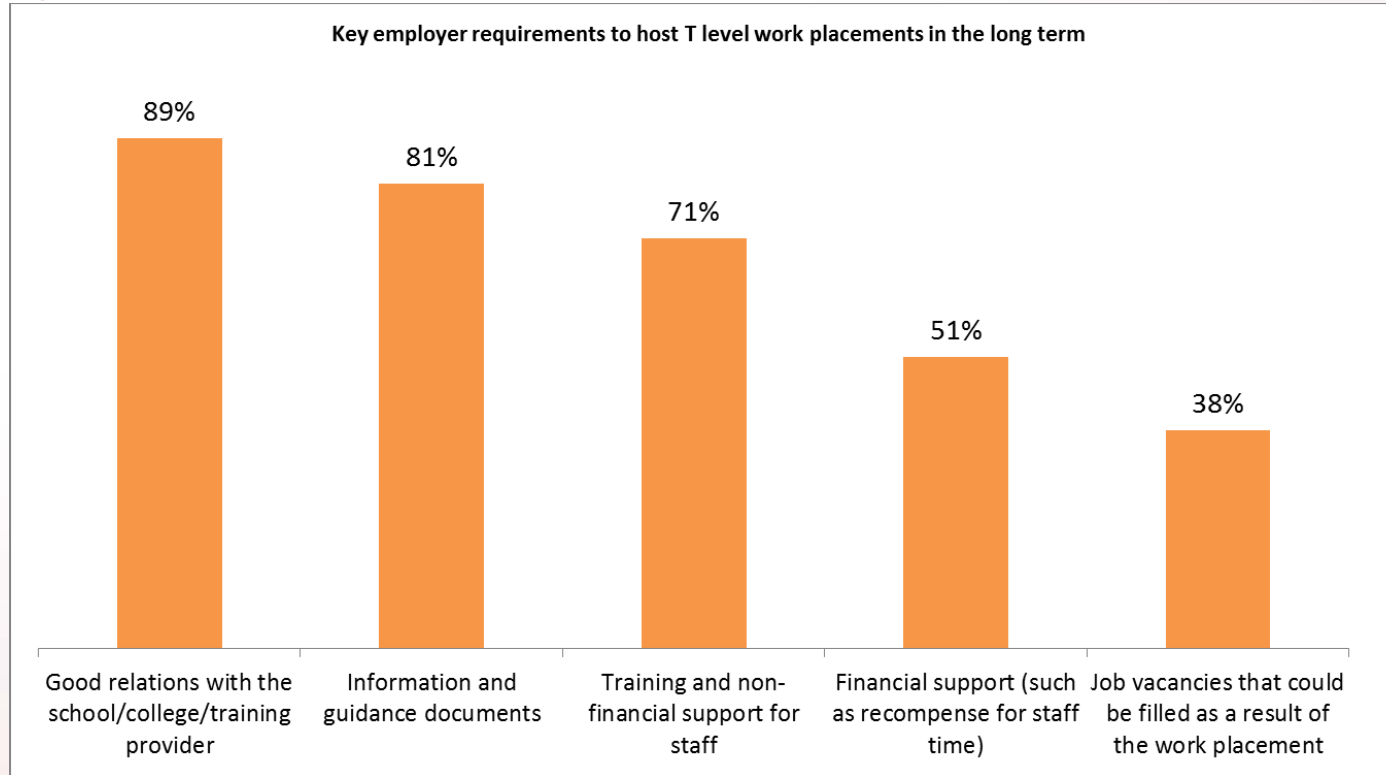


In your opinion could the key occupational components (i.e. skills and knowledge) of entry-level jobs in your company/organisation be demonstrated to work placement students within a 45-60 day period, or would it take longer or shorter?

Key employer requirements



The large majority of employers say that they need good working relations with their training provider(s) together with information and guidance documents for success (89% and 81%). Support in the form of staff training and funding is also important to most employers (71%).



What would your company/organisation need in order to engage and sustain your participation in hosting T level work placements in the long term? Base 63

Content of information and guidance materials

There was a clear consensus around employers wanting to know details and receive support. Almost all employers want clear expectations and around two thirds want information about T levels, tips for working with learners and specified content.

