



Improving business skills in the early years and childcare sector

**Final evaluation report to 4Children and the
Department for Education**

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Executive Summary

Background

In January 2011, 4Children, the Office for Public Management (OPM) and the Social Investment Business submitted a partnership bid to the Department for Education (DfE) and received funding as part of the Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families Grant.

The grant funding was to support a programme for improving business skills in the early years and childcare sector, which has been delivered by 4Children and independently evaluated by OPM. This report presents the final evaluation findings.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation is formative and summative; formative in the sense that it captures learning from the process of implementation to feed into design of the programme as it progresses, and summative in that it establishes the impact of the programme on a range of beneficiaries.

The evaluation is also theory-driven and has used a 'pathways to outcomes' logic model as an analytical framework to track how the programme works and the impacts of different activities; this model has been adapted over time (to reflect process learning that has emerged) and is presented in the main body of this report.

The pathways to outcomes model follows the three main strands of work associated with the 4Children business skills programme. In alignment with these, the evaluation has aimed to test the following programme assumptions or hypotheses:

- 1) Delivering training sessions for childcare and early years providers is an effective method of ensuring impact on the way providers run their business.
- 2) A local business champion is an effective way of providing support to childcare and early years businesses in a local area.
- 3) Online resources and an online self audit tool is an effective way of reaching childcare and early years providers and communicating information to them.

Our approach has involved capturing both primary and secondary evidence in several stages of activity, spread over the two-year funding period. The table below briefly summarises these activities against the three hypotheses.

Overview of evaluation activities:

Purpose/ hypothesis being tested	Evaluation activity
Formative research used to develop the programme	Scoping research, including primary work with providers and an evidence review.
	Scoping stage of evaluation, including development of pathways to outcomes model.
Hypothesis 1	Evaluation questionnaires at the training sessions designed to collect

Purpose/ hypothesis being tested	Evaluation activity
	<p>'baseline' data compared to 'post-training' data on knowledge and skills. These provide insight into the immediate impact, as well as process learning.</p> <p>Follow-interviews with providers that attended training sessions. These explore to what extent the training has resulted in lasting knowledge and skills.</p>
Hypothesis 2	<p>Interviews with business champions to evaluate training. These generated process learning about the business champion training programme.</p> <p>Case studies with business champions and providers to explore the effectiveness of the champion role.</p>
Hypothesis 3	Analysis of self-audit tool data and 4Children Business Skills webpage

Summary of findings

Delivering training sessions for childcare and early years providers is an effective method of ensuring impact on the way providers run their business

Evidence from evaluation forms used to assess the **immediate impact** of the training sessions suggests that the process of attending the training enabled providers to gain new knowledge on business management topics, and that also they became more aware of their existing knowledge and practice, enhancing their confidence.

Providers who were new to their roles or that had not previously attended business training particularly benefited from the sessions, learning new knowledge and skills. Providers who had more experience or had attended previous business training benefited from filling gaps in their knowledge, by refreshing their existing skills and by increasing their confidence as the sessions validated their current practice.

Qualitative research with providers shows that the training also broadly met the expectations of participants even **in the longer term**. Providers described how the sessions served as an excellent introduction to new subjects and those who were looking to fill gaps in knowledge similarly described ways in which they picked up new ideas or tips.

Providers have put the knowledge and skills into practice since the training in various ways depending on their level of experience prior to the sessions, from implementing small adjustments to their ways of working to whole-scale change. Some examples include: developing strategies around expenses and allowances, responding to legal issues around recruitment, adapting to a social enterprise business model, reviewing roles and legal responsibilities, thinking through the EYFS framework and partnership relationships e.g. with Ofsted, and developing new ways of managing finances and taxation.

Overall the evidence suggests that this strand of the programme has improved the business knowledge and skills for those providers that attended, and that **providing training in this way can be highly effective**; however securing outcomes in the longer term depends on the disposition of the provider (in developing their practice), as well as the provision of other

forms of support to enable them to embed the learning, such as those provided through the other strands of the programme.

A local business champion is an effective way of providing support to childcare and early years businesses in a local area

As part of the programme 4Children have delivered free training aimed at Local Authority and other staff involved in supporting early years and childcare providers (this has also included individuals providing this support in a voluntary capacity or as childcare providers themselves). The training has been delivered to 94 participants, giving them the chance to become '**business champions**'; acting as a local resource for providers in developing their businesses and sustainability.

On the whole the business champions have found the programme to have a large impact upon their work. Champions that are involved with local authorities in a business support role have greatly valued the opportunity to enhance their existing knowledge and skills, as well as their confidence.

For business champions that are new to the role and those with more experience, the programme has been useful for preparing them to work directly with providers, providing new tools and techniques, as well as coaching and influencing skills. The programme has also been experienced as an opportunity to network and update practice; such opportunities are particularly valuable given cutbacks within many organisations in recent years.

Champions have been working with providers to **put the learning into practice** in various ways: through direct or planned support; through routine monitoring visits (for example by introducing health check processes) and when providing ad hoc or light touch advice and support. For providers, the support from the business champions is highly valued; this is not only because of their business knowledge and expertise, but more significantly because of their specific skills in tailoring this knowledge to meet the needs of the sector.

Overall there was a strong message that generic business support is inadequate because of the many complexities facing childcare businesses, including vulnerability to local demographic pressures, government legislation, regulatory processes, and a relatively low baseline level of business skills. The support from the business champion has therefore been particularly important for supporting business through difficult times, and is perceived overall by providers as a **highly effective way** of enhancing their business knowledge and skills.

At present much of the business support available is being provided through local authority services (although there are some independent and voluntary sector champions) but the wider economic and political context means that this landscape is currently changing. What is clear from the evaluation is that in order to **maximise the impact of this programme and embed the learning**, champions need to be supported to maintain their knowledge and skills, to gain recognition for them, and to continue to develop them further. The qualification attached to the programme through the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and networking opportunities are key ways in which the champions are being enabled to do this.

Online resources and an online self audit tool is an effective way of reaching childcare and early years providers and communicating information to them

The 4Children business skills webpage and self-audit tool have enabled providers to look at how they are currently managing their businesses and identify ways in which they can make improvements (as well as what they are doing well). Qualitative evidence shows that providers that have used the tool have found it to be an effective way of **increasing their**

self-awareness and there is some evidence of the success of the resources in enhancing providers' knowledge and awareness both through the case study findings and the scoring data from the tool.

Due to the timescales of the programme it is not at this stage possible to assess the extent to which this knowledge has been put into practice or led to a longer-term improvement to business knowledge and skills. However evidence shows that overall the online resources are **gaining momentum** as valued resources within the sector, and that key to this has been promotional work within the sector

The current economic context means that online resources are becoming increasingly useful as a way of providing cost effective information and support, and therefore of building capacity (business knowledge and skills) in the childcare sector. There is, however, work needed to improve access to such resources, particularly where providers face barriers such as time, capacity and technological issues. Direct support, for example from the business champions, is perceived as beneficial in **building the confidence and abilities** of providers to use online resources and to overcome such barriers.

For those providers that have used the online resources there is evidence that they have been effective, but there are many other providers that are yet to use the resource, and these are potentially some of those that would benefit the most from enhanced business knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

For all three strands of the business skills programme there is evidence of an improvement in the knowledge, skills and confidence of providers working within the childcare sector. For the training sessions and the online resources, this evidence largely relates to an **immediate impact** but there is also some evidence of **longer term outcomes**, for example where providers that attended the training sessions have made changes to their practice as a result.

The role of the local business champion has been a particularly effective strand of the programme in terms of the reported impact for providers. The champions are an essential source of business knowledge, supporting providers at different stages of the business development cycle. Many of the business champions were already working in this type of role, but overall the 4Children business skills programme has led to **enhancements to their practice**, increasing their own knowledge and expertise, and therefore potentially improving their roles as a mechanism for improving business management within the sector as a whole.

Although it is 'early days' the emerging evidence of impact suggests that the programme has made progress towards the overarching aim of building a sustainable resource for improving business skills within the sector, and the outcomes achieved by each strand of work are likely to having a cumulative impact on the sector as a whole in the longer term.

Background

In January 2011, 4Children, the Office for Public Management (OPM) and the Social Investment Business submitted a successful partnership bid to receive grant funding from the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families Grant.

The grant funding was to support a programme for improving business skills in the early years and childcare sector, which has been delivered by 4Children and independently evaluated by OPM. This report presents the final evaluation findings based on primary and secondary research conducted between December 2010 and February 2013.

Context for the programme

Under the Coalition Government, national policy for the early years sector has centred on a vision for “*a family-friendly environment for all children to grow up in, where families are welcomed and supported, children are safe, and childhood is celebrated and enjoyed*”¹. This aligns with an enhanced focus on the critical role of early years care in supporting families with different needs, and in securing positive health and educational outcomes in the short and long term².

The Department for Education has therefore introduced a number of policies in recent years affecting different types of childcare provider, including nurseries and children’s centres. This includes reforming the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework to reduce bureaucracy, simplify the age five assessment and promote the three key areas of learning for children’s development.

Other policies have prioritised nursery provision in disadvantaged areas, for example from September 2013 disadvantaged two year olds will be legally entitled to free early years education, and there are also plans for children’s centre provision to change³. Support has been provided through the Early Intervention Grant (EIG), and the DfE Business Plan prioritises building capacity within the voluntary and community sector in delivering children’s centre provision⁴.

In the last three years these policy changes have also coincided with an increased recognition that business skills need to be a key priority for providers, particularly due to the impact of the recession on the sector. Specific issues associated with the economic climate include:

- **pressures on occupancy levels due to unemployment levels:** as people become unemployed, they are more likely to stay at home to look after their children and will not spend additional income on child care;

¹ Department for Education (2012) ‘Families in the Foundation Years’, available [here](#) (last accessed 28.02.13)

² Ibid.

³ Department for Education (2012) ‘Sure Start Children’s Centres’ General article, available [here](#), accessed 04/10/12

⁴ Department for Education (2012) ‘Business Plan 2011-2015’ available [here](#) (last accessed 28.02.13)

- **debt increases:** as more parents are unable to pay nursery fees, providers have to incur bad debts;
- **the increase in VAT at the beginning of 2012:** for some early years and childcare providers this has led to a need to increase fees or to bear the cost themselves; and
- **cost pressures:** parents may opt for more part-time care rather than full time due to costs and more availability to look after their children at home

In response to these issues, and to support providers in developing their resilience to the recession, 4Children developed a programme for embedding business skills in the sector, and partnered with OPM and the Social Investment Business to gain DfE funding for the project.

Improving business skills in the early years and childcare sector

The 4Children business development programme has been rolled out over the course of two years (2011 – 2013) and has aimed to:

- develop an online hub of best practice resources for business skills to meet industry needs, drawing on evidence of what works;
- disseminate information about the hub and resources through the 4Children current and planned networks, business improvement bodies and lead industry bodies; and
- train 100 Business Champions to drive business improvement, each chosen for their ability to drive business improvement in the early years sector at a local level targeting disadvantaged areas.

As specified by the Department for Education, the four early years and childcare provider groups that the programme has focused on are: childminders, nursery and pre- schools, children's centres, and out of school and holiday clubs.

OPM were asked to carry out the initial research to inform the design and content of the rest of the programme. The research was conducted over a three month period from May to July 2011 in England and involved primary research with 636 providers. The findings of this scoping research have already reported and are separate to the evaluation.

Wider context and ongoing changes impacting on the programme

Throughout the roll-out period and as the programme has developed there have been several key drivers affecting the early years and educational sector, and public service provision more widely. The economic downturn has had a significant impact; across the country local authorities have experienced major funding restrictions, and in many locations these are so severe that they have led to extensive re-structuring or in some areas a complete overhaul of the purpose, scope and delivery of services.

Local authorities in many areas are in the position of having to radically re-think their entire businesses, and this has impacted on the programme in several key ways: it has made some local authorities reluctant to release staff time to participate in the programme, and it has meant that some of the business champions that work for local authorities have found that their roles have changed (or in some cases been lost) since the training. These developments will continue to impact on the sector and therefore on the extent to which the programme can achieve outcomes over the longer-term. As part of the evaluation we have therefore tried to identify some of the key ways in which the learning can be embedded and sustained, and these are reflected on throughout this report.

Evaluating the programme

Aims of the evaluation

The evaluation has worked to test out the following three programme hypotheses:

- 1) Delivering training sessions for childcare and early years providers is an effective method of ensuring impact on the way providers run their business;
- 2) A local business champion is an effective way of providing support to childcare and early years businesses in a local area;
- 3) Online resources and an online self audit tool is an effective way of reaching childcare and early years providers and communicating information to them.

The evaluation methods are couched within a theory-driven approach through the development of a 'pathways to outcome' logic model, presented in figure 1.

Evaluation theory and approach

Prior to the start of the delivery of the programme, OPM undertook a series of scoping activities with the aim of providing a clearer understanding of the context of the programme and to gain evidence to inform the focus and content of the 4Children training. This included interviews with stakeholders involved in the early years sector, an online survey and focus groups with childcare providers (childminders, nursery and pre- schools, children's centres, and out of school and holiday clubs). Whilst not strictly part of the evaluation, these activities directly informed the design of 4Children's programme.

We also completed an evidence review of relevant literature about the childcare market including its size, how it is funded, any difference between private and voluntary sector providers and the rate of business closure. The review considered what business skills and support already existed, and identified the potential barriers to providers in the sector when trying to access these.

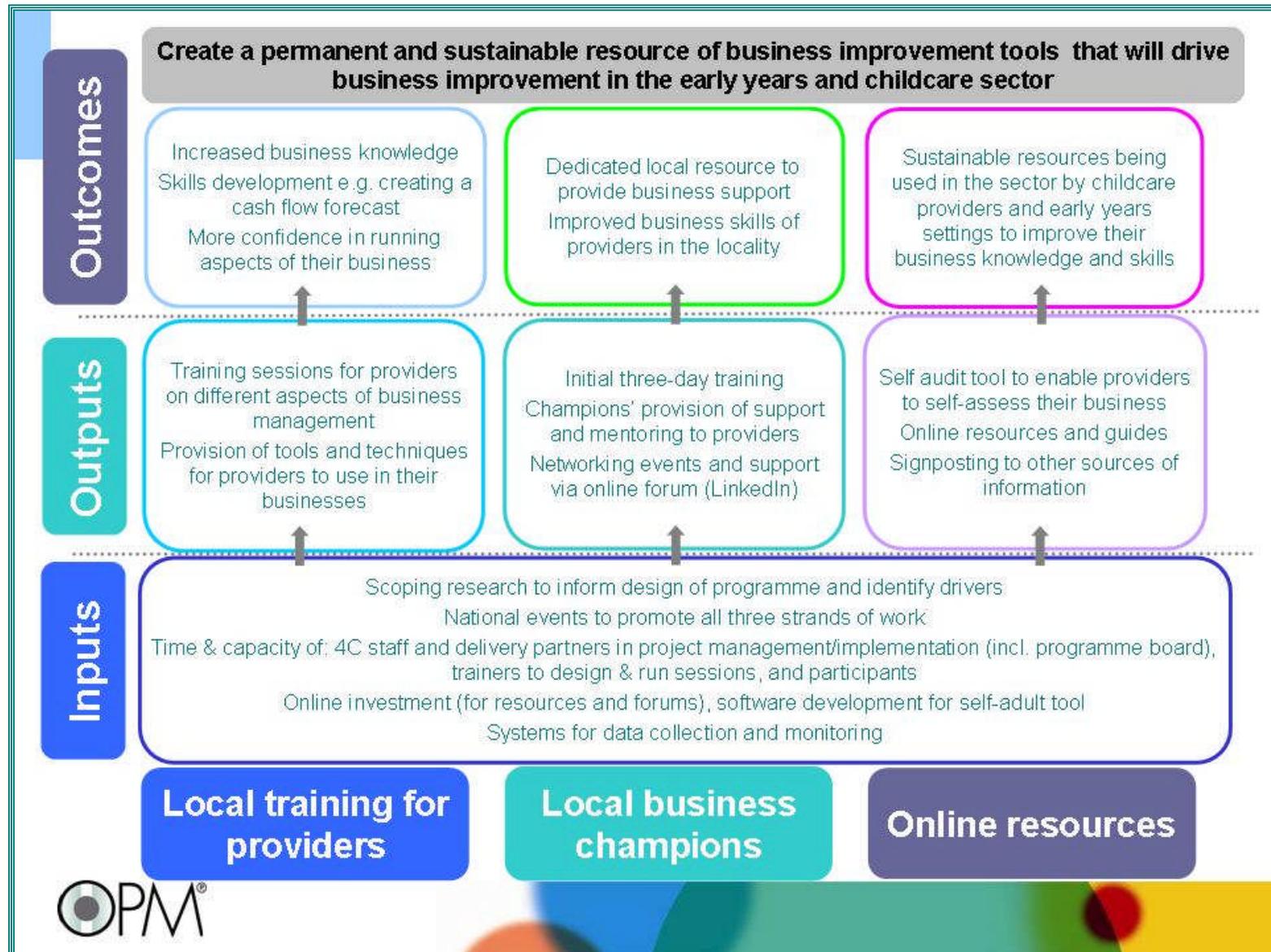
The findings from the scoping phase were reported to 4Children and the DfE in November 2011 and used to inform the types of support and design of the programme.

Pathways to outcome logic model

Drawing upon this scoping research, the first stage of the evaluation involved developing a 'pathways to outcome' logic model which breaks down the key inputs, activities/outputs and outcomes relating to the improving business skills in the early years and childcare activities. Once the different steps of a programme are mapped out it is possible to formulate hypotheses of why certain inputs and activities might lead to certain short and longer term outcomes.

This logic model formed an iterative part of the evaluation and has been adapted over time (to reflect process learning that has emerged throughout the evaluation). The model has also subsequently been used throughout the evaluation to guide data collection and analysis. An image of the final version of the programme logic model is displayed below (figure 1).

Figure 1: Final evaluation



Change mechanisms

The pathways to outcomes logic model is underpinned by a series of assumptions, otherwise known as 'change mechanisms'. These assumptions provide the logic of the model and help explain why a series of activities are expected to lead to certain specific impacts. They also help us test at a more detailed level the three main hypotheses underpinning this evaluation as outlined earlier. The change mechanisms relating to the three different programme strands are described below in more detail.

A) Local training for childcare providers

- The process of attending training will enable providers to gain new knowledge on business management topics;
- The training will enable providers to become more aware of their existing knowledge and practices, enhancing their confidence;
- The process of attending training and undertaking specific projects allows for providers to reflect on how to improve their own business skills;
- By attending training on specific topics childcare providers obtain skills development tailored to their own needs;
- The process of attending stakeholder events will mean that providers meet with others in the local area and share good practice, increase their business knowledge.

B) Local business champions

- The role of the business champion will ensure that local childcare professionals are created to train and support local businesses;
- They will develop partnerships with trainers and key bodies in the local area and aim to develop the business skills of those in most need. The process of developing local partnerships will contribute towards creating long term sustainability;
- By training up local childcare professionals a network of childcare professionals will be created, improving the business skills of providers in that locality.

C) Online resources

- By using the self audit and other web tools childcare providers should increase their business knowledge as they'll have a way of measuring how and where to improve;
- The process of using a self audit web tool provides a benchmark for the childcare providers to work with.

Whole programme:

- By planning and undertaking projects to improve their business, receiving personalised support/supervision from a local business champion and accessing online tools and on-going mentoring sessions childcare providers will increase their ability, knowledge and confidence in running their businesses.

Evaluation methods

The evaluation has involved several stages of activity, spread over the two-year funding period. These activities were guided by the logic model and designed to gather relevant evidence with which to test the three main hypothesis – and attendant change mechanisms - identified.

The below table summarises the fieldwork activities and what they were designed to measure, followed by a detailed description of each of the specific methods.

Table 1: Overview of the evaluation activities

Purpose/ hypothesis being tested	Evaluation activity	Time period
Formative research to develop the programme and evaluation design	Scoping research, including primary work with providers and an evidence review	May 2011 - July 2011, reported in October 2011
	Scoping stage of evaluation, including development of pathways to outcomes model	November 2011 - January 2012
Hypothesis 1: Training for childcare providers	Evaluation questionnaires at the training sessions designed to collect 'baseline' data compared to 'post-training' data on knowledge and skills. These provided insight into the immediate impact, as well as process learning.	Two waves: February 2012 - April 2012 September 2012 - January 2013
	Follow-up interviews with providers that attended training sessions (n=15). These explored to what extent the training resulted in lasting knowledge and skills.	September 2012 - January 2013
Hypothesis 2: Local business champions	Interviews with business champions to evaluate training they attended (n=8). These generated process learning about the effectiveness of the business champion training programme as support for the role.	June - July 2012
	Case studies with business champions and providers to explore the effectiveness of the champion role and whether having a local resource is the most helpful way of providing business skills support (n=10).	November 2012 - February 2013
Hypothesis 3: Online resources	Analysis of self-audit tool data and business skills webpage usage to measure the extent to which the online resources have been used by providers.	February 2013

We now describe each of these activities and how they test the three hypotheses in more depth.

Hypothesis 1: Assessing the local training for childcare providers

Evaluation questionnaires from training sessions

4Children have delivered two main waves of training sessions across England to the four provider groups as part of the Programme: nurseries and pre-schools, childminders, children's centres and out of school clubs. The provider groups were trained on different elements of business skills, based on the areas of need identified in the pre-programme scoping research. The sessions are summarised in the table below; the evaluation forms for 20 training sessions have been analysed and the findings for each one are presented in Appendix 1.

In addition to these sessions, 4Children have delivered a number of networking events for the business champions and providers on key topics such as 'Getting It Right Legally'. The evaluation forms were not analysed for these sessions, but evidence on their effectiveness is reported on in the findings section on the local business champions (from the case study interviews).

4Children have also delivered a number of training sessions for specific local authorities, but these are not included in as they were not funded as part of the programme.

Table 2: 4Children training events for providers

Wave	Type of provider	Course	Location
Wave 1: Sessions delivered between February and March 2012	Nurseries	Financial planning and management	Bromley
		Marketing and sales	Brent
	Children's centres	Pathways for Community Development	Knowsley
	Childminders	Financial planning and management	York Westminster
		Developing professional relationships with parents	Walsall
	Out of school clubs	Financial management	Stockton
		Employment Law	Telford
	Pre- schools	Effective committees	Wiltshire
Managing employees		Swindon	
Wave 2: Sessions delivered between September 2012 and January 2013	Nurseries	Financial management	Medway
		Marketing and sales	Leicestershire Kent
	Children's centres	Pathways for Community Development	Sandwell
	Out of school clubs	Employment Law	Nottinghamshire Slough Derbyshire Essex

Wave	Type of provider	Course	Location
		Managing employees	Redbridge
	Pre- schools	Effective committees	Bromley

We provided the evaluation questionnaires (designed in collaboration with 4Children and the trainers). They were disseminated directly at the training sessions in hard copy form, and then sent to OPM by post. The forms all followed the same format, with sections to be completed before and after the training.

The 'before' section was designed to capture background information about participants, and to assess their confidence in their knowledge and skills relating to the topics covered in the training (acting as a 'baseline'). The 'after' section was designed to gain process learning about participant's experiences of the training, and to re-assess confidence levels in the same topics to compare to the baseline data. One example of one of these questionnaires is contained in Appendix 2. The findings from these training sessions are reported in this report, with supporting information contained in the Appendix.

Follow up interviews with providers

We conducted 15 follow-up telephone interviews with providers that attended one of the 10 training sessions run in February and March 2012. The interviews aimed to find out about the extent to which the knowledge, skills and confidence of the trainees have been impacted in the longer term, and how they have been using the business skills topics from the training in their daily work. We also captured process learning to understand the effectiveness of the training as a mechanism for improving business skills in the sector.

Table 3 summarises the profile of the number of interviewees for each training session/area.

Table 3: Profile of providers interviewed:

Type of provider	Training session attended	Number of interviews	Locations
Nurseries	Financial planning and management	1	Bromley
	Marketing and sales	1	Brent
Children's centres	Pathways for Community Development	2	Knowsley
Childminders	Financial planning and management	3	Westminster
		2	York
Out of school clubs	Employment Law	1	Telford
Pre- schools	Effective committees	3	Wiltshire
	Managing employees	2	Swindon

Hypothesis 2: Understanding the impact of local business champions

Business champion telephone interviews

In June and July 2012, we conducted 8 interviews from an equal number of participants across the two pilot training locations for business champions: London and Birmingham (n=4). The participants invited to take part were from different regions and roles in order to capture a range of experiences and perspectives. The interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide and all interviews were conducted by telephone. The findings from these interviews are reviewed in this report and copy of the guide can be found in Appendix 3. Table 4 summarises the profile of the locations and roles within each area, but without identifying individual participants.

Table 4: Profile of Business Champions interviewed (pilot cohorts)

Region attended training	Number of interviews	Locations	Roles
Birmingham	4	Warwickshire, Shropshire, Telford, Leicestershire	Business Development Advisor, Development Officer, Business Consultant
London	4	Hammersmith & Fulham, Bromley, Brighton, Brent	Development Officer, Business Manager, Business Support Officer

Case studies

We conducted case studies with business champions and providers between November 2012 and February 2013. These involved a mixture of phone and face-to-face interviews, and aimed to investigate the business skills support champions are providing, their experiences and the impact on the providers. A copy of the interview guide is provided in Appendix 4.

The case study sample was drawn from all of the 100 business champions trained as part of the programme; we sent out an open invitation for participants and tried to select a range from different cohorts, regions and roles. All of the champions involved work for local authorities; the vast majority of those trained do so and we were unable to gain participation from any voluntary sector providers. Table 5 summarises the profile of the participants, but without identifying individuals. The findings from the case studies are reviewed in this report.

Table 5: Profile of case study participants (champions and providers):

Cohort	Champions			Providers	
	Region attended training	No. of champion interviews	Roles	No. of provider interviews	Roles
1	London	1	Coordinator Grants & Business Support	2	Nursery Manager, Nursery Owner
2	Birmingham	3	Early Years & Childcare Development Officer, Business Support Officer Business & Finance	5	Pre-school Chair, Treasurer, Pre-school Owners

Cohort	Champions			Providers	
	Region attended training	No. of champion interviews	Roles	No. of provider interviews	Roles
			Manager		
4	London	2	Business Development Strategy Manager, EIG Revenue Manager	1	Nursery Owner
5	London	1	Childcare Sufficiency Manager	1	Pre-school Owner
6	Leeds	2	Senior Finance Officer, Quality and Development Officer	2	Pre-school treasurer, Pre-school/out of school club manager
8	London	1	Childcare Development and Business Support Worker	1	Nursery Manager
Total:		10	Total:	12	

Hypothesis 3: Measuring the use of online resources

We have received usage data directly from 4Children on the number of submissions to their online self-audit tool, which enables providers to undertake a 'health check' of their businesses and to identify areas for improvement. The online tool includes a series of closed questions (multiple choice) and providers are given an overall score based on their answers.

The raw data we have received covers the time period July 2012 to January 2013; we have analysed it to understand the reach of the tool (in terms of the number and type of providers responding) as well as the scores they are achieving.

In addition to this we analysed some evidence on the usage of the 4Children business skills website, which contains information and resources for providers on managing their businesses. This has also provided us with an understanding of the reach of the website and the extent to which it is being used. These findings are presented in this report, along with qualitative evidence from some of the other methods on the experience of using the online resources and how business champions have been disseminating information about the web tools to providers.

How to read this report

The findings sections below are structured according to the three hypotheses the evaluation is assessing which correspond three strands of the business skills programme. In each section we present the findings from the methods described above, including evidence on:

- the **immediate impact** of the programme activities, and whether they constitute an effective method for enhancing business knowledge across the sector;
- early evidence on the **longer term impact** of the programme; including any lasting changes in knowledge, skills and confidence, evidence of changes to practice and reported mechanisms that have led to sustaining these;
- **key learning** to inform future similar programmes.

Throughout the report we also reflect on embedding and sustaining impact for champions, providers and wider stakeholders.

Findings

1. Training for early years and childcare providers

As a result of the programme, childcare providers are expected to develop skills, increase their business knowledge and become more confident in running aspects of their business. The pathway to these outcomes – the resource invested and activities that happen which should lead to these impacts - is mapped out in the diagram below:

Fig.2: Logic model section for training for providers



As outlined in the previous section, the strands of the fieldwork designed to assess the effectiveness of the local training were:

- evaluation questionnaires delivered at 20 training sessions (from two waves: February 2011 and September 2012), with before and after ratings to assess immediate impact;
- follow-up interviews to assess the longer-term impact of the 4Children provider training sessions (n=15)

Key findings

- Providers who were new to their roles or had no previous experience of business skills training particularly benefitted from the sessions, learning new knowledge and skills and increasing in confidence.
- Providers who had more experience or previous training benefited from having gaps in their knowledge filled, by being able to refresh their existing knowledge and by increasing their confidence as the sessions validated their current practice.
- Providers have generally put the knowledge and skills into practice in various ways depending on their level of experience prior to the sessions, from implementing small changes in their ways of working to whole-scale change.

Getting involved in the training: context, aims and objectives

Providers heard about the training through different word of mouth routes, including through the local authority, Sure Start children's centres or via other contacts. Providers had a range of different existing business training and qualifications: for some this was their first training in this particular business area, others were refreshing their knowledge from training many years before and a third pool of interviewees had completed relevant training such as civil service training, NVQ Level 4 in business management and a diploma in management.

As providers' background and level of training and qualifications varied, their reasons for attending the courses also varied. Nonetheless, their aims and objectives fell into a number of broad categories:

- **A general overview of the subject:** For providers who were new to their roles they saw the training as an opportunity to get a broader introduction to the roles and responsibilities that they had to consider:

I went into the committee blind – I didn't really understand the full responsibility of being involved so I thought this would help me find out!

- **To fill a specific gap in knowledge:** For providers who had been in their roles for a longer period and who had had prior training in similar areas, they were often looking to fill specific gaps in their knowledge:

I wanted to know more about the legal position with regards to employment, advertising the job, application forms, all aspects of that.

- **To validate or update existing knowledge:** For other providers who had been in their roles for a longer period and who had prior training in similar areas, they used the training as a chance to refresh and update their knowledge, to either update their practice or validate the work they currently do.

When I saw it I thought it's something I'd not been on for a long time – something that could be useful.

- **To improve the business, find a competitive edge:** Other providers saw the training as an opportunity to support them during harder financial times, to make sure that they were working to HMRC standards or to help them stand out from competitors:

Because we're a small business I wanted to know if we could be offering anything new and to find out how to expand out visibly in the local community... I was hoping that this course would allow me to find that edge.

- **No expectations:** Finally, a small number of providers, generally those who were new to their roles, said they went to the training with an open mind, just to see whether it could be any use to themselves or their business in general. *'I wasn't sure what to expect!'*

Experiences of the 4Children training sessions

Event feedback forms included a quality rating scale so that participants could assess the training immediately after completing the course. Graph A below shows how participants rated each of the specific sessions and illustrates how well received the training was upon its completion: for 17 out of 20 of the sessions all (100%) of participants rated the quality of the training as 'good' or 'very good'. Only three sessions had any 'satisfactory' quality ratings but these were still low scores, with only one session having a 'satisfaction' rating of around 10%.

The provider interviews allowed participants the opportunity to reassess the quality of the sessions a period of time after the training. The interviews suggest that the training broadly met the expectations of participants even in the longer term. Providers who were looking for a general overview of the training described how the sessions served as an excellent introduction to the subjects and those who were looking to fill gaps in knowledge similarly described ways in which they picked up new ideas or tips.

It definitely met my expectations, I came out knowing much more and that's what I wanted'.

Providers who felt fully briefed about the training before they started described how it achieved those aims:

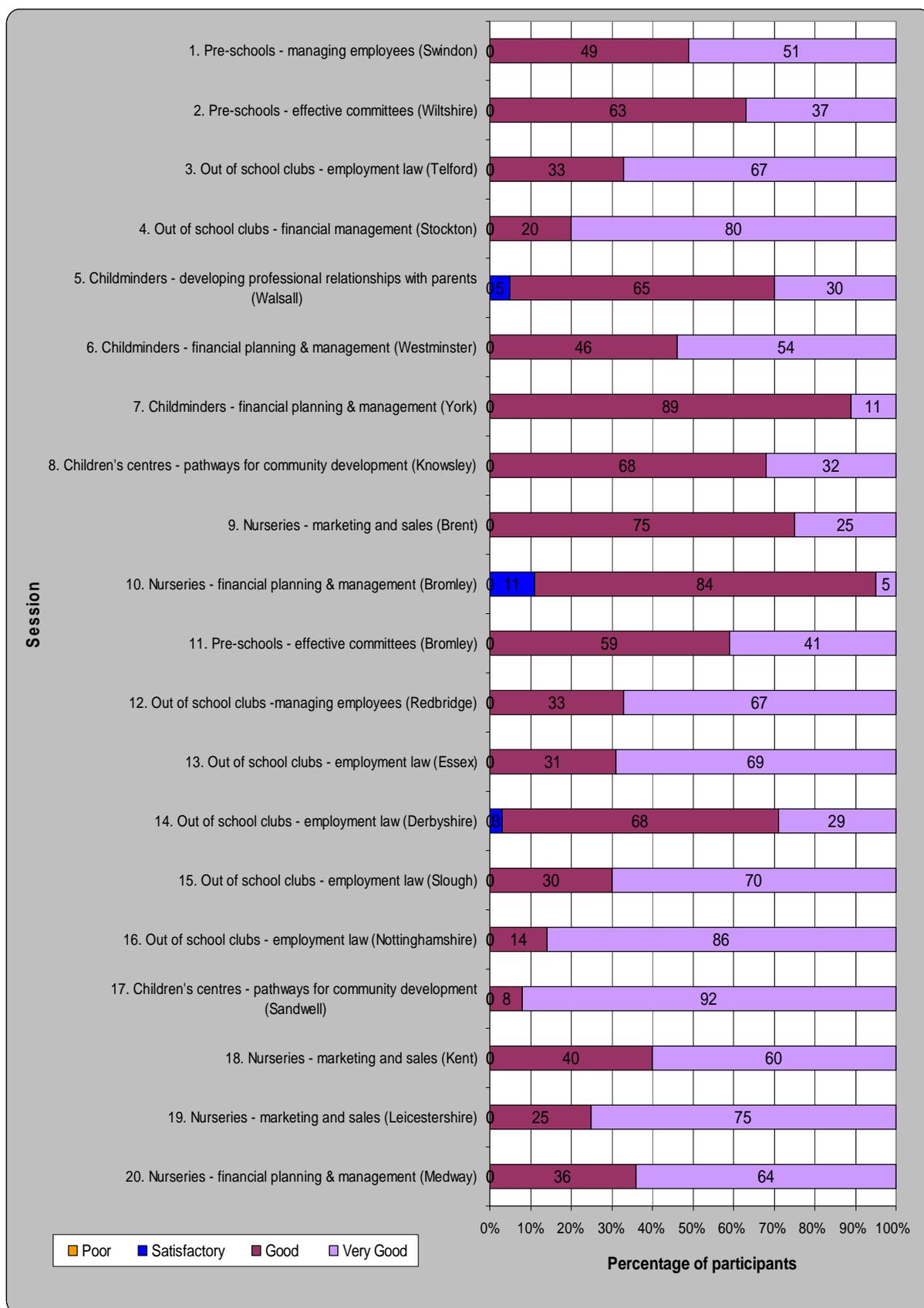
I'd say it lived up to my expectations... we had objectives beforehand about what it hoped to cover and then they asked if there was anything extra we wanted to cover and then covered that as well. It had everything that I needed to know.

Providers were more critical when they felt that the session was too general for their specific needs or that the mix of attendees varied a great deal in terms of their prior knowledge of the subject, making it difficult for the facilitator to pitch the 'level' of the training:

It's really important when designing these courses to ascertain where people are at in their knowledge base.

Providers broadly felt that sessions were tailored appropriately as an introduction to the subject, and that they benefited from this initial training even if it confirmed what they already knew. Nonetheless they offered recommendations about how to pitch more specific training in the future.

Graph A: Participant ratings of the quality of the training session (by session):



Impact on knowledge, awareness and skills

Participants were asked to rate their confidence in their knowledge and skills before and immediately after attending the training. Graph B below demonstrates significant increases in attendees' confidence in their knowledge and skills across all sessions. This suggests that the very process of attending the training enabled providers to gain new knowledge on business management topics, and that they became more aware of their existing knowledge and practice, which further enhanced their confidence.

The provider interviews are useful in adding some context to these figures as interviewees assessed the impact of the training on their knowledge, awareness and skills a period of time after the training. Interviewees are generally positive about the impact of the sessions in the longer term and how they increased their confidence or became more conscious of their existing knowledge as a result of the training.

The extent to which providers learnt new things depended largely on their levels of experience as they started the training. For example, those who were new to the role with little previous training described how the session was invaluable to their learning:

The extent I've improved because of the training is 100% - it was, honestly, there's nothing else out there and it filled a gap and was much needed... I just didn't know about what was required until this training.

These providers described how this knowledge has had a positive impact on their confidence. Their confidence has increased both by knowing more about specific areas of business which they have been able to implement since the training, as well as in broader aspects of managing their day to day roles.

My confidence has improved definitely – now I know what parameters I use and what others will be using so I can set prices and be competitive.

For providers who came to the training with greater knowledge from other relevant training or for those who had been in their roles for a longer period of time, they described how the training had been useful to fill gaps in their knowledge, update their knowledge or to give them new tips for updating their practice.

It probably hasn't had a huge impact on my business knowledge but we picked up tips that we have implemented

As well as picking up tips or filling gaps, these providers described how they still felt an increase in their overall confidence as the training served to raise their awareness of what they already knew, making them acknowledge their existing expertise.

I'm not doing anything differently but I'm more confident in what I'm doing.

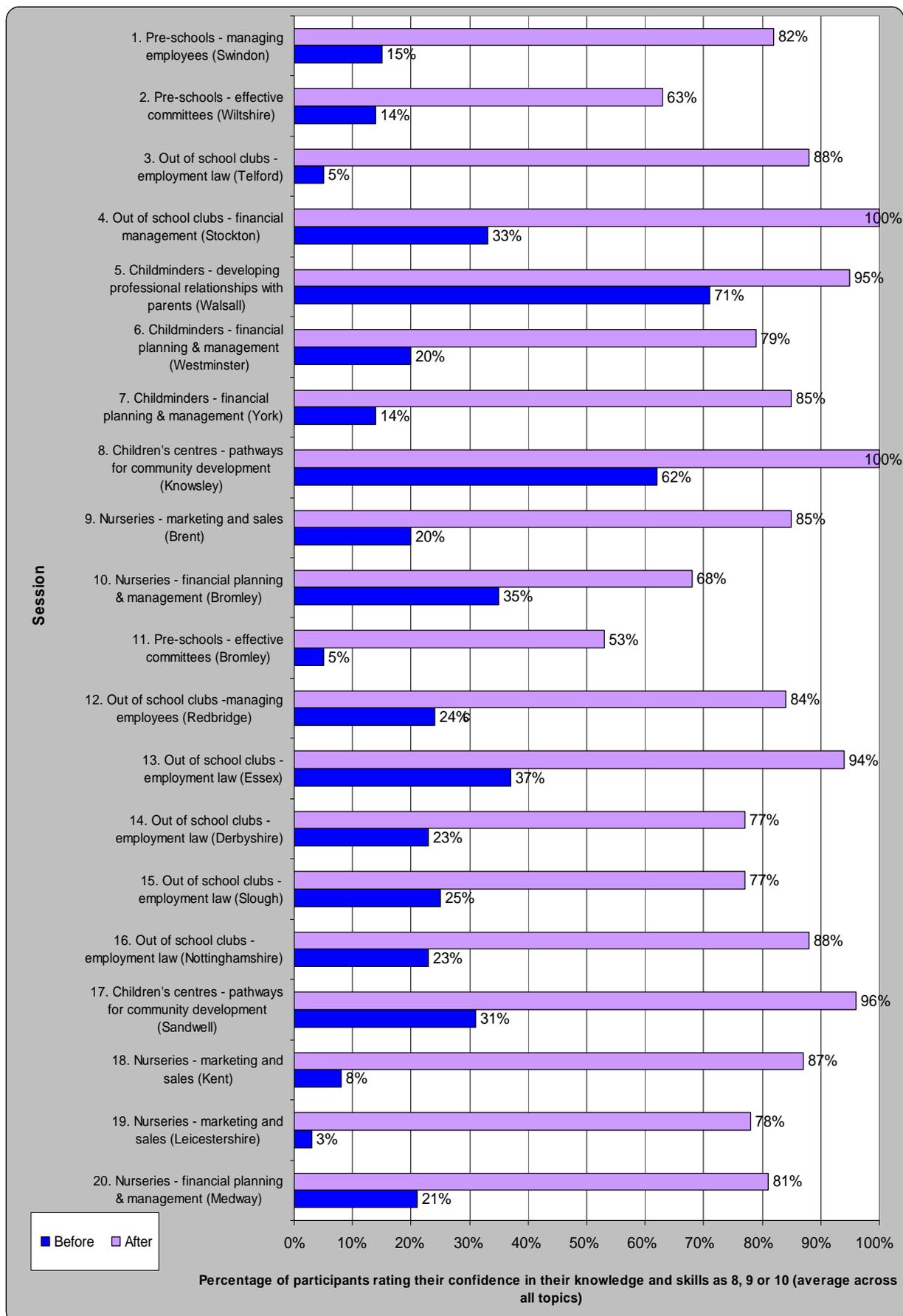
This conscious awareness of their knowledge and skills is reported as a hugely important outcome of the training as it helps to validate the work of current professionals.

However, one provider felt that the session had no impact on the level of their knowledge, skills or confidence:

To be honest my knowledge has come from hands on experience... the training did not offer anything new and [regarding confidence] I came out how I went in.

This interviewee felt they already had the knowledge before attending the session and felt that they would benefit for a more advanced session in future.

Graph B: Summary of before and after ratings of confidence in knowledge and skills:



Changes to practice

The provider interviews revealed a number of ways in which training allowed attendees the space to reflect on their existing skills and practice, from those who were looking for full introductions to the subject area, to those who were looking to validate their current work. The interviews also revealed a number of ways in which providers have changed their practice as a result of the training, again from whole-scale change in approach to picking up and implementing hints and tips.

For providers looking for a general introduction to the subject area – or with a ‘lower’ starting point - the training has led to some significant changes in practice:

I think my knowledge improved considerably at that point because I was starting quite low. I didn't know a lot of the basics about managing things [and] keeping a cash book, that's something I've begun to do and I wasn't before the training.

The specific areas of knowledge and skills implemented by these include strategies around expenses and allowances, responding to legal issues around recruitment, adapting to a social enterprise business model, reviewing roles and legal responsibilities, and thinking through the EYFS framework and partnership relationships e.g. with Ofsted and new ways of managing finances and taxation.

She taught us how to do new things I never thought of before, like how to manage the business and when you get the money, how you do your financial outlay and your cash flow and your uncommon expenses.

I realised we need to develop our business skills – at that time we were focussing on delivery of the services. So it's made me more strategic.

Providers described how they not only learnt specific knowledge and skills but they also learnt who to contact for additional information or for further advice, helping further their broader sense of resilience.

As described elsewhere, more experienced providers also benefited from the training, even if the resulting changes to practice are more piecemeal as opposed to whole-scale. For example, providers talked about picking up hints and tips, such as running an employee incentive scheme:

As a result of the training we put in place an incentive scheme so that every member of staff is responsible for a folder and at the end of the year we give them a cash incentive if they have completed their folders correctly.

This is not to say that *all* providers had been able to make changes to practice in the period since their training. There is one instance where an interviewee could not remember the training due to not having had the opportunity to implement it. However, other interviews described how they hadn't changed their practice as yet but felt ready and equipped by the training to be able to do so if necessary, for example implement legal conditions when recruiting new staff. These interviewees described how they had kept the training resources to act as an aide memoir when they would finally put the training into practice.

Yes, so when the time arises I'm confident that I would be able to use the knowledge gained, plus I've still got all of the notes, power-point resources etc as and when I need them.

Implications for future support needed

What providers valued about the training

Providers who felt that the training met their expectations – and particularly those who described how the training has led to a change in their practice – generally felt that training should be run in the same fashion in the future. These interviewees tended to say they would recommend the training to their colleagues, or already had already recommended it.

As already reported, these providers valued the opportunity to reflect on their practice and learn new skills and update their knowledge. However, they also valued other aspects of the process of training, such as the chance to meet and learn from new people, establish new networks and to take away practical resources during the short, interactive sessions.

They were very into encouraging audience participation. It was a good atmosphere where you weren't scared to talk. And they had a local council officer there which was useful because then you know who to go to on an ongoing basis... they gave us handouts which was helpful [and] it was good to meet committee members from other pre-schools as there's normally no opportunity to do this. It was nice to be in a 'you're not alone' environment'.

What particularly stood out for many of these providers was the informal nature of the sessions and the sense that everyone felt compelled to contribute – an atmosphere usually attributed to the skills and expertise of the facilitator.

What providers would change for future training

The main suggestion for future training would be to ensure the depth of training is pitched appropriately and according to the level of attendees' existing knowledge and experience. As one interviewee commented:

The session was for both senior members of the county council and for volunteers – and some volunteers were parents including vulnerable parents so I think the understanding was too high for them sometimes – especially when it came down to business skills and value for money – a few of them were looking around the room.

Providers recognised that there would be limits to what could be covered in a 2 hour session and even those that felt they gained the least from the sessions felt that the general level of information was appropriate as an introduction to the subjects:

For me, more depth and sophisticated financials might have given me more out of it... but it's difficult to be all things to all people. I'd say it was aimed well to the majority of attendees.

Nonetheless, providers suggested specific areas in which they would like more depth training. This included:

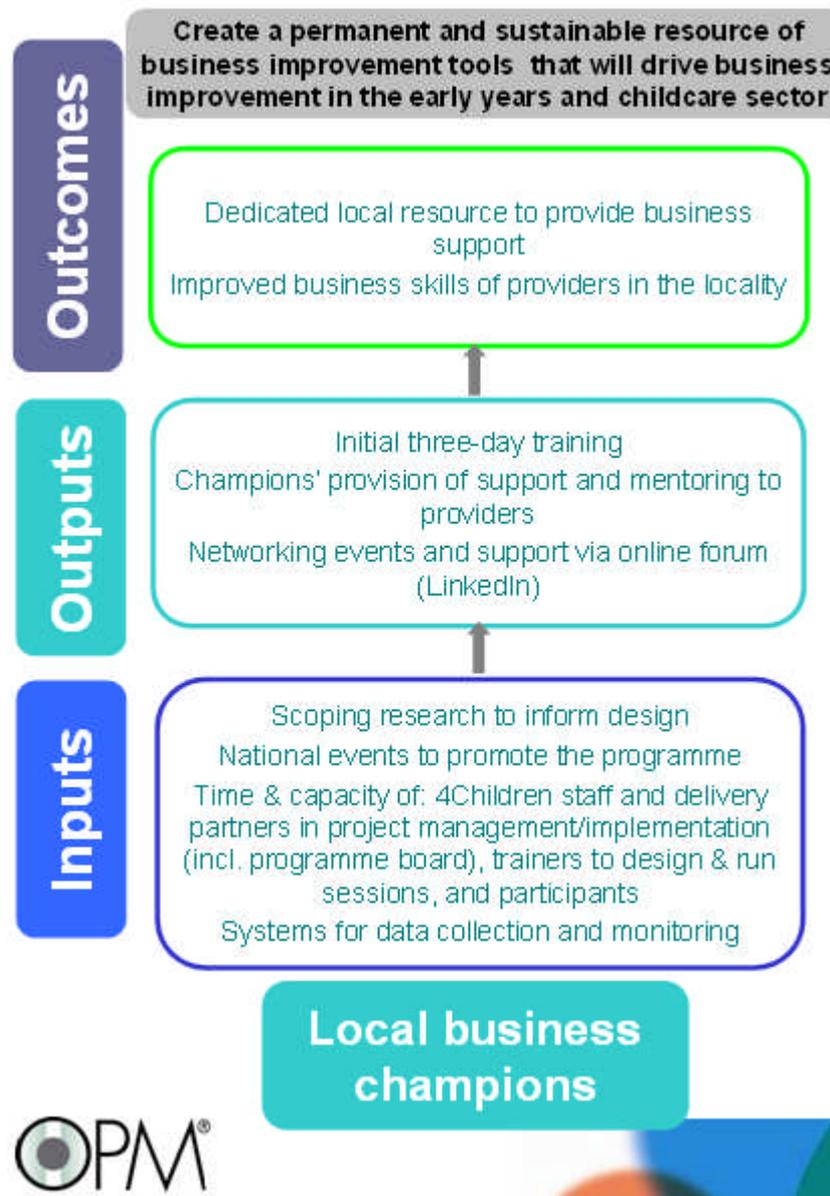
- How to hold appraisals and supervisions in practice
- Cover the EYFS in more detail
- How to build tailored marketing plans, potentially including a template to fill out.
- Have a follow up session to review their individual business plans

Providers would like to attend more sessions more frequently to 'bring knowledge into life' and to have more information about the sessions in advance to that they can identify who is best placed to attend the sessions and manage expectations.

