



The National Employer Skills Survey

This is a very large and thorough survey providing detailed information about employers' recruitment problems, experience of skill gaps and engagement in training at national, regional and local level. It is used for drawing up plans and contracts for skills provision at local and regional level. At national level the results have been used by the Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) to inform the national skills strategy. They have developed such schemes as; Employer Training Pilots, which offer free training to employees and compensation to employers for the time employees take off work to train. This has now been rolled out nationally into [Train To Gain](#).

The South West Experience

A South West analysis of the 2005 survey has recently been commissioned by SLIM and is available on their website at;

<http://www.swslim.org.uk/research/slim-reports.asp#ness05>

I spoke to researchers in the Learning and Skills Councils about how they use the NESS, what are the most useful questions, what are the problems with it and what questions would they like to add;

In the South West people's experience is generally that the NESS is a welcome source of information for planning, and the time series is useful. It is fairly broad brush, but gives a good overview of the direction for planning. There is not really enough detail at local level so most Learning and Skills Councils do supplementary research to get the real picture locally. They also re-analyse the raw data for their own needs, such as carrying out a sector analyses. But the trick is then how does the need then translate into provision. The results will be given to the college managers and then this informs the contracting with the LSCs (what the LSCs buy).

The most useful questions are those to do with vacancies where there are skills shortages and where there are internal skills gaps. Also those about whether or not the training providers have been in contact with the employers.

There are problems translating the information about skills requirements into qualifications. Skills do not necessarily translate into qualifications. This is currently a problem because government targets are generally linked to qualifications.

We are asking the employers what they need and they are not always good at articulating this. For smaller employers it is much harder to define what they need as they are usually running day to day and managing with what they have. There is no information on specific qualifications

They would like to add questions that ask, if the training they require is not available, what is it that they require? We would like to know why they are not buying publicly funded provision, what are they lacking?

The reports and questionnaires are available at the Learning and Skills Council website at;

http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/Research/LSCcommissionedresearch/ness05_main-report.htm