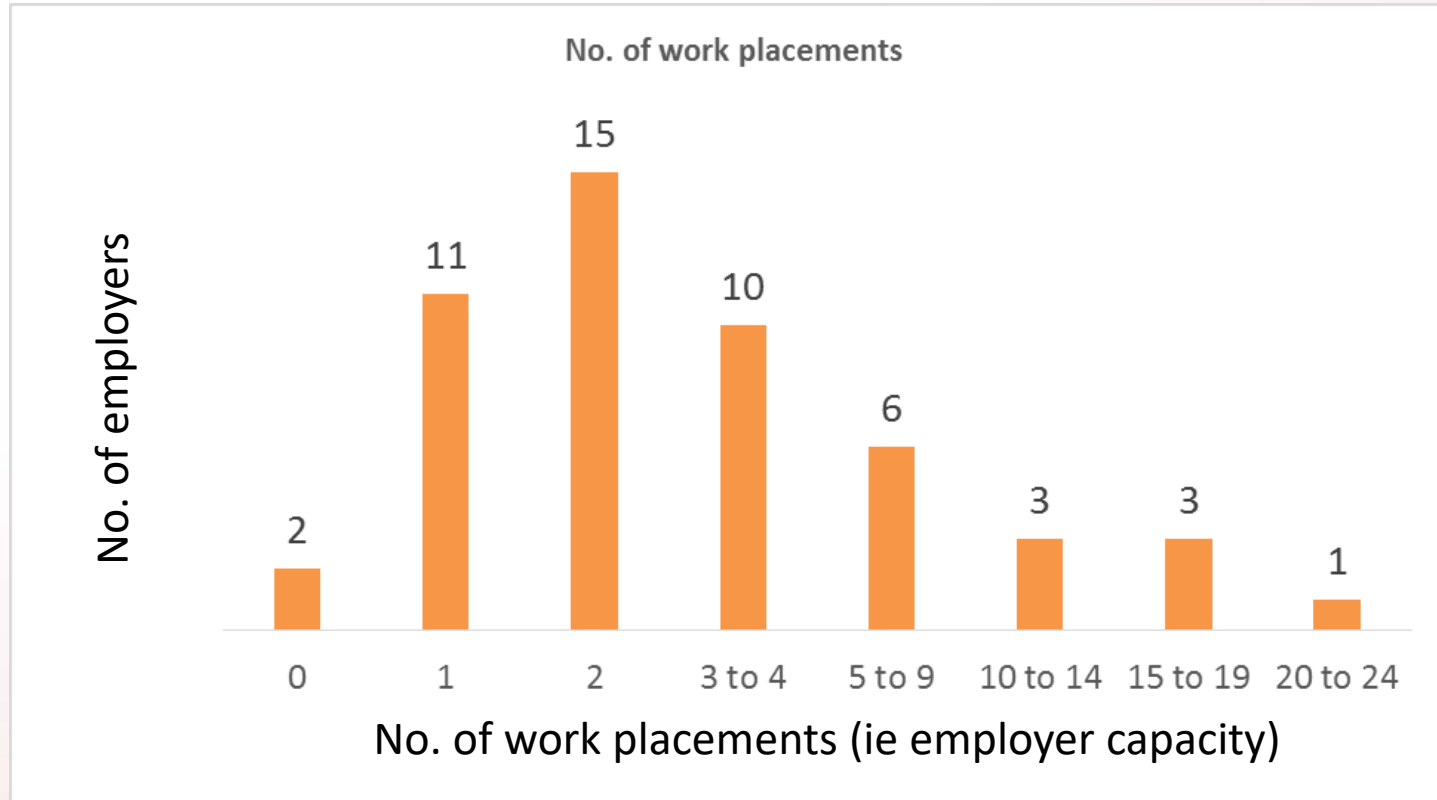
What would you want in information and guidance materials?	%
Clear expectations of what activity was needed from the employer	97%
Information about the learner's qualification and how a successful work placement contributes to qualification achievement	79%
Tips on how to prepare and support learners	77%
Specified content for the work placement already in place	65%

If you were to host learners on T level work placements, what would you want included in the information and guidance materials for employers? Base 62

Employers' capacity: volumes of learners



Most employers surveyed had capacity for 1-4 work placements per year.