2. Local business champions

Business champions are expected to improve the business skills of providers in the locality, become local professionals and become sustainable in the longer term. The pathway to these outcomes is mapped out in the diagram below:

Fig 3: Logic model sections relating to business champions



The components of the evaluation relating to the business champions and how they address the activities and outcomes captured in the logic model are:

- Interviews to assess the impact of the 4Children 'train the trainer' training (n=8)
- Case studies to understand the support being provided by the business champions locally and the impact for providers (n=10).

Key findings

- Overall the business champions have found the programme to be very impactful; most of them work for local authorities in a business support role and have greatly valued the opportunity to enhance their existing knowledge and skills, as well as their confidence;
- Some champions are new to a business support role and have found the training particularly useful in preparing them to support providers – especially due to tools and techniques learnt that they were previously unfamiliar with;
- The training has also been experienced as an opportunity to network and update practice; such opportunities are particularly helpful given cutbacks within many organisations in recent years (limited attendance at training and networking events);
- Champions have been working with providers to put the learning into practice in various ways: through direct or planned support; through routine monitoring visits and when providing ad hoc or light touch advice and support;
- The support provided by the business champions is greatly valued and has been felt to have enhanced the business knowledge and skills of providers;
- Maintaining the champions as a resource for providing business support in the future will be important; the qualification attached to the programme and facilities for ongoing partnerships (for example through LinkedIn) are key ways in which the champions are being able to sustain their knowledge and skills.

Becoming a business champion: context, aims and objectives

Motivation for getting involved in the programme

For many business champions the key driver behind the decision to take part in the 4Children programme was because of its relevance to their existing roles; most of those that have taken part in the programme are working for local authorities in a business support/advisory capacity.

Despite this common motivator, there has been significant variation between the specific roles of the champions and therefore the underlying reasons for their involvement. In some cases, the champions have been working in an exclusively business or funding focussed role for a number of years, while in others they have recently taken on a business focus within a broader role (for example development workers that have previously been involved in providing support in relation to quality issues, as well as business).

For the more experienced champions, in general the training was perceived as an opportunity to update their practice by learning new tools and techniques, to update their sector knowledge (for example by learning about new policies and funding sources), and crucially, to network with other champions working in similar roles in other areas.

In contrast, for those champions that have recently begun a business-focussed role the training was seen as an opportunity to reinforce and develop their knowledge and skills; those involved in the case studies in this situation reported having a childcare background

with less business experience; the course was therefore seen as a way for assessing their practice and to up-skill for the new roles (for example see case study 1).

Although all of the case studies within the evaluation have been with local authority champions (due to the high proportion involved in the programme), we did gain some insight into the experiences of a provider that is also a business champion through the business champion interviews. For them, participation was driven by a desire to further develop their business skills – they have keenly been pursuing business qualifications and have been providing ad hoc support to other settings. This was felt to be an opportunity to continue that development and formalise some of their knowledge and skills.

Alignment with existing role

Evidence from the case studies suggests variation in the extent to which champions have been involved in providing direct, face-to-face support to providers (further information is provided in the sub-section on support for providers). For those working for local authorities, this has been largely dependent on the size of their area and resources; in some larger authorities, the champions are involved in proactively engaging providers for example through an annual health check process or to meet sufficiency requirements.

In contrast, in smaller areas champions may primarily be involved in responding to providers' requests for information and only intervening face-to-face when urgent issues arise, for example if a provider is facing financial difficulties (for example see case study 3).

The 4Children programme was felt to be attractive for both champions involved in providing planned support, and those more involved in a strategic way (providing guidance/advice and support when a business needs urgent assistance). For the former type of champion, the opportunity to learn about tools and techniques to use directly with providers was valued, as well as relationship-building skills.

For the latter, the main appeal of the training was the chance to network with other champions (particularly because resource constraints in local authorities may have limited this practice in recent years) and to keep up-to-date on resources and sources of information to signpost providers towards. As outlined later in this section for different types of champion broader benefits than those anticipated have been realised.

Wider context

For many champions the timing of the 4Children programme was particularly welcomed because the ongoing economic difficulties and public sector resource constraints have reduced opportunities for training and skills development.

Taking part in this programme was seen as an important part of their personal development, not only in terms knowledge and skills acquisition, but due to the opportunity to learn and share practice with others. As one champion explained:

These days due to the cutbacks both in terms of nationally funded support but also LA budgets many of the opportunities to network with colleagues in neighbouring authorities have gone now. So the big benefit for me was not only to network but to benchmark and measure myself and our authority against what others are providing to the sector.

Experiences of the 4Children programme

Findings from the interviews and case studies indicate that overall the training was experienced positively and for most champions it exceeded their expectations and aims.

The key elements of the training that were identified as crucial to the success of the programme were the style of the facilitation, the opportunities to share practice with other champions, and the resources that were provided. There were also a number of elements of the training that some champions found challenging, particularly in terms of balancing the work needed for the assignments with existing demands on their time.

An overview of the findings concerning different elements of the training are outlined in more detail in the following sub-sections.

Facilitation of the training

Many of the champions involved in the evaluation commented on the way in which the training was run, reporting that the facilitation was very effective. The sessions included a mix of presentations and group work, and the trainer was felt to be particularly good in supporting the champions to discuss and develop their own learning; as one champion described:

I think it was really well paced there were lots of different things to do, so [the facilitator] might have a bit of input but then there was time for us to do our own thing and not just to get the theory of the different methods of the business but to actually have a go at doing it ourselves, I think that was great.

Part of this involved encouraging the champions to share examples from their day-to-day roles, and prompting them to develop solutions to questions rather than providing all of the answers. This was felt to be ‘thought provoking’ and to enable champions to transfer the learning more readily into their workplace following the sessions.

The trainer was also reported to have supported the champions to retain the learning after the training sessions for example by capturing and disseminating the key messages (by taking pictures of the write ups from practical sessions and emailing them to the champions). This was felt to be particularly valuable for completing the assignments.

The topics/content

The breadth of the topics covered in the programme was also felt to be one of the key benefits; some champions reported that they had initially expected it to focus ‘purely’ on underlying principles of business management and business planning, but that in reality it had covered a wider range of topics including relationship and influencing skills to use with providers. For the more experienced champions these were felt to be a useful refresher for improving their existing practice in providing support, and for champions new to a business support role the skills were felt to be useful for supporting them to work directly with providers in giving business advice; in some cases the skills were not necessarily new but it was helpful to learn about using them in a specifically business-focussed context:

I was surprised when it looked at the relationships and about assisting practitioners in a different way. Some of those things I'd been doing come from my own analysis/experience. It showed me a different way of working – being able to assist/nurture them more.

However, there were also some champions that felt these skills were less relevant to their daily roles and that this made it harder to engage with the training. In particular the champion that did not work for a local authority (a provider) and some of the champions less involved in providing direct face-to-face support to providers felt that the training may have been too 'consultancy focussed'. This was reported on in the Interim Evaluation Report and was used to develop some of the training.

Despite this, some champions felt that even though some of the consultancy skills were not as useful within their current roles (in local authorities where they were providing support less directly) they were felt to be valuable skills for the future:

The role of a 'business champion' I felt was more of a consultancy role, which is good for career development, but I found difficult because once you have been employed it's hard to change your ways of working... being a consultant; that step's too high for me. But it's not something I'm disregarding – I'm confident that it is still valuable if my career moves...I can see how it would be useful

Overall champions reported that the course was more 'practical' than expected, with more opportunities to discuss the 'ins-and-outs' of working with providers and to unpick elements of business support, for example developing business plans (for example see case study 1). This was felt to be positive and to support them to put some of the learning into practice in their daily work.

Some champions felt that overall three days may not have been long enough for the training and that they would have benefitted from a longer run of sessions. This was because of the breadth of topics covered; it was felt that having more time would allow the learning to be explored in more depth and for champions to spend longer on some of the assignments too. Despite this, the champions also recognised the practical difficulties associated with freeing up time for more training sessions, particularly given the current resource issues being experienced by many local authorities. In many instances the champions reported being grateful to have had the opportunity to attend the training at all given these issues.

Opportunities to network

The group work in particular was felt to be valuable for encouraging champions to discuss their work and share practice. For some champions working in smaller teams or in isolation within local authorities this was useful for benchmarking their practice:

The group working was very helpful - the fact that they were relatively small groups in total to start with, but also that it was very much based on us doing the work rather than it being a lecture... it was the factor of being able to measure yourself and your practice against those of other officers there, from different types of authorities – but also it has been helpful as well to reflect on how, given different lengths of experience, length of service etc, how again you could measure yourself individually against other people, and their knowledge and share their experiences.

Some champions also found that interacting with their peers not only provided them with insight into their own practice, but also new ideas to implement within their organisation (including processes and tools).

One champion described how in some areas networking opportunities for business support workers that used to exist have recently fallen away due to budgeting issues (a lack of funding for meetings or travel). In this way the training was felt to be particularly valuable (see case study 9 for an example); it enabled a discussion of the common difficulties being

faced in local authorities and by providers, and the chance to 'problem solve' as a group. Another champion found it re-assuring and empowering to find out that some problems they thought were associated with their particular area were being experienced by other champions too.

Resources and materials

Champions felt that the resources associated with the programme were very useful, not just in terms of the physical materials (for example they were all given a book), but also the online resources that have been developed to provide ongoing support as part of the programme.

In terms of physical resources, it was felt to be advantageous that these were provided upfront and that there had been pre-course work to do ahead of the training sessions; this was reported to have enabled champions to 'get in to mode' and to prepare in advance of the course. Whilst this initial communication was felt to be useful, a minor suggested improvement for one champion was that it would have been useful to have known in advance of the first session that they were going to receive the book because some champions had already bought it.

The online resources have included an Information Hub and a LinkedIn network, both of which allow champions to share practice and problems. These were felt to have gained momentum throughout the programme (as increasing numbers of champions were trained) and were being used by many of the champions included in the evaluation. As one champion explained:

I do look at [the LinkedIn network] and I've commented on it. There have been a couple of useful things people have flagged up – another thing is that it is growing, it's much wider now – there are more champions than at the outset and that's good.

Some champions however had been less inclined to engage with these resources, highlighting time constraints as a key barrier. They reported preferring face-to-face opportunities to network although they did recognise the value of being 'connected' to the other champions in the absence of any formal events.

One champion felt that one of the most useful resources has been the development of an 'FAQ' site to aid champions when completing the assignments as part of the accredited qualification associated with the programme.

Overall champions expressed concerns about the sustainability of these resources when the programme ends; this reflects their perceived value.

Experience of the assignments

There were mixed views of the assignments that formed part of the programme; most of the champions felt that in principle they were a good idea for encouraging them to put the learning into practice and to share their experiences as a group (forming the basis of conversations in the practical sessions), however there were some practical issues associated with them that made it difficult to fully benefit from their use – particularly the timing and the engagement of providers.

In terms of timing, feedback from the pilot cohorts showed that some champions found it too difficult to complete the assignments between the training days due to a combination of the pressures within their normal workloads (leading to a lack of time) and the time needed to prepare and engage providers. This was reported on the Interim Evaluation Report and

changes were made to improve the timing for later cohorts, however in some cases it was still felt to be too pressured.

Some champions felt that the ideal time frame for the programme would be to have one month between sessions to allow enough time to do the practical work. This was expressed in particular by champions that attended their first and second training sessions over the summer months and found it easier to complete the work at that time (due to many providers being closed in the summer holidays), this was in contrast to the third session which was held a few weeks after the second and was found to be much more challenging to fit in.

If it could be timed longer between sessions that would enable us to do the assignments better, I mean we did our assignments but some of our colleagues weren't able to get theirs done.

The champions commented that the success of the assignments was related to their willingness and ability to ensure the work was done. One champion referred to the need to be structured and disciplined.

Also important was the willingness of the provider to engage: selecting an appropriate case study to work with was a particular challenge for those champions less involved in providing direct support (and therefore with fewer providers to work with). In one instance the champion could not work with the provider they wanted to because they were not at the right stage of support; instead they had to work with a business facing financial difficulties, which was more challenging.

I did identify a setting – a new business start up that were in need of business support... but I found with them that their timescales were far in excess of the programme, so I couldn't push them within the three month timescale because they're on a 12 month development timescale... we had a number of groups in crisis demanding business support, as such I ended up having to refer to [them]... With the time restrictions I couldn't just pick someone up and go through the cycle and find the cycle to automatically fit with the training and give me the skills and outcomes. I had to rely on my experience to make those connections with the training.... It may have worked for some delegates, but I think that's quite challenging.

Another champion felt that the training sessions would have benefitted from devoting more time to reviewing the work from the assignments to identify what had gone well/not worked etc. They suggested having 'one-to-one' tutor calls as a way of having these conversations.

Case study 1

Background

A key aim of the 4Children training programme has been to equip business champions with the skills to guide providers in developing a business plan.

One of the business champions worked with their provider over several months to do this. The provider was a new applicant hoping to open a local pre-school. She initially contacted the family information division in the Local Authority and was told to submit a business plan to apply for grant funding. However, her business plan did not pass the funding panel. As such the champion became involved to provide support.

The business champion has been in post for six months, and was therefore new to the role when working with the provider. The champion's day-to-day work involves working with the PVI sector to provide business support and ensuring that there are sufficient childcare places in the local area (for three and four year olds initially, and now also two year olds following recent funding from the DfE).

The local area is one of high need, with insufficient places at present, so the champion wanted to work with the provider to support her to develop a clear business plan and gain the funding needed to open the business. The timing of the support was also fortuitous as it aligned with the champion's involvement in the 4Children programme and formed an ideal case to use in the assignment, as the champion reflected:

"To have something like that was a really good piece of work to bring as my project. It was good to do the sessions in London and then take the answers back...keeping that in my mind when I'm actually meeting her – it was nice to put some things into real life practice from the training."

The nature of the support

The aim of the support was not only to aid the provider with the application for grant funding, but to create a plan for ensuring the business was sustainable by year 2. The business champion worked with the provider over several months, through face-to-face meetings, over the phone and by email. The support began not long before the champion became involved in the 4Children training, so they were able to test out some of the learning with the provider in between sessions.

When reflecting on the process, the champion explained that the first training session gave an overview of what a business plan should contain, and that this information was directly useful for supporting the provider (since their earlier business plan focussed too much on operational aspects of the business). As such the champion worked with the provider to split out the business plan and operational plan, to form two separate documents.

Other examples of the revisions the business plan required concerned the logo (which was changed from paw prints to children's hands and feet) and the financial planning, as the champion explained:

"It was things like she'd forgotten about the salary increase from financial year one to year two, she'd bought toys and equipment in a big spend at the beginning but then there was nothing else. I said to her 'puzzle pieces are going to get missing, cars are going to lose wheels, you need to put contingency in there'.... Things like she had a massive

spend for postage...So it was really going through her finance plan with her with a fine tooth comb and getting her to re-think, which she did"

Impact of the support

From the perspective of the provider this process was felt to be invaluable; she said she felt "so lucky" to have received the support and felt that it had made her more focussed, encouraging her to think practically about the purpose of the business plan (having felt daunted when drafting it initially without support).

The provider also reflected on the key strengths of the support, highlighting the attentiveness and accessibility of the champion as crucial:

"I feel like the support they've given me is just tremendous...they are so attentive, every time I need anything, every time I email I have an email back within half an hour... they always want to meet up with me and discuss how I can move the business forward."

The importance of responding quickly was also identified as important by the champion, who recognised that providers are often dependent on a response in order to make key decisions (particularly when setting up a new business).

When reflecting on impact both the provider and the champion felt that the process had increased their own and each others confidence. The provider described it as having "given me the confidence to feel like I'm going to succeed" and reported that it had given them business knowledge and skills to retain and use in their business on an ongoing basis.

The champion also commented on the increase in confidence for the provider, reflecting back on their nervousness at the initial meeting compared to now, and on their enhanced self-belief in the perceived success of the new business. The champion also felt that the programme had increased their own confidence to work with providers, particularly in using a structured approach to evaluate the business and in having knowledge of where to signpost providers for other support.

"I think I've got a lot more confidence in my own knowledge and ability that I am able to do this, and I feel it's a great privilege to have been a part of it"

Specific skills gained were also reported, not just in terms of those directly relevant to business support, but more transferable skills such as managing meetings and observation skills. The champion was intending to cascade some of these within their organisation through internal training events.

Impact for the business champions

The evidence from the case studies and the interviews with business champions suggests that the programme has had a range of impacts depending on factors including the champion's role, existing knowledge, skills and experience, and wider facilitators/barriers within their organisations. These are presented within the individual case study boxes but also in the following sub-sections.

The types of impacts can be grouped into the follow themes:

- Increasing business knowledge
- Providing new skills, or enhancing existing skills, for working with providers

- Increasing confidence and self-awareness/reflective practice
- Enhancing status/improving how the champion is perceived by providers
- Improving sector knowledge and awareness of resources to signpost providers
- Promoting networking and partnerships between champions and local providers

All of these impacts have been felt differently by individual champions and a later sub-section gives an overview of some of the ways in which they have led to changes to practice in terms of the support given to providers. It is through this support that the impacts for champions act as mechanisms for the programme as a whole: through enhancing support that in itself leads to the overall impact of increased business knowledge and skills for providers in the sector.

Increasing business knowledge

All of the champions reported gaining some new knowledge from the programme, although the specific learning varied according to their experience and roles. For some champions the training was felt to have significantly increased their knowledge relating to business planning and management or wider topics, for example legal aspects and where to signpost providers for information. For most champions knowledge was also gained concerning techniques for working with providers, including influencing and relationship skills.

For less experienced champions the training was helpful for clarifying key concepts and underlying business principles (see case study 1 for an example). For some champions working in teams that provide support for the quality of provision as well as the business, the training was felt to enhance their specialism as a 'business expert' and to set them apart from colleagues in providing this type of support.

In contrast, the impact for more experienced champions was to provide underlying theory for some of work they were already doing in practice (see for example case studies 6 and 7). Overall many champions described the impact as a "*general improvement*" to their knowledge and reported that they training had introduced them to new concepts and tools that otherwise they would not necessarily have been using, for example business health check processes and diagnostic tools.

It's increased my knowledge I'd say definitely, it's increased the knowledge that I have, and as I said at the beginning given a lot of theoretical basis to what we do in practice.

Enhancing existing skills for working with providers

As the majority of the champions have already working to provide some form of business support to childcare providers, one of the main impacts of the training has been to enhance their existing practice by bringing them up-to-date with some of the tools and techniques they are able to use.

Across all of the case studies the champions reported there were tools introduced in the training that were previously unfamiliar to them, in particular the Seven S and analyses tools. These were felt to be useful for supporting providers in understanding their businesses, involving wider staff and to structure meetings appropriately. For example learning to use the Seven C analysis was felt to be prompt champions when initially setting out the remit of the support (see case study 3 or 10 for examples):

It is things you take for granted in communicating and planning a meeting, the thoroughness – some things you do but don't think about – I found it really useful in being able to structure the meeting beforehand.

Case study 2

Background

For those business champions that have been working within a business advisory role in the childcare sector for a number of years, one of the main impacts of the programme has been an increase in their confidence.

For one business champion in particular this increase has been attributed to the way in which the programme has provided an opportunity for them to reflect on their practice and become more 'self-aware' in their daily work:

I suppose the difference since the course has been that I've felt more confident in working with providers on business planning...it has given me confidence around supporting them in a better way and in looking at forward planning.

Experience compared to expectations

When starting the course the champion hoped to update their business planning knowledge; they work for a local authority in a role that covers wider support and had not previously received any formal training as a business advisor. The champion therefore wanted to strengthen the business aspect of their work.

In reality, they reflected that the training actually covered much more than they expected and provided more general skills transferable to their wider responsibilities, such as those for developing relationships with providers; these was felt to be very valuable and provided an opportunity for self-reflection ('to look at what you were doing and why') that the champion was not initially expecting:

I thought it would be very theory-heavy but there was more around unpicking the business plan and very practical things. I was surprised when it looked at the relationships and about assisting practitioners in a different way. Some of those things I'd been doing... It showed me a different way of working – being able to assist/nurture them more.

Implementing changes to practices as a result of the training

After attending the training programme the champion worked with their team to audit the tools and techniques they use with providers, adding in elements from the course to improve existing approaches, as well as some new ones too. The tools used include PESTLE analysis, Seven S analysis, SWOT analysis, business planning and cash flow tools. The team have also developed a checklist to enhance the expectation that providers are accountable for their businesses.

The champion also described how they had cascaded the learning more widely within the organisation, for example they had offered information and advice to a colleague running some training for providers on management and leadership, and are running their own internal training on business skills. Central to the success of this 'knock on effect' has been support from management; they have actively encouraged the champion's involvement.

In a wider sense I feel there is a good impact through sharing the learning with colleagues, so that they too are taking the key messages and using [them] with

providers...the knowledge is creeping out and I'm pleased with that. Sometimes when one person goes on training that is it, but I feel pleased the line managers have been receptive and have sent the messages out to colleagues.

Supporting providers

The champion reported that they had introduced elements of the training into their support for providers gradually, as the support they provide is often ad hoc and varied (it is arranged via a service level agreement where providers can draw-down support as needed). They felt that their knowledge and skills had specifically fed through with 5 or 6 providers they were helping with business support, and several of these were experiencing difficulties.

For example, the champion supported one voluntary-led pre-school committee to establish a business plan (using SWOT analysis) because the organisation was having financial difficulties at the time and dealing with redundancies/reducing hours. The provider reported that the support had enabled them to focus on what they needed to do as a business and on, a personal level, had increased their confidence in undertaking the committee role. They felt that it had ultimately enabled them to improve the prospects of the business:

The support made us look at everything in a fresh way, made things a bit clearer – now we are in a much stronger position

The key difference in the support from the champion compared to that received before the programme was the depth. The provider commented that although it had been quite time consuming, that in being so in-depth it had enabled them to develop the business plan as a solid lasting resource – central for continuity in the business when committee membership changes. The champion recognised this as a key need for many voluntary-led businesses, highlighting the need to make committee members aware of their responsibilities and the value of having a sustainable plan in place to enable the next set of members to steer the organisation.

Another voluntary-led provider that received support from the champion was struggling as a business due poor financial management under a previous treasurer. The champion has been supporting them in making an application for sustainability funding; this has involved advising them on the information needed as well as sharing a range of business management tools.

The provider felt that the key strengths of the support were the way in which the champion communicated with the setting, offering support and encouragement but also explaining the need for improvements. Crucially, the provider reported that without the support the setting would have struggled to remain open:

[The champion] has enabled the setting to stay open – that did a lot for staff morale...Having [the champion] has meant we've been able to get on and get over a tricky time financially and think about the future.

Unintended impacts

The champion also felt that the learning from the programme was supporting them in the wider aspects of their role and not always consciously:

I had to smile to myself as...there are some things that I am doing and not realising that I got it from programme! For example one setting didn't understand legal options – it was voluntary managed but wanted to know the different options – when I did a note of the

visit I realised I had used the pyramid principle, where you have a question at top, break down the situation, the complications, and offer solutions.

They felt that the training had been particularly useful in making them conscious of the different approaches used to engage providers. Depending on their needs there are different forms of support settings can access, and the champion reported that they were better able to use their skills to build tailored relationships through an enhanced awareness of professional boundaries and of their existing knowledge and skills.

In this way the tools from the training have helped champions to 'formalise' some of their existing processes, making them more aware of what they were already doing and leading to more established systems. One of the champions referred to this as '*rubber stamping*' their existing practice, in providing an underlying structure for them to use.

Another key area of skills enhanced through the training are the influencing skills that champions use when working with providers. Some champions found the psychological analysis useful, particularly in learning to use probing questions and to use the 'trust model' to build relationships. Whilst these were not always new skills, the training was felt to have reminded them of these skills and brought them to the fore, enabling them to better focus on the way in which they interact with providers and giving them useful 'nudges' and tools to use (see case study 9 for example).

[It has been] supporting my practice, given me tools to make sure I can build and develop clear relationships – so that the provider has the confidence to trust and work with you. The trust model for example... in order to get the best out of the relationships you've got to develop that rapport... you can get the best out of the provider process, if they tell you the full issues... For me it having those tools which helps them to get them to focus on the issue at hand

Champions felt that the skills gained had helped them to develop a more comprehensive support package for providers, not just through their skills but through resources and being able to produce up-to-date information. In this way the training was felt to be impacting on the way in which champions support providers in a '*drip drip*' way, i.e. by instigating improvements to their daily work.

Increasing confidence and self-awareness

Another key way in which the champions reported the programme to have had an impact was through increasing their confidence. This was experienced by consistently by champions regardless of their level of experience and background: for those that were new to their roles, the training made them aware of existing knowledge and skills but crucially provided them with new information, and for those that were more experienced it reinforced what they were already aware of and gave them the chance to benchmark against other champions.

As much as I think I don't know about financial things, when you got to it I thought 'actually I do know' so it brought out some of the skills that maybe I wasn't aware I had. It's given me more confidence to go into settings – because we never really know what we're going to get... I think it just gave me more confidence that I know what I'm talking about, and that if I didn't know, I'd know where to point [providers] for help

Case study 3

Background

The benefit of the champions programme for some champions has been the opportunity to network and gain up-to-date information on practice across the sector.

One highly experienced business champion has been working in a business support role for a small local authority for more than 10 years, although precise structure of the role has changed in this time. It is a small local authority with less dedicated business support capacity compared to other areas; as such the champion is less involved in providing planned support and has more of a strategic role, providing guidance in relation to early years funding and grant schemes due to their knowledge and expertise, and intervention support when needed.

When they enrolled in the programme, one of the perceived benefits for the champion was the chance to network with other the business champions and to be able to benchmark their own practice against the support other authorities are providing to the sector. In addition to this, the champion felt that the programme would enable them to keep up-to-date with new tools and techniques.

Realising the benefits

Overall the champion felt that the programme these anticipated benefits has been realised; they had learned about practice in other areas, as well as gained some new information to enable them to update some of their approaches.

Particularly valued was the opportunity to find out about and update their knowledge concerning less sector-specific developments, for example funding sources and where to signpost settings for additional support. An additional benefit experienced through the programme was the opportunity to reflect on the way they use skills they already had; the champion felt that in being very experienced to some extent they were doing things 'naturally' and without conscious reflection, and that there were elements of their existing work that the training highlighted.

[It's] about me being enabled to reflect on the way I actually do the job and on whether now it is a routine or included as part of my practice, and where it isn't I have adopted those into the way that I work

This enhanced awareness has impacted on the champion through encouraging them to formalise some of practices they were already doing; for example by adding context or structure to some of the routinely used approaches:

There were things that ... we maybe don't recognise that we do, or don't express it clearly what we're doing, and in terms of changing practice, it tended to be things / tools/ that I've brought away that would help in the relationship with the setting because it will be clear around the process we're going through...and it is recognised.

In particular, the champion reported that the programme identified a number of useful tools and resources that they would be integrating into their current processes and documentation. For example setting up contracting arrangements with providers to ensure that they are aware of the remit of the support being provided. The champion reflected that when working with a provider they automatically formally introduce themselves and explain what they will

do at what point, but that having resources to formalise that process would be beneficial and something they would be looking to implement.

Improving the training programme

The type of support provided by the champion (less planned business support compared to some of the other champions) did mean that their experience of the assignment side of the programme was difficult; time restrictions meant that they were not able to select a provider to involve as a case study, but instead had to use one that they were already working with, relying on their experience to connect the training with the support. This is an important area of process learning for the programme.

Support to providers

The champion regularly supports a range of providers across the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector and maintained sector, covering all types of childcare. The nature of the support means that identifying specifically those providers they have used the learning from the training with is not straightforward; however the champion did feel that they were implementing the learning through formalising and enhancing some of their existing processes (as described).

As part of the programme assignments the champion supported a pre-school committee that were experiencing financial difficulties and reduced child numbers. The champion provided face-to-face support on several occasions, supporting the committee to work through the finances and develop a business plan. The provider felt that the support had been crucial in showing them what they needed to do to get the business '*back on it's feet again*' and for guiding them through the steps needed, for example they needed to secure a new chair for the committee before applying for grant funding.

The provider described the knowledge of the champion as the key strength of the support because it helped them to identify what had gone wrong and what action needed to be taken. They felt that it had improved their own business knowledge through a better understanding of how committees work, and of their roles and legal responsibilities. They also felt the support had improved their confidence:

I think overall it gave us more confidence to know what we needed to do and how to go about doing it, getting back on our feet, what to do next.

The champion is also currently working with another provider on a longer-term basis (supporting them to plan and develop a new nursery) and they expected to have the opportunity in due course to use some of the tools in a more direct way, depending on their progress.

For some champions the training also gave them more confidence in specific areas, for example in being more assertive when engaging providers and more confident of their role as an advisor (see case study 5 for example). This was particularly the case for champions that had newly entered roles involving face-to-face support, and also for those that had mixed roles and less involved in planned support (for example where also more involved in managing funding processes).

Overall many of the champions reported that the programme had enhanced their self-awareness and made them reflect on their work (for an example see case study 2). As one champion commented:

I'm more reflective in how I deliver things. I actually take a step back before I react to something and think 'how am I going to coach this? What response am I looking for? How am I best going to work with this person? How am I going to shape the questions' and I've learnt from that. I've learnt from what I've observed in the training, and also from the group dynamics in the team

This was felt to have a knock on effect on their confidence through an awareness that they are 'on the right track'; working effectively and following the right principles in delivering business advice. Some champions also perceived that the training has increased their understanding of their own role by providing insight into the thinking behind their work, i.e. why they do some of the practices they do, and enabling them to articulate that more effectively to providers and colleagues. This was felt to be an added layer of consciousness that has fed into different aspects of their daily work.

Enhancing status/provider perceptions of support

Some champions felt that the programme had given a boost to their status in working with providers, both directly through the title of being a 'business champion', but also indirectly by enhancing their knowledge and professionalism.

In particular, the champions involved in case study 6 and 7 reported that they felt the programme had raised the profile of their work and supported them to gain buy-in from the settings they work with. Many champions described difficulties in engaging providers, particularly with the economic challenges facing the sector; in many cases providers are reluctant to seek support or may be resistant to the local authority due to a lack of trust. Champions have to develop relationships so that providers are willing to share information and seek advice.

For some, the programme has facilitated this in acting as an accredited marker of professionalism, and in giving the champions a higher status. The champions also felt that this had a wider impact within their team; empowering them in their work that they deliver.

Improving sector knowledge and access to information

As described in the earlier sections one of the motivators for some champions to participate in the programme was the prospect of updating their awareness of developments within the sector, for example sources of information for providers to use. Evidence from the case studies suggests that for many champions this benefit has been realised (see for example case study 3); they reported valuing the practical information accessed through the course, particularly because it was felt there have been fewer opportunities for keeping up-to-date (e.g. through regional meetings), given the funding cuts experienced by local authorities in recent years.

Case study 4

Background

In some local authorities, recent re-structuring of services has led to changes in the way that business support has been provided; specifically in terms of separating out business from quality support into different roles and/or teams.

One of the champions working for such a local authority began a more business-focussed role a year ago (having a background in business and in childcare), and they decided to take part in the champions programme in order to update their knowledge and skills, and to gain confidence through validating their existing practice.

Changes to practice as a result of the programme

The champion reported that they have been using the learning from the programme continually (“*it is in everything I do*”) due to the knowledge and confidence they had gained. In addition to this, the champion is working with their team to develop a toolkit to use with the settings that utilises some of the tools and approaches from the course, and they have made changes to some of their existing materials. For example, a template for business planning that they send out to settings.

They also reported that they feel the programme has enhanced their confidence and made them more assertive in their role, both by making them aware of their own working style and by highlighting what they already knew:

When I started the programme we did a self-evaluation of where thought we were now - at the beginning and then again at the end - I think I was surprised at how much I did know... It gave me the confidence because it made me aware of what I am [already] doing.

Support for providers

As part of their normal role the business champion routinely conducts business health checks; these are conducted face-to-face with settings on an annual basis. The champion discusses business and sustainability, audits the NEF (nursery education funding) ensures there are appropriate processes in place to safeguard the business.

Since being involved in the programme the champion has adapted the way in which they do this health check, working with approximately 20 settings. The principle way in which they have been using the learning has been in how they explain to settings why they need to do certain things, and in some of the tools used to guide them through a business planning process.

One provider, the manager/owner of a pre-school, received support in developing a business plan from the champion as part of the programme. The provider found the support to be very effective, particularly because of the champion’s style in making it a “two-way process”:

[The champion] knows what you want to get out the meeting and make you feel you’re contributing; [they] listen to me if I want to talk about things that I think will affect my business.

The provider has been receiving support from the champion since before the programme and

reflected on the difference they felt it had made to the champion's approach, reporting that they felt the champion had been more 'constructive' and 'focussed', for example in prompting the provider to plan ahead and ensure the business is sustainable. They found the business planning process to be very useful and highlighted the continuing need for support and advice from the champion with the ongoing business. The provider felt that they would have been 'vulnerable' without the champion

You need someone to give you the confidence. [The champion] does that for me. As nurseries we get fed up of all the pressures, legislation changes... [The champion] is supportive, tells you what you need to do and that [they] understands.

The champion has also used the learning in working with providers more generally with ad hoc support (i.e. not as part of the health check process) by making their approach more consistent. They explained:

We are being consistent in how we deliver support because we have a form we take out and we all work through, we're all aware of what a clear invoice should look like, what a business plan should look like. We are consistent in the actions we expect as well

In addition to this the programme has led to wider changes within the champion's team, for example they have changed the courses they run for childminders when preparing them for registration; the new course includes content on business planning and cash flows when previously it didn't.

Particularly valued was the information on funding sources to signpost providers to; again the funding constraints within local authorities have meant that many providers need to seek alternative sources of support, and for many champions the training had made them aware of places to signpost providers to that they had not known about before the course.

Similarly, the training improved the awareness of some changes to key information sources for business support (such as Business Link), and some specific information was felt to have been gained through the additional events held as part of the programme, particularly the training day on Community Interest Companies (see case study 9 for example).

The Information Hub developed as part of the programme was also felt to be useful for providing some of the sector information and for enabling champions to share resources.

Promoting networking and partnerships

The opportunity to network and develop partnerships was also considered to be a key impact of the training – as well as a key mechanism for enabling champions to better support providers.

Champions valued immensely the opportunity to interact with one another and to share practice with professionals from other local authorities. This was particularly due to the lack of alternative opportunities for this type of interaction in recent years: as reported in previous sections, some champions reported that they used to have regional meetings with other business support workers but that these were no longer happening (and in some cases had not been for a number of years).

The networking was felt to be useful for a number of reasons: it enabled champions to share ideas and to work together to solve problems, to gain insight into the challenges being faced

across local authorities and to look at different ways in which different areas are responding. In some cases this was felt to be an empowering experience, particularly for organisations that had recently experienced re-structures.

The champions also reported that the programme has enabled them to encourage providers to network and share practice, something felt to be extremely valuable for increasing business skills within the sector (see case study 8 for more detail). Some champions also reported that they are developing training sessions on some of the topics covered within the programme to cascade to providers.

Champions were also cascading the information and learning from the training within their organisations, for example by hosting training for colleagues. This was felt to be beneficial for them in cementing their learning, but also for their colleagues, and particularly those involved in providing support concerning the quality of provision. These individuals can lack fundamental business skills, but in providing support to providers are important for giving some advice and for signposting to the champion where needed (as many champions highlighted, quality needs to be underpinned by sound business principles).

The networking events held as part of the 4Children programme on topics such as Getting It Right Legally were felt to be particularly useful both for engaging champions and providers to enable them to network (both were able to attend some sessions), and in sustaining some of the relationships between champions and opening networks between those from different training cohorts.

These local and regional partnerships, between champions, providers and wider staff involved in providing childcare support, were overall perceived as essential for achieving the overall aims of improving business skills across the sector – and as important to maintain in the longer-term in order to ensure the sustainability of such skills.

One thing that will need time but hopefully may go beyond this is the networking side... Given the fact that even on a regional basis we don't meet regularly anymore, that networking is very important for us because we do tend to be limited in resources...It can be quite difficult to form views and get them across without having that ability to say to people in similar role 'how you are getting the message across'?... there is a good impact through me sharing the learning with colleagues, so that they too are taking the key messages and using it with providers....the knowledge is creeping out and I'm pleased with that.

Case study 5

Background

One business champion who had been working in the role for a long time wanted to take part in the programme in order to validate their existing practice, but also to interact with the other champions working in the sector. Compared to other business champions, they had a high level of business knowledge and awareness prior to the programme (due to a background in the financial sector); they therefore did not perceive business skills as one of the key benefits of the training, instead valuing the chance to network with other business champions.

Using the learning from the programme

Aside from the usefulness of networking, the champion reported that they had been using some of the learning to enhance their skills in developing relationships with providers. Their role involves two key elements: business support and issuing grants, and they felt that the latter can often make it difficult to establish trusting relationships, particularly with larger providers (for example private chains). The champion explained:

I've been in role for 5 years and I am still struggling with the trust element; as I work for the LA they [providers] think 'big brother' is watching them. Any private businesses are reluctant to share information as they think you are going to use it against them. I have found it hard to build those relationships... Over the years there are certain providers I've got close to, the relationship is working well, they know who to turn to, and the confidentiality is there – but with bigger companies/chains, where the manager is in charge but driven by a management team, that [is] difficult

They reported that they have been using the influencing and coaching skills from the course, for example they have gained confidence when asking providers questions and feel better able to evaluate and challenge the responses if they are not adequate. The champion also felt that this confidence would enable them to develop the role further towards a consultancy style when developing relationships (and envisaged using the tools from the training in doing this) thereby contributing to their professional development in the future.

Working with providers

The champion did not feel overall that the support they were providing to settings had changed substantially as a result of the programme; they felt that it was the increase in their confidence that was deemed to make an impact, although they also reported taking a more formal approach, for example when setting out relationships (explaining what they will cover and what actions the provider needs to take).

The champion has been working with three providers with which they have used the learning from the training; all have involved undertaking a business health check (not the 4Children tool) to work through and assess sustainability.

Providers have found the process very useful and reported that the support had increased their confidence; one felt that it had made them focus on new aspects of the business that previously they had not considered through being able to 'take a step back' from the day-to-day work. They reported that they had made some key changes as a result of the support including employing a member of staff to manage a monthly management account:

Now I realise how it's more cost effective to have someone come in for a couple of hours a week to focus on admin and accounts rather than you having to do everything.

When reflecting on the key strengths of the support the provider felt that the champion's knowledge and commitment to finding out information for them was invaluable. They also felt that the training had enhanced the champions' knowledge. Overall they reported that the support was essential in enabling them to succeed with the business:

It just makes it so much easier to have the support – they are supporting you all the way through and that makes me more confident...[The champion] is just so valuable to us, that we've got this help there constantly – and when you're so busy dealing with the day to day running of things. [The champion] is a superstar.

Another provider that the champion used the health check with felt that the process had highlighted issues or weaknesses within their business management that they were previously unaware of, but they also felt that it had boosted their confidence by making them aware of processes they were doing well. They reported that the processes had been very useful, particularly because of the regularity of the visits from the champion, which were more intensive and structured than the usual support the provider receives.

The provider found the regularity enabled them to make progress with the actions from the meetings, and the champion was able to move them along because there were clear expectations on both sides about what the sessions would cover.

They reported the support had enhanced their confidence, not just through the awareness of good practice surfaced through the process, but due to the approach of the champion in providing re-assurance. The provider also felt that this led to a boost to the champion's own confidence in enabling them to see the results of their work:

I think [the champion] has gained in confidence because we've said we're grateful for what [they've] done for us and how it's helped in our business

They also described how the support has had a knock-on effect within the business in encouraging them to evaluate other aspects of the organisation and to work with staff to make operational improvements.

Impact on the support for providers

As the case studies highlight, champions have been using the learning from the training in their work with providers in a number of different ways, depending on how they are delivering business advice and support. Overall, the delivery of support can be grouped into the following types/ways:

- Direct or intensive support to meet specific needs (for example when supporting providers with expansion or financial difficulties);
- Routine monitoring visits, for example through annual business health check procedures;
- Ad hoc support in response to requests for information or advice.

In many cases champions are supporting providers in multiple ways (i.e. the forms of support are not mutually exclusive). The sub-sections below describe some of the findings on how the programme has influenced these types of support and the work that champions are doing with local providers.

Direct or intensive support

All of the champions involved in the case studies provide direct 'face-to-face' support for providers as part of their roles, although the extent and nature of this support varies (as outlined above).

Within the business skills programme champions were invited to work with some of the providers they were already supporting in this 'direct' way to form case studies for the assignments; this was to enable them to put the learning into practice. As part of the evaluation we spoke to some of these case study providers, as well as other providers that had received direct support from a champion, and we tried to unpack the key impact of the training in terms of how the support had changed, if at all, from what would usually be provided.

For most champions the key changes relate to the impacts described above: they had used some of the knowledge, skills and approaches gained from the programme when working directly with providers, and this was felt to have improved the quality of the support. Some champions also felt that the impact of the programme on their confidence had fed through into the support, for example when using some of the influencing skills or when giving advice on business issues if they were relatively new to the role.

For some champions, intensive support is only provided where providers are in need of urgent intervention, for example if their business is struggling and they are experiencing sustainability issues. Some of the key examples of the types of support provided in these situations were:

- Supporting pre-school committee members to understand the legal requirements of their roles (for example case study 3);
- Helping providers facing sustainability issues to comply (e.g. using a checklist) and to put adequate financial management and planning processes in place;
- Helping with marketing, for example if a provider has low numbers and needs to attract new business;
- Working with providers facing a significant change, for example a move in premises or a change in management.

For this type of support some of the most useful elements of the training were the tools for formalising the support, particularly the Seven C analysis, which champions were using to manage the expectations of the provider and to highlight the possible outcomes, including for businesses at risk of closure. As one champion described:

The thing we would have done differently is the formalising of certain aspects: with the two settings that I've supported that were in crisis in effect we talked through the process...both of them are receiving a grant from the LA to ensure that they don't close... there we have a very clear process – and an outcome that we would have talked through with the settings as part of that contracting/initial contract.

Some of the business analysis/diagnostic tools gained through the training (such as SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis and Seven S analysis) were also felt to be particularly useful for champions supporting providers experiencing sustainability issues, acting as useful prompts for encouraging them to think strategically about their businesses. As one champion explained, for some businesses it is 'a long journey' to move from a situation of financial difficulty to being viable, and helping them to analyse their businesses and think strategically is an essential part of this process. This is primarily because providers need to take responsibility and ownership of the decisions needed to improve the situation.

Case study 6 and 7 (Joint case study)

Background

We conducted a joint case study with two business champions involved in the programme that work for the same local authority. Both of the champions felt that the training had benefitted them and the providers that they supported, and that it had “*come at the right time*” in light of the economic context and challenges within the sector.

The champions were motivated to take part in the programme in order to update their existing knowledge and skills. They are members of a well-established team and have been working for the same local authority for a long time. As such they did not have a particular need to increase their business knowledge (although there were some topics they wanted to find out more about, for example providing legal advice), but instead they had a desire to keep up-to-speed on the tools and approaches available to use in their roles.

Impact of the training for the champions

There were some differences between the champions in what they gained from the training. One of the champions particularly valued learning about the influencing skills, including positive psychology and using probing questions to build up a relationship with providers and to ‘*get the most of the person/business you are advising*’. The champion explained how some providers will avoid discussing certain issues or answering questions, for example if they are in denial about a problem, do not know how to answer, or do not want to comply. The information about nudges and tools within the training was valued and something that the champion was putting into practice in their daily role when meeting with providers.

The other champion valued the self-awareness they gained through the training in knowing the tools and techniques they are using and in being able to explain them in a more formal way. They felt that this had enhanced their professionalism in working with providers, as well as in being able to explain to others what they are doing in their role.

When I go out now I do try and think about the various aspects of what has been learnt... it's just interesting for me to think 'how am I going to put this theory into practice' and make sure it is well implemented. So the nice thing is... you can think what you did and put names to it.

Both champions also felt that they had gained valuable insight into practice in other areas from attending the training, and one explained that it had made them aware that some of the problems they are facing are not unique to their locality; this had empowered them to seek solutions by networking with champions and learning from their experiences.

Both champions also felt that the programme had raised the profile of their work with providers and this was perceived as a benefit in encouraging providers to cooperate. They also felt that it had empowered them and the wider team, and as part of this the 4Children brand was felt to be important, as well as the opportunity to gain accreditation through the programme.

I think it's actually raised the profile of the work that we do... what I've observed from the whole team coming out from this work is that it's actually galvanised the team. It's about that cohesion: taking the professional work on an extra step and actually getting the buy-in from settings that really do need our advice and making that happen.

Unintended impact

The programme also had a wider impact for both of the champions in its relevance for some of the organisational changes they are currently experiencing: the local authority has been undergoing a re-structure and the champions found the change management content within the training to be a useful lens through which to consider these experiences. As one of them explained:

It was interesting to see the change management profile within this training because it is exactly what is happening to us here; so whilst you could relate it to what you're doing with your settings, for me as a manager it was [also] about how I supported my team, my colleagues, and wider colleagues as well in the division.

Success factors

The champions attended the training with other colleagues from within their local authority team; in total there were 4 of them. This seemed to have acted as an advantage in enabling them to put the learning into practice because they were able to share their experiences as well as the workload associated with the assignments. This was felt to have 'enriched' the experience. One of the champions commented that attending as a team made it easier to disseminate the information from the training more widely to other colleagues within their organisation and to 'empower' them to improve their work in providing business support too.

Supporting providers

Both champions reported that they had used the tools and techniques from the programme to enhance their work with providers, and particularly the diagnostic tools such as the Seven C analysis and Seven S analysis. As part of the programme the champions worked together (and with their colleagues that were involved) to support a voluntary-run setting that were looking to expand their services in order to ensure sustainability.

The setting had already been receiving support from the team for a number of years, but as part of the programme the champions worked to put some of the theory into practice. The provider was looking to establish an extended holiday placement scheme because they had some sustainability issues and had realised (through the business support already received) that they had spare childcare places in the summer months. The focus of the support was to help them to consider their options and develop a plan for the extended provision.

As part of the support the champions met with the provider and had a whole day workshop to go through the business plan and marketing strategy. The provider reported that the support made them aware that they '*hadn't been selling the business well*' and it showed them what funders would be looking for when considering a business plan/funding application. They also realised that there were significant changes they could make to improve the marketing of the business, for example they did not have an independent website. On advice from the champions they have since set this up and feel it has been beneficial compared to relying on word of mouth.

The provider felt that the support had been very effective and had enabled them to look into how to transform the business (particularly with the idea of the summer placement scheme):

The innovation that I got from the whole thing is tapping into what we have, and at the same time looking out there to see what we can bring in; so there are places that we

don't sell, we don't use because we have some children that are here just for the free education which means come summer time they will not be in, so instead of losing that money, we could have a summer childcare scheme to generate funding to put into the nursery.

Reflecting on the key strengths of the support, the provider felt that the champions had given them self-belief and enabled them to realise their potential; they valued the opportunity to test out different ideas with the champions and to analyse the business. The provider felt that in this way it had updated their business knowledge and skills (they studied business management many years ago) and also enhanced their confidence: *"it brings the best out in you. I cherish the involvement... truly they are champions"*.

The provider felt that some of the specific tools used had been useful: notably SWOT analysis, PESTLE analysis and Seven S analysis. Overall they felt that the champions' passion in supporting them had been key to the success of the support, as well as the flexibility, for example in offering to do an intensive visit the champion's enabled the provider to find time to focus on the business that otherwise would have been difficult. The provider felt this reflected the champions' understanding of their daily pressures.

From the champions' perspectives, the difference in the support provided as a result of involvement in the business skills programme (compared to what would have been provided anyway) is that they used and reflected on the diagnostic tools and were also aware of some additional funding sources. The champions also felt that the cultural and stakeholder analysis carried out as part of the change management process had been enhanced through the training:

Using that tool... made it clearer to the provider for her to see the impact each stakeholder has on the business and what they need to do to take it forward. It adds value to it.

Some champions describing support given to providers facing difficulties also felt that the relationship skills had been particularly valuable: they felt that the training had enabled them to use techniques such as probing questions to overcome some of the initial 'defensiveness' and to establish trust. For example one champion described how they had managed to develop a relationship with a previously disengaged setting that was experiencing difficulties through using the coaching skills and the preparatory tools:

Before I went in the setting had not been too receptive... so I did a lot of read-up and used a lot of the tools, the nudges etc, before I went in to make sure not only had I done my homework on the [provider] itself but I'd done my homework on the psychology; so by the time I did finish [the provider] was actually vehemently saying 'oh yes this needs to be done', whereas before she was in denial.

Other champions are more involved in proactively supporting providers at set up or with expansion in order to meet local sufficiency requirements. For example:

- Guiding new providers with the process of developing business plans, marketing plans and applying for funding (for example case study 1);
- Providing training and information for new childminders to aid them with the registration process;
- Aiding expansions to existing business, for example setting up holiday schemes or increasing the number of places.

With each form of support the champion will tailor the approach depending on the needs of the provider. In developing business plans and funding applications the champions reported the business skills programme had given them useful templates to use and ways of structuring the process, as well as more general skills such as managing meetings or observations skills. The increased sector knowledge was also felt to have impacted on the support in some cases—for example one champion that was new to the role felt that the training had given them a greater awareness of the lack of business skills within the sector and that this had helped them to focus their support:

One thing it has shown me is that a lot of pre-schools are set up because someone liked children or liked childcare, and now they have to become more business-minded because if they don't they are not going to be sustainable; so its passing on the skills and getting people to realise that actually it is a business.

For some new champions the training was felt to have directly improved their own knowledge of key processes such as developing a business plan, making them better able to advise providers on what to include and why. Furthermore, for more established champions the training had led to them making improvements or adjustments to approaches that they were already familiar with; for example one champion worked to support a new provider to develop a business plan using SWOT analysis, but as a result of the training they included wider staff in this process (in addition to the setting owner (case study 10)). This was felt to be beneficial.

In terms of the registration process for childminders, one champion reported that as a result of the programme they had changed the content of the training they provide by incorporating more in-depth aspects of business management and planning, for example covering cash flows and how to develop business plans.

With expansions, business champions often provide support with similar processes to those needed at set up (business and marketing planning) to aid providers to meet the requirements for grant funding. As a result of the programme some champions reported adapting this form of support using some of the diagnostic tools to support providers to think more strategically about their plans. Also useful were some of the approaches for cultural and stakeholder analysis, as well having enhanced knowledge of potential funding sources (see case study 6 and 7).

These new skills were also perceived as becoming increasingly useful as many champions are currently involved in supporting providers to expand provision to disadvantaged two year olds (in line with the recent legislative change). This funding is dependent on the business viability and the quality of providers; as such champions will be working to enable providers to adequately take on these places and to build their capacity in terms of business skills:

With the two-year old funding we are trying to encourage providers to take on a pre-school or become a childminder. They have got to have experience of working with children in that market, but often they don't have the skills in terms of the business market.

In some local authorities, providers are able to access the champions and their teams through a service level agreement, where they can 'draw down' support as needed. The activities will therefore vary according to the provider's situation and type, for example voluntary-managed committees will often seek support, particularly for new treasurers. Often face-to-face hours of support are limited by the agreement; some champions felt the training had better enabled them to maximise the use of this time, and the associated knowledge of other sources of information/support were useful for being able to signpost providers.

Case study 8

Background

As most of the champions were already working in roles that involve providing day-to-day business support to providers prior to the training, the impact has been felt through an enhancement of their existing work, rather than as a new area of knowledge or expertise.

One such champion felt that the training had acted as a useful refresher, clarifying their thinking and practice in a number of areas and providing some new tools to use in their work with providers. The champion works for 4Children but is seconded to a local authority.

Unlike some of the other participants involved in the programme, the champion's work involves providing support relating to business management and development, but also to improve the quality of provision – the role is therefore not exclusively business focussed. The champion's role involves development work across the region based on local sufficiency data; they identify where childcare provision is needed and work with providers to support them to set up or expand. They also undertake quality monitoring visits.

Part of the motivation for taking part in the programme was therefore to build on their strengths in terms of business knowledge and skills; they come from a business background and have more experience in this area compared to other members of the team, therefore it seemed like a good opportunity to enhance it as a specialism within the role.

Impact of the training

The champion felt that the training had enhanced their existing work, rather than led to any substantial changes to practice. They reported gaining new knowledge on some topics, for example the legality of running committees, and also learning about some new techniques to use with providers, particularly the Seven C analysis. In addition to this the champion felt that the training had enabled them to reflect on what they were already doing in a beneficial way:

It did introduce me to things I hadn't done before... with others [tools they already knew] it allowed me to reflect on how I use them and how to make them more effective...I had been using some of these things for years, but others were quite new to me. A bit of both.

Also valued was the business health check tool, which the champion had used with some settings and felt had worked well.

The champion reported that the programme had increased their confidence through clarifying some areas of knowledge, and helping them to identify areas to improve. They felt it was important to make sure that core business skills are continually updated and that the training had formed part of their development in the role:

Core [business] knowledge can always be improved on, which is why this training is excellent, so although I had some skills I've got others and improved on them.

Reflecting back on their motivation for getting involved in the programme, the champion felt that it had helped to establish them as the business 'expert' within the team.

Support for providers

The champion described a key part of their role as involving brokering networks between providers, and supporting them to think more strategically about their businesses. They felt

there was a real need for this type of support, particularly in their (rural) location where many childcare businesses are isolated. The champion described the importance of encouraging providers to share practice to look at how things could be done differently or better, and of helping them to overcome some of the 'preciousness' around sharing (due to perceived competition).

As part of the support the champion therefore works to broker relationships, making recommendations for them to host one another and to share different aspects of their work. They reflected it would be useful if there was a stronger drive in the sector to encourage this and promote networking opportunities focussed specifically on business knowledge and skills (rather than quality/practice).

The champion has supported three providers using the learning from the training directly to date; this reflects the wide remit of their role in terms of providing quality support in addition to business support. They also felt that their enhanced knowledge had influenced the other support they provide, for example they do annual RAG visits with providers to assess compliance and practice, and they reported that as a result of the training they were focussing more on business viability and growth within this process.

One of the providers they have directly used the learning with has received support to expand their business; they are currently running a pre-school and are expanding as part of a move to a new school site (and part of this involves a new building). The champion has been supporting them to develop a business plan and in applying for funding for the expansion and part of this has involved helping them to analyse their business using various tools including SWOT analysis.

The champion has also advised the provider about marketing the business and how to target it, and the provider reported they had helped broker relationships between them and other local settings that can also offer support. The provider felt that the support had been extremely effective: they reported that the champion has been approachable and available whenever they have needed support, and they felt that the champion's knowledge had been a source of re-assurance in the expansion, and that they would be relying on their input in the future to support with the set up:

[The champion] has always been supportive, at the end of the phone, especially when we were moving premises. I know the support will be ongoing in the future.

Another provider that has received direct support was also expanding their nursery to offer out of school provision. The champion had primarily given them support with financial planning and management: helping them to use a cash flow spreadsheet and manage different elements in order to put together a business case.

The champion also helped the provider in marketing their business, introducing new ideas and helping them to plan for marketing activities within their budgeting. The provider had put some of the ideas into practice, for example they looked into advertising in local magazines including those focussed on lifestyle and topics broader than childcare, such as food (they angled the advert to focus on food provision within the nursery).

The provider described the champion as being available whenever they needed advice, and they felt that the support had made a real difference to their business. When reflecting on the strengths of the support they highlighted the champions knowledge and approachability:

[The champion] was there whenever I needed [them], and still is – [they are] still in contact, it didn't suddenly stop, [they] are there at the end of the line if I need anything.

Routine support processes

Another way in which some champions support providers is through routine visits to settings to assess business viability and sustainability (and sometimes also quality of provision, depending on the remit of their role). In some cases this is attached to funding (i.e. where providers have received funding from the local authority and need to comply), but in some areas it may also form part of an annual monitoring process to assess the needs of all local providers.

As part of these routine visits champions reported carrying out business health check processes, and for some this had been developed or improved as a result of the training programme. For example, one champion reported altering their template and developing additional tools to use on visits as a result of the training (see case study 4):

The other thing we are doing on the back of the training is putting together a toolkit we can use with settings, with advice sheets that we will be taking on visits.

These tools and techniques were reported to have brought consistency to the health check process, enabling the champion to better articulate what they require/expect from providers and to use prompts, for example in talking through what an invoice or a business plan should look like.

For another champion involved in carrying out routine health check visits, the training was felt to have improved the process by equipping them with influencing and coaching skills. The champion reported that they were more aware of how to ask questions and to interpret responses i.e. better able to evaluate responses and challenge the provider if needed. As they explained:

I now know more about the reason for asking a question in the first place, and understand about getting the question back in the right format, I feel more confidence challenging that...Because they think a lot of what they're doing is correct, but there are certain things where they say 'X does that for me' and imply they have no responsibility – but if you push it makes sure they realise [that as]...an owner or manager... they need to know what's going on.

For some champions, the training had also prompted them to launch their own routine health check processes (in some cases these had been in development but the training was felt to have spurred them on).

Ad hoc or light touch support

Most of the champions involved in the evaluation reported they receive ad hoc requests for information and advice from providers; this can be to providers that contact their team or a related local authority service (for example Family Information Service, see case study 9) or as part of ongoing relationships with providers that have previously received other support.

In providing this type of support champions often act as a 'sounding board' for providers seeking reassurance or in need of specific information. Champions reported that they had found the learning from the business skills training on different sources to use for signposting providers particularly useful when providing this type of support.

Case study 9

Background

For some business champions the 4Children programme is felt to have come at a particularly advantageous time, given the widespread changes and re-structuring occurring in many local authorities. For example one champion that has been providing direct business support to providers for many years felt that the programme has provided an opportunity to share practice and resources across the sector, and acted as a chance for personal development, at a time when economic cutbacks have made training and networking less of a priority.

The champion began working for their local authority 11 years ago, and they are currently the only member of the early years team specifically focussed on business support. Reflecting on their motivation to get involved in the programme, the champion explained that in the past they used to attend quarterly meetings for local authority business support officers and managers from across the region to share practice, problem solve and keep up-to-date with sector knowledge. However recent re-structures have meant that many business managers/support officers roles have changed and some are no longer in post, and the meetings have not happened for sometime. The business skills programme was therefore a welcomed chance to share experiences with the other business champions. As the champion explained:

For me with all the current changes it was an opportunity to make sure I was keeping abreast of opportunities to up-skill and train... I mean to be fair [my local authority] has been very good with providing training opportunities, however there have been cutbacks recently as a result of the current economic climate, the Business Champions programme provided an opportunity to update my knowledge base, but also with a lot of courses like this it involves working with your counterparts/peers and I welcomed the opportunity to share learning and best practice, to network...this has become increasingly important as a number of counterparts have disappeared or their roles have changed.

The champion's role

This champion has a particularly complex and multi-faceted role compared to some of the other business champions on the programme. In addition to being involved in providing direct support to providers with business management, business development and sustainability issues, they also manage funding allocation processes, for example they are currently setting criteria and arranging the grants panel (in an advisory role) for the new two-year old funding. In managing the team the champion works closely with the quality support officers and development workers to give providers information, advice and support. This ranges from ad hoc queries through the Early Years Department and the Family Information Service within the LA, to intervening and supporting TAS (team around the setting) groups where settings are a cause for concern (for example triggered by an inadequate Ofsted rating).

Impact of the training

Compared to some of the other champions involved in the programme, the champion is much more experienced, with a very high 'baseline' level of knowledge and awareness of how to provide business support. They were familiar with much of the content of the training in terms of underlying approaches, although some of the specific tools and techniques were

new, for example the Seven S analysis. This was felt to be an additional useful tool, but as an alternative or 'up-to-date' way of providing existing support, rather than as a new concept or theory.

In this way the training was felt to be valuable for validating their current practice, and for reinforcing their confidence as a result.

It reinforced the fact that what I was doing was correct and similar to other business professionals ...that the practices we have here are those that other local authorities are following...I suppose it does boost your confidence knowing that you are on the right track, that you are delivering sound principles and business advice and that your colleagues are doing the same.

The champion also felt that the establishment of the Information Hub as part of the course was particularly useful, although they raised an important question as to the sustainability of such resources into the future and beyond the funding period for the programme.

As outlined, one of the anticipated benefits of the training was the opportunity to learn about experiences in other local authorities and to share best practice; it was felt that these benefits were realised. The champion also felt that they had been able to update some of their information sources to use with providers (for example on funding opportunities), and to gain some new information, for example through the networking session on Community Interest Companies (CICs).

However, the champion also made a suggested improvement for future networking events; to have a clearer distinction between the content for champions and the content for providers (or separate sessions). This is because the champion described how in one particular case a local provider had expressed a view that they felt they could become a business champion; this was perceived as a significant risk given that they did not have the necessary underlying business knowledge and skills, and were therefore not in a position to provide sound business advice (the champion also highlighted potential issues with insurance, that providers may perceive business champions from other settings as competition and therefore may be reluctant or unwilling to share information about their business practice).

In terms of process learning it may therefore be that there was a need at some events for more clarity as to the purpose of the champion training, compared to the other networking events, and for a clearer specification as to the knowledge/skills needed within the champion role.

Support for providers

The champion felt that the programme had impacted on the support they deliver to providers by '*giving [them] more to use*', i.e. through validating existing tools and also providing some new ones that can be used to analyse businesses and help providers in making decisions.

Reflecting the breadth of the champion's role, as part of the case study we spoke to two providers that had received business advice and support, but under very different circumstances.

One provider, a nursery, was experiencing sustainability issues and needed support from the provider to develop a business plan and to apply for a sustainability grant. The process of developing the business plan involved several face-to-face meetings; the champion explained the different aspects the provider would need to include and outlined the structure, and once the provider had developed a draft, the champion gave feedback and signposted

them to key information, for example who to contact for local information on childcare and where to find statistics/demographic data.

Overall the provider felt that the support had been extremely effective not only in terms of directly enabling them to access the sustainability funding, but in helping to build their underlying business knowledge and awareness. They felt that the techniques the champion used (for example SWOT analysis) enabled them to understand and break down different elements of the business in a manageable way. An essential strength of the support was felt to be the extensive knowledge the champion has on all areas of the business, and the ability to understand the providers needs beyond the specific request for support. Their interpersonal skills were also identified as key:

[The champion] is just very approachable; easy to talk to, doesn't ever make you feel like you should know things already, [the champion will] talk you through things and make sure you're okay with how everything is working and how to put it all together.

The provider felt that they would retain the knowledge they had gained in terms of how to put together a detailed business plan, particularly because the champion had made them aware of key sources of information to use as a lasting resource in the future – they also reported that this had made them more confident:

I think because you have the correct information that you need you're more confident to go out there and speak to other people about the information that you require; whereas before you probably wouldn't know where to access it or who to contact..

The champion had also supported the provider with marketing the business, and the process of completing the business plan was felt by the provider to have helped them to understand how to direct and market the business in the local area, through an understanding of the 'gaps' and likely opportunities.

The other provider received support from the champion under different circumstances: they were already involved in running a children's centre, and decided to intervene when the on-site nursery was due to close by forming a Community Interest Company and putting together a business plan/funding application.

The provider felt that the support had been crucial in enabling them to take over the business and that the impact had been evidenced through the ongoing success of the nursery in terms of profitability and the delivery of high quality childcare (waiting lists and an outstanding Ofsted grading). They reported being 'dependent' on the champion not only in putting together the business plan but in understanding the complexities of running a childcare business. The provider described the sector as complex and felt that they needed the support of the champion to navigate it, especially when they started the take over bid:

In the early days it really was touch and go as to whether the nursery stayed open, and I've got to say without [the champion] it might not have... I come from a business background but I've got to say this is like no field I've ever come across. Running an early years business, from a budgetary, financial planning point of view, is a very complex; [it's a] difficult business to plan because you're talking about different occupancy levels, how sessions are split, it's not like selling apples and potatoes... I think you need specialist support with it... the support is essential

They also reported using one of the specific tools (an Excel costing spreadsheet) on an ongoing basis to plan for the future of the business. This tool was felt to be extremely useful and something they were 'heavily reliant on'.

The provider has also recently taken over a second nursery and has worked with the champion to develop plans and access the funding to be able to do this. As part of this (and in the establishment of the first business) they have also received support from the development workers/quality support workers in the team, and they reflected that several of them also have a good awareness of the business – not in terms of technical expertise, but in terms of pointing out the potential implications of decisions about quality on the business (e.g. occupation rates); this could reflect the influence of the champion as a manager within the team.

Both of these providers have an ongoing relationship with the business champion and are continuing to receive support: despite the differences between them, they both described the champion as having had an invaluable impact on their businesses and in supporting them to gain knowledge, skills and confidence as owners.

Future success

The champion felt that the opportunity to take the qualification from the programme even further, and potentially to Diploma level or beyond, would be beneficial in terms of continuing professional development.

They also felt that having a continuing opportunity for networking with the other champions would be valuable. From a practical perspective, 4Children could consider acting as potential facilitators for such an opportunity, or it would be worth considering flexible ways of bringing colleagues and or other professionals together to continue to share practice and learn, as well as to continue using the resources associated with the Information Hub.

To cascade the learning the champion also reported that they were hoping to include information from the CIC session in their quarterly newsletter to providers, and would consider running training on it if there is resulting interest.

Some champions had specifically signposted providers to the 4Children online resources, including the business self-audit tool, and in some instances this was being used to inform further more intensive support:

[For providers] it is about knowing that they can go to a particular place. We're saying have a look at the 4Children support and talk to a development officer about what it flags up. We talk through the health check and then talk through the points it raises, so it is a good starting point – I would make that health check a starting point every time. You can say 'let's look at this together', if they do that first and then come and see you – you can see what they can do about it.

Most of the champions involved in the case studies and interviews felt that the knowledge they had gained through the programme was feeding into this light touch support in an intangible way: sometimes consciously (such as in knowing up-to-date sources of information as outlined) but often in more subtle ways, as one champion reported:

It is in everything I do – because we give business support – so even if someone phones up with a query there is all of the learning at the back of your mind.

Key qualities of an effective business champion

During our case study interviews we asked champions and providers what they thought were the key qualities of an effective business champion. The key themes from these interviews are outlined in the following sub-sections.

Business knowledge and sector knowledge

Both the champions and the providers described two key areas of knowledge required by an effective business champion: theoretical knowledge of business and management principles and having a firm and practical understanding of the childcare sector. These twin pillars of knowledge mean that champions can appreciate the situations often facing providers and are able to tailor their support appropriately in response.

Interviewees described how the regulatory, social and political pressures on the sector mean that general business principles are not always relevant in isolation from the working conditions of the sector, and that tailored, contextualised solutions are therefore invaluable:

It is very different to a commercial sector, and I think as a business support provider you need to have that sector knowledge. Sometimes applying the sort of 'standard' training and process and approach to business support doesn't necessarily work.

According to the interviewees the key elements of the essential sector knowledge required by champions include an understanding of Ofsted requirements on ratios as well as an understanding the wider pressures facing the childcare businesses.

First hand experience of the sector

Some providers felt that champions benefit from having first hand experience of the sector. Personal experience of the different providers' roles, demands on their time and the issues they face can help champions quickly understand the particular problem so that they can respond with appropriate solutions. Several of them, for example, have previously worked as providers.

Positive interpersonal skills and behaviours

Providers described how champions need to be (and often are) approachable, friendly and genuinely motivated to support the business to succeed. From the champion's perspective this is also a crucial quality; they highlighted the importance of being able to empathise, listen and to use appropriate and tailored communication skills depending on the clients' needs, and ultimately to take a genuine interest in their businesses.

[People] can give advice and it might just be going through the motions, but [the champion] and the team want us to succeed, they want us to have viable businesses and to deliver quality provision in the settings and I think that comes across [provider]

More specifically, providers and champions describe the importance of positive communication skills, in both listening to providers and conveying ideas. As one provider suggested, this positive approach really helped them to open up to and trust the champion:

They've never...belittled me or belittled my business plan in any way, they've always been really positive in their approach.

In addition, champions benefit from having problem-solving skills, so they are able to analyse and identify problems within the business, and to support the provider to come up with

solutions. All of these interpersonal skills are wrapped up in terms of champions having a professional approach - doing thorough research and preparation beforehand in order to be able to present innovative ideas and support the provider when they meet.

Networking and relationship building

Interviewees described how strong champions have excellent networking skills (as well as access to relevant networks) so that they can quickly signpost providers to relevant sources of support and local contacts. This relies on champions having some knowledge of what's offer within the community and their ability to ensure the necessarily relationships are established and maintained.

These networking skills depend on the champion's ability to build trust amongst a range of partners - which is largely dependent on their credibility within the sector and strong interpersonal skills.

The main thing is that trust/relationships you build because the more they trust you with confidential issues, the more they will share and the more you can help them. Talking about problems makes them take ownership as well.

It was also felt that champions should think about their relationships with providers as a long term investment - from approaching settings at start up, providing training on financial management, carrying out regular monitoring visits and sending an annual business questionnaire to find out how providers are and whether they are at risk/need support. This builds up providers' trust so that they know they are able to approach the champions when they need support.

Focus on sustainability

Personal experience of the sector and an honest, open approach to working with providers enables champions to offer realistic support and advice. This is valued by providers, particularly in terms of helping them work within their means. As two champions explained:

Knowing how far you can go, and stopping there and giving [the support] tot someone else if you can't go further, rather than thinking you can do everything.

You have to get to a point where you draw the line because there's only so much you can do.

In providing tailored and realistic advice champions feel that they are supporting providers in the longer term by encouraging them to take ownership of their businesses and to recognise that they need to be responsible and not overly dependent on the Local Authority:

As much as you do want to be there for them it's getting them to realise that this is their business and saying 'we can give you advice and point you to places that could help you, but you need to do it'. I think that, for a lot of providers and especially smaller pre-schools, is a big mind shift.

These are essential approaches in supporting providers to focus on ways to establish a sense of longer term sustainability even at a time of considerable flux.

Case study 10

Background

For one business champion the programme came at a particularly opportune time because they had recently begun a new role, focussed on directly supporting providers to run their businesses and making sure they are sustainable. The champion had previously been working in a business and finance role within the local authority, but it had not involved providing face-to-face advice and support to providers. They therefore had a desire to make sure their knowledge and skills were up-to-date and to learn tools and techniques to enable them to structure the support appropriately. As the champion explained:

This training was perfect timing to help me to be able to deliver my duties more effectively.

The champion now works with providers that request support when setting up their businesses, for example in sourcing premises, business planning, and marketing. They also use a health check process on an annual basis to ensure that providers are sustainable and financially viable. The health check process is divided into key aspects including HR, tax and mentions, employment issues, quality issues, legal issues and health and safety. There is a business check to make sure that the provider has appropriate plans in place. This health check process was already in development when the champion started the programme, but they felt the learning had helped them to refine it.

Using the learning from the training

The champion felt that the training had given them structure within their role, ensuring thoroughness. For example previously when they were planning a meeting they would have prepared and set out an agenda, but the training gave them a tool (Seven C analysis) to refine this process and to structure and clarify the key considerations in advance of running the meeting. The champion reported they had put this into practice through the tool, but also through an enhanced consciousness of the whole process.

The champion also reported an increase in their confidence as a result of the programme, in providing this structured approach for them to work to:

For me, in doing a new role, even though I had the underlying knowledge and experience, for me it was having something more structured – rubber stamping that [knowledge] with the training.

The champion reported that that they were using different elements of the training in their role, depending on the needs of providers. They felt that the training had enhanced their skills not just in terms of new tools, but in terms of using some of the approaches they were already aware of, for example they worked with one provider to do a SWOT analysis and analyse their business plan and cash flow. Although the champion was experienced in using this tool, as part of the training they were encouraged to involve wider staff in the process and gain their input. The champion did this with the provider and found that there were interesting differences between the perceived strengths and weakness between the manager and the other staff, and that this was useful learning with which to analyse the business.

Supporting providers

One of the providers, a community nursery, has been supported by the champion to develop their business plan and cash flow forecast; this has been in order to update their existing one (which was out of date) so that the new version could be used for fundraising and for an expansion opportunity.

The support involved several sessions to go through different aspects of the plan and templates to use. The champion has since provided feedback on a draft of the plan, and the support is ongoing. The provider felt that the support had focused them on the specific aspects of the business they need to develop, and to highlight risks to their future sustainability, as well as areas to improve.

They explained that the support had been particularly useful because of the practical focus; the champion supported them with realistic suggestions that they felt they could put into place, and enabled them to take a strategic view of the running of the business:

What [the champion] does is help me focus on some aspects I need to have in place; it's also [valuable] having an outside eye looking in – you can get a bit close to it, so it's good having someone outside saying 'there is a simpler way of doing thing'; they can introduce you to different skills for dealing with problems.

The provider reported that the support had increased their confidence because the champion had provided feedback on the positive aspects of the business, as well as on the areas to improve. They compared the support to that received from other sources (for example accountants) and felt that the champion sector knowledge was valuable because they were able to discuss the specific aspects of their role, rather than generalised issues.

Reflecting on the impact of the support on the providers they support, the champion felt that it had given them a chance to sit back and review their businesses – something that the champion thought they do not often do:

For the ones I've visited and supported so far it's given them the time to sit back and review the setting, what I've found is a lot of them are just running it and not thinking, just focussing on childcare and not focussing on the business... there are policies and procedures they've ignored, e.g. not having a contract in place, that have been identified through the health check – it has given more focus..

Business champions in the future

Overall the findings from the case studies and the interviews with business champions show that they are highly valued by childcare providers. When asked about alternative sources of support many providers reported that they would not know where else to go, and even where they felt other support (such as online resources) were valuable, they often reported that they felt this was only as an addition or supplement to the champion's support.

The champions seem to be valued because of their business knowledge and expertise, but perhaps more significantly because of the specific skills in tailoring this knowledge to meet the needs of the sector (as outlined in the section above on the key qualities of an effective champion). The specific complexities of the sector in terms of vulnerability to local demographic pressures, government legislation, regulatory processes, and the relatively low baseline level of business skills were all reported to make the champion role particularly impactful.

Overall there was a strong message that generic business support is not adequate for supporting providers and that the tailored support available through the business champions is much needed. At present much of this support is being provided through local authority services (although there are some independent and voluntary sector champions) but the wider economic and political context means that this landscape is currently changing. What is clear from the case study work is that in order to maximise the impact of this programme and embed the learning, champions need to be supported to maintain their knowledge and skills, to gain recognition for them, and to continue to develop them further.

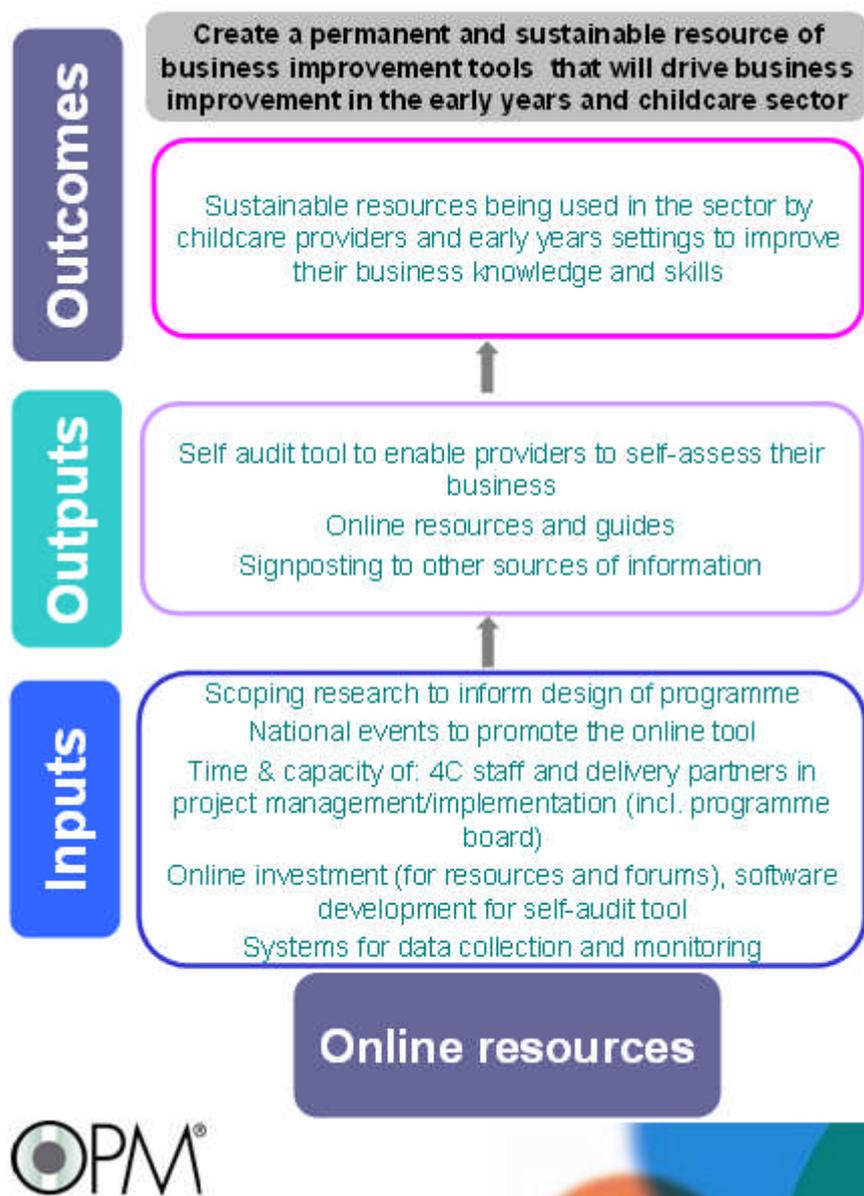
The opportunity to pursue the accreditation with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) constitutes an important way in which champions can do this; all of those interviewed were positive about this opportunity although some champions hoped that it would be extended even further as a pathway for continued professional development (through even higher level qualifications).

Another element of the programme that was felt to be important for securing longer term impacts in building the capacity of providers is the networking opportunities through both events and the online forums (LinkedIn and the Information Hub). Champions reported that they were already using these to develop partnerships across regions, and that this was also a way of encouraging providers to do the same. Some champions also expressed concern about the future of these opportunities; this is something that 4Children are considering that will require careful planning to ensure that the positive impacts that have been realised as a result of the programme are to be sustained.

3. Online resources

The online self-audit tool and resources are designed to act as an accessible source of information and guidance to providers in managing their businesses. The pathway to these outcomes is mapped out in the diagram below:

Fig 4: Logic model sections relating to online resources



The evaluation activity relating to the online resources how they address the activities and outcomes captured in the logic model has involved the analysis of self audit data to understand the extent to which business champions are working to disseminate and enhance the web-based support available to providers.

Key findings

- Online resources are increasingly being recognised as an important way of building capacity (business knowledge and skills) in the childcare sector;
- Whilst some providers regularly access resources such as government websites, forums and resources from their local authorities, there are still pervasive barriers such as low IT literacy and time/capacity constraints;
- For some providers direct support, for example for the business champions, is beneficial in building their confidence and abilities to use online resources;
- The 4Children Business Skills Support webpage has been well-received within the sector, with over 2,000 users in the past six months and a longer average visit compared to the rest of the website;
- The self-audit tool has been useful for enabling providers to assess their businesses and benchmark their practice, thereby increasing their knowledge and awareness. It has been used by over 1,200 providers to date with significant increases in recent months;
- Some of the scoring data suggests that the tool is successfully enabling providers to identify gaps in their business knowledge and skills, but qualitative evidence suggests that other forms of support (such as the advice provided by business champions) is important if providers are to address these gaps.

Decision to use the online resources; context, aims and objectives

Part of the aim of the 4Children business programme has been to create a sustainable resource for enhancing and maintaining business knowledge and skills within the sector. The use of online approaches has formed a key part of this; 4Children have developed a dedicated 'business skills' section on their website to enable providers (and champions) to access information, tools and templates (fig 5 below).

As part of the qualitative strands of research (interviews and case studies) we gathered evidence on the perceptions and experiences of providers in using these online resources, and well as online approaches in general.

Motivation for accessing online resources

Overall champions and providers reported that they felt online approaches were an effective way of up-skilling, but that this was largely dependent on the disposition and 'baseline' knowledge and skills of the providers.

In some cases providers are not computer literate and find it difficult to access information online, or they may face specific challenges if English is not their first language. For some providers time pressures and the day-to-day responsibilities of running a business can also mean that accessing information online is simply not a priority. Some champions also felt that in the childcare sector in particular it can be hard to engage providers in this way because many of them are more concerned with providing care than with business strategy (and are not from business backgrounds).

In some cases the quality of technological equipment (and the costs associated with updating this) can limit a provider's abilities to access and use information online. For example one case study reported that they had found it hard to access some of the tools recommended to them by their business champion (some of which were on the 4Children website) because their computer "was not quite up to scratch".

In contrast, in some settings the managers are regularly involved in finding information online and using the Internet to keep up-to-speed. Some of the main types of information those providers that reported using online resources referred to were local directories, forums (for managers of nurseries) and government websites such as Business Link (although this has recently changed).

Unlike those providers that struggled to find the time to use the Internet, some providers commented on the particular value of accessing support online given the time constraints and pressures of their role: *"It's essential I think because you can't be pinned down at any time in this type of business, you are so busy, so to be able to access it in the evening or on weekends is really useful."*

Providers also described some of the types of information that they felt it would be useful to access online but that they currently were not aware of, this included information about the curriculum and planning (on local authority websites), further opportunities for networking (i.e. not just hosted by the local authority but at a larger scale to enable providers from other areas to share practice), and resources relating to employment law. The legal aspects of running a business were felt to be a particularly difficult to access information on due to the use technical language/jargon, and it was felt that having more specific information relating to employment law for childcare providers would be valuable (the 4Children website contains information and resources in relation to this but providers were not always aware of it).

A key challenge highlighted in relation to the effectiveness of online approaches (that can act as a de-motivator) is not being able to assess whether the information is up-to-date. In accessing them remotely providers are reliant on the host organisation to ensure that they adjust their websites and resources in line with current sector developments (such as regulatory changes) – and unlike in face-to-face contact, the provider has no way of knowing whether this is the case. As one champion explained:

On the whole online approaches are effective, but the only issue is making sure they are up-to-date... it would be so useful if all people put a date on! At the moment a setting can go on and read something and it could be out of date.

Wider context

In the current economic climate, champions recognised the importance of encouraging and supporting providers to seek support from a wider range of sources than in the past (i.e. not just from the local authority but from public, private and voluntary sector organisations, as well as other childcare businesses).

Overall champions and providers felt that a blend of online and other forms of support (by phone or face-to-face) was important, particularly to meet the needs of providers less inclined to use the Internet and to provide more in-depth advice on certain issues:

Online support is okay if they are computer literate, but I still think one-to-one support, help at the end of the phone is better, so they can get in touch when they have a question. I think that is the best tool, taking away that face to face, trust element is a risk

– you can't get that from an online resource. It doesn't matter how much info you put on a computer.

Some providers are likely to need support to access online resources and build up their IT skills through training or support from the business champions. Once they have built up the skills and confidence to do this online resources can act as a useful source of ad hoc support – as long as the resources are easily accessible and specific enough, as with the 4Children website.

[Online resources] are useful in their right context, but it's getting buy-in. I think it's something we're moving more towards in the future, but I have to say after everything we've done so far in [the local authority][with the website, things aren't read. Settings don't have time to use what's there, or they don't understand it...

From the providers' perspective, even where online resources have been accessed and used to gather information, it was felt that further support was often needed to tailor the information to meet the needs of their business – and this was often best provided through direct contact with a business champion/support worker.

In light of the current economic difficulties, organisations are increasingly using online communication as a cost effective way of providing information and support; there was widespread recognition of this amongst providers and champions; for example local authorities are moving business support templates that used to be available in hard copy to being available online only. It was felt that this had the potential to benefit the sector, but that initial 'groundwork' would be needed with some providers to help them realise the value of using the Internet, as well as to develop the necessary practical skills.

Use of the 4Children business skills website and self audit tool

Use of the 'business skills support' webpage

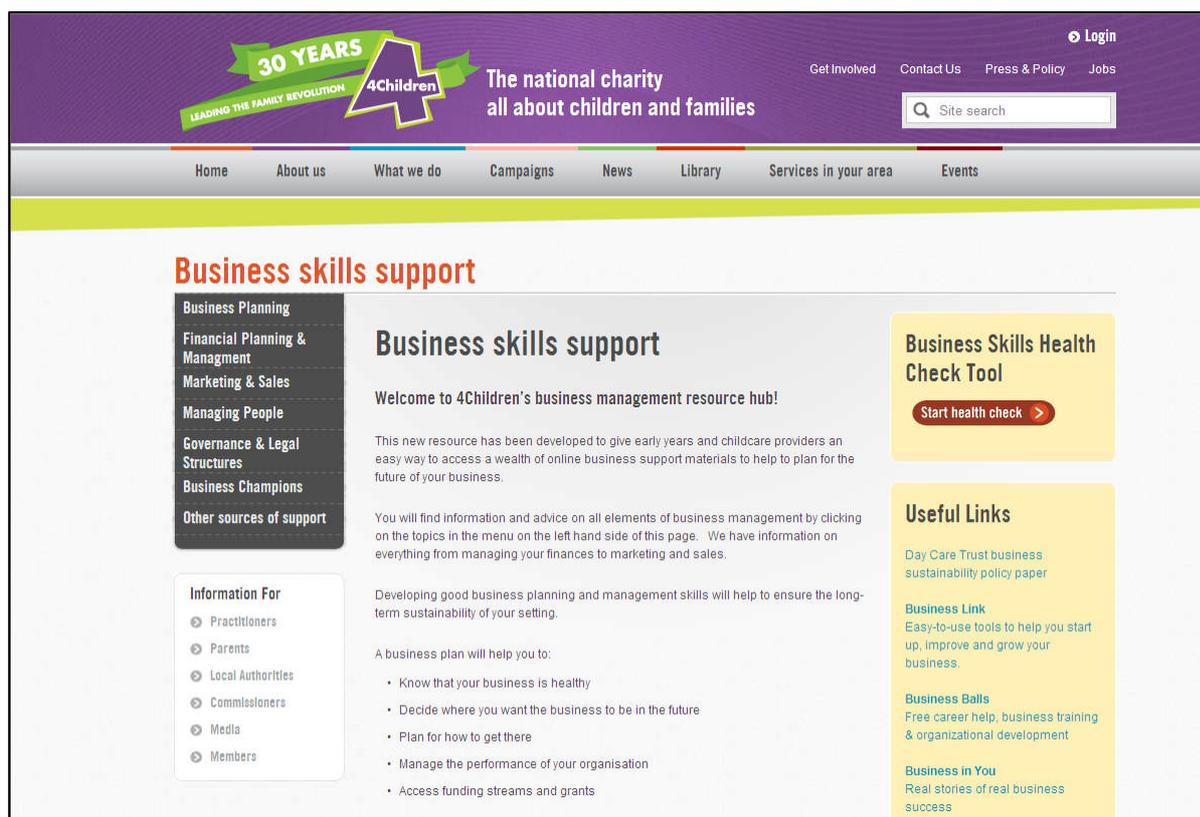
The 4Children website was recognised as a valuable source of information and support by most of the business champions, and some of the providers involved in the evaluation, but evidence suggests that some providers were still unaware of it.

The website was felt to particularly useful for signposting providers to specific sources of support on different aspects of business management, for example on where to get information about legal structures, and for providing access to key templates.

Website usage data for the 4Children website for the past six months (August 2012 to January 2013) indicates that the 'Business Skills Support' webpage has received 2,176 visits, and that the majority of these visits (66%) were 'unique', i.e. the users did not access other sections of the 4Children website but exclusively focussed on this webpage.

The number of visits peaked in November 2012 after a series of workshops at which the website was publicised; this also correlates with the rise in the number of self-audit tool submissions (as outlined below). This shows the impact and importance of promoting the website across the sector, as reflected in the qualitative findings concerning awareness of the site.

Figure 5: 4Children business skills webpage



An indicator of the potential impact of the online resources is the time spent on the Business Skills page: data shows that visitors spent a longer on average compared to the time spent on the overall 4Children website (an average of 1.6 minutes, compared to 1.26 minutes on any page on the website). This suggests that users are particularly interested in the content and more likely to spend longer using it compared to other information available.

Use of the self-audit tool

Those champions and providers that had experience of using the 4Children self-audit tool reported that it had been very useful in enabling them to assess their practice and identify areas for improvement. In most cases the tool had been introduced to providers through the business champion, along with signposting to other resources available on the 4Children website.

Some providers involved in the case studies had heard about the self-audit tool but had not realised it was available online for them to access; they felt that it was a good idea and something that they would find useful for analysing their businesses:

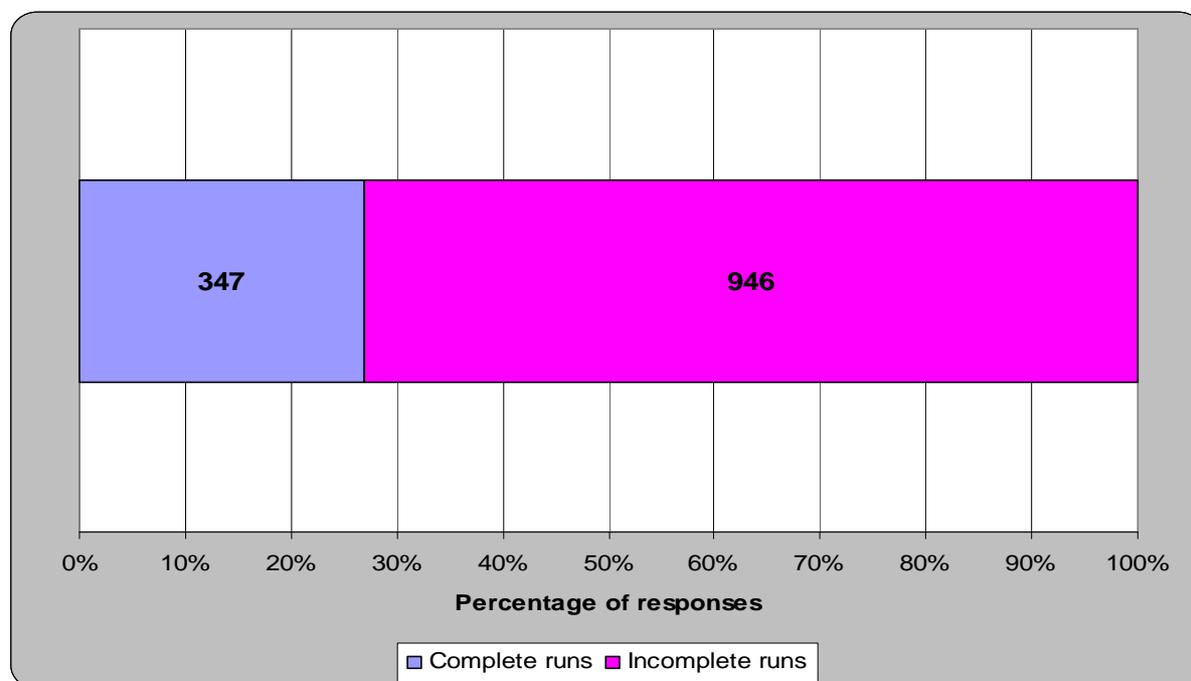
I think it would be quite useful really [self audit tool] – it would give you an idea of where your business is and where you maybe need to take it to go forward.

As graph C shows, data from 4Children on the use of the tool shows that from July 2012 to January 2013 there were 1,293 users, of which 347 (27%) were 'complete runs'; i.e. users that completed the whole tool and entered a password before submitting their responses. The remaining 946 responses were 'incomplete runs', where users did not enter their password. 4Children believe that these users may have been reluctant to enter this

information because of concerns about how the data would be used (for example they may have thought they would have been put on a mailing list and wanted to avoid this).

Given that some of the information entered into the tool can be sensitive (as it concerns business performance) it may also be that some users are reluctant to share the information.

Graph C: No. of complete and incomplete responses to the self-audit tool:



Graph D shows the number of self-audit tool responses from different types of provider, as well as whether the responses were 'complete' or 'incomplete' runs. Graph E shows the proportion of responses for each type of provider overall (for all responses, 'complete' or 'incomplete').

A range of providers have used the self-audit tool to date, most commonly pre-schools (446 responses, 34%), and nurseries (385 responses, 30%). Evidence from the case studies suggests that these types of provider are more likely to receive business support from champions, and therefore potentially more likely to also seek online support and/or to have been signposted to the tool.

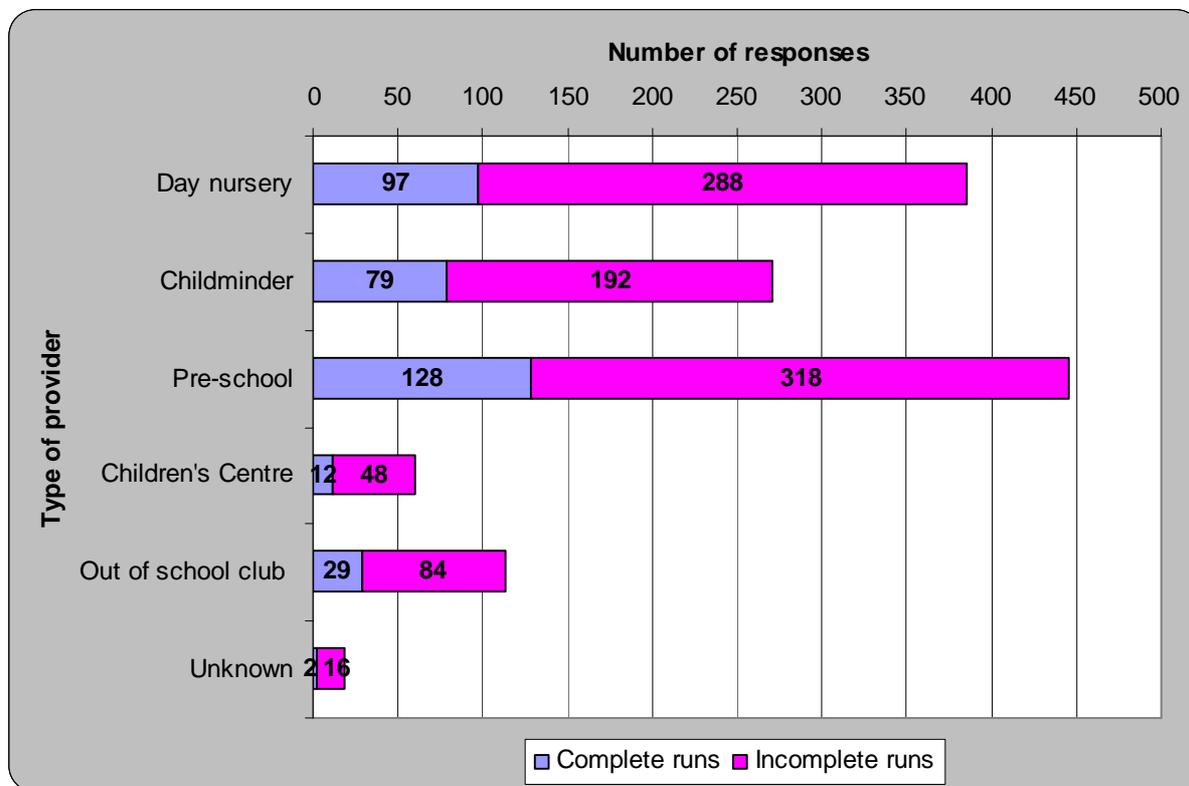
There are a relatively high number of responses from childminders (271, 21%), a positive sign given that these are often isolated/working independently and therefore likely to benefit from access to support and information online. As the graphs show there are also fewer responses from Children's Centres, but this may reflect the profile of the sector in that these types of businesses are more likely to be larger organisations (or chains) with their own internal dedicated business training and resource.

There is some evidence from the usage data that as with the 4Children business skills webpage, over time the use of the self-audit tool has increased with a surge in November 2012, most likely due to the work 4Children did to disseminate the tool at some of their events.