Taking everything into consideration, how many young people would your workplace realistically be able to take on T level work placements per year? Base 51

Ways of increasing numbers of work placements

The large majority of employers wanted a financial contribution and learners that matched their placement opportunity (85% and 77%). Interestingly, they also asked for clear links between work placement content and the qualification/skills, thus indicating their contribution to skills development (74%).

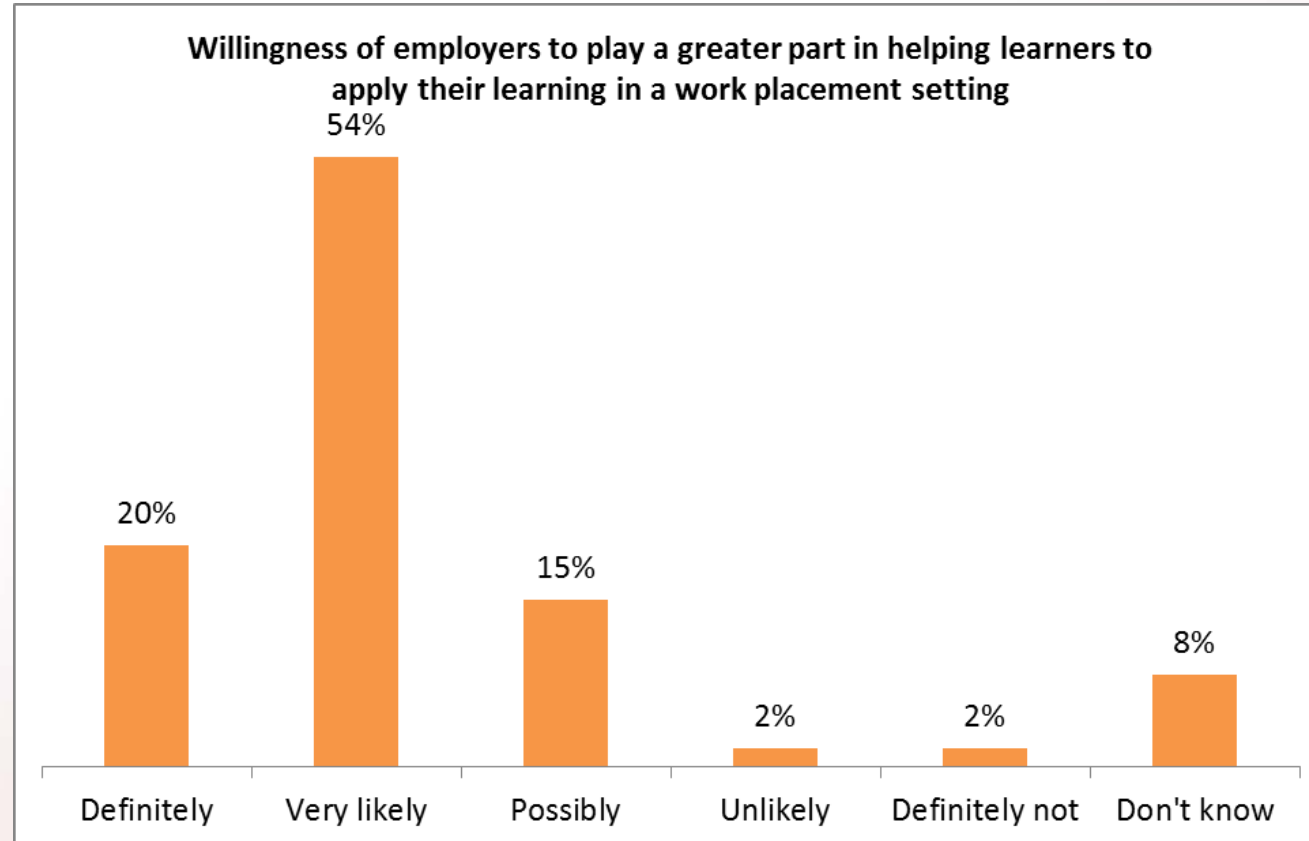
Ways to encourage more employers to take on more T level work	%
Financial contribution to employers	85%
Strong and accurate matching of individual learners to each placement opportunity	77%
Clear links between the content of the work placement and the resulting qualification/skills	74%
Staff training and support resources	61%
Tailored design of work placement content to the needs of each individual company	47%
Design of work placement content to the needs of the sector as a whole rather than to each individual company	40%
National advertising campaign	34%
Don't know	6%

If T levels become as popular as expected, a great many more work placements would be needed than at present. In your view, what would be most effective at encouraging more employers to take more T level students on work placement? Base 62

Willingness of employers to play a greater part



Very positively, almost three quarters of employers surveyed were willing to play a greater part in helping students apply their learning in a work place setting.



The government wants T levels to closely mirror the skills needs of employers, To do this will require employers to play a greater part in helping learners to apply their learning in a work place setting. *How willing and able is your company/organisation to play a greater part? Base 61*

Why employers would step up, and limiting factors

A total of 42 employers explained why they answered as they did to the previous question, of which four fifths gave reasons why their organisation may not be able to commit more strongly to 'stepping up' their role, i.e. limiting factors. The rest were strongly positive.



Main limiting factors

"Depends on staff resource at the time" / workflow. "Depends on the resource required."

"Day-to-day pressure of work" would be accentuated by extra responsibility for work placement support.

"It is a balance – resource needed to design and support this effectively and other work activity that the business needs to achieved."

"Need more information", only then can we be more definite.

We need to have skilled staff available to staff our business however our sector requires very specific skills which aren't taught in generic courses. If we can train staff from an early age we can produce better more productive employees.

Positive reasons for participation

"Always keen for people to learn"
/ "Practise what we preach" about their
commitment to learning and development.

"Invest in the future" of the sector / "important we
make an active contribution to shaping future
generations."

Applied business skills and "turning theory into
practical solutions is imperative".

"Already engaged with Institute for Apprenticeships."

The government wants T levels to closely mirror the skills needs of employers, To do this will require employers to play a greater part in helping learners to apply their learning in a work place setting. *How willing and able is your company/organisation to play a greater part? Please explain your answer. Base 44 comments.*



Case studies

What works well for work placements

Marie, the Learning and Development Manager at Greenvale AP, part of the Produce Investments group discusses her thoughts about what works well in her organisations for work placements.

Experience of work placements

Typical of most employers, Marie had not heard of T levels, however did have experience of school pupils completing a 1-2 week work experience along with employing graduates and apprentices.

Marie added, they struggled to find suitable recruits because of their sites' rural locations and people don't generally understand the food industry. It's not just packing on a line, we have many functions such as Finance, IT, HR and commercial to name a few.

Challenges of young people on site

- ❑ A major reason for not getting recruits are our rural locations. There's poor public transport and young people usually can't yet drive or don't have access to a vehicle.
- ❑ The world of work as well, working in a fast paced industry, can be "completely alien" to some young people. They can sometimes struggle to integrate and adjust, therefore support from the team is vital to ensure they get the best from working with us.

Getting involved in T levels

Marie says:

"T Levels would be "great" for our business as there would be a combination of gaining experience whilst at work, which would feed into their learning back in the classroom, which in turn can then be integrated into the workplace. We could potentially have around 3 or 4 T level work placement students at each of our two larger sites."

"Our business understands the importance of development and its commitment to learning within the organisation - my role is testament to this", says Marie.

"It can be a mine field of bureaucracy when sourcing qualifications and apprenticeships so it's really important that we have good relationships with our training Training providers."

"The levy fund has partly driven us, however it's actually about getting good people in to the business and our industry. We have a lot to offer!"

The one large high-tech manufacturing firm will usually get inundated with requests...

Find out more

Catering sector work placement

What works well?



In this case study, a contract catering company Personnel Director shares her past experience and ideas for effective T level work placements.

The company

700 staff work on multiple sites of varying sizes across six counties in the south of England. From schools, care homes to fine dining.