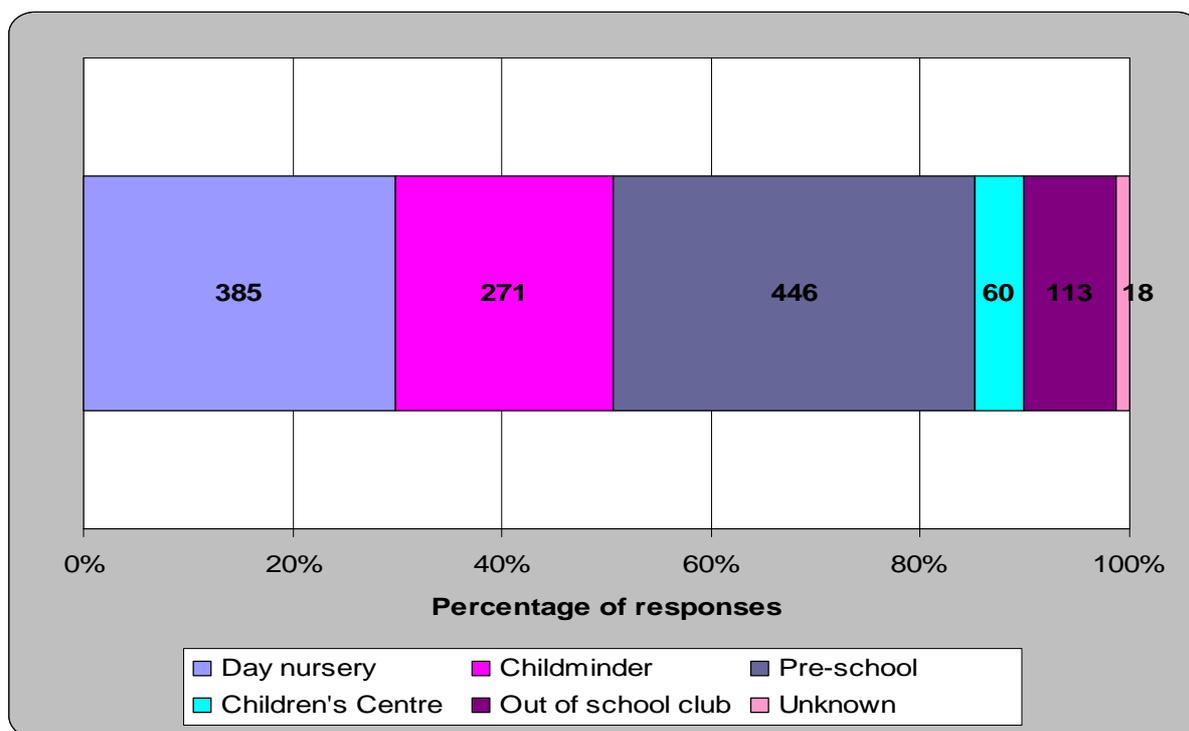
Graph F provides a breakdown of the number of responses to the tool by month from August 2012 to January 2013 (it excludes July because only a 9 responses were received in this

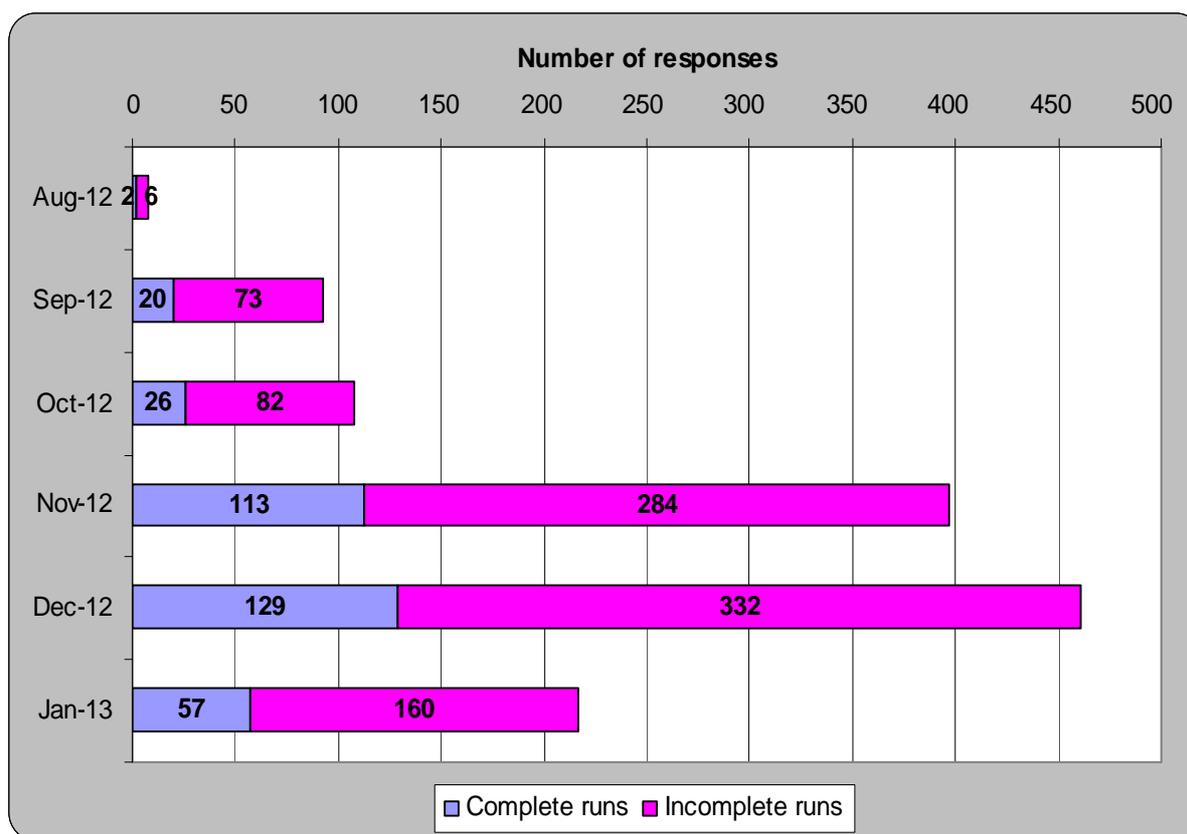
month, all of which were incomplete runs). Since the surge in November, use of the tool has remained high with a peak in December of 461 users (an increase of 16% on November's 397 responses).

Graph D: No. of complete and incomplete responses from different types of provider:



Graph E: Proportion of responses from different types of provider:



Graph F: No. of complete and incomplete responses by month (six month period):

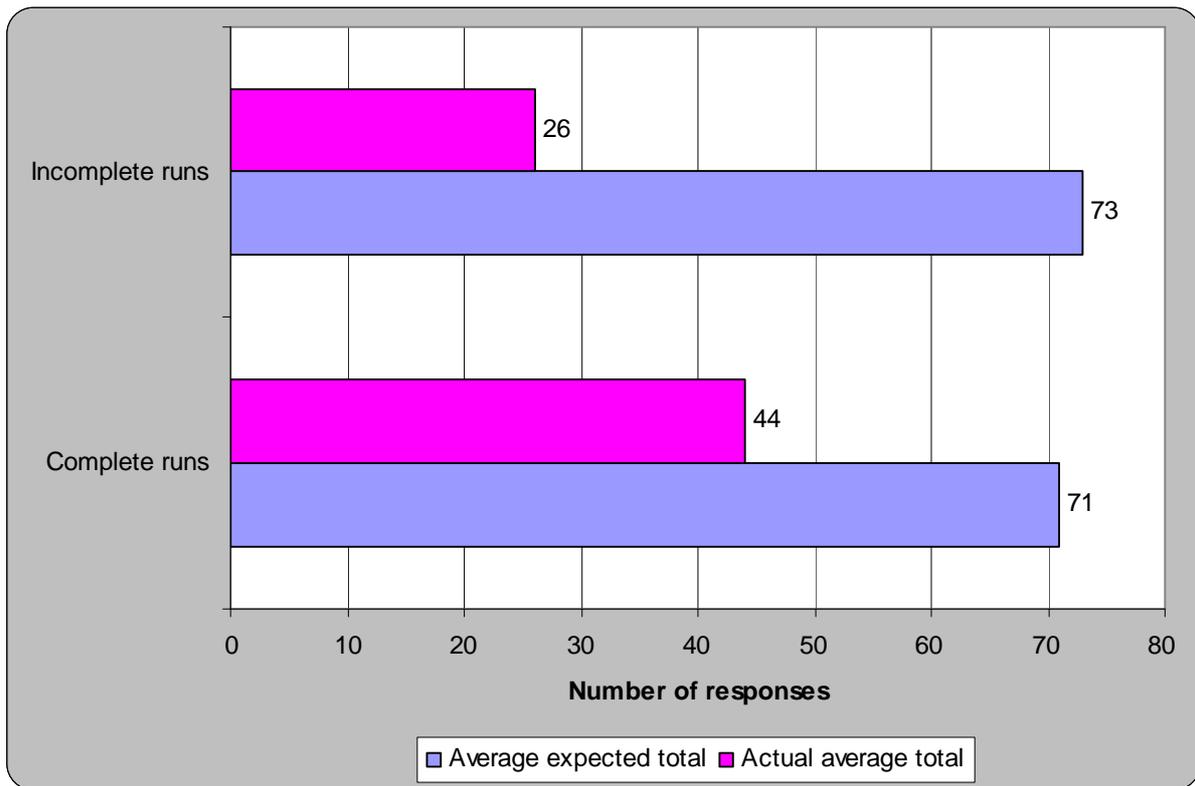
Analysis of the scores of those providers that have completed the tool shows that the scores on average are lower than the 'expected' scores (i.e. the total possible points for the relevant questions answered): this implies that providers are identifying gaps or room for improvement in relation to the way they currently manage their businesses, and therefore hopefully increasing their business knowledge.

Graph G shows these findings: the average total for the 'complete runs' was 44, which represents a score of 57% compared to the expected total. For 'incomplete runs' the average total is proportionately lower at 36%. It is not clear why this may be but it could be due to the fewer sections being completed by these users (and therefore a lower potential score).

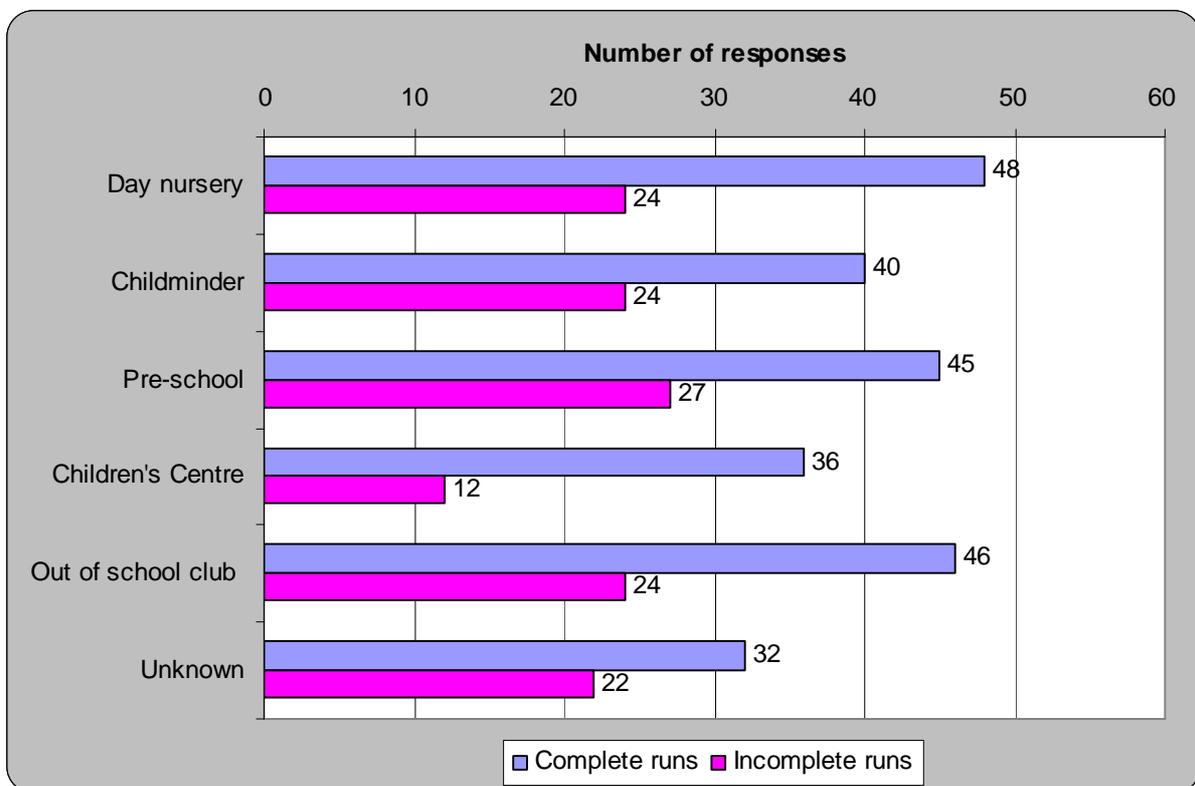
The process of using a self audit web tool provides a benchmark for the childcare providers to work with; it is therefore hoped that in attaining a lower than expected scores providers are being made aware that they need to improve their business management skills, and signposted to the necessary resources in order to do so.

Further analysis of the scoring is presented in Graph H below. It shows an overview of the average score for different types of provider (and comparing complete and incomplete runs). The evidence shows that the scores are broadly consistent, ranging between 32 and 48 for complete runs, and of 12 to 27 for incomplete runs. Overall day nurseries and pre-schools have the highest scores, and children's centres have the lowest scores. It is not clear why this may be, but it may be an area to further explore in the future.

Graph G: Comparison of 'average total score' compared to 'expected total score':



Graph H: Comparison of average total scores for different types of provider:



Sustaining longer-term impact

The aim of the self-audit tool is to enable providers to look at how they are currently managing their businesses and identify ways in which they could improve (as well as what they are doing well). Qualitative evidence shows that providers that have used the tool have found it to be an effective way of increasing their self-awareness in this way.

Due to the timescales of the programme it is not at this stage possible to assess the extent to which this knowledge has been put into practice or led to a longer-term improvement to business knowledge and skills – it is one thing for providers to identify what needs improving, but further steps are needed to translate that knowledge into actions.

Overall the 4Children website and self-audit tool are gaining momentum as valued resources within the sector; promotional work at events has been crucial for increasing the usage and there is some evidence of the success of the resources in enhancing providers' knowledge and awareness both through the case study findings and the scoring data from the tool.

As outlined at the beginning of this section, the current economic context means that online resources are increasingly useful as a way of providing cost effective information and support. There is, however, inevitably work needed in order to improve access to such resources, particularly within the childcare sector where issues such as time, capacity and technological issues can act as barriers. For the providers that have used the online resources there is evidence that they have been effective, but there are many other providers that are yet to use the resource, and these are potentially some of those that would benefit the most from enhanced business knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

Overall impact of the 4Children business skills programme

For all three strands of the business skills programme there is evidence of an improvement in the knowledge, skills and confidence of providers working within the childcare sector. For the training sessions and the online resources, this evidence largely relates to an **immediate impact**. The training has given providers access to new information and reinforced their existing knowledge. The online self-audit tool has made providers aware of the 'health' of their business, supporting them to identify good practice and where to make improvements.

There is also evidence of **longer term outcomes** for providers that attended the training sessions and have made changes to their businesses as a result, but this evidence is still emerging. It will be important in the future to continue to assess the extent to which this knowledge has been put into practice or led to a longer-term improvement to business knowledge and skills.

Perhaps the most important strand of the programme overall has been the role of the local business champion. These act as an essential source of business knowledge, supporting providers at different stages of the business development cycle, through difficult times as well as times of growth, providing ongoing information and advice to build and maintain business knowledge and awareness within the sector.

Many of the business champions were already working in this type of role, but overall the 4Children business skills programme has led to **enhancements to their practice**, increasing their own knowledge and expertise, and therefore potentially improving their roles as a mechanism for improving business management within the sector as a whole.

Providers involved in the programme have reported an improvement to their business knowledge and skills as a result of the support from the champion. However, whilst there is evidence of their effectiveness, due to the timescales of the programme it is not at this stage possibly to specifically evaluate the contribution of the programme to these outcomes.

Although it is 'early days' the emerging evidence of impact suggests that the programme has made progress towards the overarching aim of building a sustainable resource for improving business skills within the sector, and the outcomes achieved by each strand of work are likely to be having a cumulative impact on the sector as a whole.

Sustaining these outcomes is key as the programme draws to a close; 4Children have already developed some processes to do this - particularly for the business champions through the accredited qualification and the networks/partnership that they are establishing through the programme and online resources.

Appendix 1: Findings from the individual provider training sessions

Findings from the individual provider training sessions: first wave

Summary of wave 1 training sessions:

Wave	Type of provider	Course	Location
Wave 1: Sessions delivered between February and March 2012	Nurseries	Financial planning and management	Bromley
		Marketing and sales	Brent
	Children's centres	Pathways for Community Development	Knowsley
	Childminders	Financial planning and management	York Westminster
		Developing professional relationships with parents	Walsall
	Out of school clubs	Financial management	Stockton
		Employment Law	Telford
	Pre- schools	Effective committees	Wiltshire
		Managing employees	Swindon

1. Nurseries: Financial planning and management - Bromley

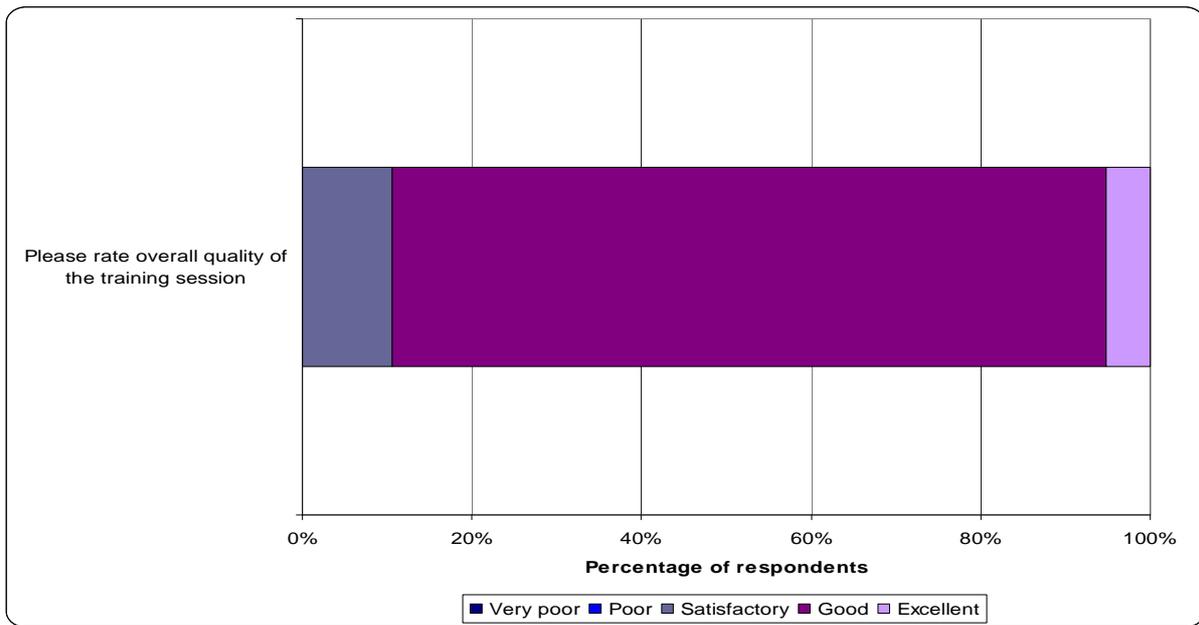
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Bromley
- 21 attendees, 21 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: pre-school managers, treasurers, administrative and accounts staff, lead practitioners and a headteacher
- Type of organisation: pre-schools, out of school clubs, day nurseries, and a primary school

Experience of the training

Overall ratings show that the majority of participants felt that the training was good (84%) and smaller proportions felt it was excellent (5%) and satisfactory (11%), as shown in graph 1.

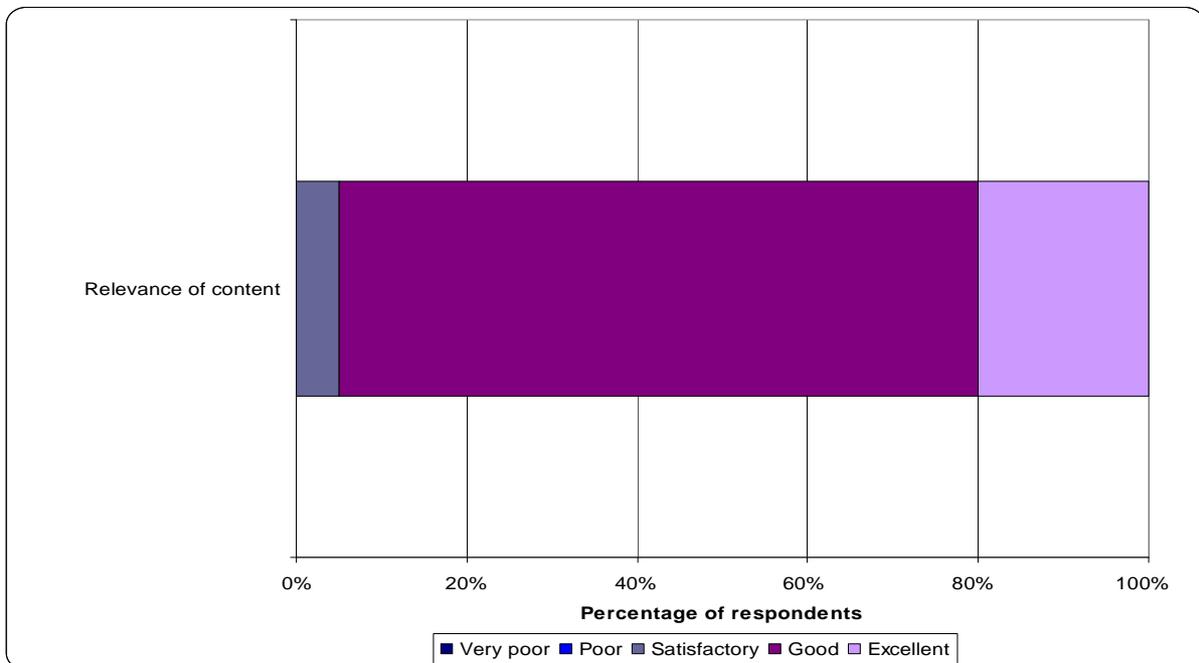
Graph 1: Overall quality of the session



Base: 19

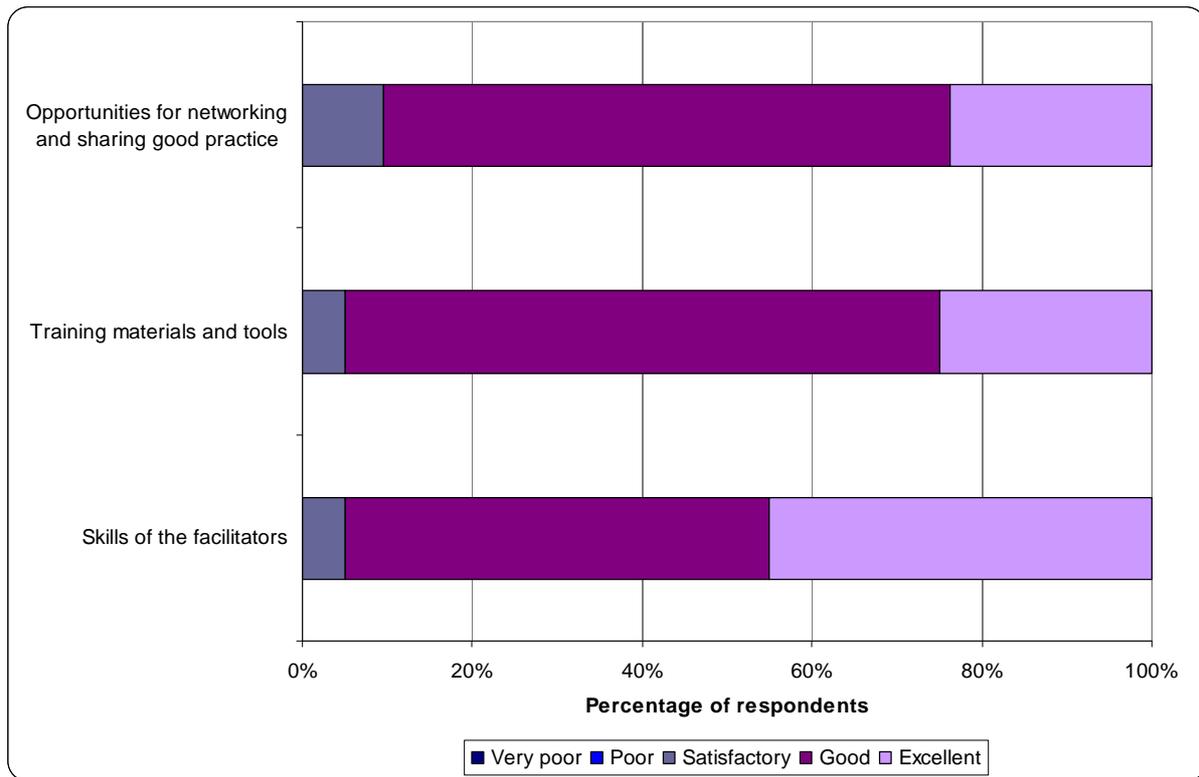
Similarly, graph 2 shows the largest proportion of participants felt that the content of the training was good in terms of its relevance to their roles (75%), although a sizeable proportion felt it was excellent (20%) and a small proportion felt it was satisfactory (5%).

Graph 2: Relevance of content



Base: 20

Graph 3: Ratings of specific elements of the training



Base: 20, 20, 21

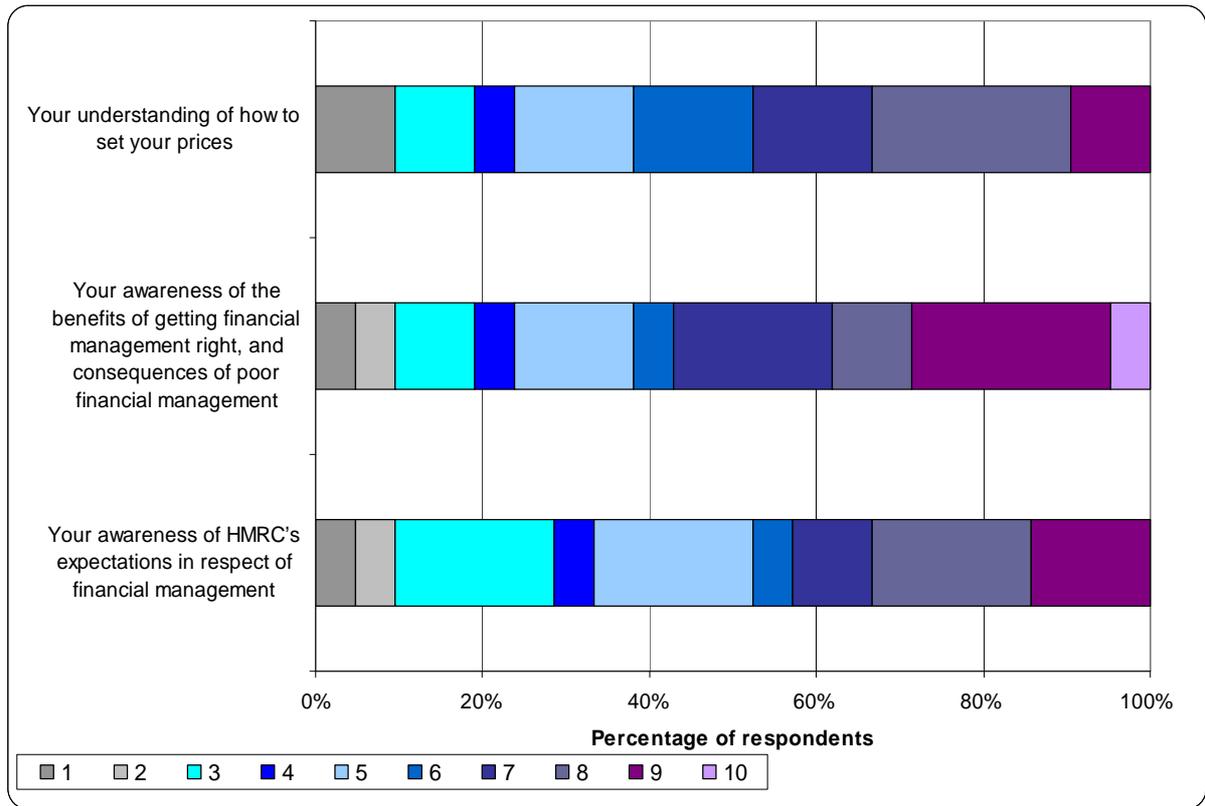
As displayed in graph 3, when asked to rate specific elements of the training session in terms of their quality, participants rated the skills of the facilitators most positively (45% excellent and 50% good), although all of the elements received high levels of good and excellent ratings.

Knowledge and awareness

To understand the impact of the training, participants were asked how confident they felt in their knowledge and awareness of specific topics before and after the training. Graph 4 and 5 below show the differences between the ratings. Confidence was measured on a scale of 1 – 10, where 1 was not at all confident and 10 was extremely confident. Higher levels of confidence were reported across all topics after the training. Key findings are:

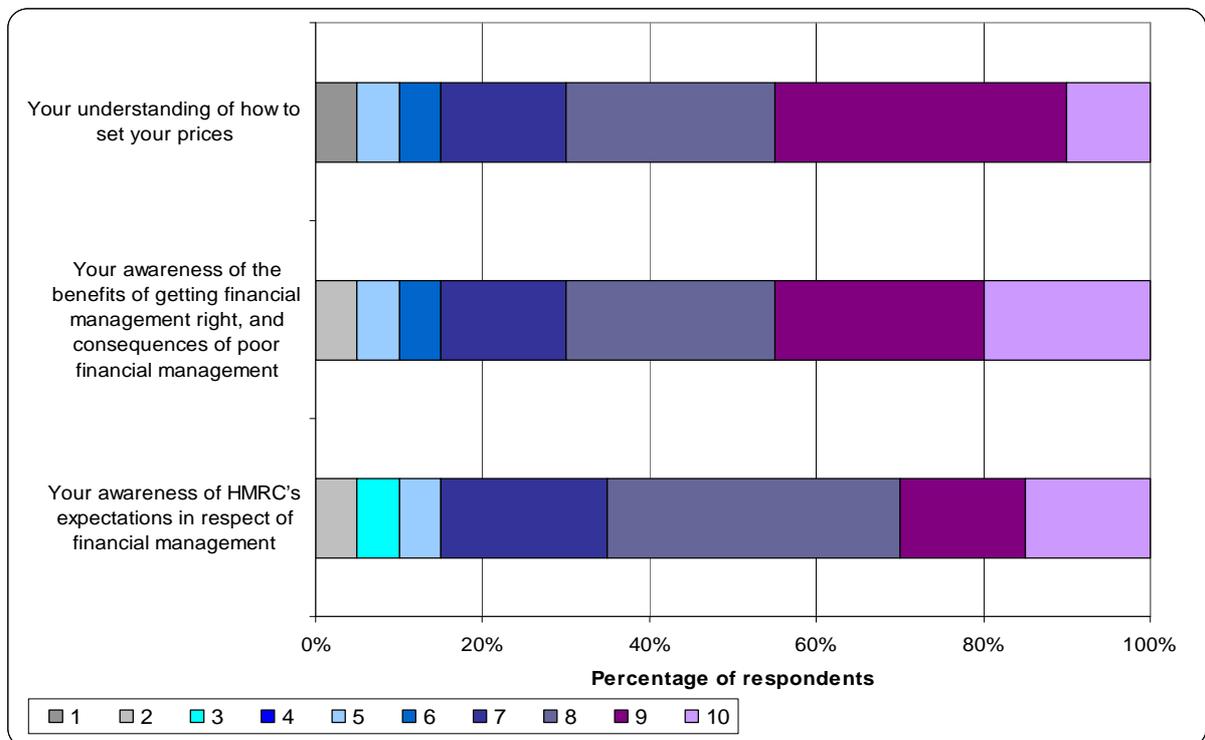
- Before the training 33% of participants rated their confidence in understanding of how to set prices as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 70% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 38% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the benefits of getting financial management right and consequences of poor financial management as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 70% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 33% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of HMRC’s expectations in respect of financial management as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 65% of participants after the training.

Graph 4: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 21

Graph 5: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 20

Using the learning from the training

When asked about the ways in which they were likely to use the learning from the session, participants reported that it would be useful for reviewing and improving existing systems for financial management. Key themes were:

- Reviewing approaches to costing, cash flow and financial records
“Will be doing cash flow projections, looking at all financial records, generally keeping better records”
- Increasing the use of Information Technology e.g. using online spreadsheets
“To use spreadsheets online for accounts instead of doing it all manually”
- To assess existing practice
“I will use the training to double check what we are doing”

Other comments

Participants used the invitation for open comments at the end of the form to provide positive feedback and suggestions about the training. Participants highly valued the presentation and opportunity to discuss practice with others. Some participants felt that the training could have been improved through more preparation time e.g. asking them to bring a list of fixed outgoings, as well as more detail on certain topics e.g. how to produce a cash flow forecast.

2. Nurseries: Marketing and sales - Brent

Background and profile of participants

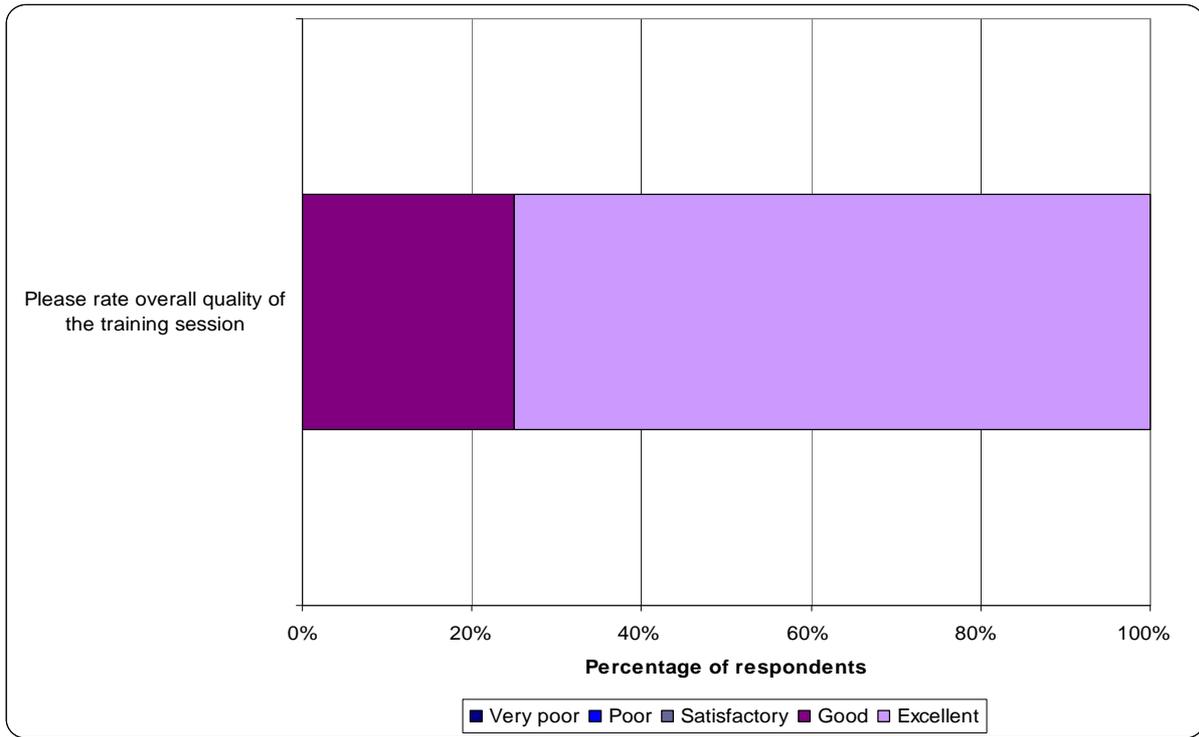
- Location of session: Brent
- 6 attendees, 5 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: nursery owners and managers
- Type of organisation: nurseries and pre-schools
- All private sector

Experience of the training

It is worth noting that there were a small number of forms received for this session, as such all percentages relate to small base rates.

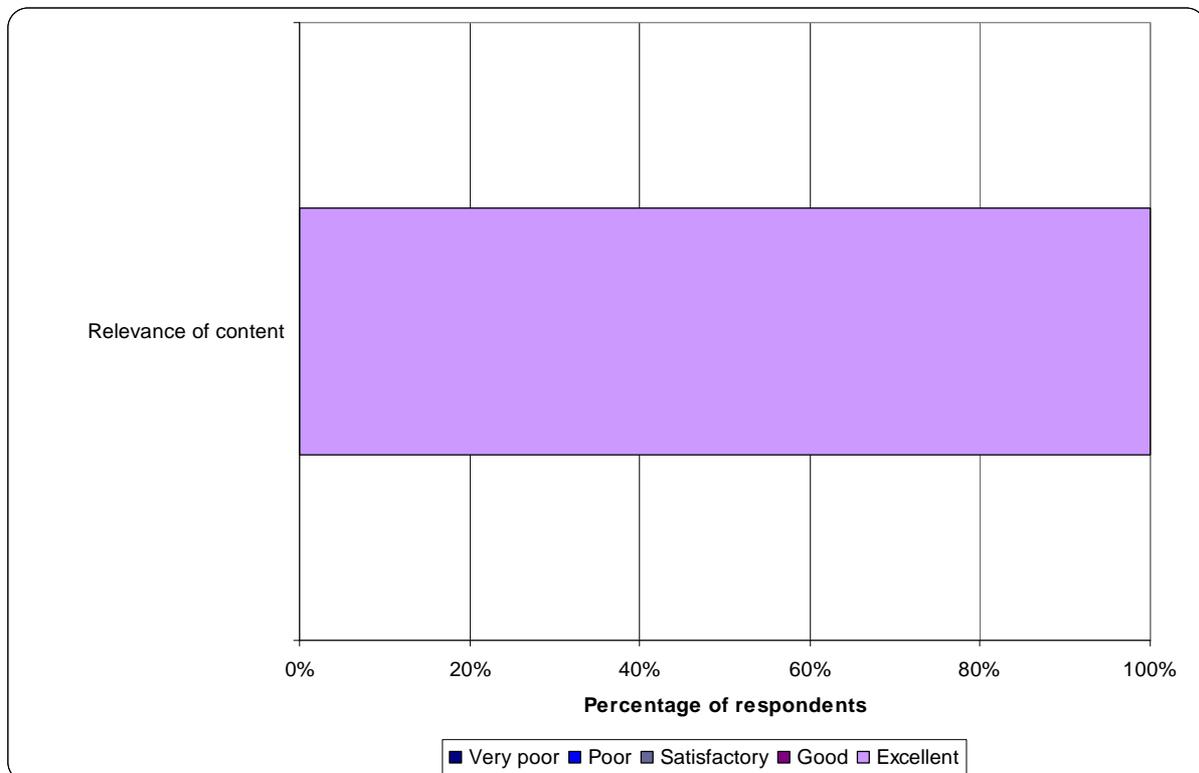
Ratings of the quality of the session and the relevance of the content were very positive. The majority (75%) of participants rated the overall quality training as excellent, and 25% rated it as good (graph 6), and all of the participants (100%) rated the relevance of the content for their day-to-day work as excellent (graph 7).

Graph 6: Overall quality of the session



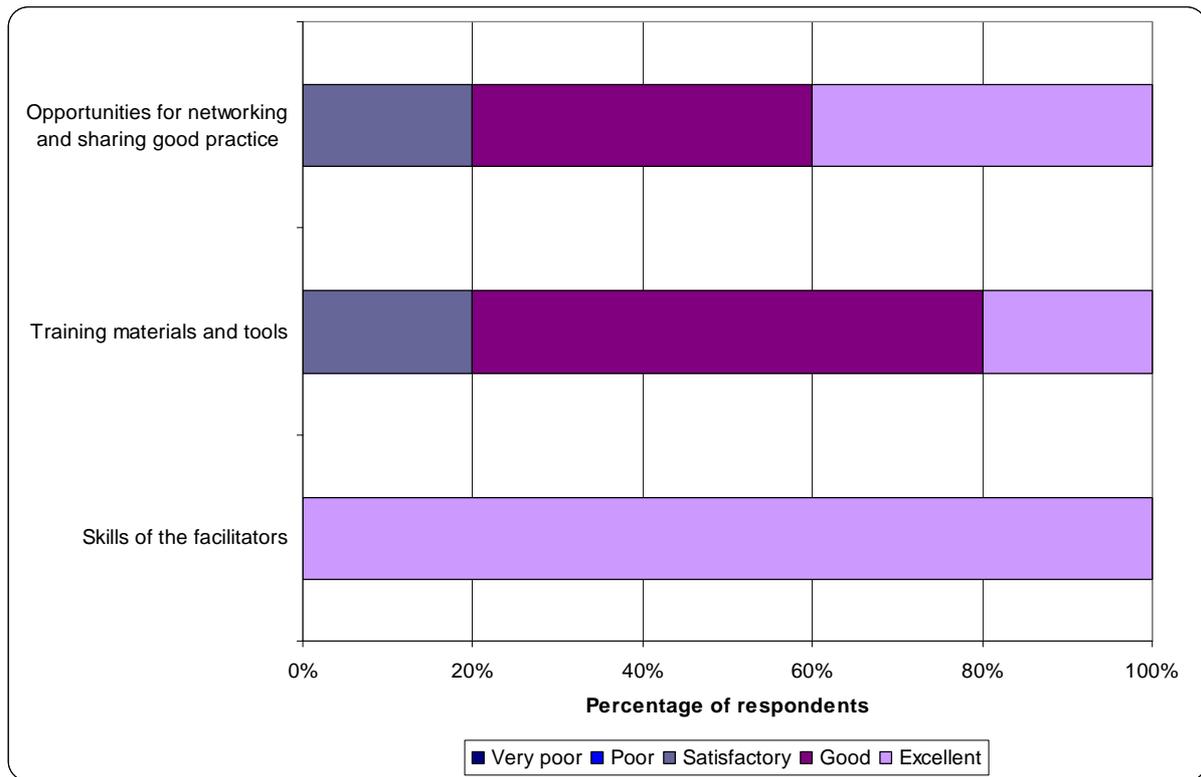
Base: 4

Graph 7: Relevance of the session



Base: 5

Graph 8: Ratings of specific elements of the training



Base: 4, 5, 5

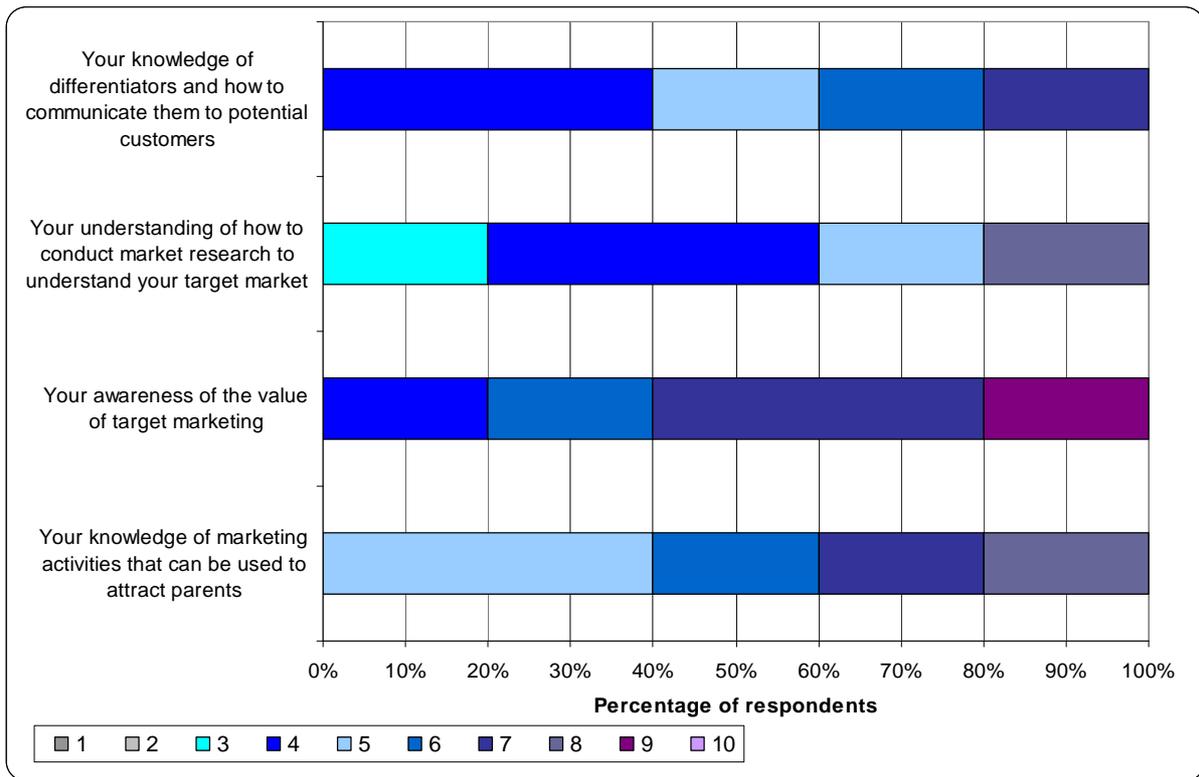
When reporting on the quality of specific elements of the training (graph 8) the skills of the facilitators were very highly rated, with all participants reporting them to be “excellent”. High proportions of participants also rated the opportunities for networking and training materials and tools as good or excellent, however these were rated as satisfactory by one participant (representing 20%).

Knowledge and awareness

As graphs 9 and 10 show, when rating their confidence before and after the training in relation to different topics there were improvements reported by many participants. Specific findings are:

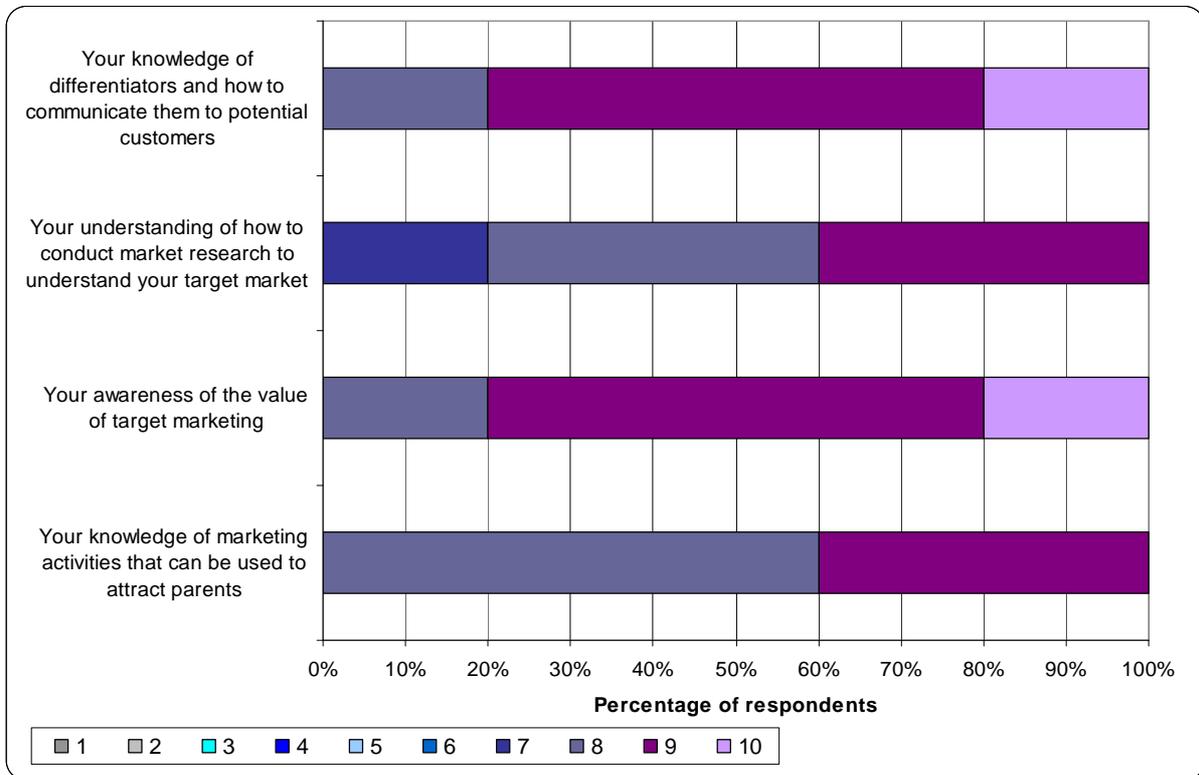
- Knowledge of differentiators and how to communicate them: 20% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 80% of participants after the training.
- Understanding of how to conduct market research to understand your target market: 20% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 80% of participants after the training.
- Awareness of the value of target marketing: 20% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 80% of participants after the training.
- Knowledge of marketing activities that can be used to attract parents: this had the biggest increase. 20% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 100% of participants after the training.

Graph 9: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 5

Graph 10: Levels of confidence after the training



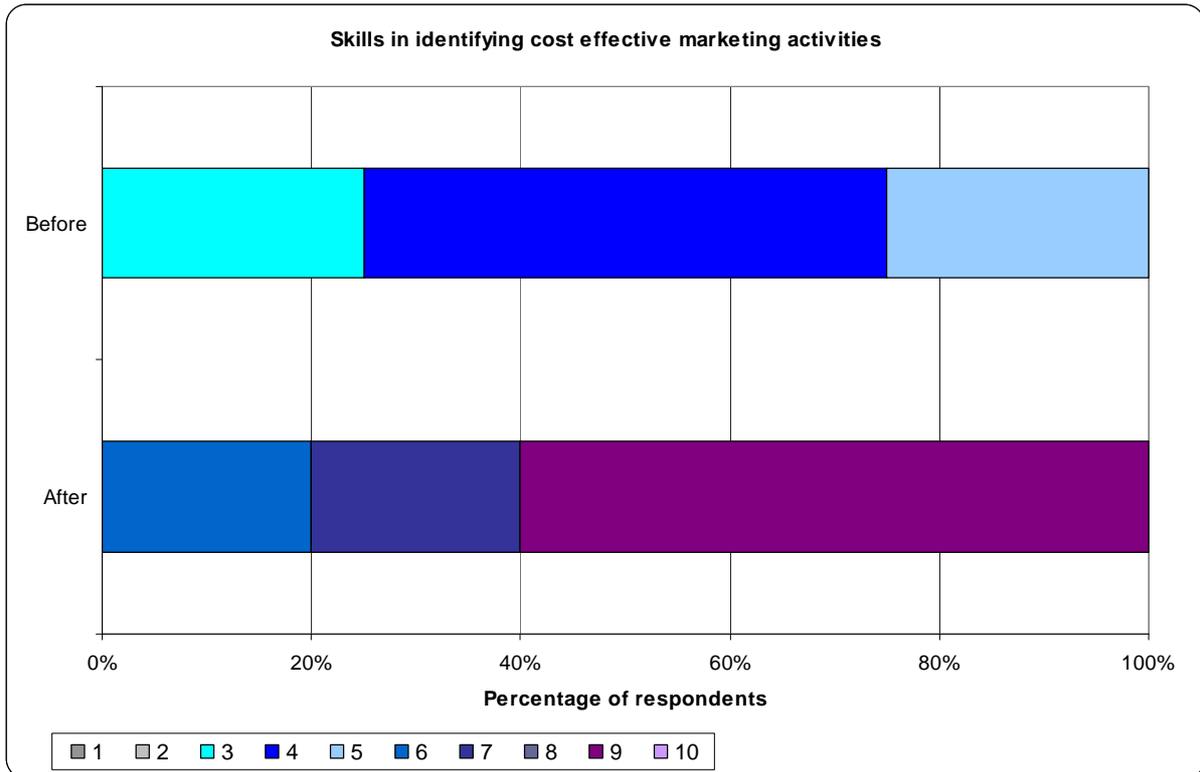
Base: 5

Skills

Participants were also asked to rate their skills in identifying cost effective marketing activities before and after the training. Graph 11 compares the scores and shows that before the training no participants rated their skills as 8, 9 or 10 (all were 3, 4 or 5) compared to 60% of participants after the training.