The MD is committed to training so 'it's part of our culture', says the Personnel Director. She has found work experience students to have been mixed quality in the past and some discover it's just not the industry for them.

Having a T level student for their work placement would mean an extra pair of hands, their practical work would free up time for the manager to show them skills.

"Work placements develop the essentials for the industry."

Why host students?

The Personnel Manager says:

- Work placements develop the 'essentials' staff need for the industry – skills and understanding of cooking and punctual food services.
- You do not *have* to pay the student wages or expenses
- We use work placements to talent spot future staff, to train for progression into new site managers, to help the business grow.
- Work placements give as many young people as possible a chance of experiencing the catering industry.

What would work well?

T levels have to be zero cost to the company, reflecting this low-margin industry. Also, English and maths requirements must be relaxed. Currently, otherwise competent students who don't think they'll pass English and maths exams sometimes give up.

The Personnel Manager wants students one day a week, not in a block of consecutive days. She'd only place them at her larger sites to provide a range of activities and because they'll never need to be left alone in kitchens which can be dangerous places for young people.

For T levels, she'd probably continue her successful partnership with their current training provider to ensure students cover and learn the skills required for her and other businesses.

Find out more



The General Manager of a small business shares his thoughts on how T level work placements should be designed.

Experience of work placements

This company hires technical equipment to the entertainment industry, such as audio-visual technology and power generators, and also provide technicians to set up and run the equipment on site where required. They have a £2m turnover with 23 permanent staff plus freelance contractors for site work.

They currently have 20-25 work experience students on 1-2 week placements per year, mainly in depot and warehouse roles relating to preparing equipment for rental.

Why do work placements?

- ❑ Work placements are a useful business tool in assessing people for future employment – a **“long format job interview”**. They are part of our flexible approach to recruitment and training in order to attract and retain good people.
- ❑ We also have a social responsibility in offering opportunities for young people to gain some experience of real work.

Designing work placements of the future

The T-level combination of a robust qualification - “it needs to be tough enough that they actually have to actively pass it” – with an extended period of work placement could be very beneficial on all sides. T levels could certainly be useful as a pathway to apprenticeships and could somehow contribute to an ‘accelerated apprenticeship’.

But bear in mind that only some parts of the business are suitable for placements – depot and warehouse. It would be hard to create meaningful roles elsewhere in the business. For example, 16-18 year olds won’t be allowed on site-based work because of the anti-social hours and the working time directive.

A robust T level qualification including extended work placement could be beneficial to all

Find out more

HMG Paints on work placement

What works well?

John Falder, Managing Director of HMG Paints Ltd, shares his insights on effective T level work placements.

Current experience

John's family-run company develops and produces paints for the automotive and other sectors. He has 180 staff working in labs, production and various back office support functions.

He has had school pupils on work experience for some years. Groups of eight 14-year-olds visit every Friday for 30 weeks and rotate around five departments. Pupils go through a rigorous and competitive application procedure including a range of aptitude tests and a presentation.

Seven out of eight pupils have found work experience "transformative".

Why host students?

John says:

- ❑ Work placements attract a younger generation into the industry, ten years earlier than would normally happen.
- ❑ We give structured and challenging tasks which contribute to the work of the business and thus helps to create future work opportunities.

Find out
more

What would work well in future?

Block placements would work better than day release because they enable projects to flow through to a conclusion and make an impact on the business. So students' timetables would need to be coordinated with the business'. Ideally students would be slightly older than John has at present (ie 16-19 like with T levels rather than 14-16 year olds). Groups of 3-4 students at a time would mean 10-12 over the course of a year. It will always be difficult placing students in the production area because of the many hi-tech machines; health and safety is a huge concern.

Staff would work with the students on a one-to-one basis, mentored by senior people in the relevant department. This inculcates mature behaviours as they are out of their peer group.

"We give structured and challenging tasks which contribute to the work of the business"

MBKB Training - Designing T level work placements for success



Mark Bremner, Managing Director of MBKB Training, explains his thinking on T levels.

About MBKB Training

The company has 350 learners, almost all apprentices and 100 of whom are 16-19 year olds. Historically specialising in Early Years, the company has recently diversified into other sectors including Digital, so they already deliver learning in two of the first T levels pathways due to be launched in 2020.

In the past, Disclosure and Barring Service clearance has always been the main issue that employers want addressed before agreeing to take a learner on a work placement (even though no worker unqualified at Level 3 in Early Years can legally work unsupervised).

Find out
more

Perspectives on T level work placements

- ❑ **The right delivery model?** – The preferred delivery model for MBKB Training is one day a week on the employers' sites, so spread over the two years to help enable their mapping of development and progress. A month to month rota would ensure coverage of different tasks, skills and experiences. "The danger of doing a block is that the learner is treated as free labour" says Mark. From the employer, Mark suggested having a project that is work-based, relevant and valuable. Something starting as research and ending with delivery of something that makes a difference to the employer.
- ❑ **Enough employers?** – Whether there will be 180,000 employers willing to participate is a difficult question, according to Mark. It may be asking too much on the back of the new apprenticeship levy for large employers and SMEs contributing financially where previously they did not. "I don't think it is an easy sell because it is a brand new route, another set of qualifications, and people have been fully absorbed by getting their heads around apprenticeship reforms over the last few years".
- ❑ **Moving forward?** – For Mark's company, the next steps are to consider feedback from external consultations including by the DfE and watch for even more things changing with post-16 funding. Until they know the precise details of funding rules and regulations they won't go forward with T levels. Typical of many independent training providers, Mark says "we have an eye on it, are proactive and can move quickly when needed".

PM Training – designing work placements for success

Here, Staffordshire-based PM Training, part of Aspire Group housing association, share their extensive expertise on successful work placement design for policy-makers and others.

Like many training companies, PM Training recognises that T levels will change the complexion and nature of opportunities for young people. Also, they feel that they have a very successful model which could be used in collaboration with others on the delivery of T-levels. However, the right design and support is needed to make the new qualification attractive to Training providers, learners and employers alike:

- ❑ The introduction of T levels (which will be Level 3 only) could affect the perception of Level 2 qualifications and the social mobility of lower attainment learners, where L2 is the appropriate level of study and limit their progression and further the take up of L3 apprenticeships. The Transition Offer is unclear and more narrowly defined than it might be, focusing on English and maths as opposed to addressing wider barriers to access to further learning and employment.
- ❑ Employers will need a lot of support with T level work placements and at this stage (April 2018). PM Training, as most ILPs have extensive links with employers, but to date these links do not appear to have been considered
- ❑ There needs to be flexibility and breadth to T-level content to make them attractive and not narrow down learners' options too early. If work experience can be wedded directly to the occupation being studied then that is good, but does not feel a necessity – the necessity is the quality of the work experience that gives an understanding in the requirements of a working environment. Experience of work and work environments builds the behaviours and emotional intelligence that makes a positive contribution to an employer.
- ❑ The 45-60 day period is a big commitment for employers. Extended periods of work experience such as this are positive but employers will need a lot of support, particularly in how to structure a worthwhile work placement and what it should contain. For example, placements in the Construction industry will have a lot of constraints imposed, so the content of the work placement has to be both realistic in terms of what can be done and must fit with the employer's work patterns and workload.

Find out
more



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cityandguilds.com



LITC Training (London) - Designing T level work placements for success



Based in inner city London, LITC provides training opportunities to young people facing multiple barriers to employment.

Successful experiences for disadvantaged young people

LITC is a small organisation that uses sport and other outreach activities to engage young people facing multiple disadvantage in inner London in society and the economy.

There's a "massive reluctance of employers" to offer opportunities to young people previously excluded from school or not in any form of education or training explains Alice, Head of Work-based Learning. However, "99% of the time work placements go well, expectations are often so low and people are often pleased".