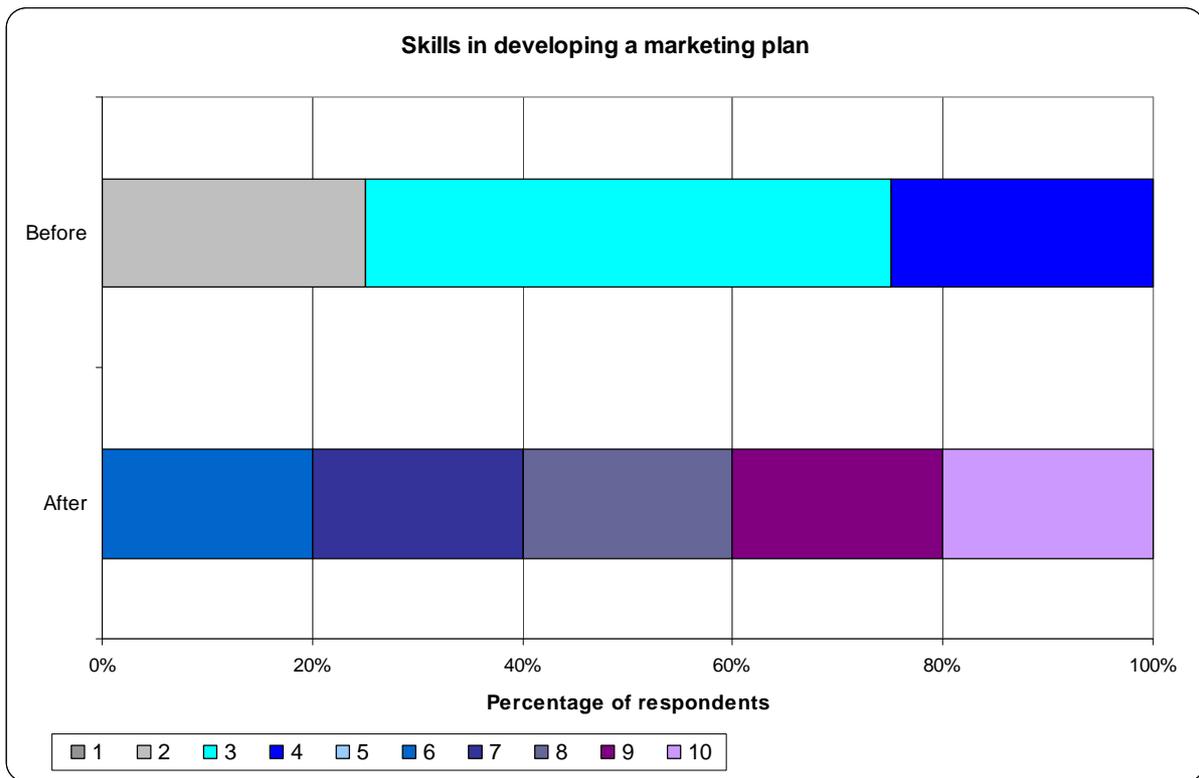
Similarly when asked to rate their skills in developing a marketing plan no participants rated their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, but 60% did after, as shown in graph 12.

Graph 11: Skills in identifying cost effective marketing activities



Base: 4, 5

Graph 12: Skills in developing a marketing plan



Base: 4, 5

Using the learning from the training

Participants reported that they would use the learning to market their business more effectively, through using a marketing strategy, improving advertising and customer relationships, and networking:

“I will definitely put my marketing plan/strategy into print”

“Be able to market my business with more knowledge and confidence”

Other comments

In other comments participants reported that they enjoyed the session and would like more of “this type of training”.

3. Children’s centres: Pathways for Community Development - Knowsley

Background and profile of participants

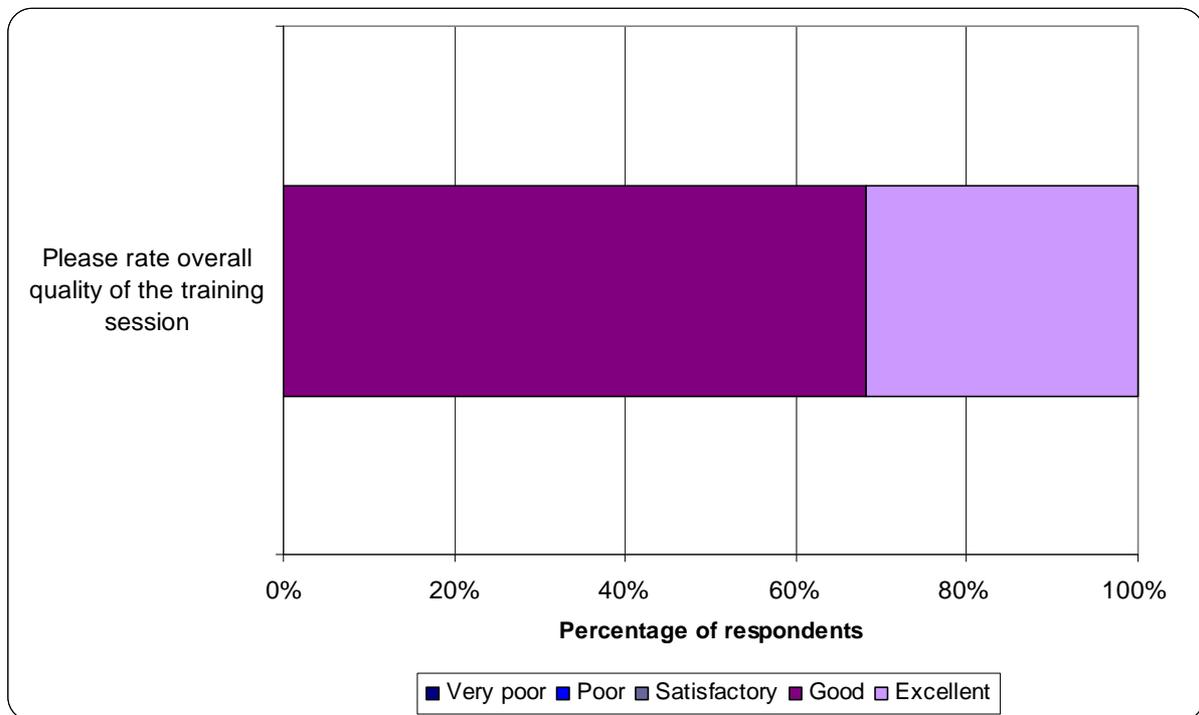
- Location of session: Knowsley
- 28 attendees, 23 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*

- Roles: Children’s Centre managers, learning and development officers, parental and community outreach officers, family support officers, play coordinators, volunteers, and participants involved in community associations.
- Type of organisation: Children Centres, a registered charity, play service and a Local Authority
- Sector: 5 not-for-profit, 8 maintained, and 9 other

Experience of the training

The overall quality of the training session was rated as good or excellent by all participants (68% good, 32% excellent), as shown in graph 13.

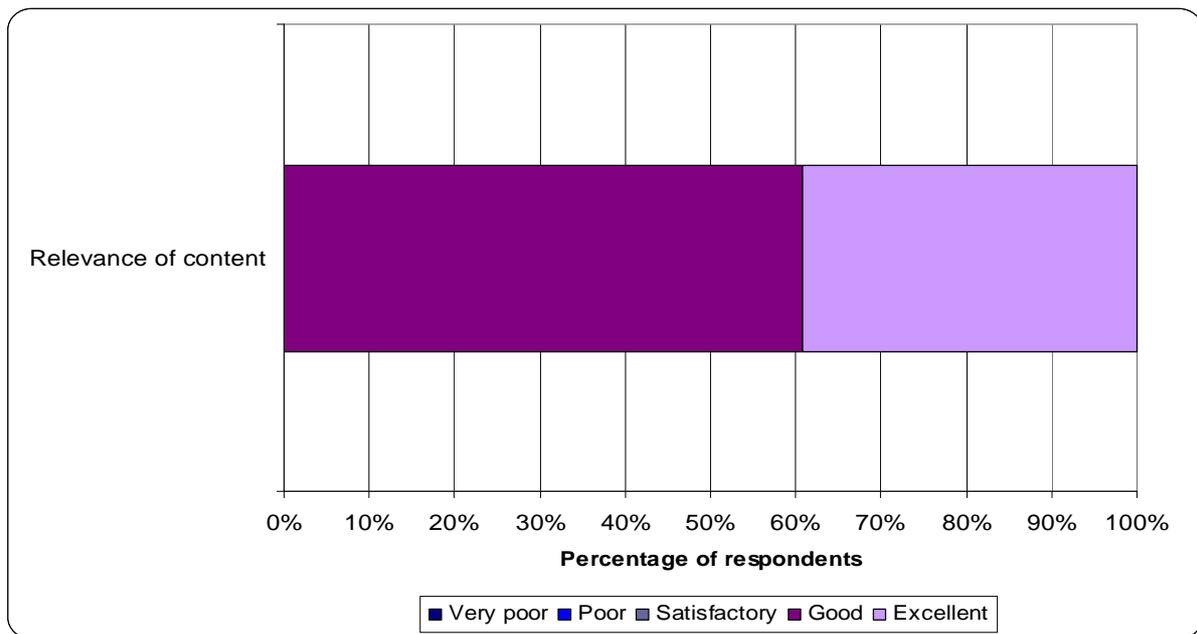
Graph 13: Overall quality of the session



Base: 22

The relevance of the session for the day-to-day work of participants was also rated highly, with 61% of participants rating it as good and 39% rating it as excellent.

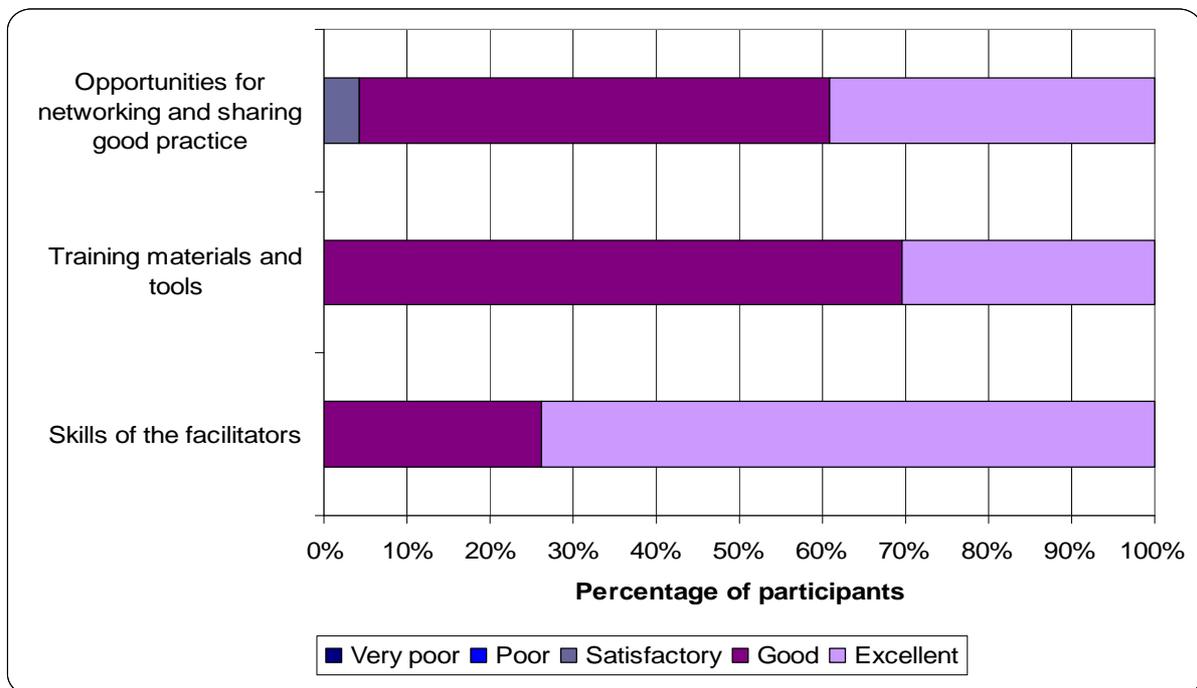
Graph 14: Relevance of the session



Base: 23

As graph 15 below shows, each element of the training was rated good or excellent by over 96% of participants, but most highly rated were the skills of the facilitators (74% excellent).

Graph 15: Ratings of specific elements of the training



Base: 23

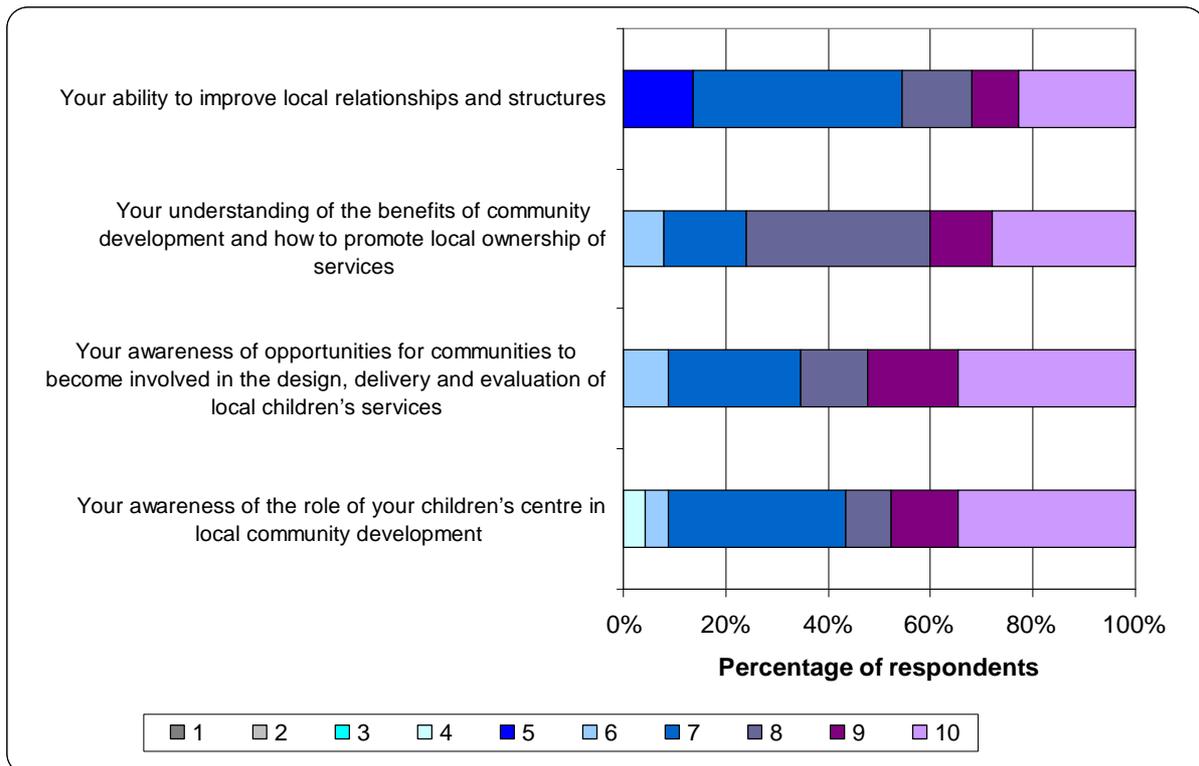
Knowledge and awareness

Evidence from the ratings reported for confidence in different areas before and after the training suggests improvements were experienced by most participants. Interestingly, compared to other training sessions the before ratings were relatively high (almost half of

participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 across each area), but the after ratings show this increased to almost all participants. Specifically:

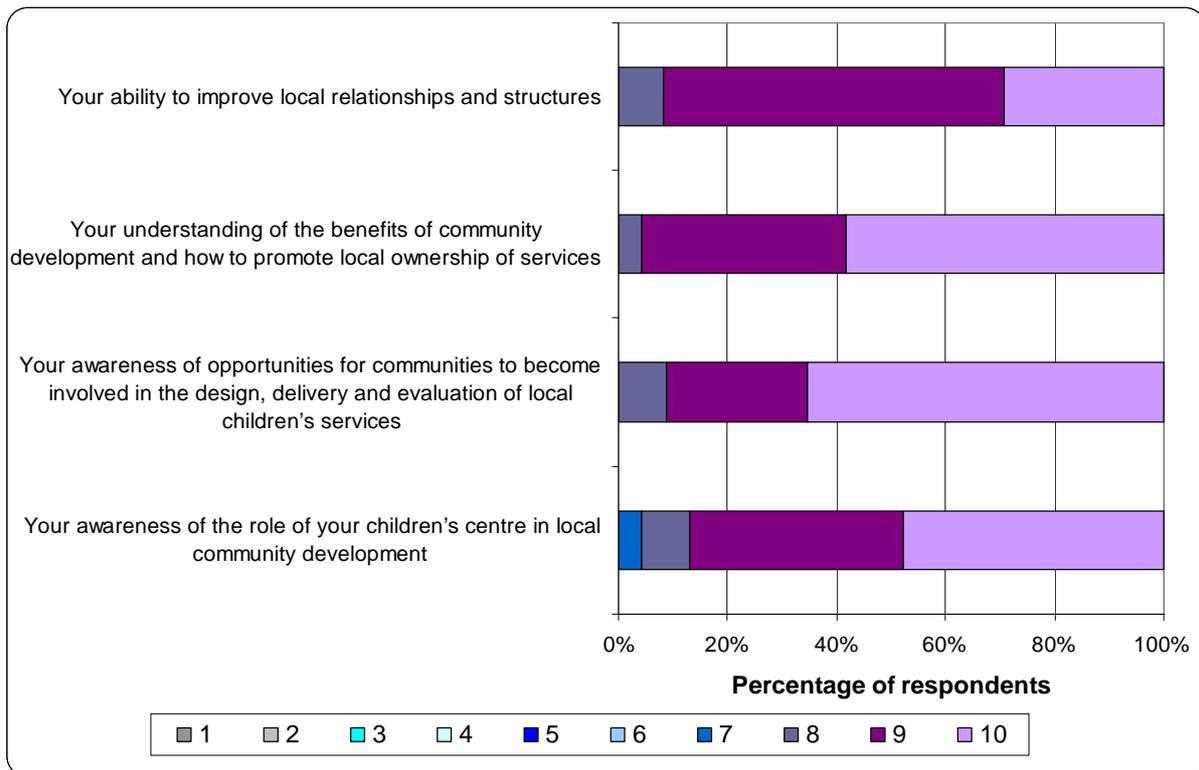
- Before the training 48% of participants rated their confidence in their ability to improve local relationships and structures as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- Before the training 74% of participants rated their confidence in understanding the benefits of community development and how to promote local ownership of services as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- Before the training 65% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of opportunities for communities to become involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of local children’s services as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- Before the training 57% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the role of their children’s centre in local community development as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 96% of participants after the training. It is not clear why the improvement in relation to this area was comparatively lower.

Graph 16: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 23

Graph 17: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 23

Using the learning from training

Below are some of the themes from open comments provided by participants about the ways in which they would use the learning from the training:

- Knowledge of SROI and cost effectiveness, helping with bids
“Better awareness of the role of SROI”
- Mentoring, including setting up schemes, and team development
“Developing mentoring further cascading some of the learning and experiences to the team”
- Sharing practice and experiences
“To share learning with practitioners, encouraging an empowering environment for future volunteers”
- Planning and performance management
“In planning and performance management of children’s centre services”

Other comments

Participants provided many positive open comments at the end of the evaluation forms, asking for further sessions for the voluntary sector, praising the knowledge and skills of the trainer and the session as a whole. One participant suggested that in future it would be beneficial to have more attendees from voluntary and community groups.

4. Childminders: Financial planning and management - York

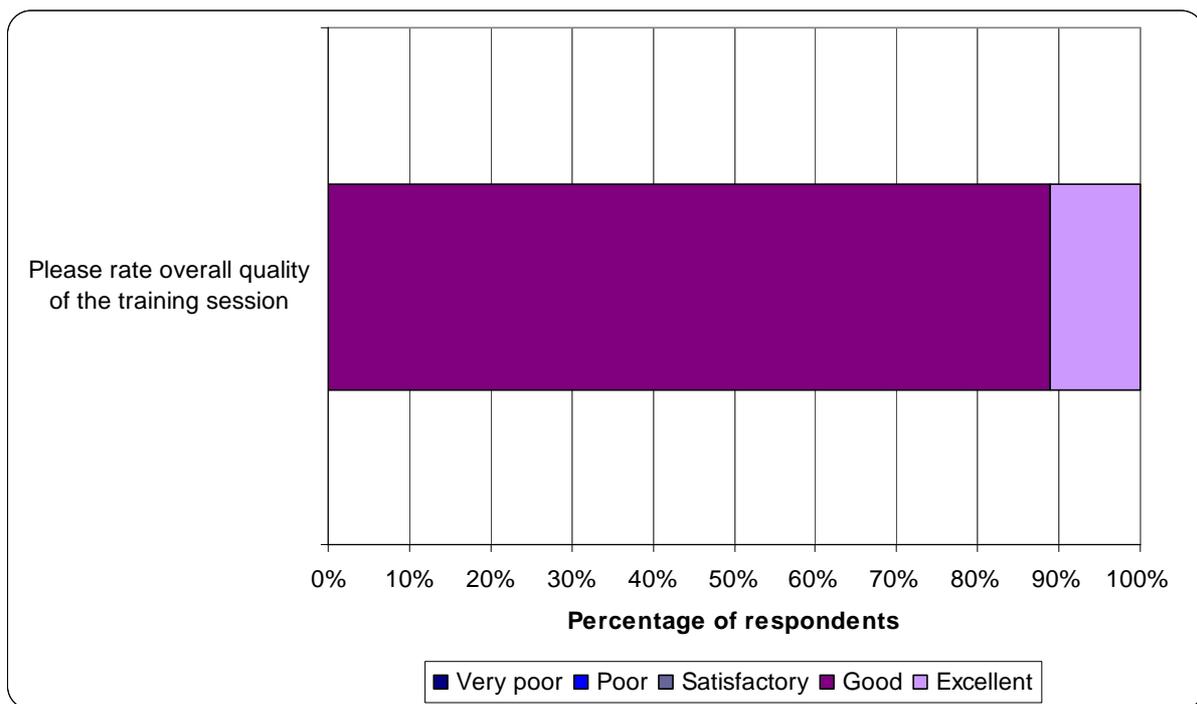
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: York
- 11 attendees, 11 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- All childminders
- All self-employed
- All private sector

Experience of the training

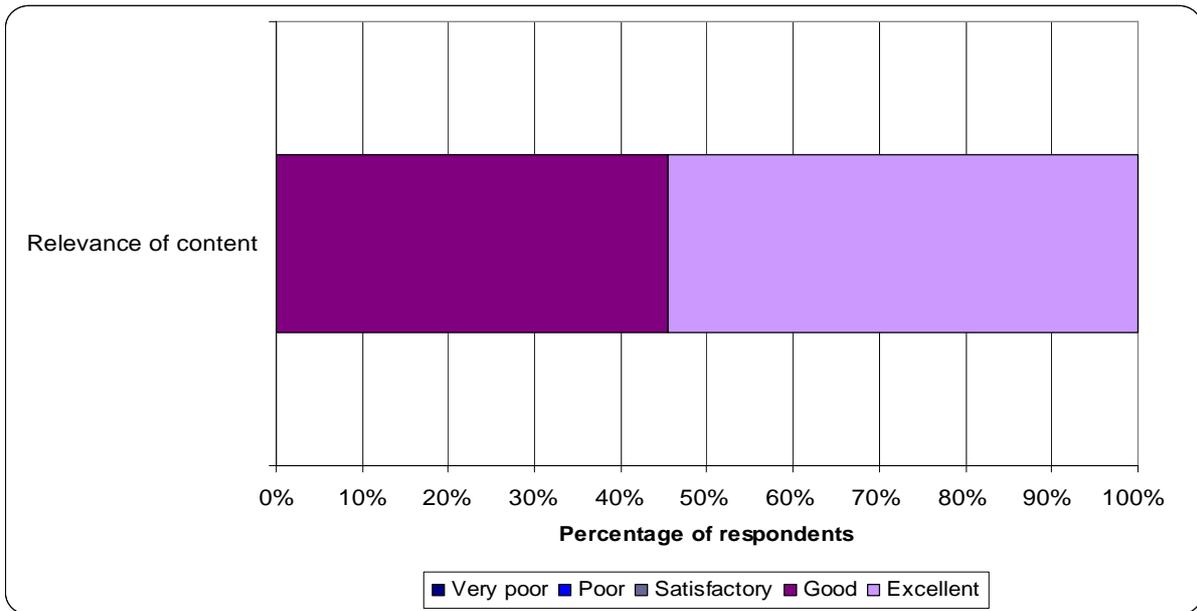
As presented in graph 19, participants rated the overall quality of this session as good (89%) or excellent (11%). The relevance of the training was also rated highly (graph 19), with the majority of participants rating the training as excellent (55%) and the remaining proportion as good (45%).

Graph 18: Overall quality of the session



Base: 9

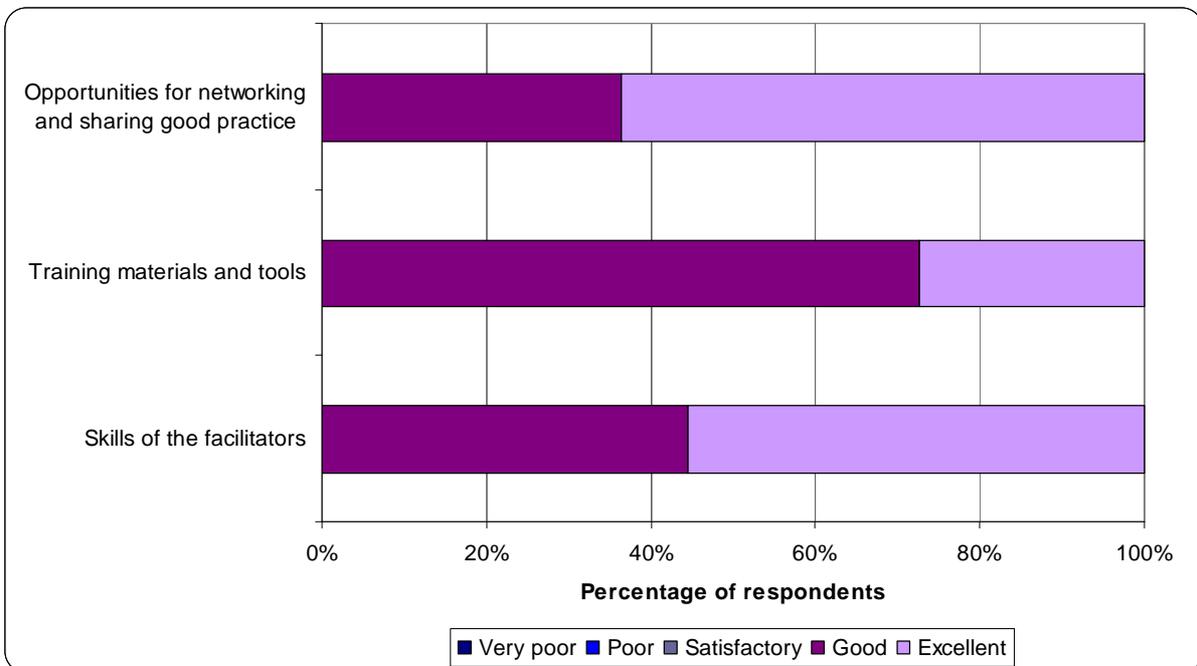
Graph 19: Relevance of the session



Base: 11

All elements of the training were rated as good or excellent, but most highly rated were the opportunities for networking and sharing good practice, which 64% of participants reported to be excellent. This is different compared to other sessions, where the skills of the facilitator have generally received the higher scores. Graph 20 shows this data.

Graph 20: Ratings of specific elements of the training



Base: 9, 11, 11

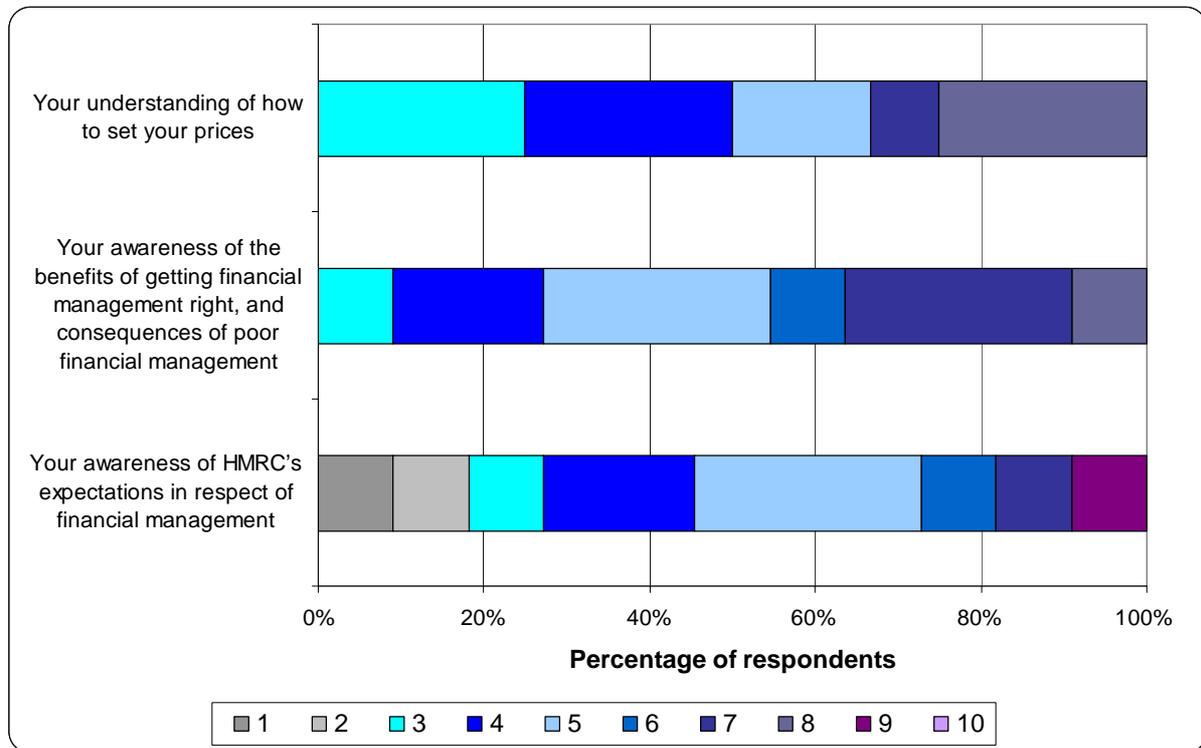
Knowledge and awareness

Comparisons of how participants rated their confidence in different areas before and after the training show that:

- The biggest improvement was reported in relation to participants' awareness of the benefits of getting financial management right and the consequences of poor financial management; before the training 9% rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- The proportion of participants rating their confidence in their awareness of HMRC's expectations in respect of financial management as 8, 9 or 10 increased from 9% to 64%.
- The proportion of participants rating their confidence in understanding how to set their prices as 8, 9 or 10 increased from 23% to 91%.

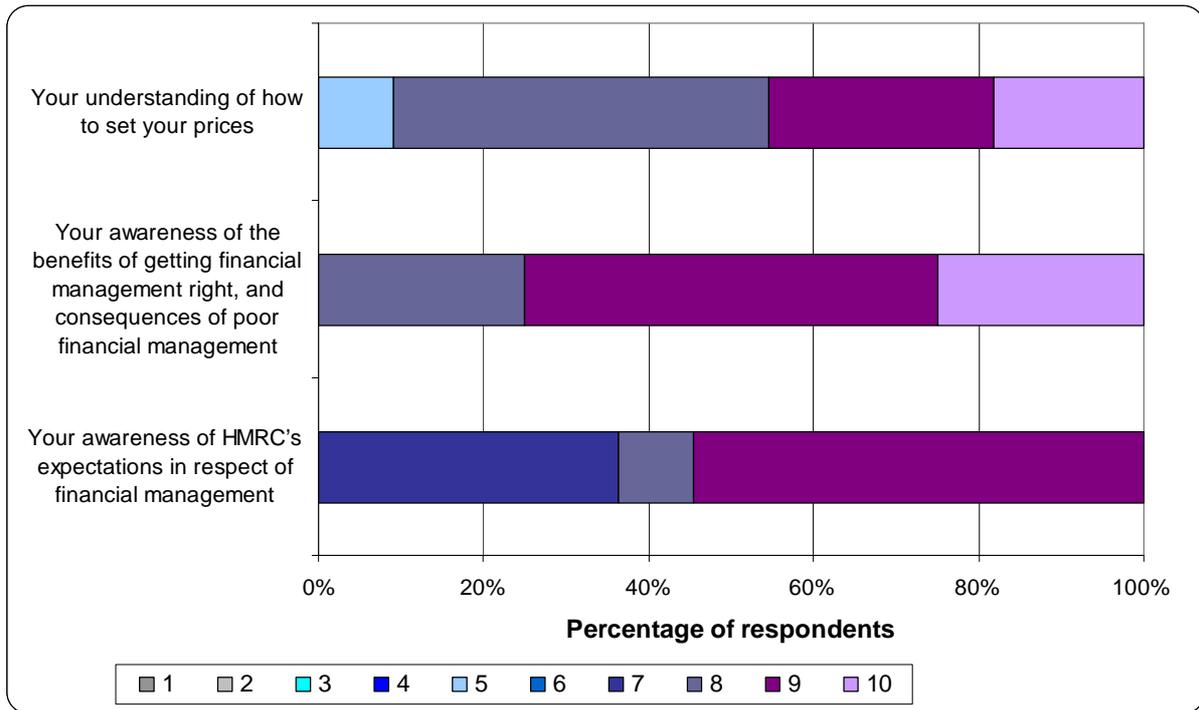
Graphs 21 and 22 below show this information.

Graph 21: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 11

Graph 22: Levels of confidence after the training

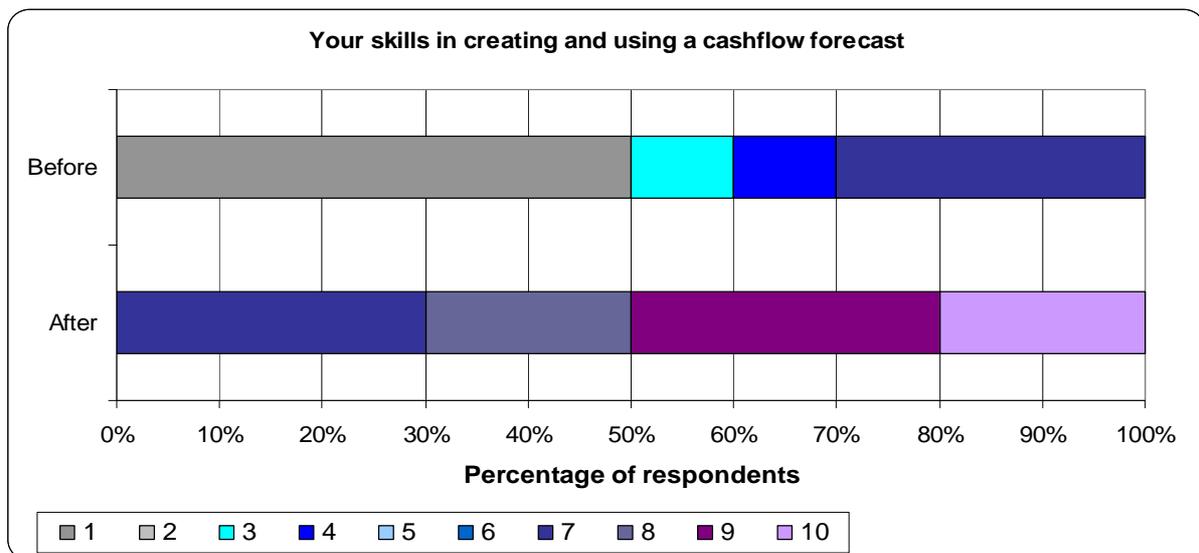


Base: 11

Skills

Participants were also asked to rate their skills in creating a cash flow forecast. Graph 24 shows the comparative scores before and after the training. Before the training, 50% of participants rated confidence in their skills as '1' (i.e. not at all confident) and no participants rated them as 8, 9 or 10. This compares to 70% of participants rating their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 after the training.

Graph 24: Skills in creating and using a cash flow forecast



Base: 10

Using the learning from training

Participants reported that they would use the learning from the training in the following ways:

- For improving systems and processes
“I will totally re-assess what systems I have in place, be more organised. I will look at possibly increasing prices.”
- For having a better understanding of financial management
“It has really made me think more about the financial aspect of my work and I now I feel more confident about the day to day running of my business”
- To use Information Technology
“Will definitely computerize records and review what I am currently charging and review outgoings”

Other comments

Participants provided positive feedback about the training through open comments, including:

- “Well presented and very useful training well recommended”*
- “Great course – thought after 11 years of childminding I couldn’t learn anything - how I was wrong”*
- “Lots of useful information to use and hopefully be more financially efficient”*

A few participants made suggestions; these included having more information about how to advertise/marketing, and also to have two separate courses for participants new to business and experienced.

5. Childminders: Financial planning and management – Westminster

Background and profile of participants

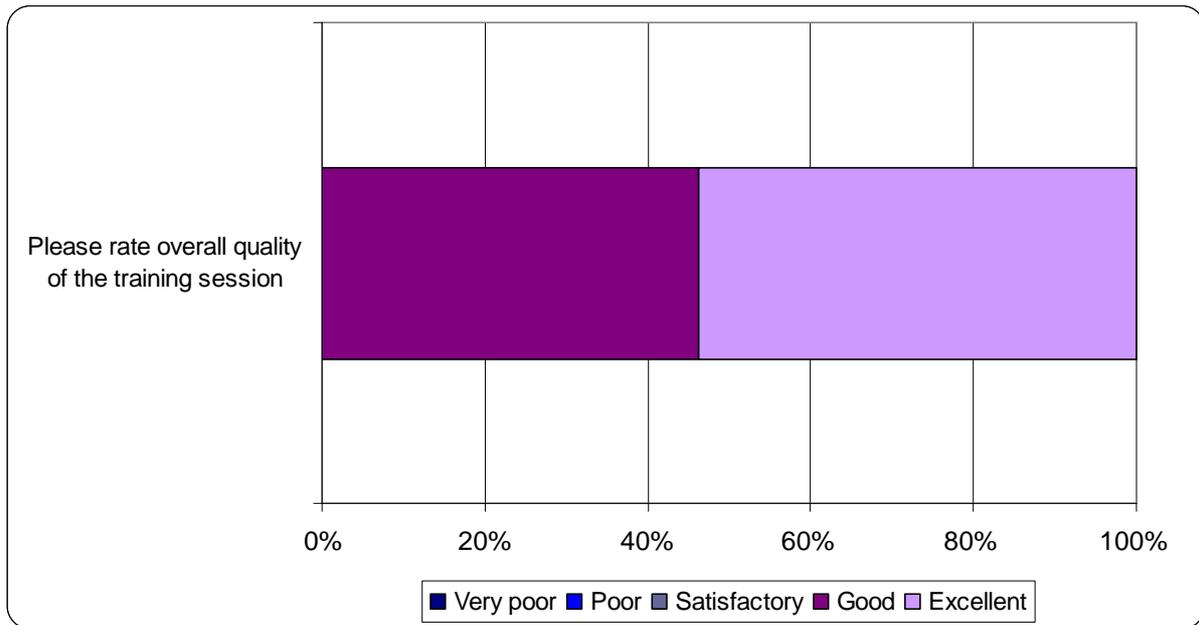
- Location of session: Westminster
- 16 attendees, 14 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- All childminders
- 12 private sector, 2 other
- 7 self-employed

Experience of the training

As in York, all participants that filled in forms from the session run in Westminster rated the overall quality of the training as good or excellent. A larger proportion of participants rated it as excellent (54%) compared to good (46%), but these scores are slightly lower than York (89% excellent).

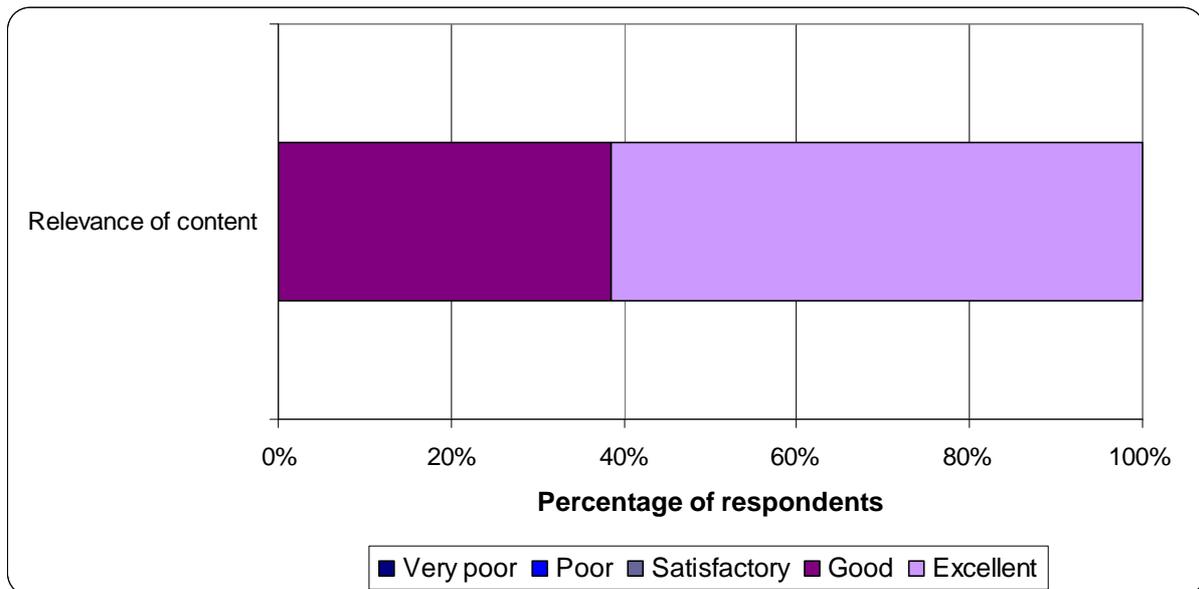
In terms of the relevance of the content to their day-to-day work, 62% of participants rated the training as excellent and 38% rated it as good. These are slightly better ratings compared to York.

Graph 25: Overall quality of the session



Base: 13

Graph 26: Relevance of the session

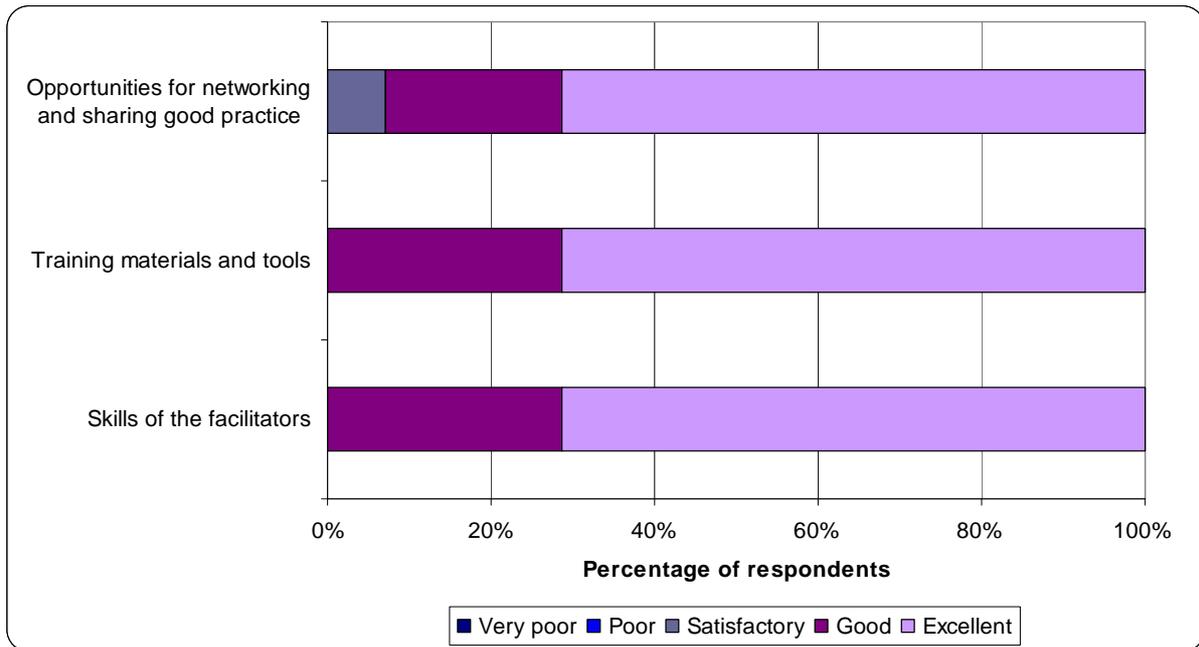


Base: 13

The elements of the training all received similar ratings from participants, as shown in graph 27. For each one 71% of participants reported them to be excellent.

Opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were rated slightly lower overall, with 7% of participants reporting them to be satisfactory. This compares differently to York, as it was the element of the training with the highest ratings.

Graph 27: Rating of specific elements of the training



Base: 14

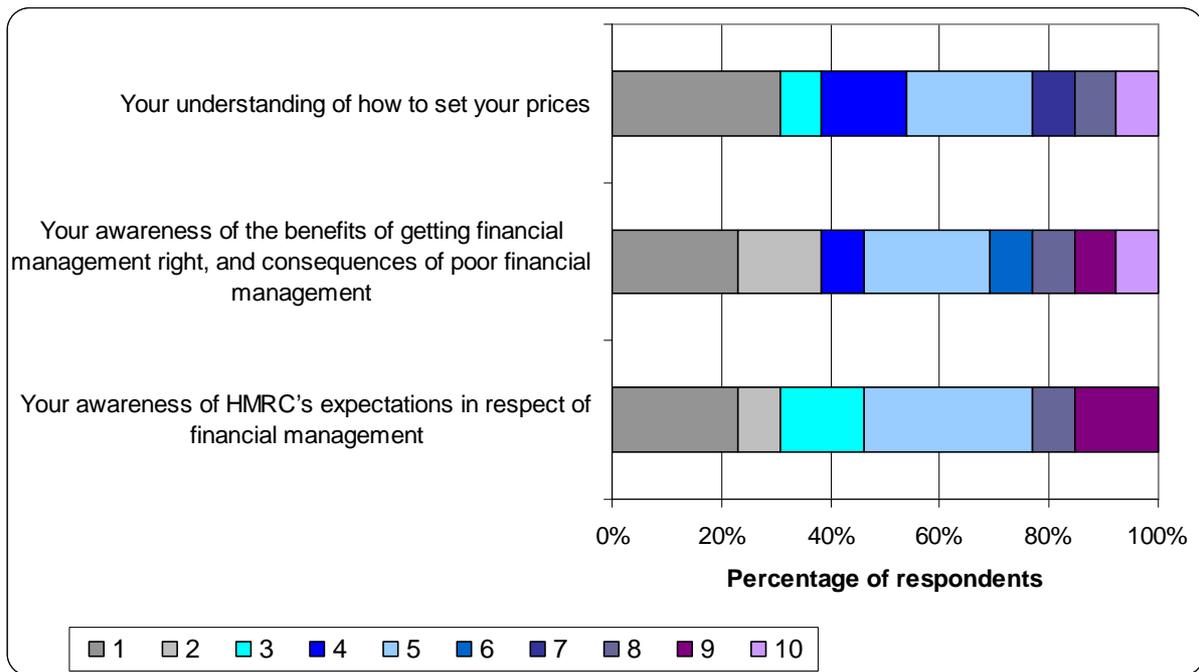
Knowledge and awareness

The ratings for different topics presented in graphs 28 and 29 shows that overall participants reported enhanced confidence in their knowledge and awareness. Specifically:

- 15% of participants rated their confidence in understanding how to set their prices as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 86% after the training.
- 23% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the benefits of getting financial management right and consequences of poor financial management as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 71% after the training.
- 23% of participants rated their awareness of HMRC’s expectations in respect of financial management as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 79% after the training.

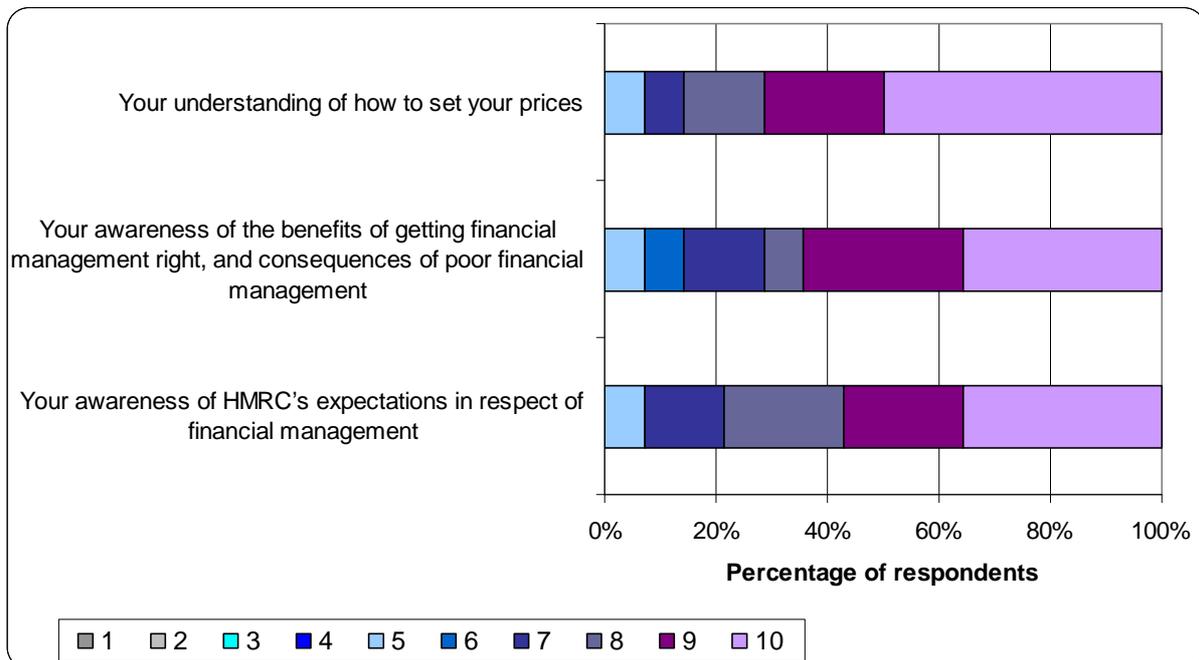
Overall these increases are smaller than those reported by participants in York, except for in understanding how to set their prices.

Graph 28: Levels of confidence before the training session



Base: 13

Graph 29: Levels of confidence after the training session

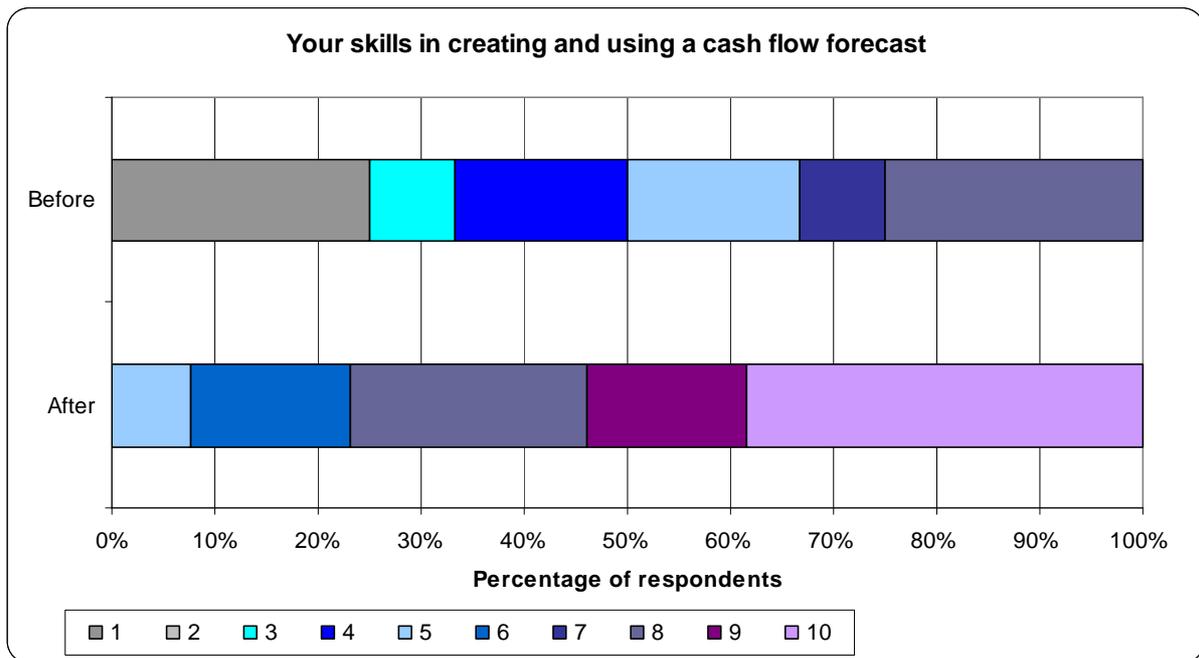


Base: 14

Skills

The scores reported by participants in relation their skills in creating and using a cash flow forecast show improvement: 25% of participants rated their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 77% of participants after the training. This is not as large an increase as reported for York.

Graph 30: Skills in creating and using a cash flow forecast



Base: 12, 13

Using the learning from training

When asked about the ways in which they would use the learning from the training several participants reported that they would use it in “every way”, but some specific comments were:

- “Will apply to my day to day work and will pass on to other childminders”*
- “Contacting HMRC, training day, finding out how I pay myself hourly”*

Other comments

In other comments participants left positive statements about the relevance of the training and indicated topics for further useful sessions:

- “I have gained a lot from this course, knowledge gained is very relevant”*
- “I’m interested in more information on the type of extra services that are needed for which location”*

6. Childminders: Developing professional relationships with parents - Walsall

Background and profile of participants

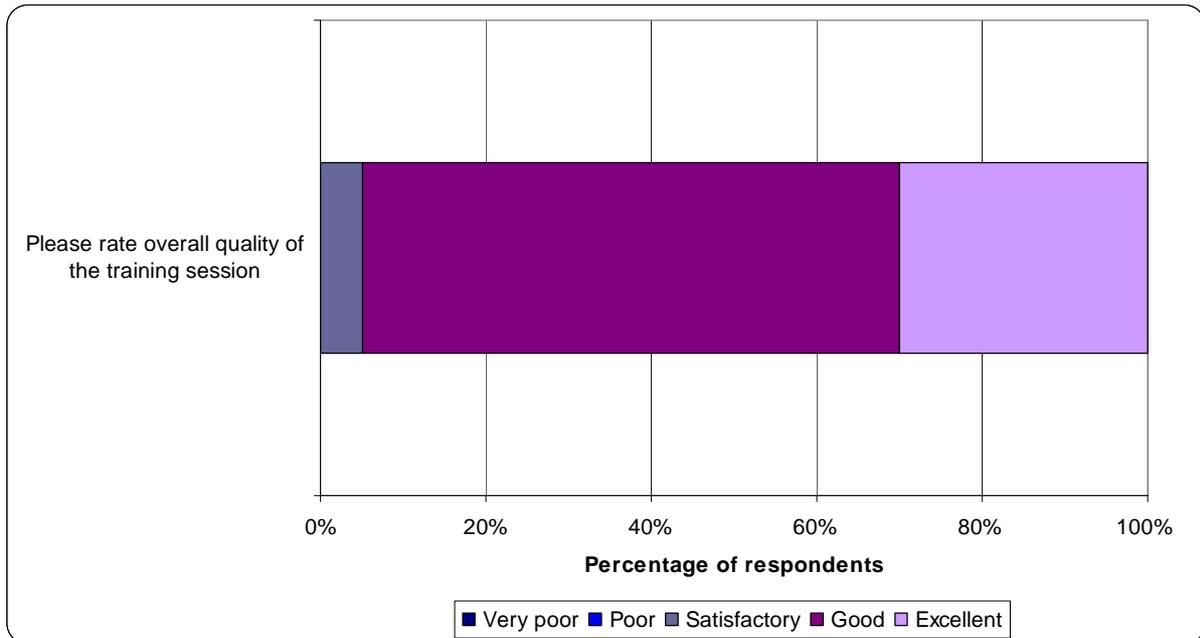
- Location of session: Walsall
- 23 attendees, 22 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- All childminders, including 4 family support childminders
- All self-employed

- All private sector

Experience of the training

Overall the quality of the training session was rated as good or excellent by the majority of participants: 30% rated it excellent and 65% rated it good. A small proportion of participants (5%) rated the training as satisfactory. Graph 31 shows these findings.

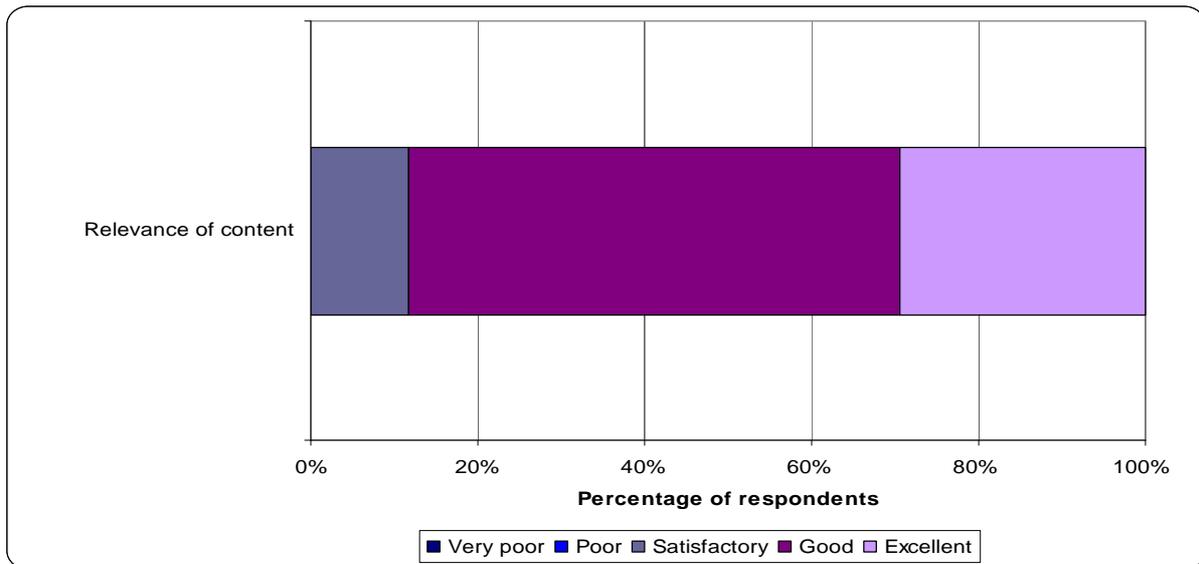
Graph 31: Overall quality of the session



Base: 20

When asked about the relevance of the session to their day-to-day work, 59% of participants rated it as good and 29% rated it as excellent. The other 12% of participants rated the relevance as satisfactory. Compared to the other training courses, this session was therefore rated lower in terms of its relevance for the participants.

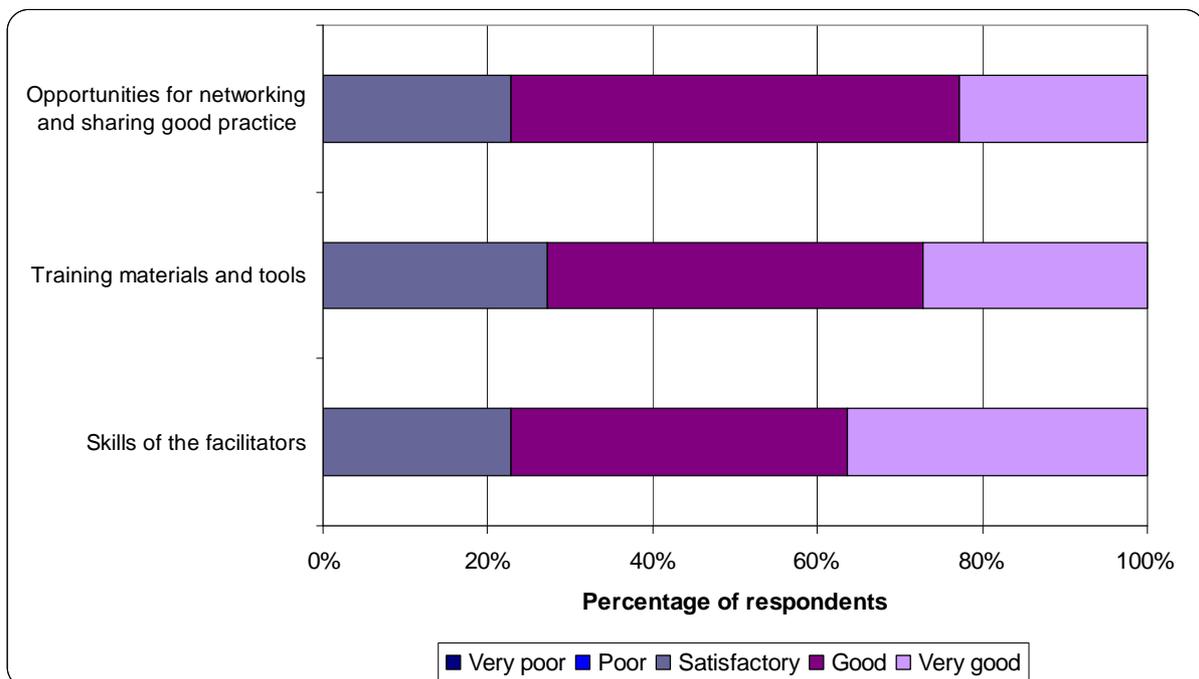
Graph 32: Relevance of the session



Base: 22

The scores for different elements of the training show that whilst overall most participants felt each element was good or excellent, just over 20% of participants rated them as satisfactory.

Graph 33: Rating of specific elements of the training



Base: 22

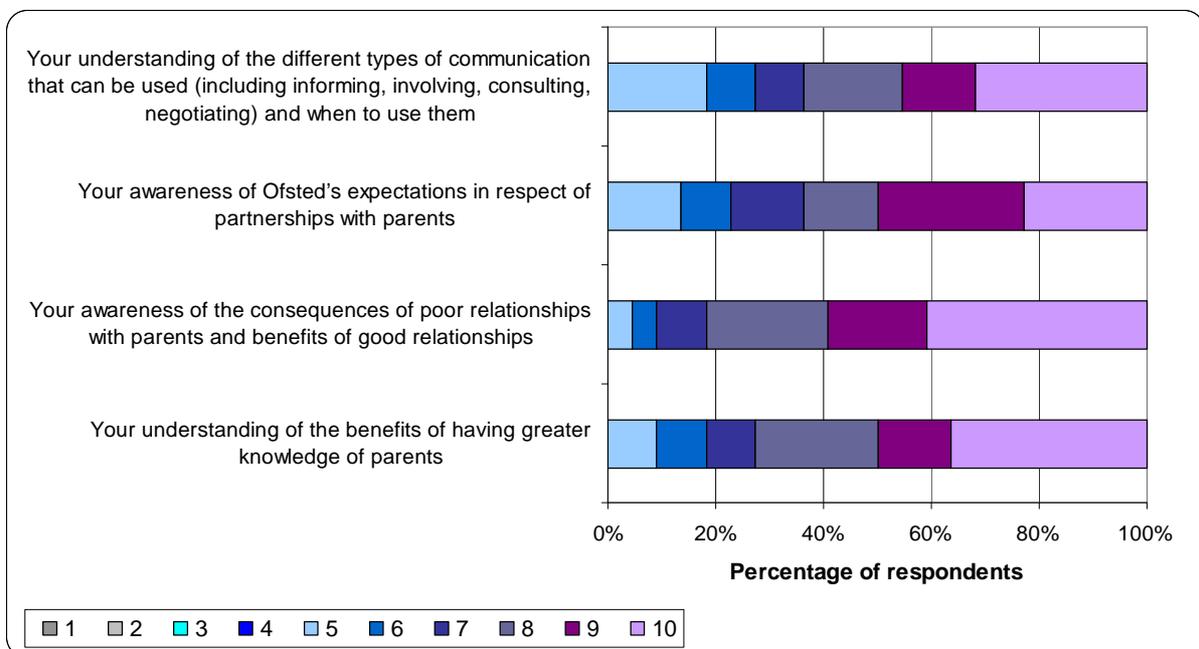
Knowledge and awareness

As graphs 34 and 35 show, levels of confidence in the different topics covered by training increased for participants. However compared to other sessions, high proportions of participants rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 – 10 (where 1 is not at all confidence and 10 is extremely confidence) for all topics before the training. This could potentially provide some insight into the higher proportion of participants rating the training as satisfactory compared to other courses too; potentially participants' had less knowledge to gain/perceived themselves as less in need of the training at the outset.

The changes in the ratings for knowledge and awareness were:

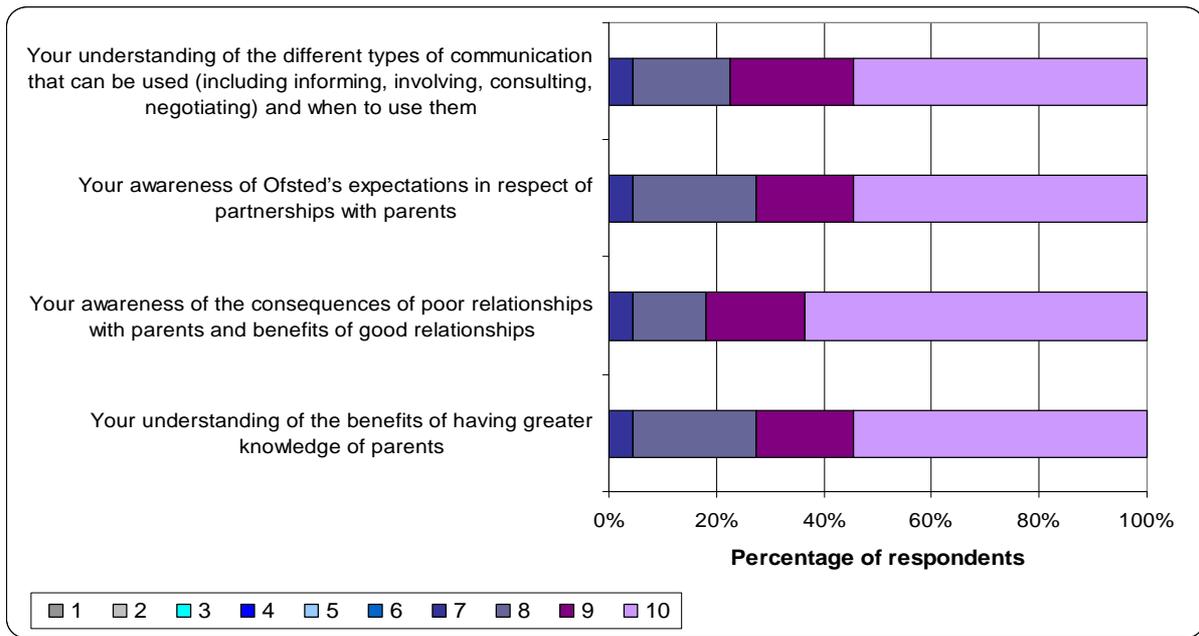
- Understanding different types of communication and when to use them: 64% of participants rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 95% after the training.
- Awareness of Ofsted's expectations in respect of partnership with parents: 64% of participants rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 95% after the training.
- Awareness of the consequences of poor relationships with parents and the benefits of good relationships: 82% of participants rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 95% after the training.
- Understanding the benefits of having greater knowledge of parents: 73% of participants rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 95% after the training.

Graph 34: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 22

Graph 35: Levels of confidence after the training

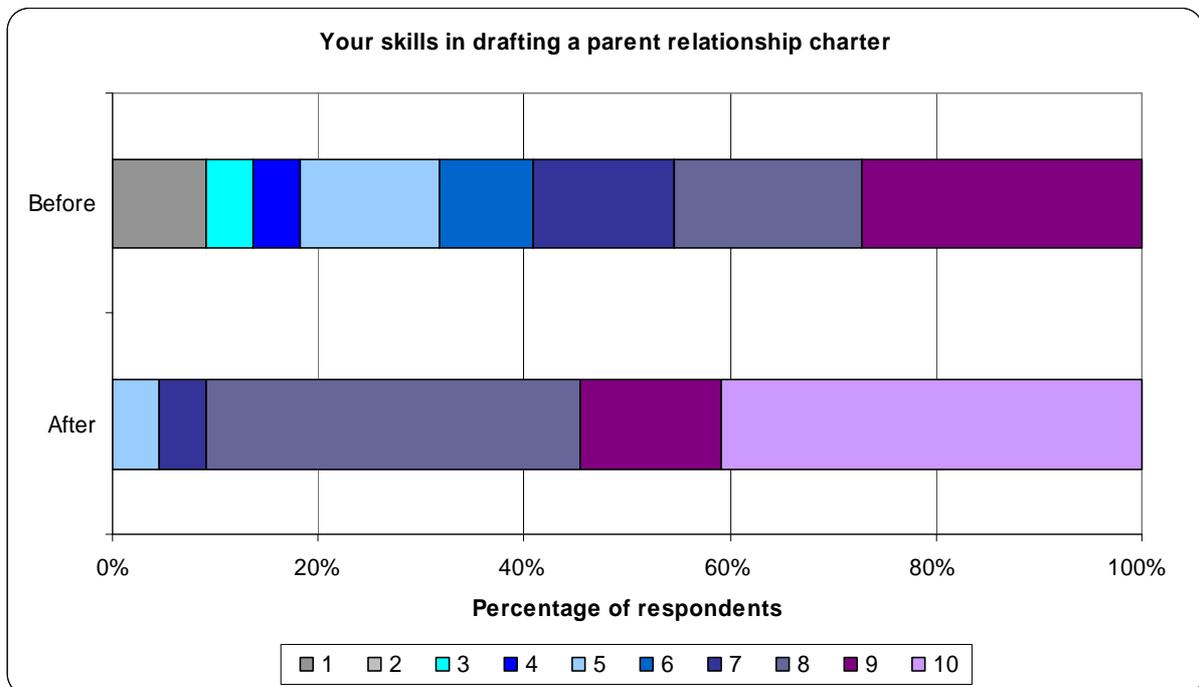


Base: 22

Skills

Participants rated their skills in drafting a parent-relationship charter before and after the training. Before the training 45% of participants rated their skills as 8, 9 or 10, which increased to 91% of participants after the training.

Graph 36: Skills in drafting a parent relationship charter



Using the learning from the training

Some of the main themes raised by participants relating to the ways in which they will use the learning were:

- Using the information, ideas and tools
“Will use lots of items within my settings”
- Reinforce existing good practice
“A lot of what the workshop discussed I do already, However it’s a good to think about it and remind me to continue to work with parents”
- Improving systems, e.g. paperwork, policies
“Re-evaluate my paperwork and improve it”

A few participants felt that the session would have been better aimed at new childminders or those with less experience.

“More childminders need to attend, to become aware of working with parents and how to build better relationships with parents”

As mentioned above, this view could be reflected in the higher proportion of participants rating the training/elements of the training as satisfactory.

Other comments

Some participants took the opportunity to say “thank you” in the open comments section, reflecting positive experiences. Other comments were:

“Has been useful for forthcoming Ofsted inspection”

7. Out of school clubs: Financial management - Stockton

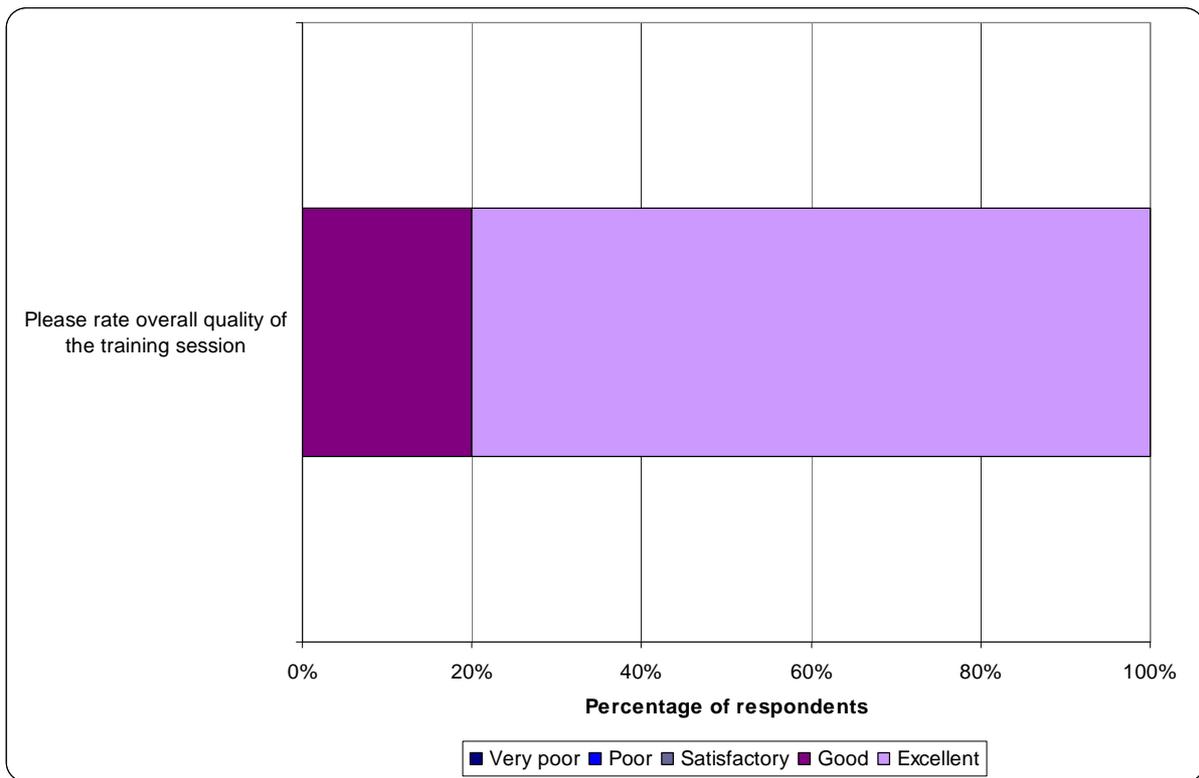
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Stockton
- 6 attendees, 5 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- 3 Managers, 5 Owners
- Type of organisations: Before and after school clubs, Pre-school, day nurseries
- All private sector

Experience of the training

As shown in graph 37, the majority of participants reported that the training was excellent overall (80%) and the rest reported it to be good (20%).

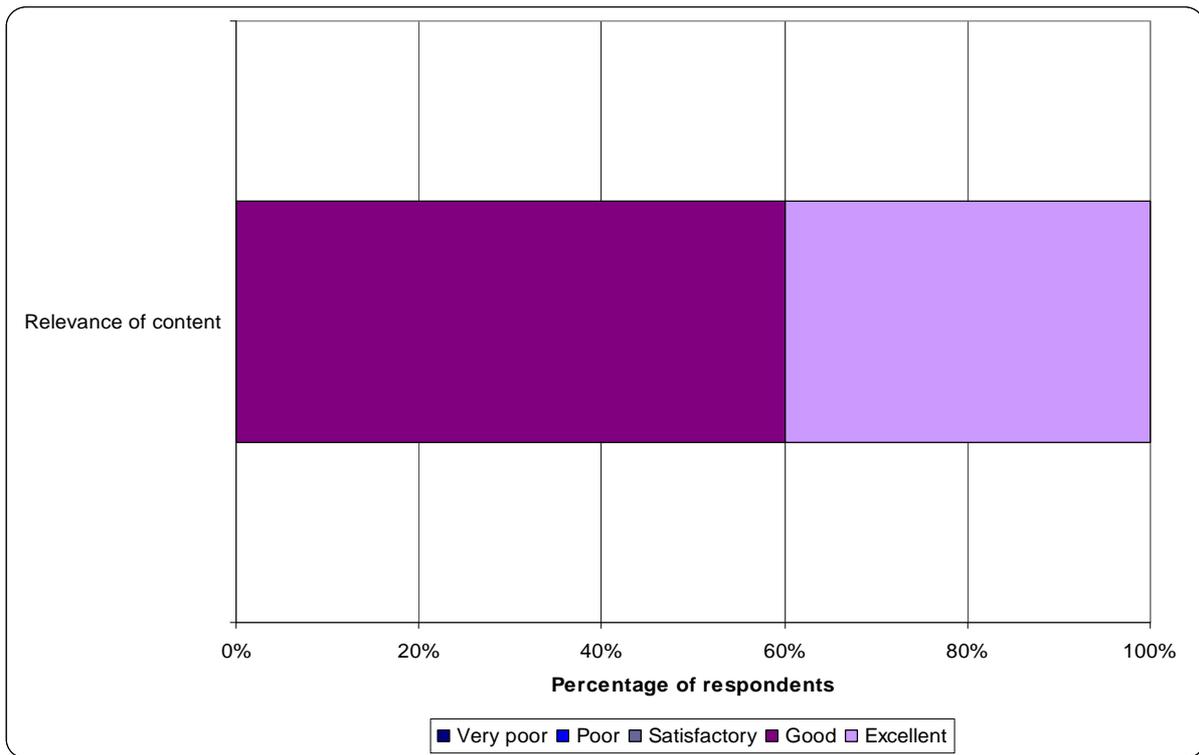
Graph 37: Overall quality of the session



Base: 5

The relevance of the session was also rated as good or excellent by all participants, but with a higher proportion rating it as good (60%) compared to excellent (40%). This is shown in graph 38.

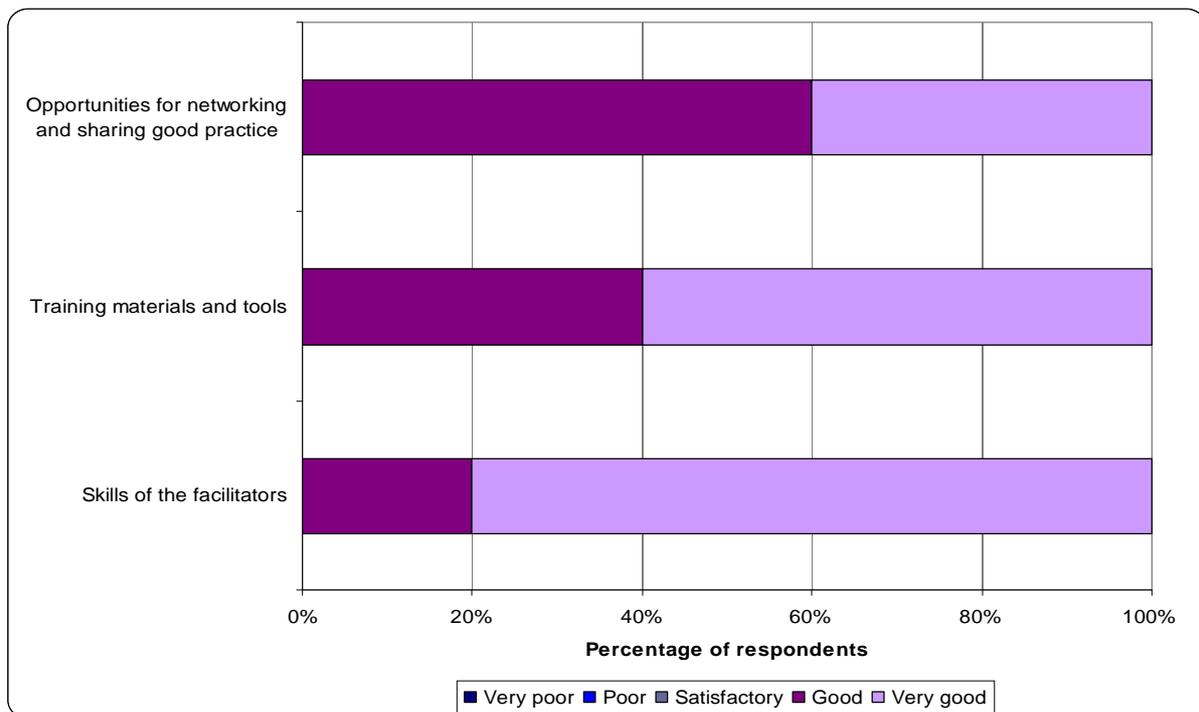
Graph 38: Relevance of the session



Base: 5

As graph 39 shows, all participants rated the different elements of the training as good or excellent. As with some of the other sessions, the skills of the facilitators were rated most highly; 80% of participants reported them to be excellent.

Graph 39: Ratings of specific elements of the training

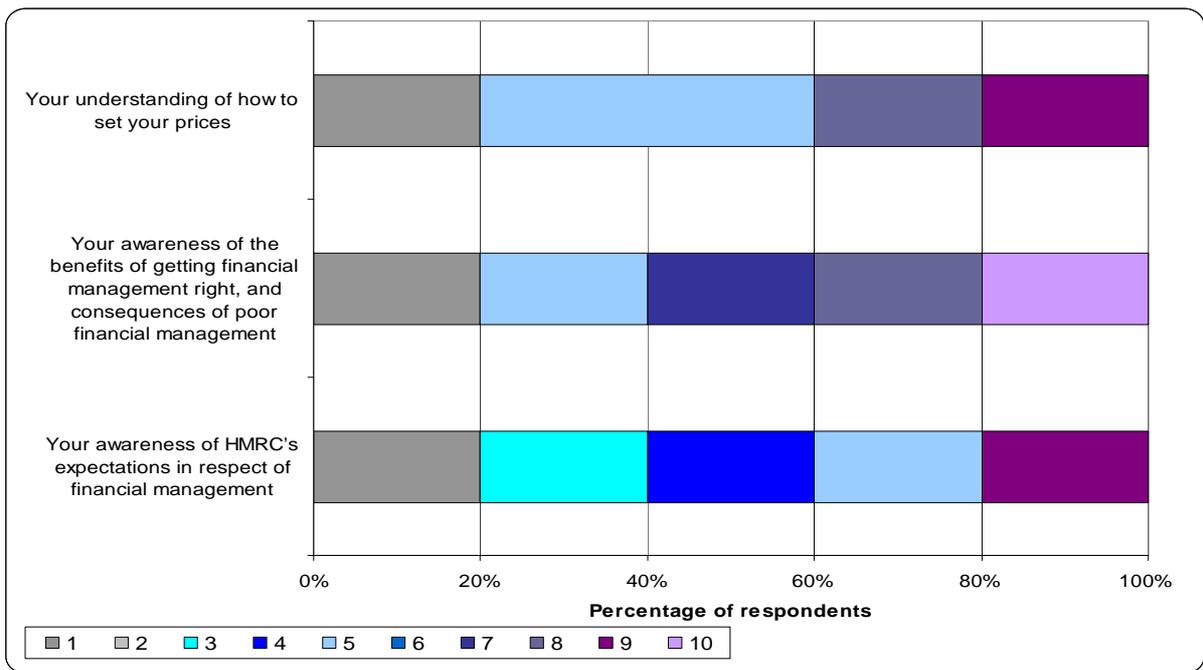


Base: 5

Knowledge and awareness

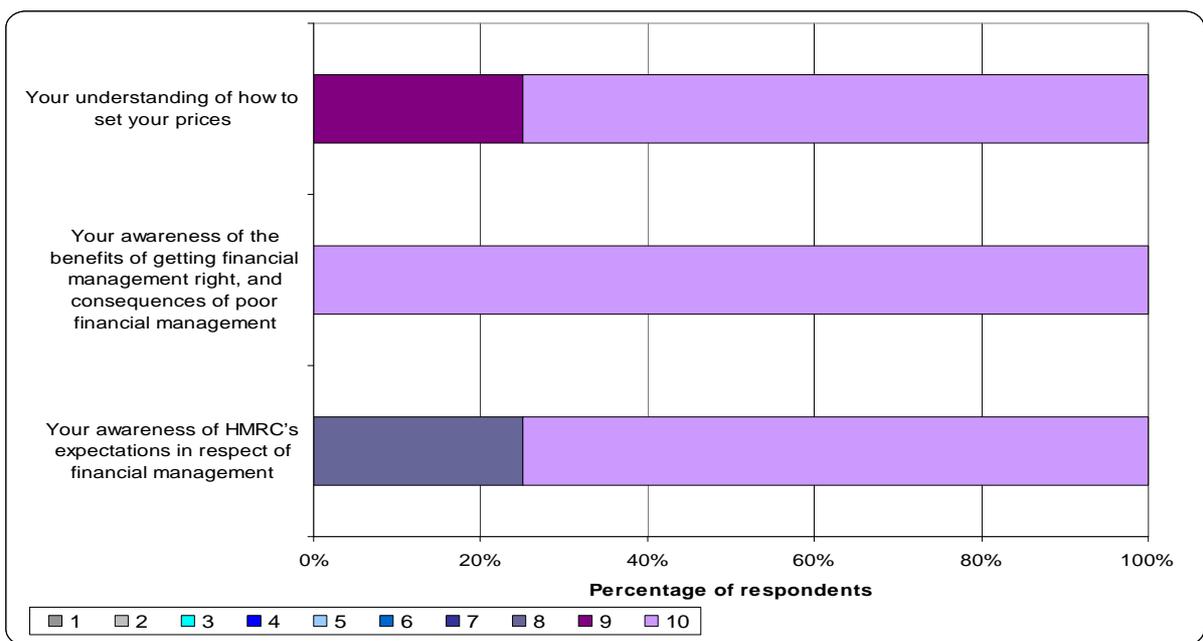
When rating their confidence in different topics covered in the training, overall participants reported improvements – as the graphs below show across all topics all participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 after the training. This increase was particularly prominent in relation to awareness of HMRC’s expectations in respect of financial management: 20% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to all participants after the training (100%).

Graph 40: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 5

Graph 41: Levels of confidence after the training

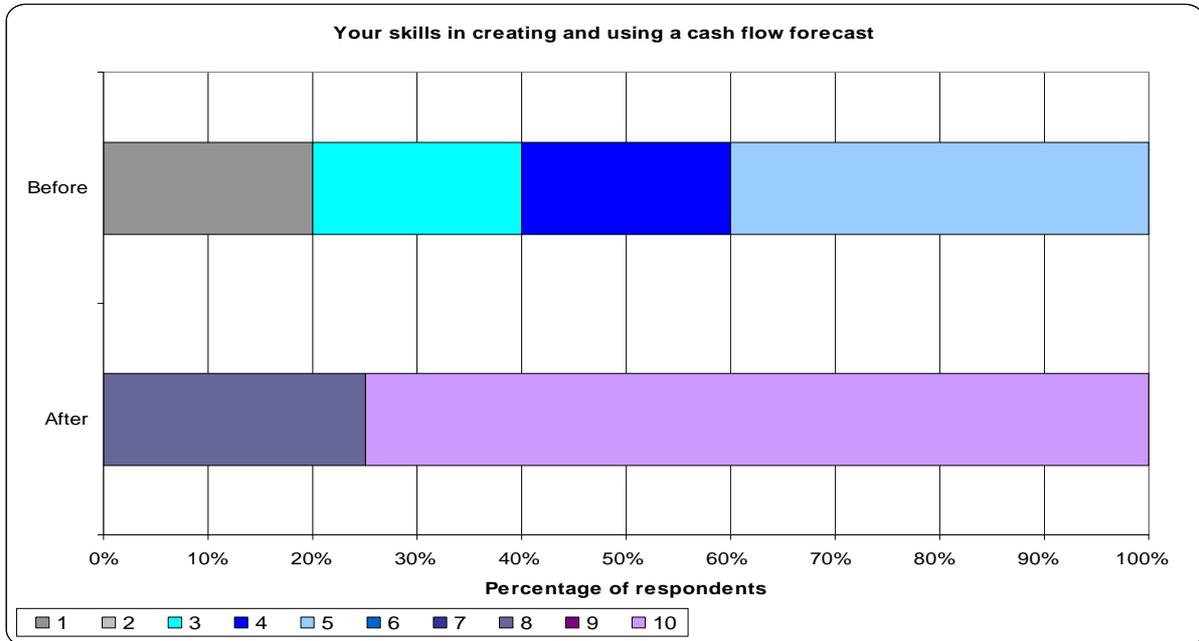


Base: 4

Skills

Similarly, improvements were reported in relation to participants' skills in creating and using a cash flow forecast: after the training all participants (100%) rated themselves as 8, 9 or 10, compared to no participants before the training (the highest rating before was 5).

Graph 42: Skills in creating and using a cash flow forecast



Base: 5, 4

Using the learning from the training

Participants identified a number of ways in which they would use the learning from the training and these primarily concerned budget setting, forecasting and financial management. Comments included:

“To ensure early predictions and cash flow by use of previous year”

“To take more responsibility where setting budgets”

“Certainly helped with working out how to draw even and given the confidence to go back and work for a setting”

Other comments

Only one participant used the open space at the end of the form to provide a further comment, they stated:

“This course was excellent and very thorough”

8. Out of school clubs: Employment Law - Telford

Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Telford

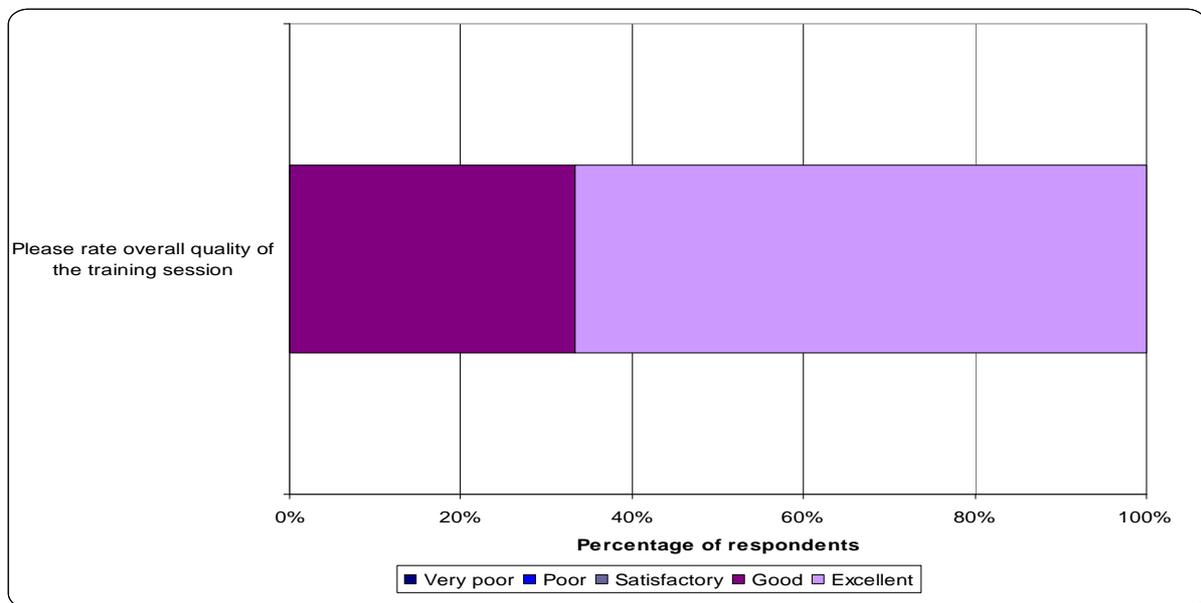
- 12 attendees, 12 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles included: business and funding consultants/administrators, treasurer, chairperson, managers and team leaders
- Type of organisation: 4 pre-schools, 5 local authorities/council, 3 nursery/out of school clubs

Experience of the training

As with many of the other training sessions, all participants rated the quality of the training as good (33%) or excellent (67%), as shown in graph 43.

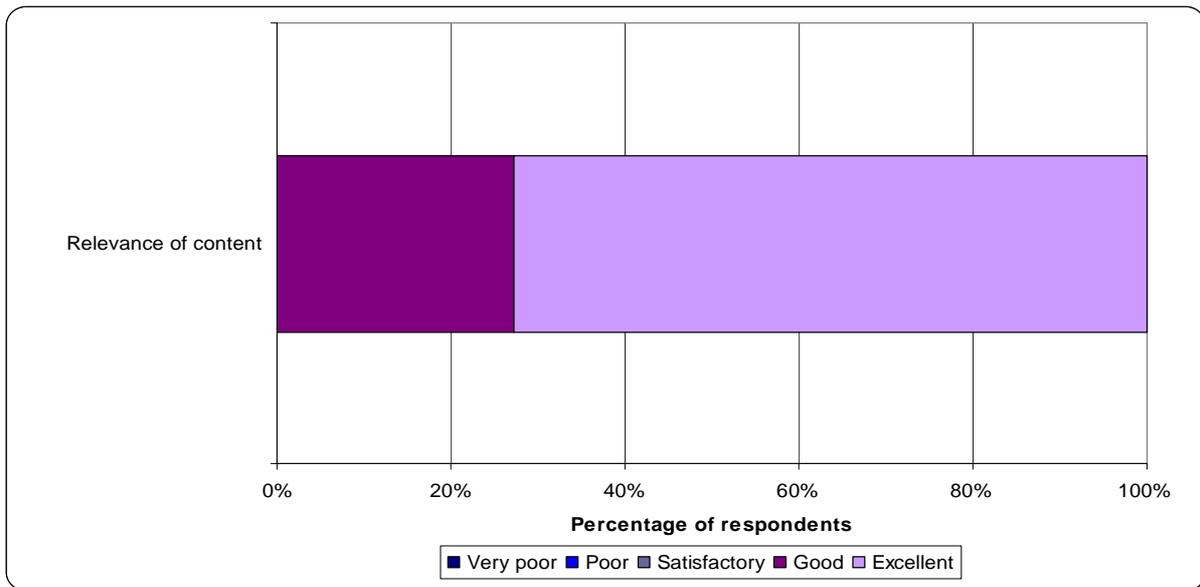
The relevance of the training to participants' day-to-day work was also rated as good (27%) or excellent (73%), as shown in graph 44.

Graph 43: Overall quality of the session



Base: 9

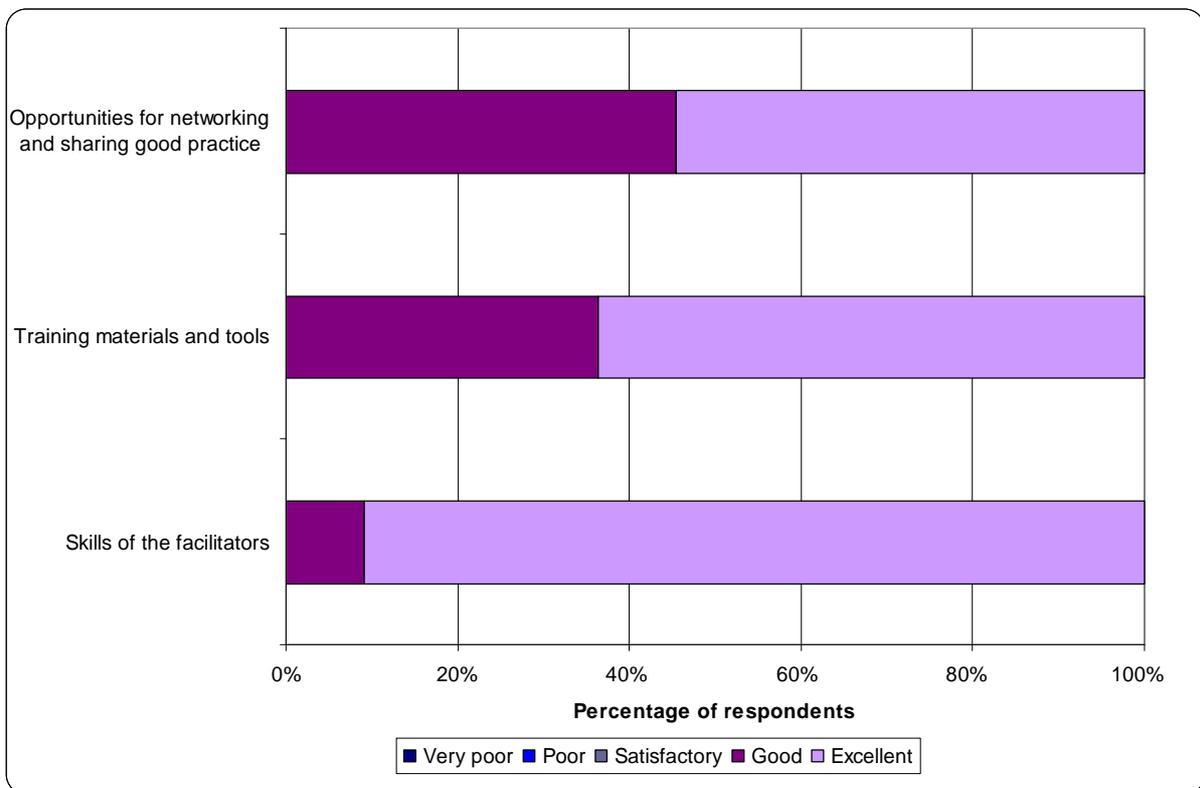
Graph 44: Relevance of the session



Base: 11

Graph 45 shows how participants rated specific elements of the training. The majority of participants rated each element of the training as excellent (at least 55%), particularly the skills of the facilitators (rated as excellent by 91% of participants).