Find out more

Participation in T levels

- ❑ **Serving employers and learners** – The structure of T level work placements would reassure employers that Training providers will be there if anything should go wrong or they need support. This makes them attractive to LITC. Working with SMEs is much easier than large companies for this provider because "you usually have the owner present and they buy fully into the ethos and mission". Some young people are reluctant to access opportunities in industries perceived less desirable but with Brexit the opportunities are huge for people to start at entry level and go up to a very high level in these sectors.
- ❑ **Continuing successful practices** – Flexibility is needed in where work placements are positioned in the two year course, and a taster near the very beginning would be useful. Also, LITC's learners have fed back that they won't be able to take time off their paid work for unpaid T level work placements. LITC would want to be able to continue operating as an informal recruitment agency, a particularly important part of their role. They also want to continue their success in arranging several one-day work experience tasters for each learner with local Construction, Hospitality and other employers with whom they have particularly good relations
- ❑ **Where the expertise lies** – Work placements have historically come from Independent Training providers and the Voluntary and Community Sector in the local area served by LITC. Organisations like ours with experience and expertise of work placements may find two-year full time programmes challenging, making partnering a real possibility.
- ❑ **Risk and reward** – At the moment, planning and development activity for participation in T levels is "a massive risk", there is "absolute uncertainty".

Large Training Provider - Designing T level work placements for success



This case study features views from one of the UK's largest training companies.

Training provider: large sized

What might the T level learner market be?

The type of learner suited to doing a T level has academic capability at Level 3 but is not ready for the world of work without additional skills and workplace behaviours. T level candidates could be apprenticeship drop-outs, too.

Up to a sixth of its 16-19 year old learners may be routed to T levels in future, ie divergence from other programmes. It isn't yet known whether or not T levels would lead to additional learners, too, ie growth.

T levels will widen the remit of what the company can offer to learners.

Find out more

Training provider responses to T levels

- ❑ **Seeing the opportunities and acting swiftly** – See what's coming as an opportunity and work quickly to understand that and provide even better opportunities for our learners.
- ❑ **Sector coverage** – This provider was planning to do the whole of T levels in sectors in which they have experience and to use their experience in employer engagement nationally to support other training providers/partners in effective work placements in other sectors.
- ❑ **Ready for so-called 'millennials'** – Training providers can help the current generation of 16-19 year olds to change their behaviours when going into a workplace for first time so that they meet employers' expectations. For example, punctuality and no mobile phones on the table, behaviours suited to serious environments such as in accountancy firms. Employers need educating about the 'millennials' too.
- ❑ **Travel expenses** – Cost of travel is a real issue, it limits opportunities of where 16-19s can go.
- ❑ **Learning priorities** – Career progression is supported by real life work experience. This means putting skills and behaviours and theory learnt in the classroom into practice. Also, learning new social and communications skills from interacting with employees.
- ❑ **Good practice continues** – The main ingredients of successful work placements are unlikely to change: strong employer engagement, initial assessment and progression record, continuous communication between all parties, focus on keeping learning behaviours, skills and applying knowledge 'on track'.



SEN Training Provider - Designing T level work placements for success



Here, a manager from an independent training provider with a strong track record in supporting disadvantaged young people shares their views and experience.

Why get involved in T level work placements?

This training provider delivers Study Programmes for 16-18 year olds and learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, concentrating on disadvantaged youth. They also co-ordinate and manage around 600 work experience placements at Key Stage 4 pupils.

Work placements are seen as important in allowing learners to understand and demonstrate work readiness to employers. Heavily academic qualifications don't engage the type of learner that they work with. The employers that they work with value qualifications because they show commitment and workplace behaviours rather than because the occupational skills content is inherently valuable.

This provider would like to be involved in T level work placements from an early stage.

Find out more

Reflections on policy design and support

- ❑ It will be a hard task for employers to deliver sufficient high quality work placements to meet likely T level demand. Indeed “employers are the crutch of the education system”. At present, large and small employers do similar numbers of placements, though large ones ‘tend’ students better because they have more available resource.
- ❑ Employers are looking for programmes that can be made to fit their business cycle. 16-19 Training providers will need to be offered on something other than a standard academic timetable.
- ❑ The time-served element of 45-60 days is less important than ensuring it is well-spent – “50 days of a poor experience wouldn't benefit anyone.”
- ❑ Some form of formal employer Support Programme would be very valuable, particularly if it trained employees in mentoring because employers would see value in this beyond just making them able to accommodate work placement.