Graph 45: Rating of specific elements of the training



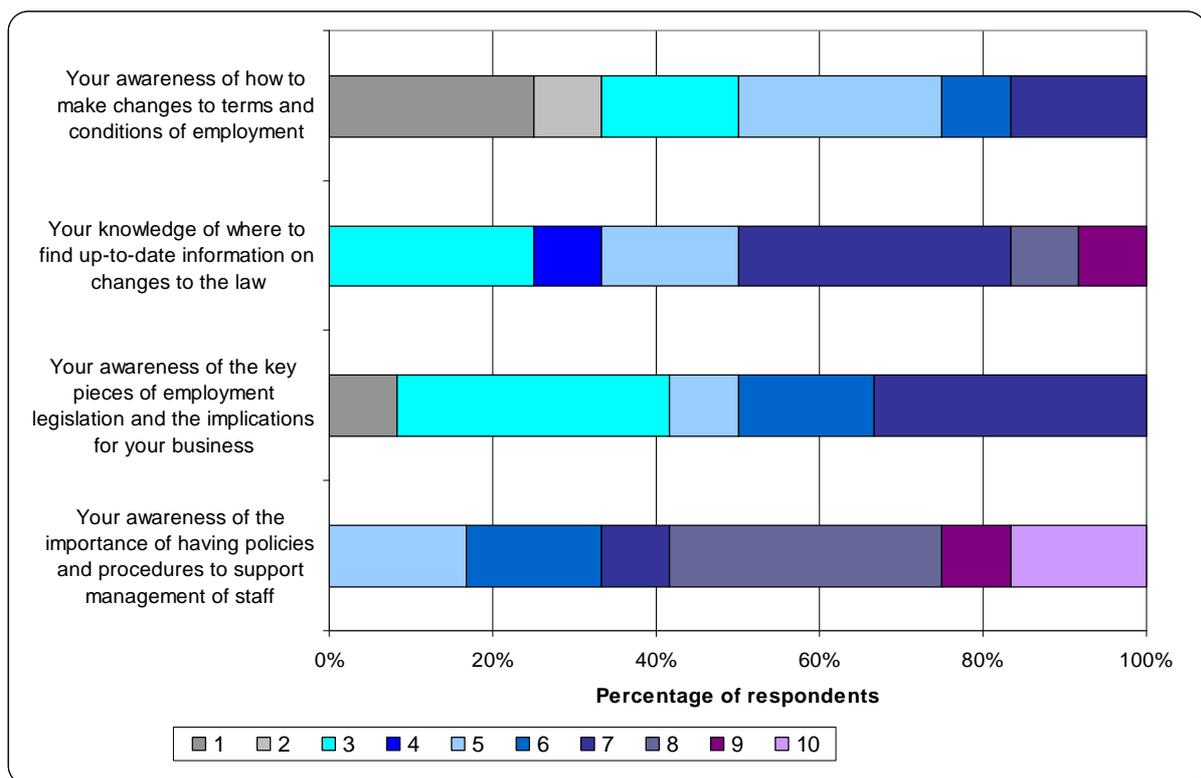
Base: 11

Knowledge and awareness

Analysis of the ratings provided by participants of their confidence in relation to different topics before and after the training shows that:

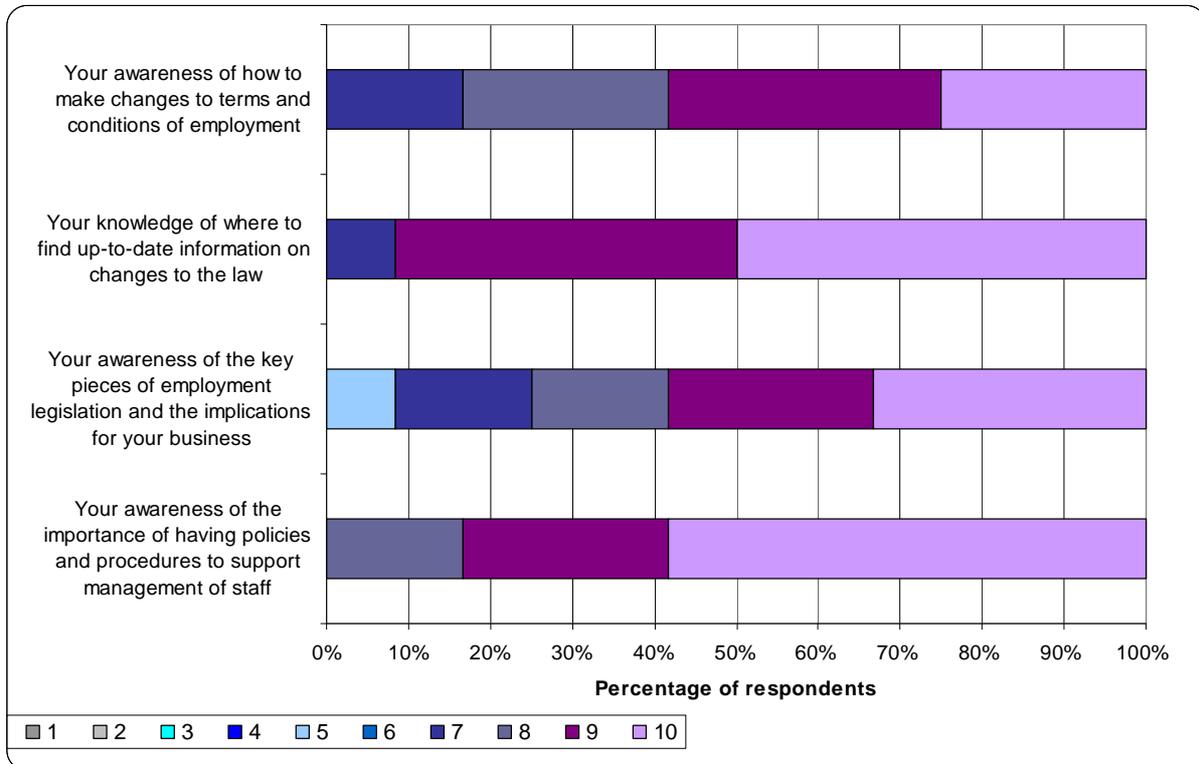
- Awareness of how to make changes to terms and conditions of employment: no participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 83% after the training.
- Knowledge of where to find up-to-date information on changes to the law: 17% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 92% after the training.
- Awareness of the key pieces of employment legislation and the implications for business: no participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% after the training.
- Awareness of the importance of having policies and procedures to support management of staff: 78% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.

Graph 46: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 12

Graph 47: Levels of confidence after the training

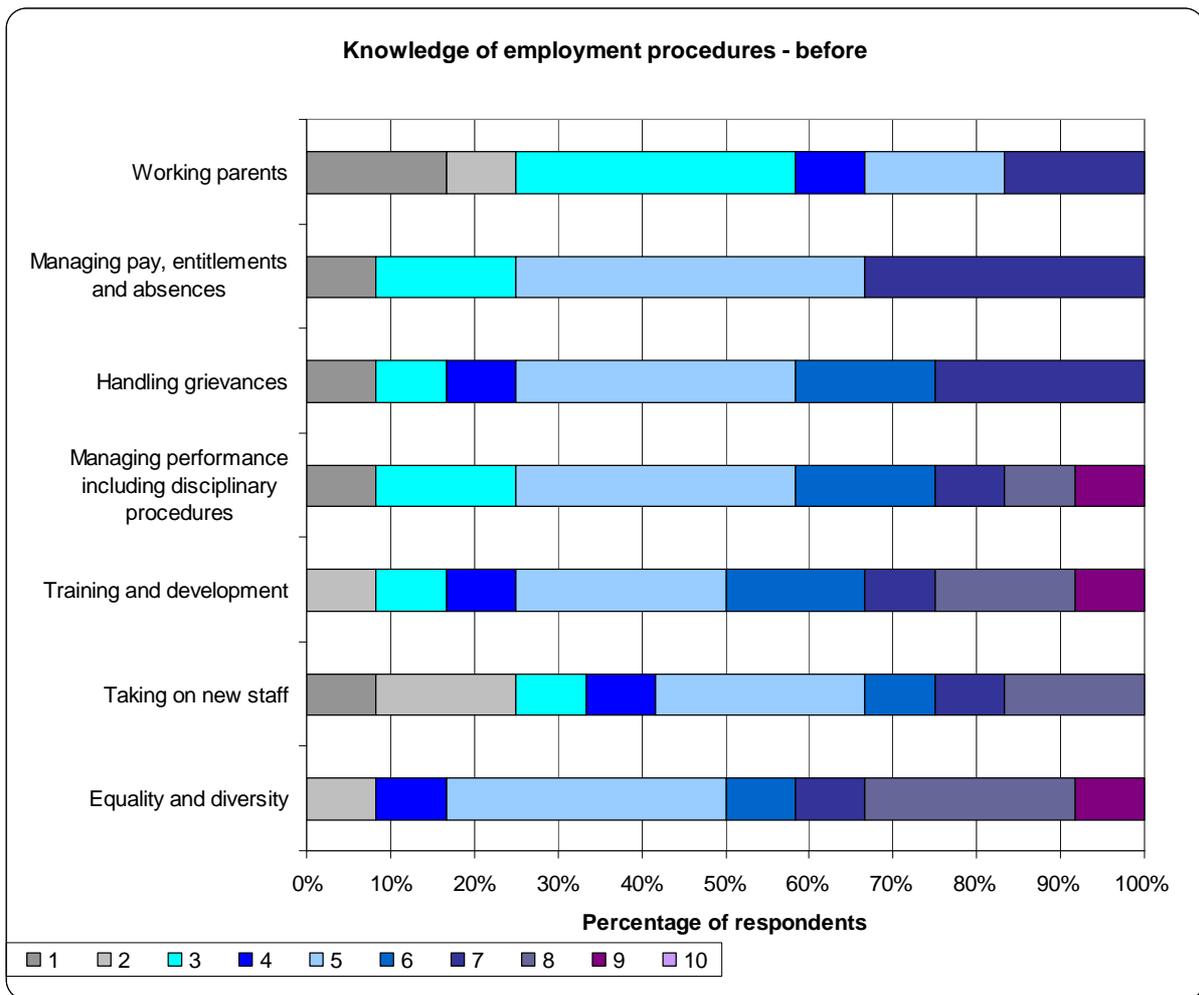


Base: 12

Participants were also asked to rate their knowledge of different employment procedures before and after the training. Graphs 48 and 49 show the ratings. The improvements were:

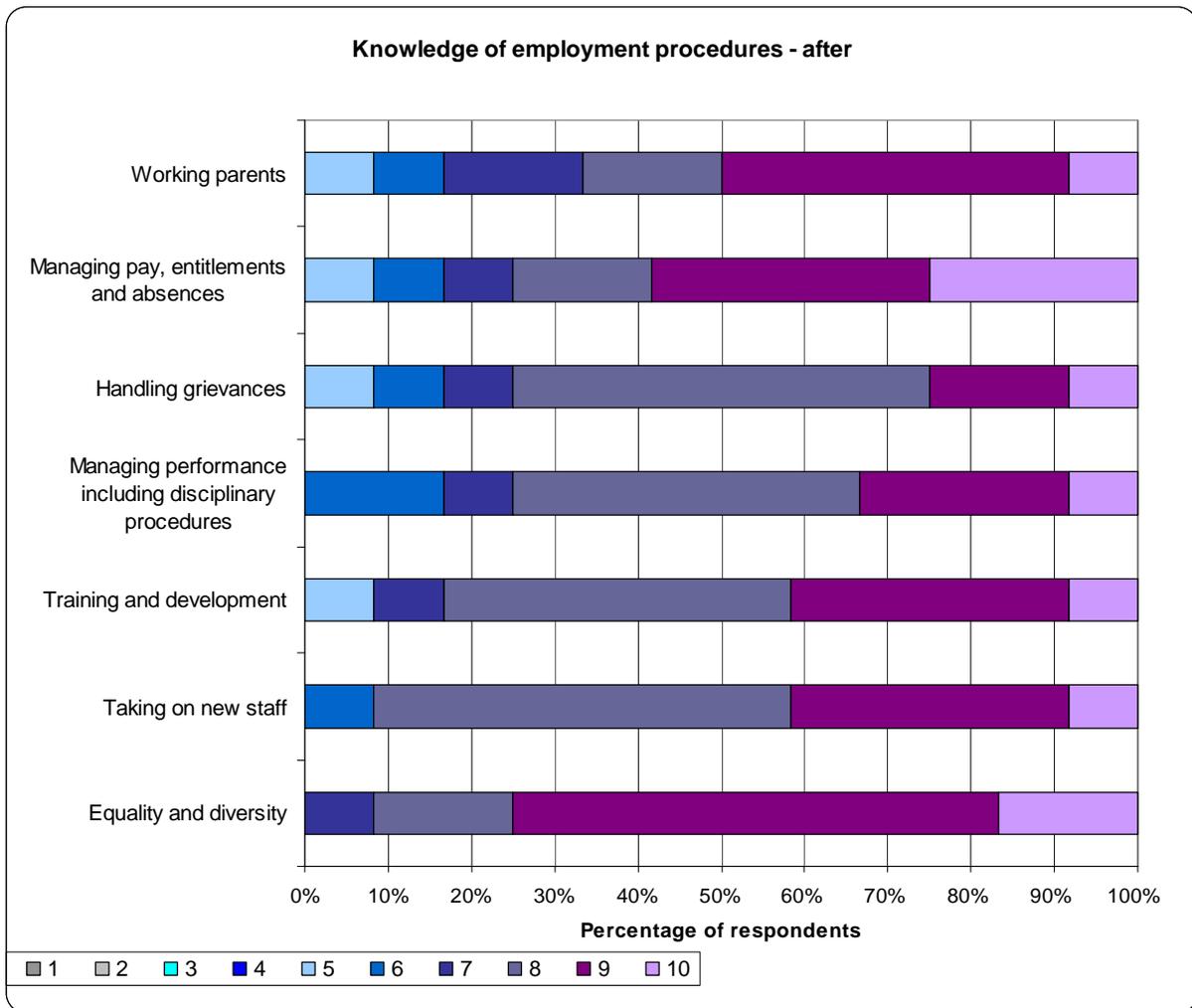
- Working parents: No participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 67% after the training.
- Managing pay, entitlements and absences: No participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% after the training.
- Handling grievances: No participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% after the training.
- Managing performance including disciplinary procedures: 17% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% after the training.
- Training and development: 25% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 84% after the training.
- Taking on new staff: 17% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 92% after the training.
- Equality and diversity: 33% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 92% after the training.

Graph 48: Knowledge of employment procedures before the training



Base: 12

Graph 49: Levels of employment procedures after the training



Base: 12

Using the learning from the training

When asked about the ways in which they would use the learning from the training, participants highlighted the following themes:

- Reviewing policies and procedures
“Review all contacts, policies and procedures, application forms etc.”
- Updating advice and guidance
“Advice and Guidance”
- Signposting and working with settings
“When visiting settings and being able to signpost to correct sources of information”

Other comments

No participants provided other comments.

9. Pre-schools: Effective committees - Wiltshire

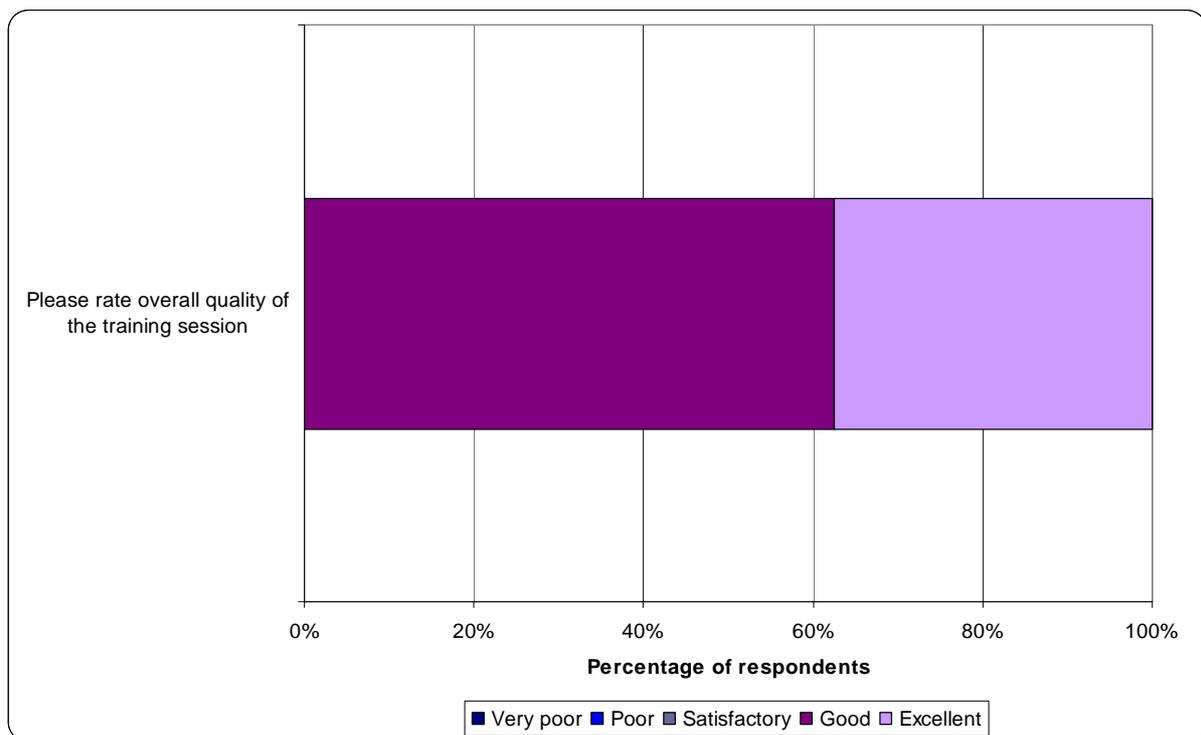
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Wiltshire
- 17 attendees, 17 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: pre-school managers/supervisors, committee members (including chairs and treasurers)
- Type of organisation: All pre-schools
- Sector: All not-for-profit sector (12), some not responded

Experience of the training

As graph 50 shows, participants rated the overall quality of the session highly: 63% reported it to be good, and 37% reported it to be excellent.

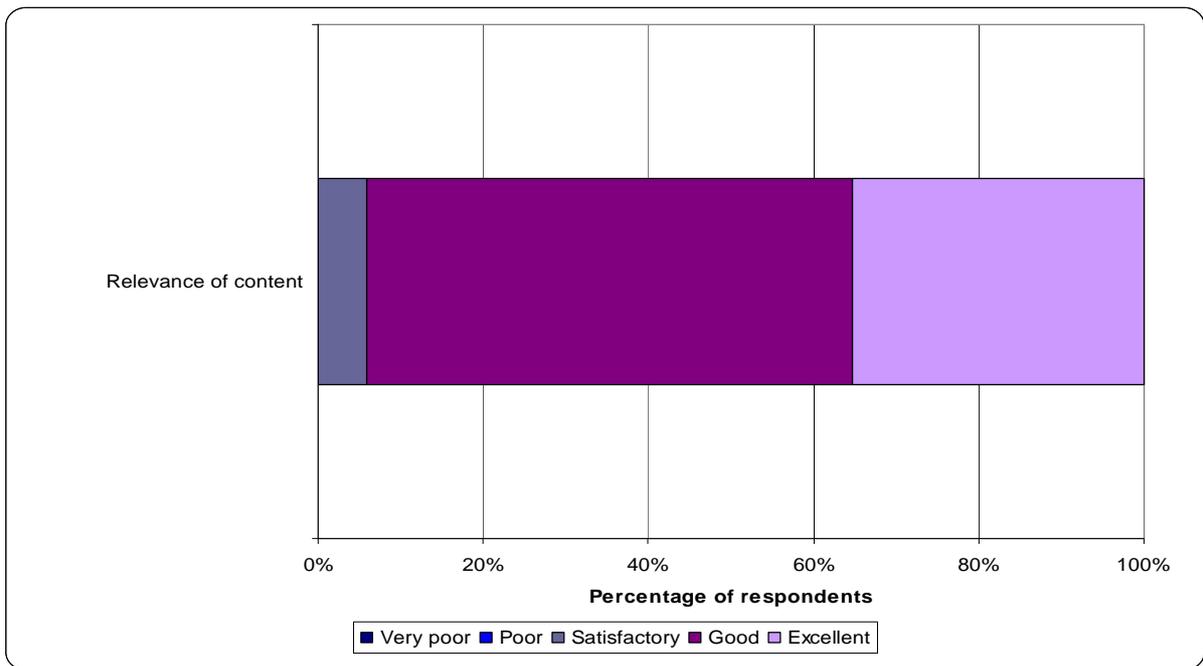
Graph 50: Overall quality of the session



Base: 16

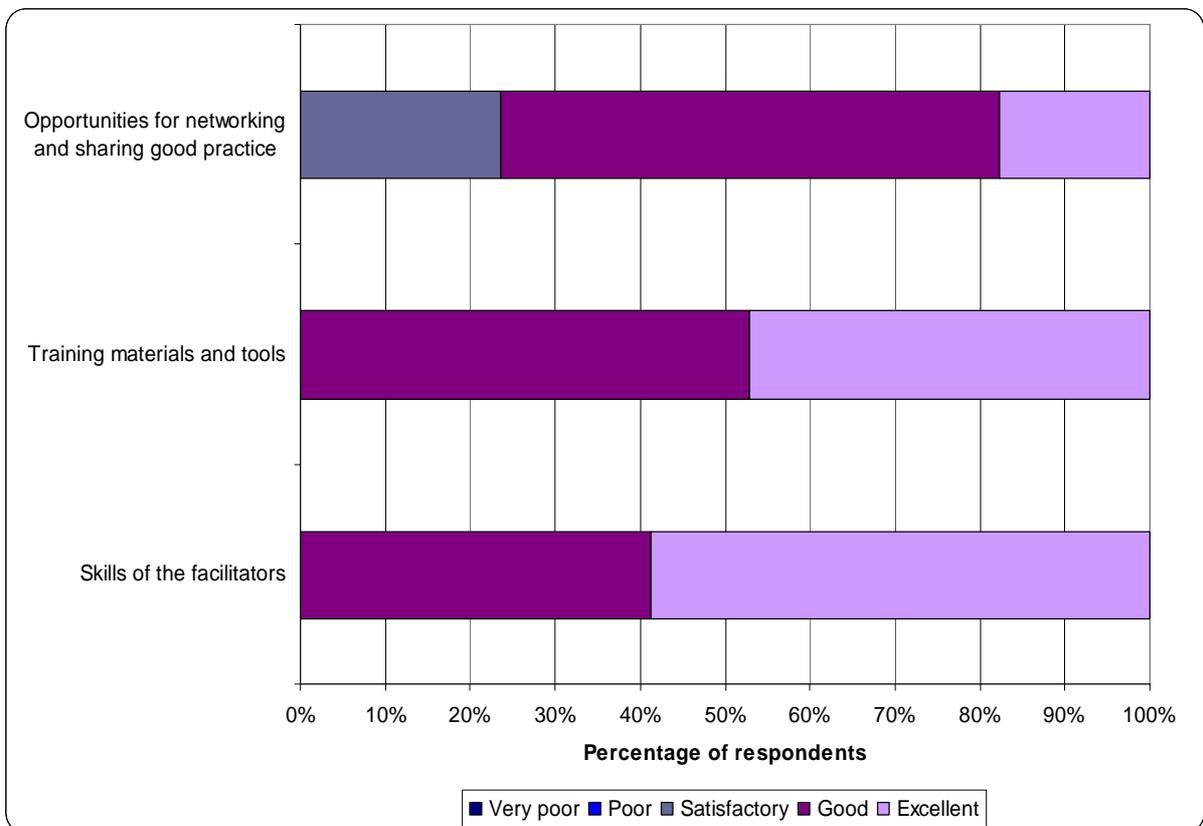
The ratings for the relevance of the session were slightly lower overall (graph 51), with 59% of participants reporting it to be good, 35% excellent, and 6% satisfactory. There were also slightly lower levels of satisfaction with specific elements of the training compared to other sessions. As graph 52 shows, one element of the session that received lower ratings was the opportunities for networking and sharing good practice, with 24% of participants rating it to be satisfactory, rather than good or excellent. The other elements were rated more positively.

Graph 51: Relevance of the session



Base: 17

Graph 52: Rating of specific elements of the training



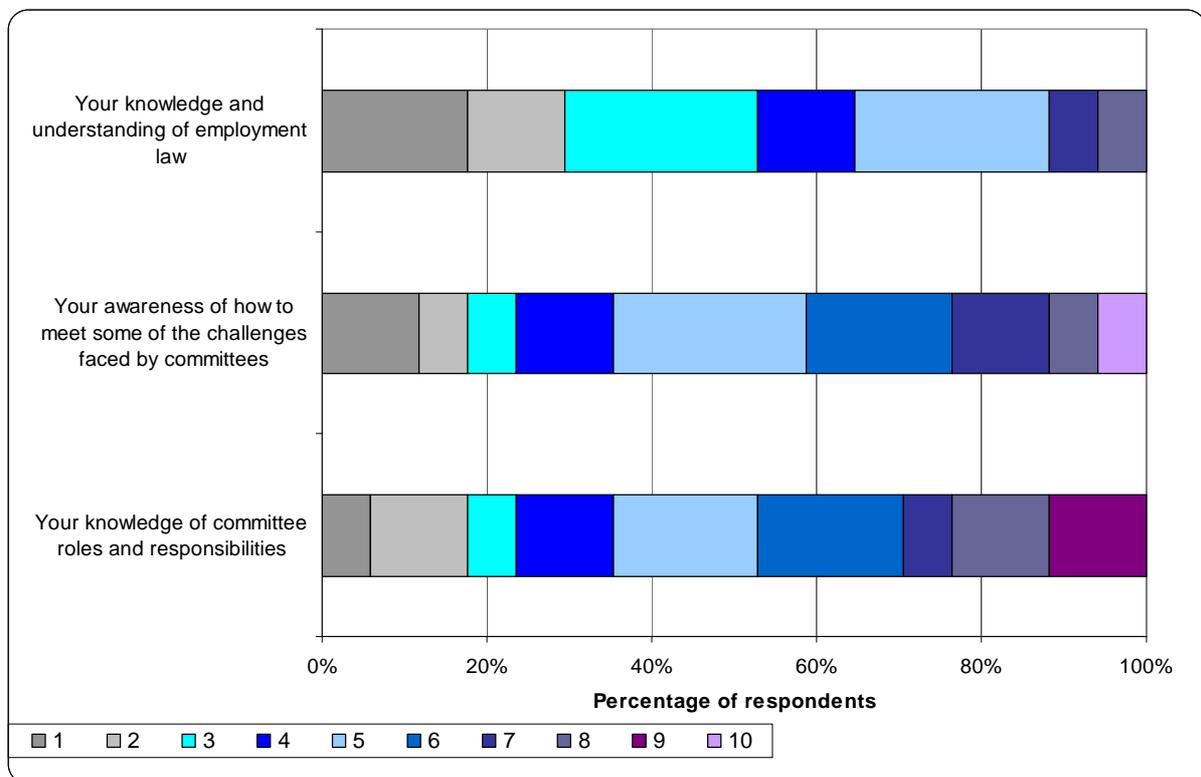
Base: 17

Knowledge and awareness

Graphs 53 and 54 show that participants' confidence in their knowledge and awareness of different topics in the training increased before and after. Key findings are:

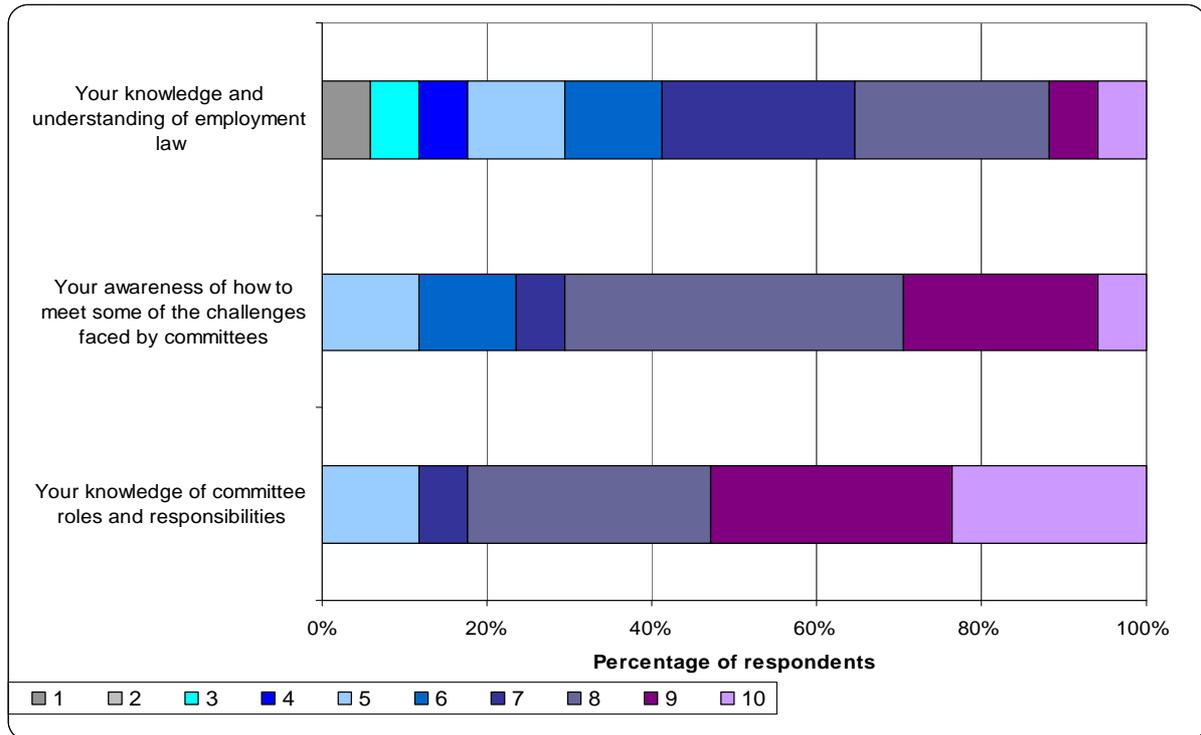
- Before the training 6% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge and understanding of employment law as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 35% of participants after the training. This shows that this may be an area of knowledge where further training is needed.
- Before the training 12% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of how to meet some of the challenges faced by committees as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 71% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 24% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of committee roles and responsibilities as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 82% of participants after the training.

Graph 53: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 17

Graph 54: Levels of confidence after the training

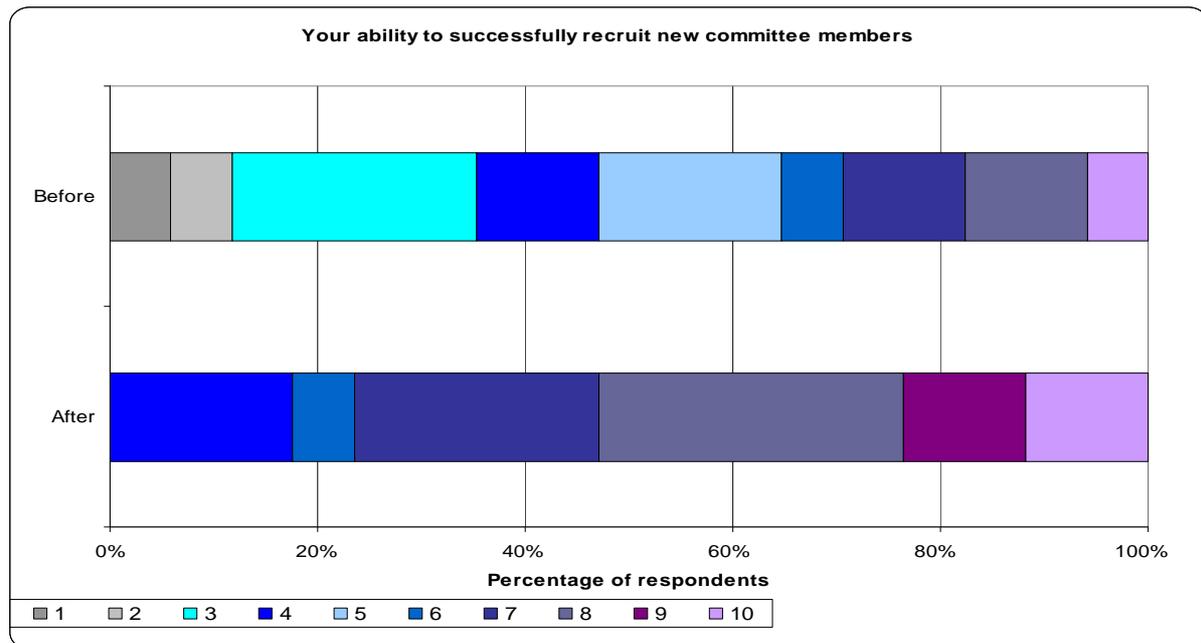


Base: 17

Skills

Graph 55 compares the before and after ratings of participants' ability to successfully recruit new committee members. Before the session, 18% of participants rated their ability as 8, 9 or 10, and this increased to 53% of participants after the session.

Graph 55: Ability to successfully recruit new committee members



Base: 17

Using the learning from the training

Participants reported a few different ways in which they would use the learning from the training, these were:

- Disseminating learning within the committee
“Will cascade info/handouts to rest of the committee for best practice”
- Signposting and sharing information
“Signposting other orgs especially around employment law”
- Use resources from the training
“Use the online resources I am now aware of”
- Update documentation and advice for committee members
“Produce trustee handbooks for general members and named roles for handover periods of new committee”

Other comments

Some participants reported that they felt they would have benefitted from a longer session, for example a whole day. Other comments included:

- “Very interesting and useful. I would highly recommend this session”*
- “Terrific that this is available free of charge for volunteers”*
- “Thanks – wish I’d had this training before – need more of it”*

10. Pre-schools: Managing employees - Swindon

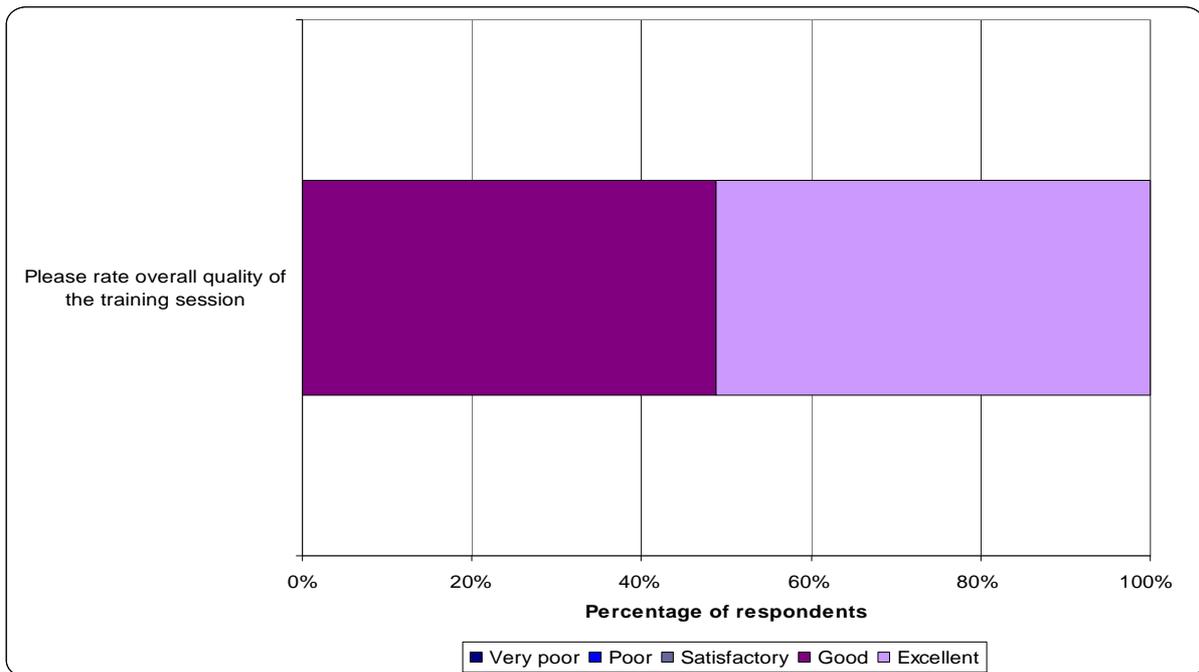
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Swindon
- 47 attendees, 43 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: pre-school/nursery/playgroup/out of school club managers, owners and supervisors, business manager and a committee secretary
- Types of organisation: Pre-schools, nurseries, playgroups and out of school clubs
- Sectors: 14 not-for-profit, 19 private and 8 voluntary sector

Experience of the training

Similar proportions of participants rated the overall quality of the training as good and excellent (49% and 51% respectively), as shown in graph 56.

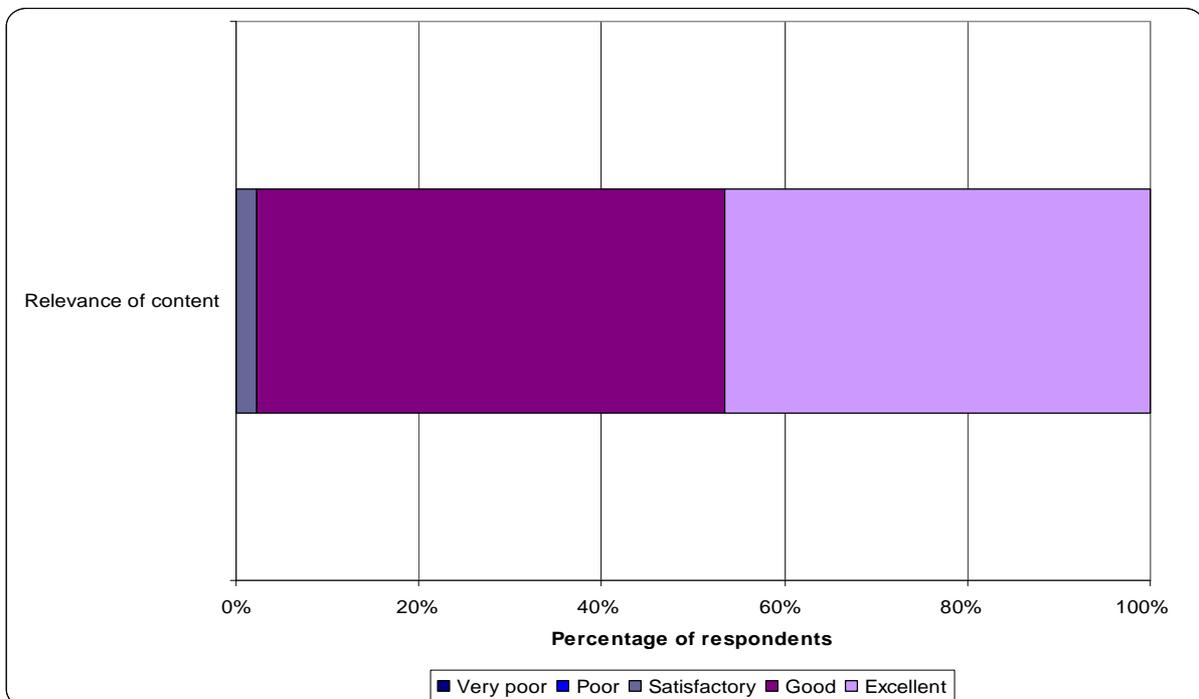
Graph 56: Overall quality of the training session



Base: 41

Graph 57 shows that the ratings for the relevance of the session to their day-to-day work were also high, with 47% of participants reporting the training to be excellent, 51% reporting it as good, and 2% reporting it as satisfactory.

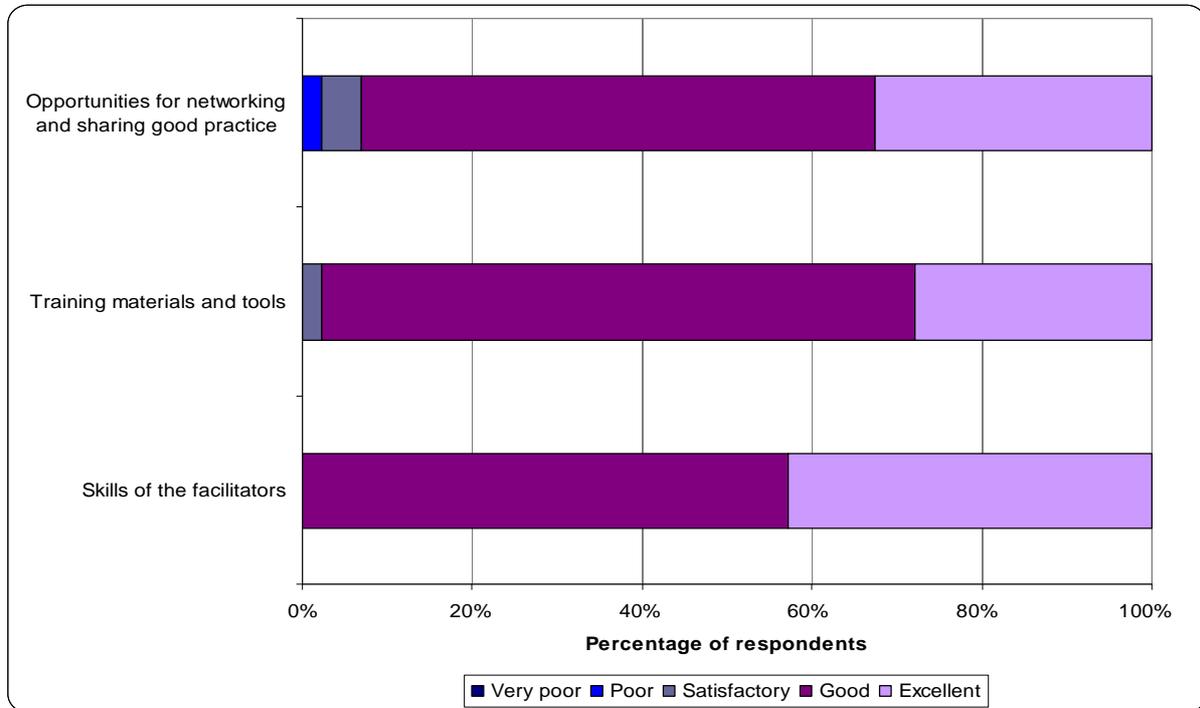
Graph 57: Relevance of the session



Base: 43

When rating different elements of the training, the scores for the skills of the facilitator and training materials/tools were all good or excellent. However scores for opportunities to network were lower with 5% of participants reporting the session as satisfactory and 2% as poor. These are small proportions but notably low compared to all of the other sessions.

Graph 58: Rating of specific elements of the training



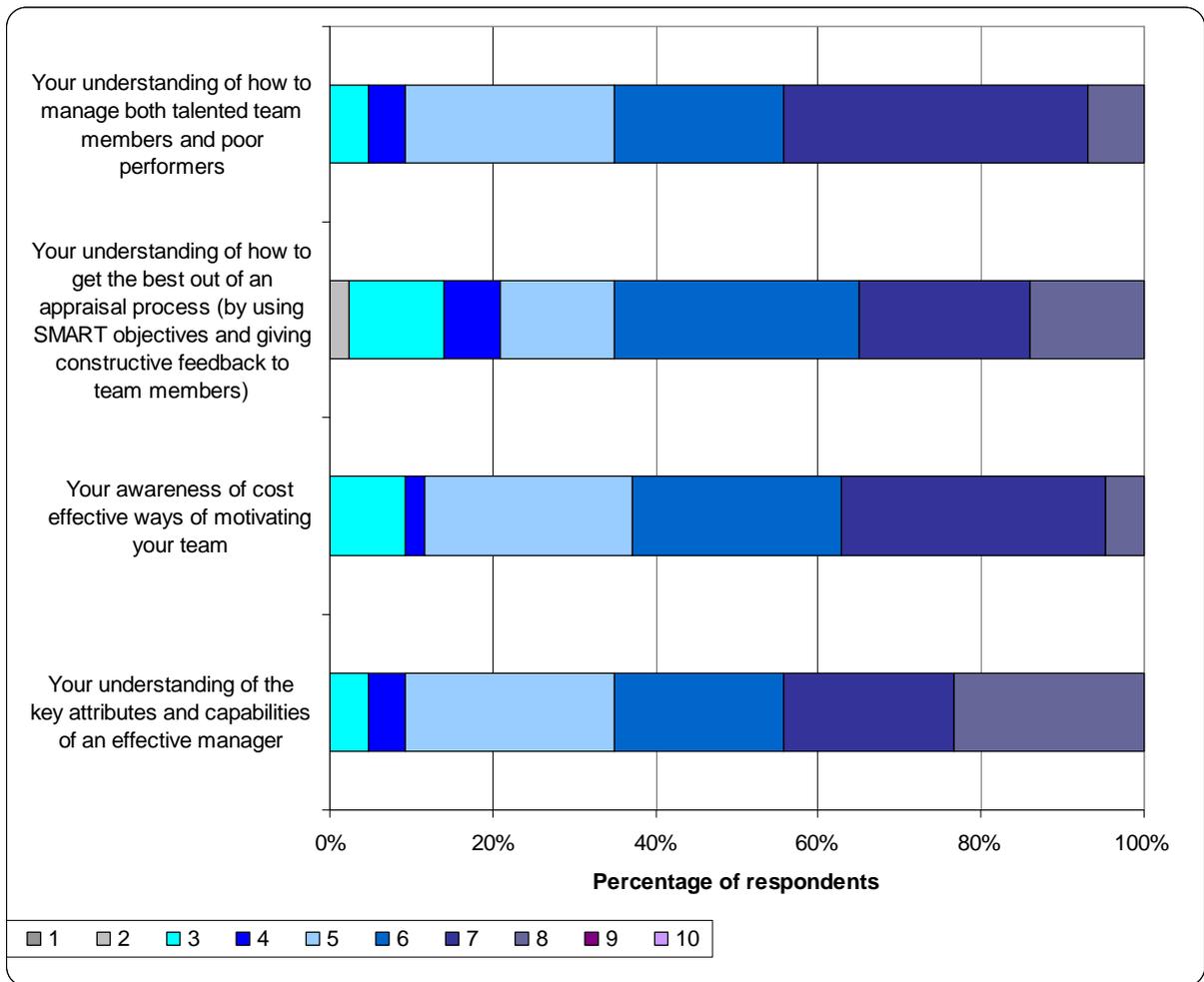
Base: 42, 43, 43

Knowledge and awareness

The data presented in graphs 59 and 60 show that levels of confidence reported by participants improved across all of the different topics covered in the training. Specifically:

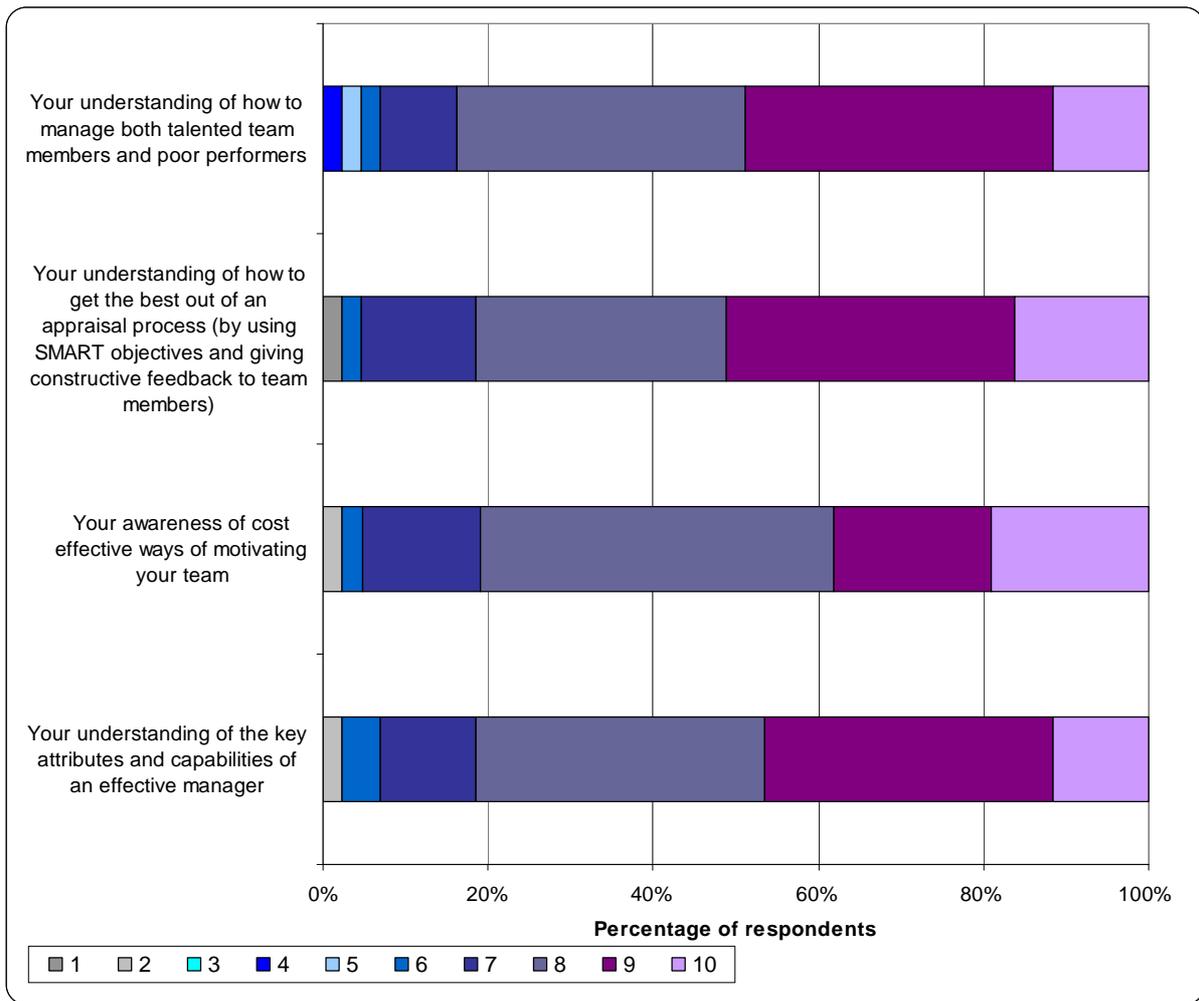
- Understanding of how to manage both talented team members and poor performers: 7% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 84% after the training.
- Understanding of how to get the best out of an appraisal process: 14% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 81% after the training.
- Awareness of cost effective ways of motivating your team: 5% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 79% after the training.
- Understanding of the key attributes and capabilities of an effective manager: 23% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 81% after the training.

Graph 59: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 43

Graph 60: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 43

Using the learning from the training

Participants reported a number of ways in which they would use the learning from the training; the majority of comments concerned the using the learning in appraisal processes or to improve communication with staff. Some of the specific themes were:

- Dealing with difficult staff or situations
“How to be prepared to have those difficult conversations and how to manage these!”
- Lifting motivation within teams
“Will ensure that I am better prepared to carry out appraisals. It has also made me think of ways I can be more “inspiring” to my team”
- Using SMART objectives
“...In appraisals will definitely use SMART to help us!”

Other comments

Some participants provided open feedback about the quality of training; that it was informative, precise and very useful. In terms of suggested improvements, a couple of participants felt the presentation/printed slides had been hard to see.

Findings from the individual provider training sessions: second wave

Summary of wave 2 training sessions:

Wave	Type of provider	Course	Location
Wave 2: Sessions delivered between September 2012 and January 2013	Nurseries	Financial management	Medway
		Marketing and sales	Leicestershire Kent
	Children's centres	Pathways for Community Development	Sandwell
	Out of school clubs	Employment Law	Nottinghamshire Slough Derbyshire Essex
		Managing employees	Redbridge
	Pre- schools	Effective committees	Bromley

1. Nurseries: Financial Management - Medway

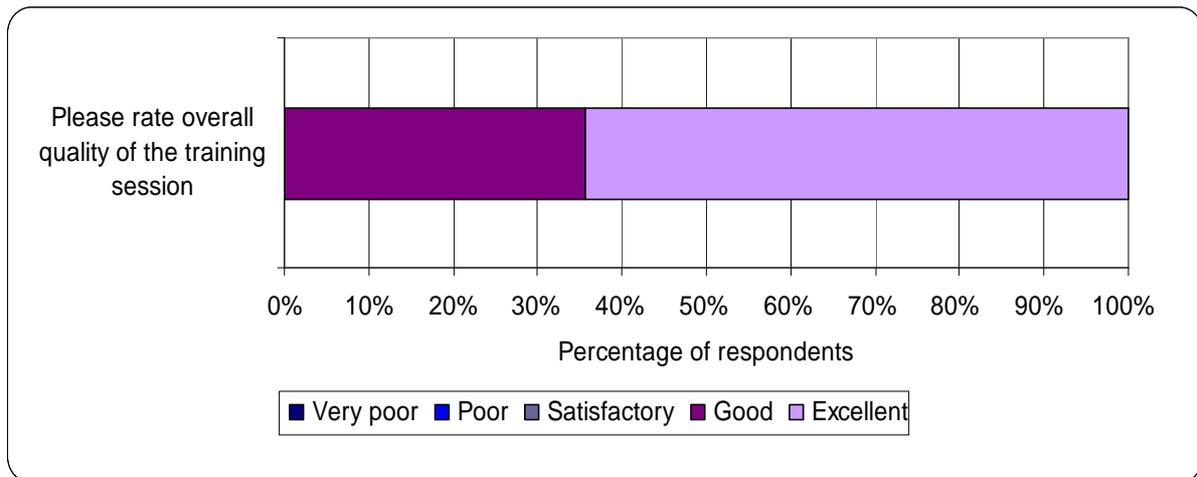
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Medway
- 14 attendees, 14 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Managers, Supervisors, Directors, Owners and Administrators.
- Type of organisation: The majority were pre-schools, others were nurseries, daycare, and there was one council employee.
- Sector: 8 private, 3 not-for-profit, 1 other, 2 unknown

Experience of the training

Overall ratings for this session were very positive, with the majority of participants rating the training as excellent (64%) and all other participants rating it as good (36%), as shown in graph 61.

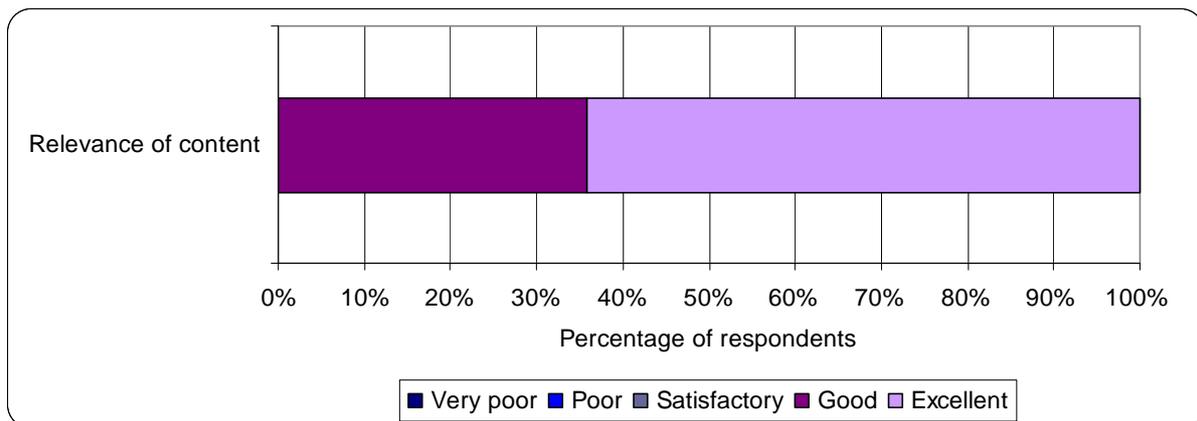
Graph 61: Overall quality of the session



Base: 14

In terms of relevance to their roles, 64% of participants considered the content of the training excellent and 36% rated it as good (graph 62).

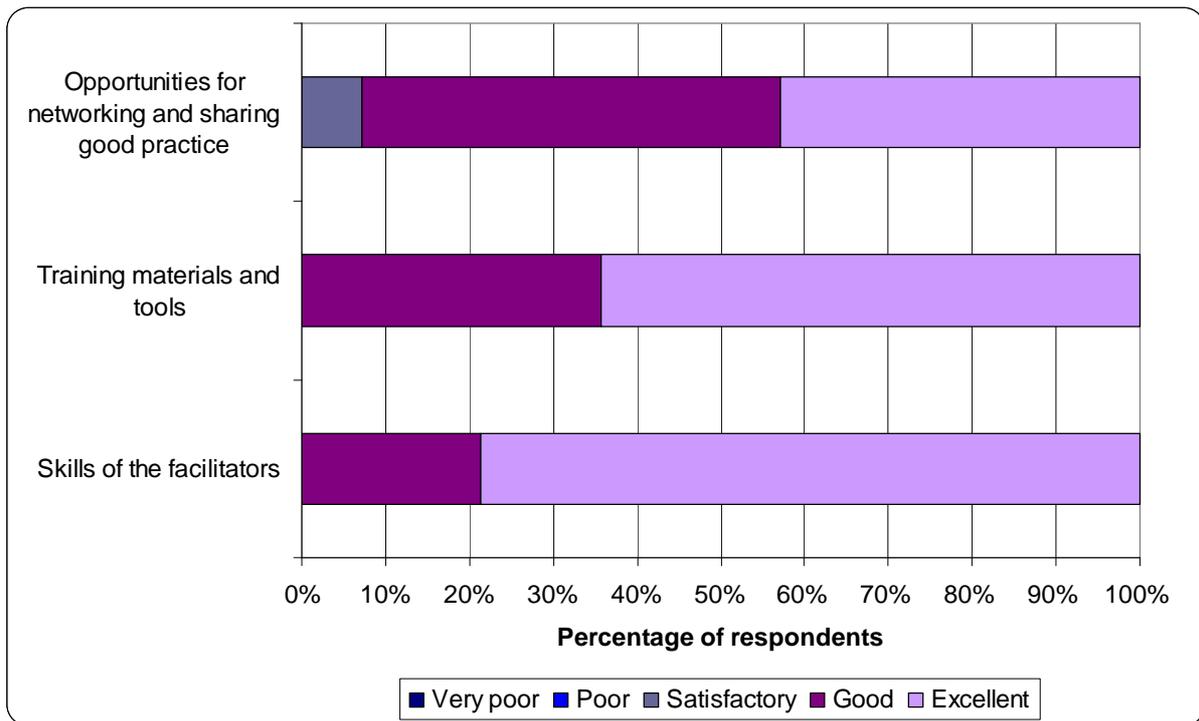
Graph 62: Relevance of content



Base: 14

As can be seen in graph 63, when rating the quality of specific elements of the training, all participants rated the skills of the facilitators as either excellent (79%) or good (21%). Similarly, the training materials and tools were considered excellent by 64% of participants and good by 36%. Opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were also considered either good (50%) or excellent (43%) by the majority, although one participant rated this only as satisfactory (representing 7%).

Graph 63: Ratings of specific elements of the training



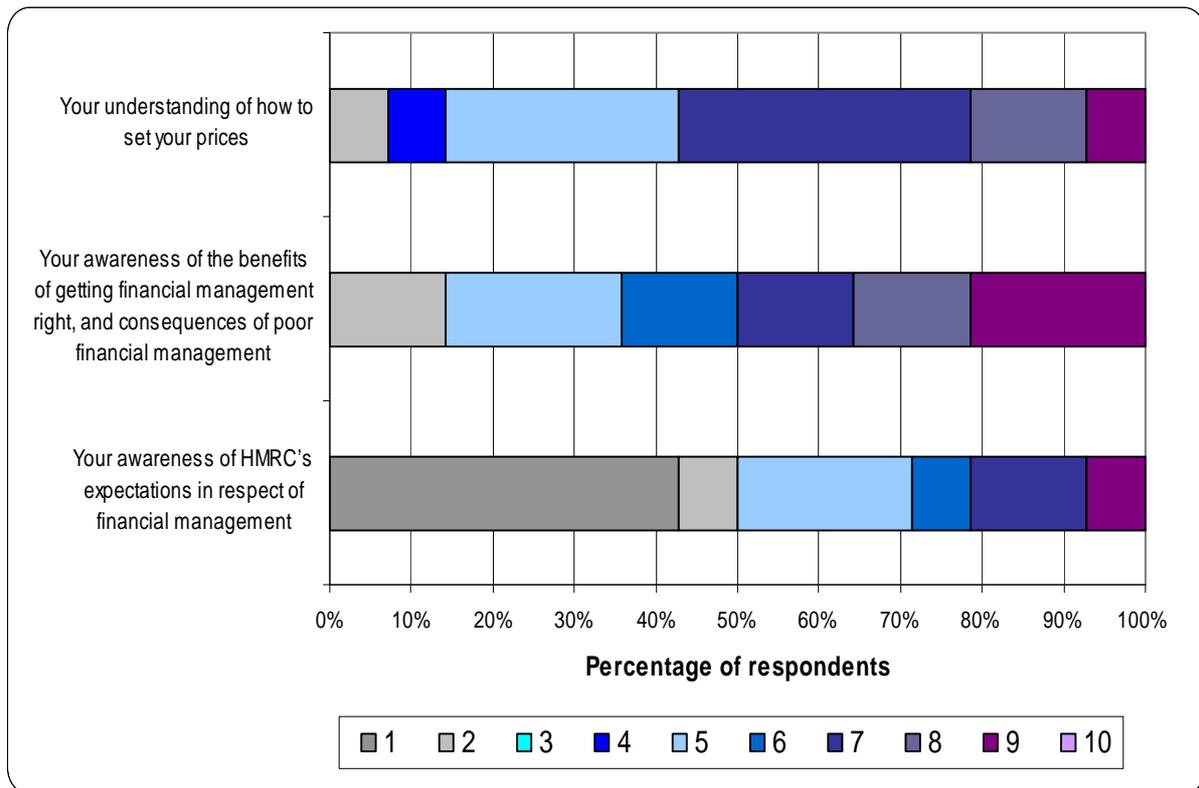
Base: 14

Knowledge and Awareness

To gauge the impact of the training, participants were asked about how confident they felt in their understanding and awareness of specific topics before and after the training. Graphs 64 and 65 show the differences between the ratings. Confidence was measured on a scale of 1-10, where 1 was not at all confident and 10 was extremely confident. Participants reported higher levels of confidence on all three topics after the training.

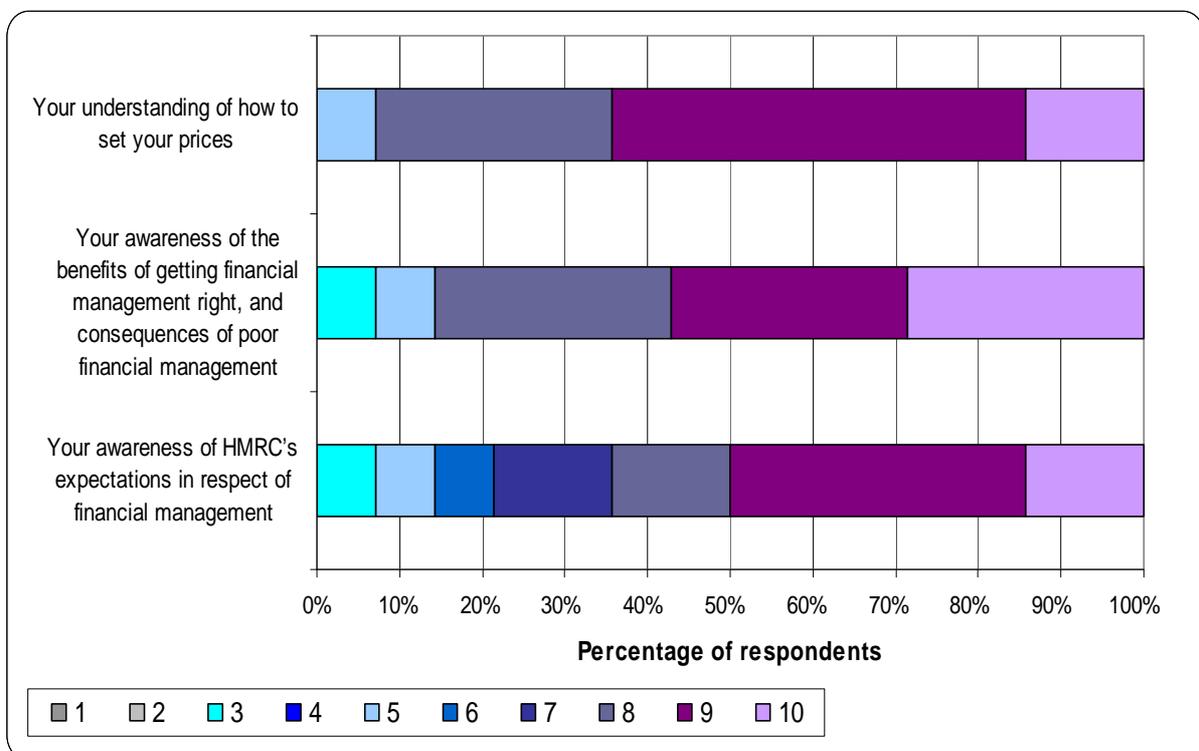
- Before the training, 21% of participants rated their confidence in understanding how to set prices as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 93% after the training.
- Before the training, 36% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the benefits of getting financial management right and the consequences of poor financial management as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 86% after the training.
- Before the training, 7% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of HMRC’s expectations in respect of financial management as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 65% after the training.

Graph 64: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 14

Graph 65: Levels of confidence after the training

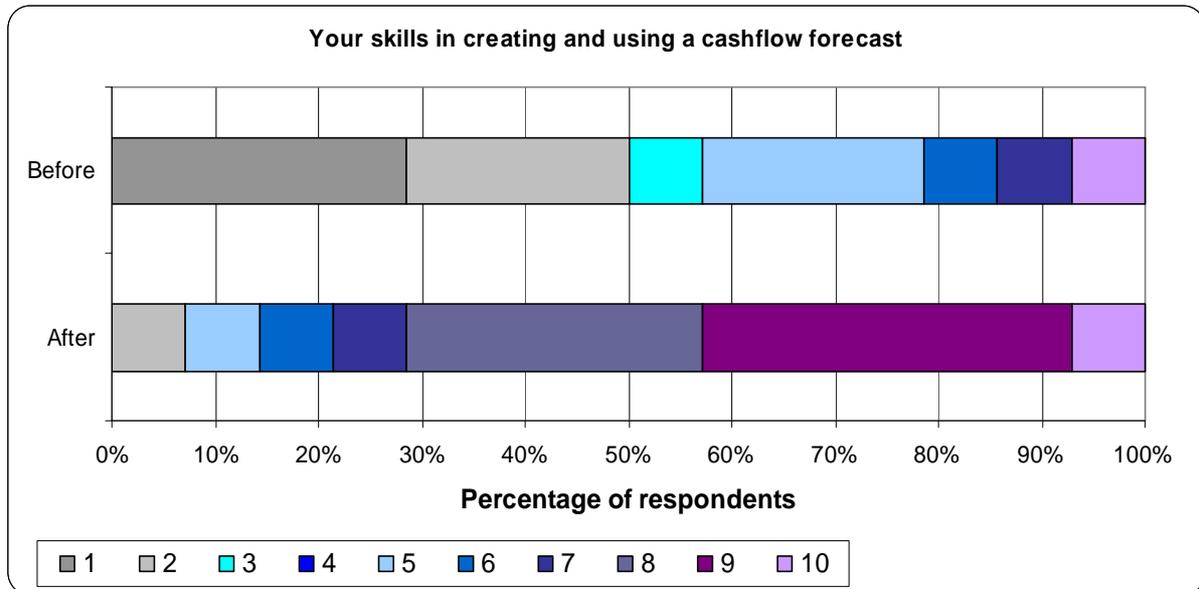


Base: 14

Skills

Participants were also asked to rate their skills in creating and using a cash-flow forecast before and after the training. Graph 66 compares the scores and shows a marked improvement, with only 7% of participants (one individual) rating their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training compared to 71% after the training.

Graph 66: Skills in creating and using a cashflow forecast



Base: 14

Using the learning from the training

When asked about the ways in which they were likely to use the learning from the session, participants reflected on the knowledge gained and many reported that it would be useful for reviewing and improving existing systems for financial management. For instance:

“Improving financial position. Creating new cash-flow forecast.”

“Tighten up on certain areas, particularly expenditure. ... Look at forecasting in more depth.”

“Making managers aware of expenses and how they can help.”

Others commented that they would use the legal information gained.

“More awareness of legal requirements, especially with regard to redundancy.”

Several participants also commented on the usefulness of the information in general, with one individual feeling more confident because of the training.

“I will be more confident when passing this sort of information to a constantly changing committee who for the most part have no understanding of sustaining a business.”

Other comments

Participants used the open comments section to say “thank you” for the course, and provide positive feedback, with many commenting that the course had been “useful”, “informative” and “interesting”.

2. Nurseries: Marketing and Sales – Leicestershire

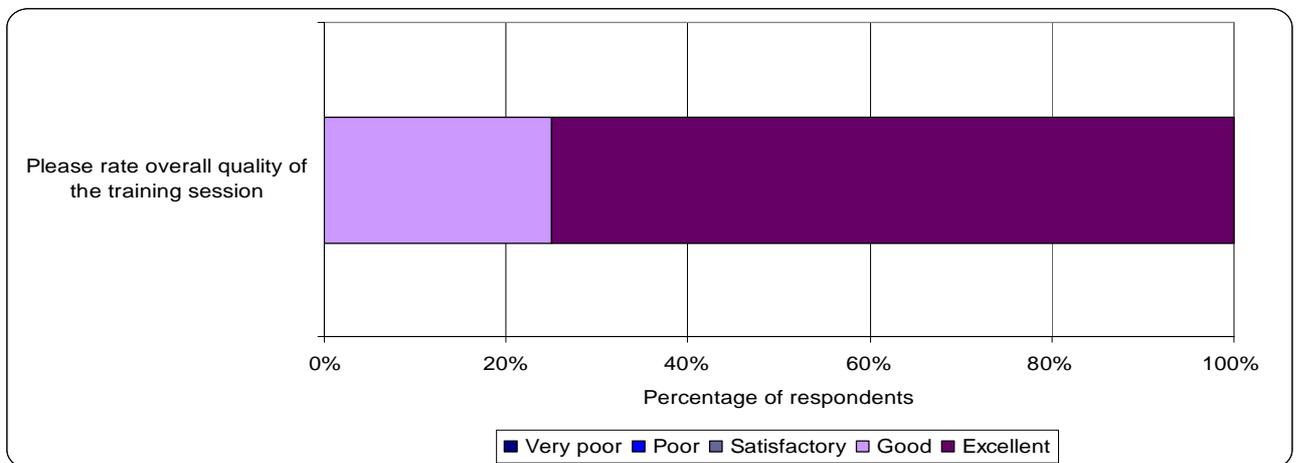
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Leicestershire
- 8 attendees, 8 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Chair, Managers, Deputy Managers and Owners
- Type of organisation: Pre-schools and nurseries
- Sector: 6 private, 2 not-for-profit

Experience of the training

The overall quality of the session was rated as excellent by 75% of participants, and as good by 25% of participants, as shown in the graph below.

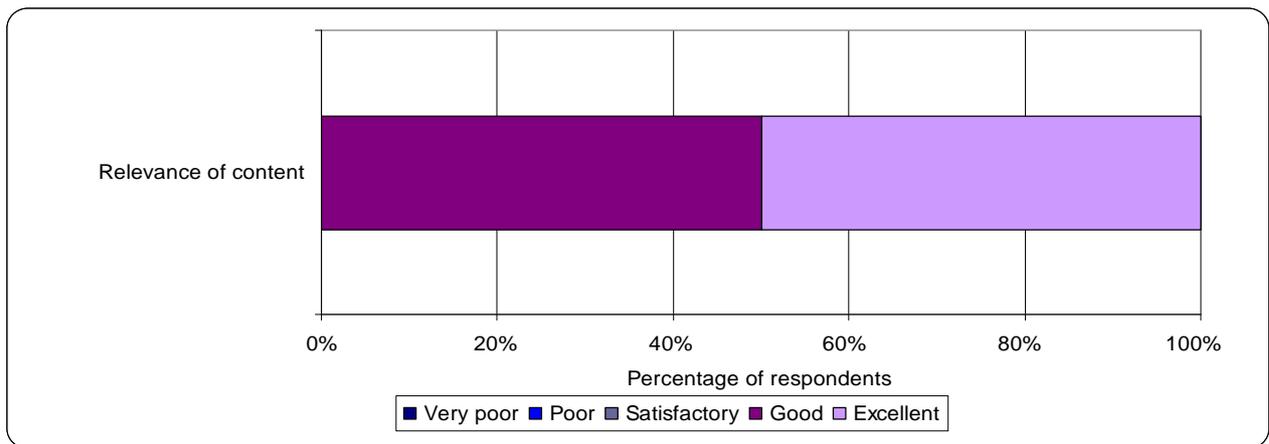
Graph 67: Overall quality of the session



Base: 8

The relevance of the content was also rated positively, with 50% of participants rating the training as excellent and 50% rating it as good (graph 68 below).

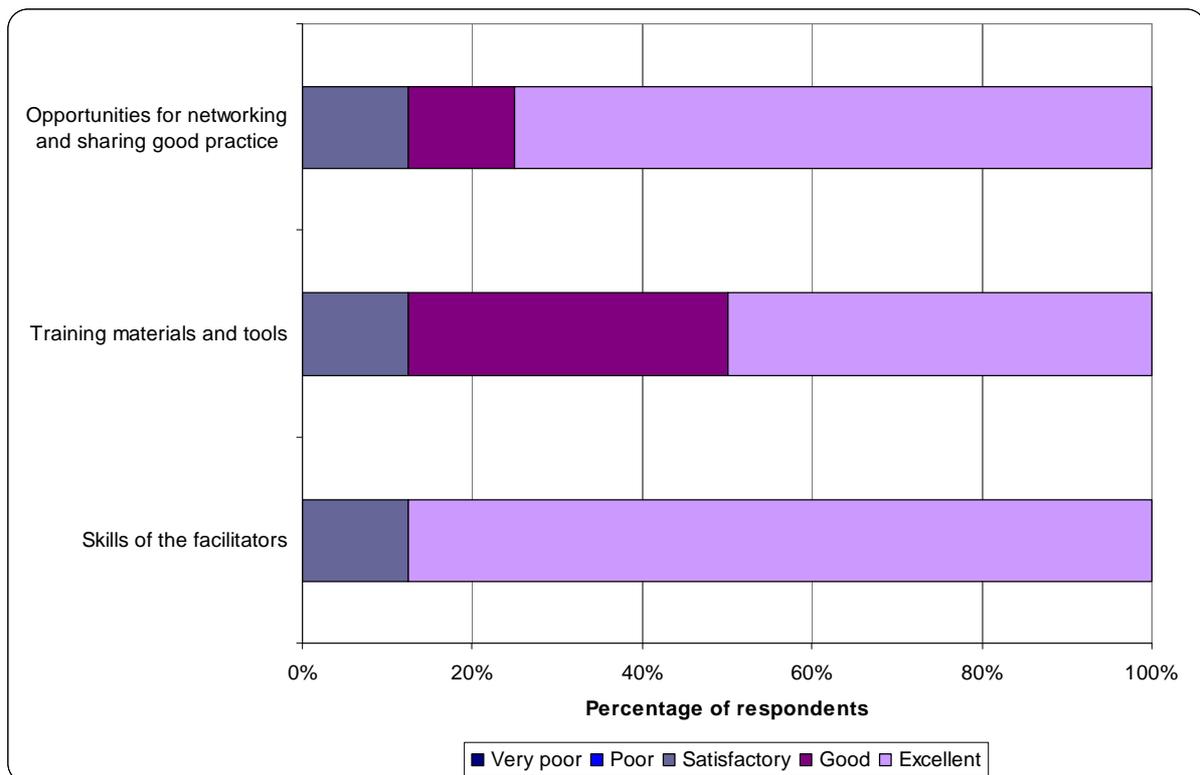
Graph 68: Relevance of content



Base: 8

Analysis of the feedback from participants on different elements of the training session is provided in Graph 69. This shows that all elements were rated as good or excellent by the majority of participants, and that the skills of the facilitators were rated most highly (as excellent by 88% of participants).

Graph 69: Ratings of specific elements of the training



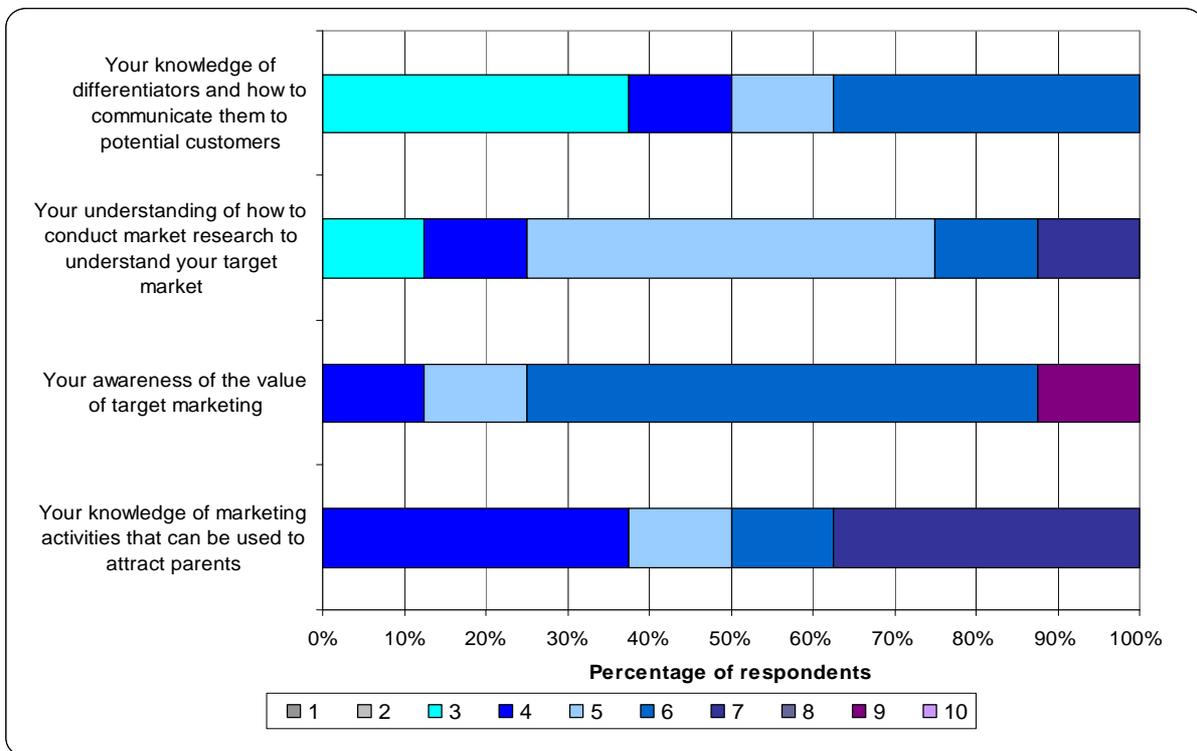
Base: 8

Knowledge and Awareness

Evidence on the ratings of confidence on different topics before and after the training suggests improvements were experienced across all areas. Specifically:

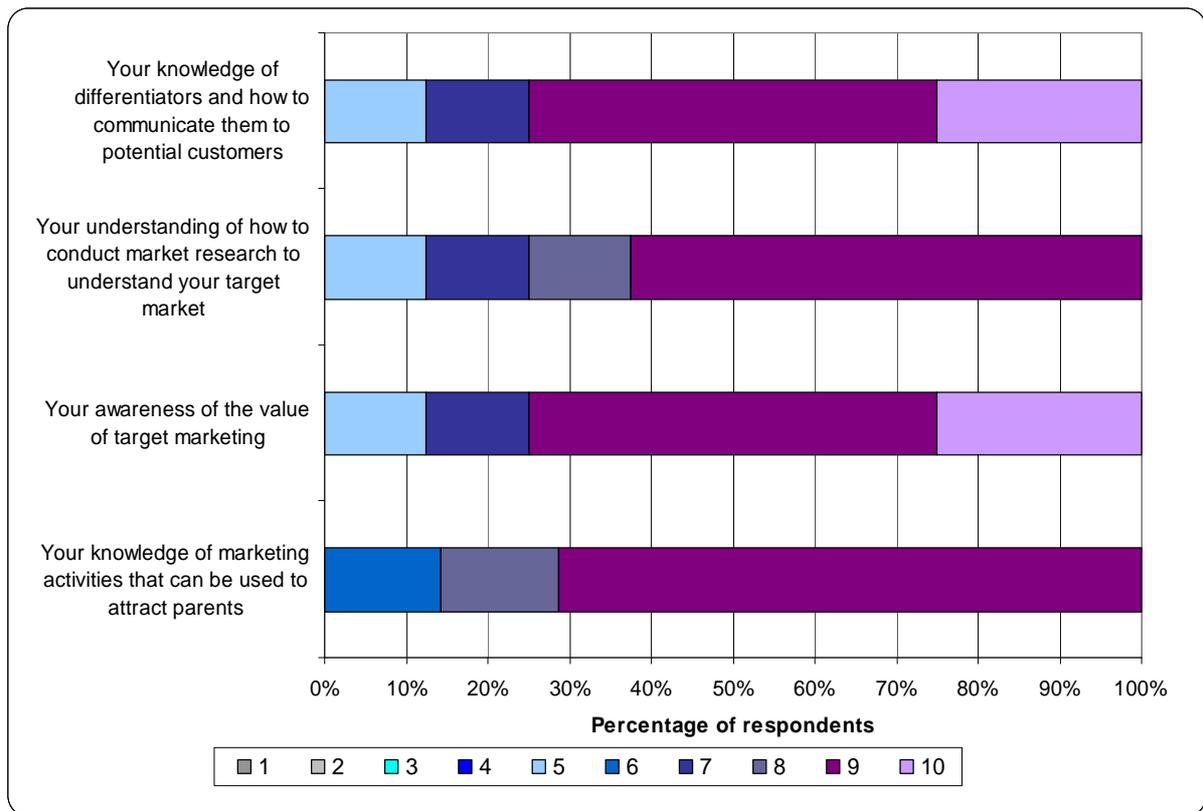
- Before the training 0% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of differentiators and how to communicate them as 8, 9 or 10, compared to the majority of participants (75%) after the training.
- Before the training 0% of participants rated their confidence in understanding how to conduct market research to understand their target market as 8, 9 or 10, compared to the majority of participants (75%) after the training.
- Before the training 12% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the value of target marketing as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (75%) after the training.
- Before the training 0% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of marketing activities that can be used to attract parents as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 86% of participants after the training.

Graph 70: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 8, 8, 8, 8

Graph 71: Levels of confidence after the training



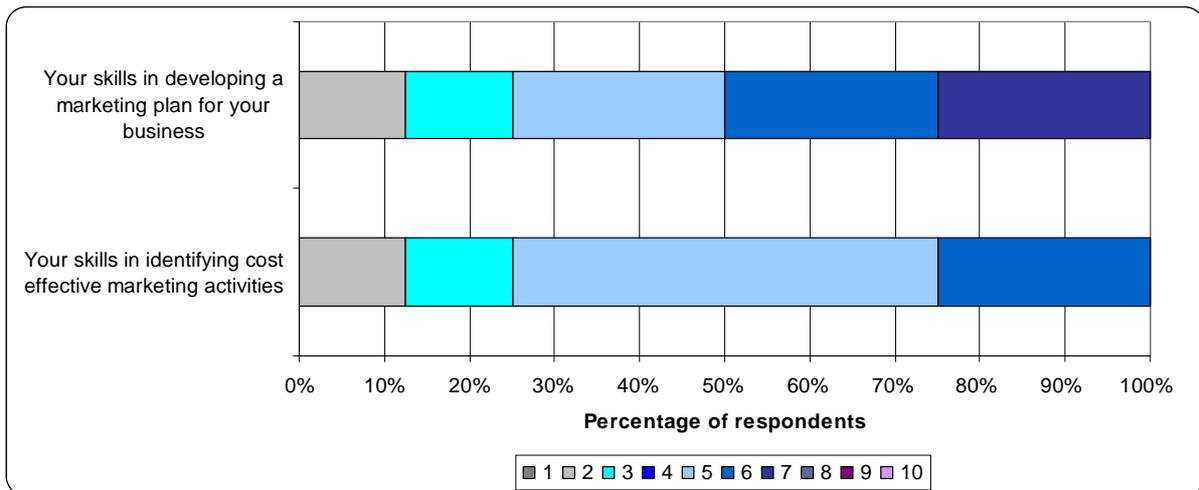
Base: 8, 8, 8, 7

Skills

Graphs 72 and 73 compare how participants rated their skills before and after the training. In relation to developing a marketing plan for their business, 0% of participants rated their confidence in their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% of participants after the training.

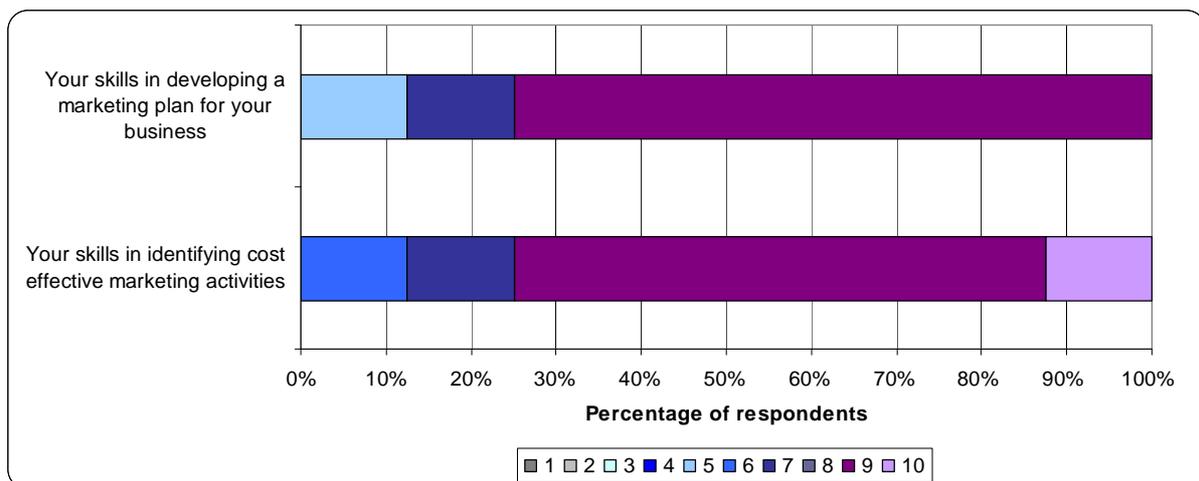
Similarly, in relation to identifying cost effective marketing activities, 0% of participants rated their confidence in their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 75% after the training.

Graph 72: Skills before the training



Base: 8

Graph 73: Skills after the training



Base: 8

Using the learning from the training

Participants reported that they would use the learning to:

- Review their existing marketing materials/tools and make improvements
“It will help tweak our business marketing plan in respect of reviewing”
“To influence and build upon my existing marketing plan”
- Develop a new marketing plan
- Use some of the ideas discovered
“Different marketing ideas to promote setting and other settings”

A few participants also made general comments about the value of the training and expressing their thanks to 4Children.

3. Nurseries: Marketing and Sales – Kent

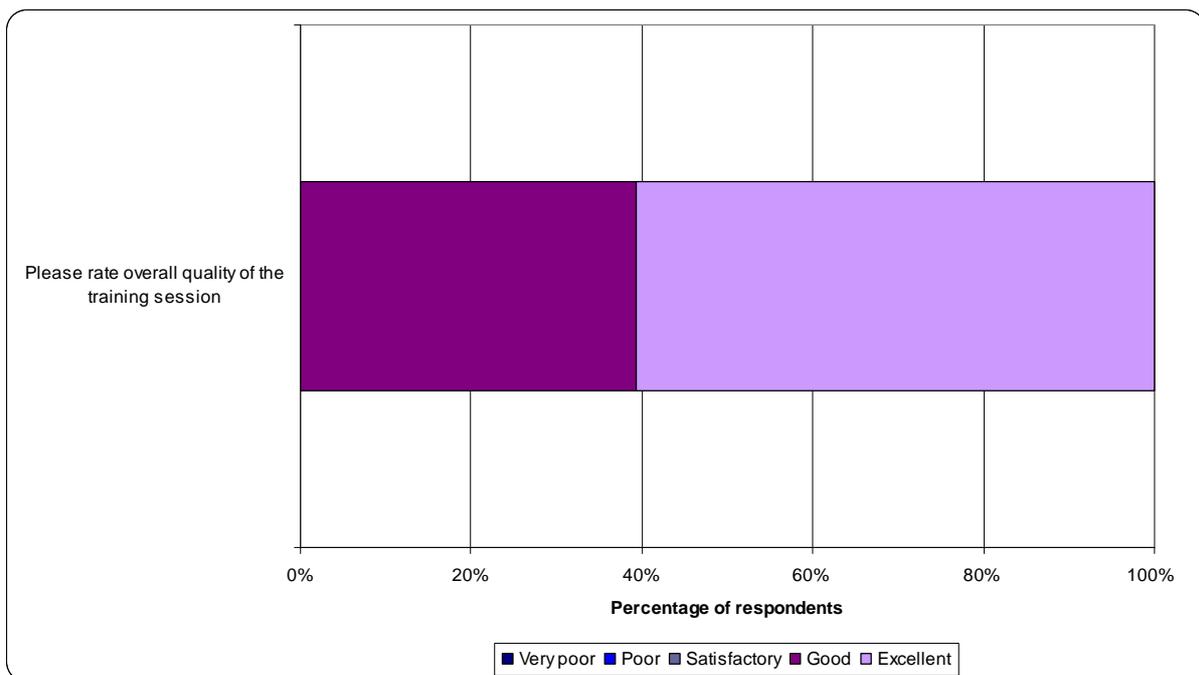
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Kent
- 35 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Childcare business managers, Nursery Managers, Deputy Managers, and Committee Members and Treasurers,
- Type of organisation: Pre-schools and nurseries, local authorities
- Sector: 13 private, 10 not-for-profit, 1 voluntary, 8 local authority

Experience of the training

When asked about the overall quality of the training, 60% of participants rated it as excellent and 40% rated it as good (as shown in graph 74 below).

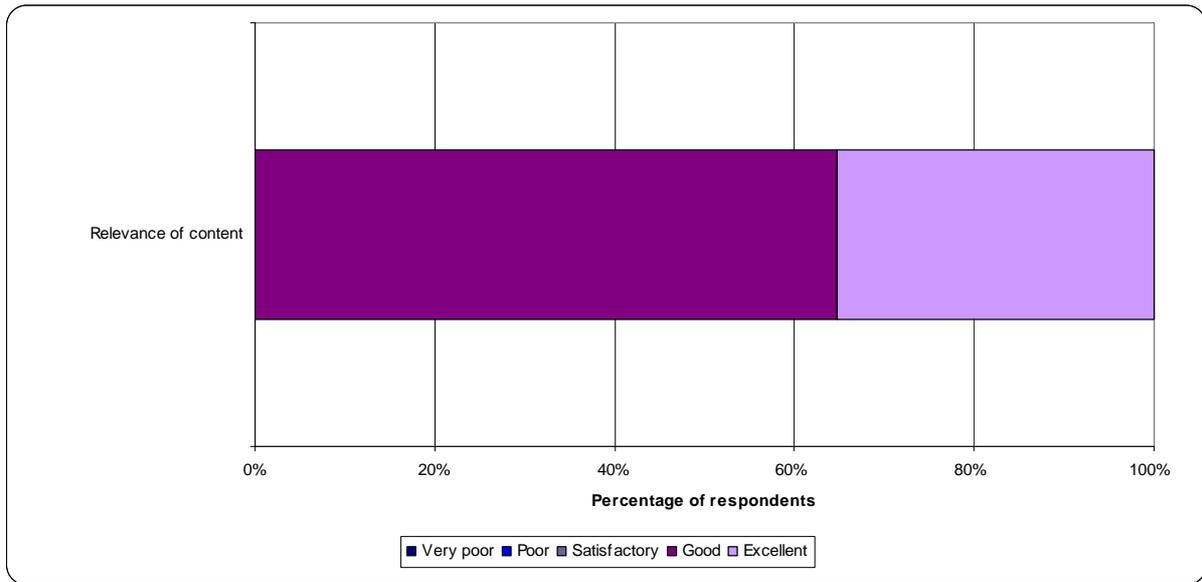
Graph 74: Overall quality of the training



Base: 33

All participants also rated the relevance of the training as good or excellent, but with a lower proportion of excellent (35%) compared to good (65%). It is possible that this may be a reflection of the diverse range of roles of the participants attending this particular session (with some local authority roles as well as providers).

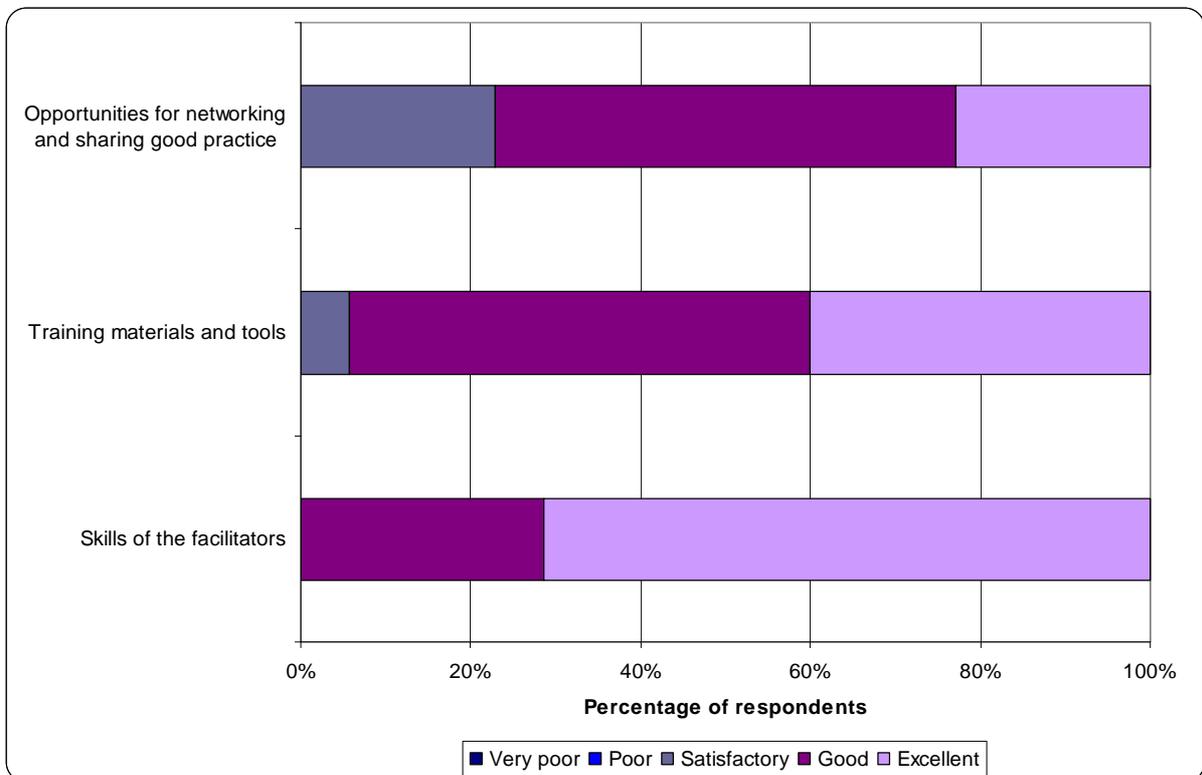
Graph 75: Relevance of content



Base: 34

When asked to rate different elements of the training, the skills of the facilitators were rated most favourably by participants, with 70% rating them as excellent, and 30% as good. The other elements of the training were also rated highly, but some participants reported they were satisfactory (23% for opportunities for networking, and 6% for the training materials/tools). Graph 76 shows these findings:

Graph 76: Ratings of specific elements of the training

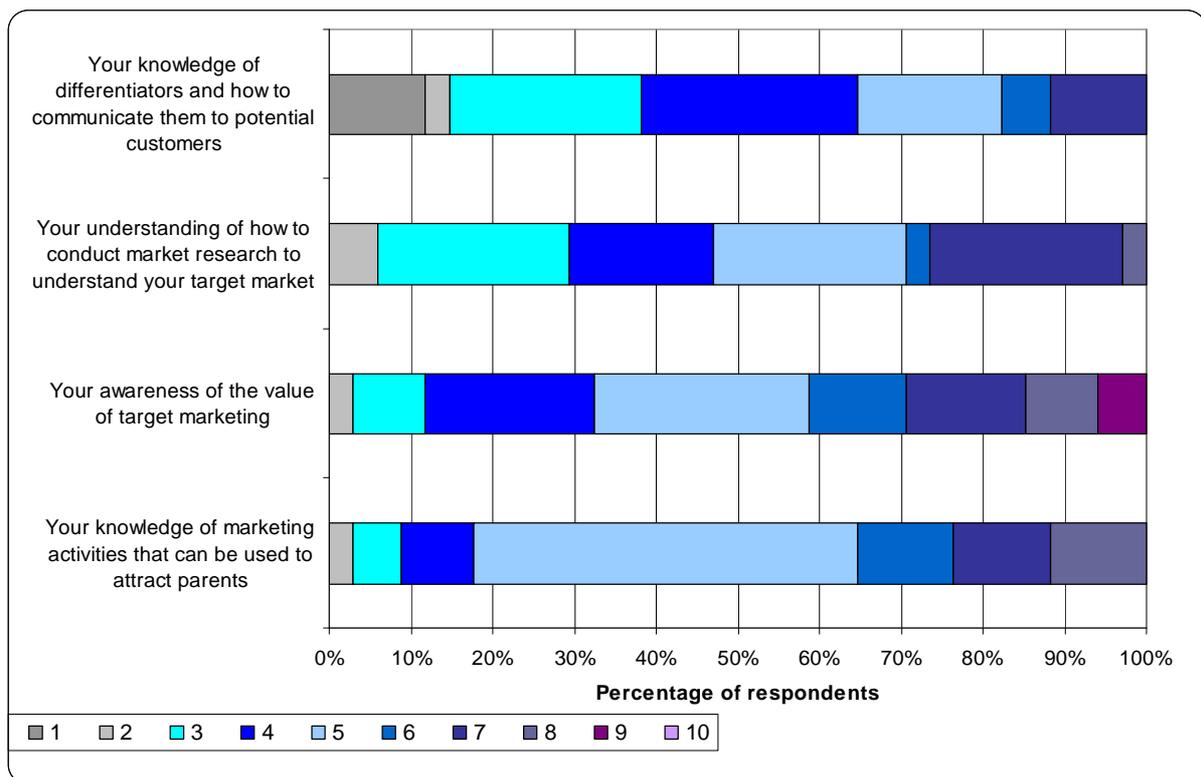


Knowledge and Awareness

Graphs 77 and 78 show how participants rated their confidence in their knowledge and awareness across different topics. In summary:

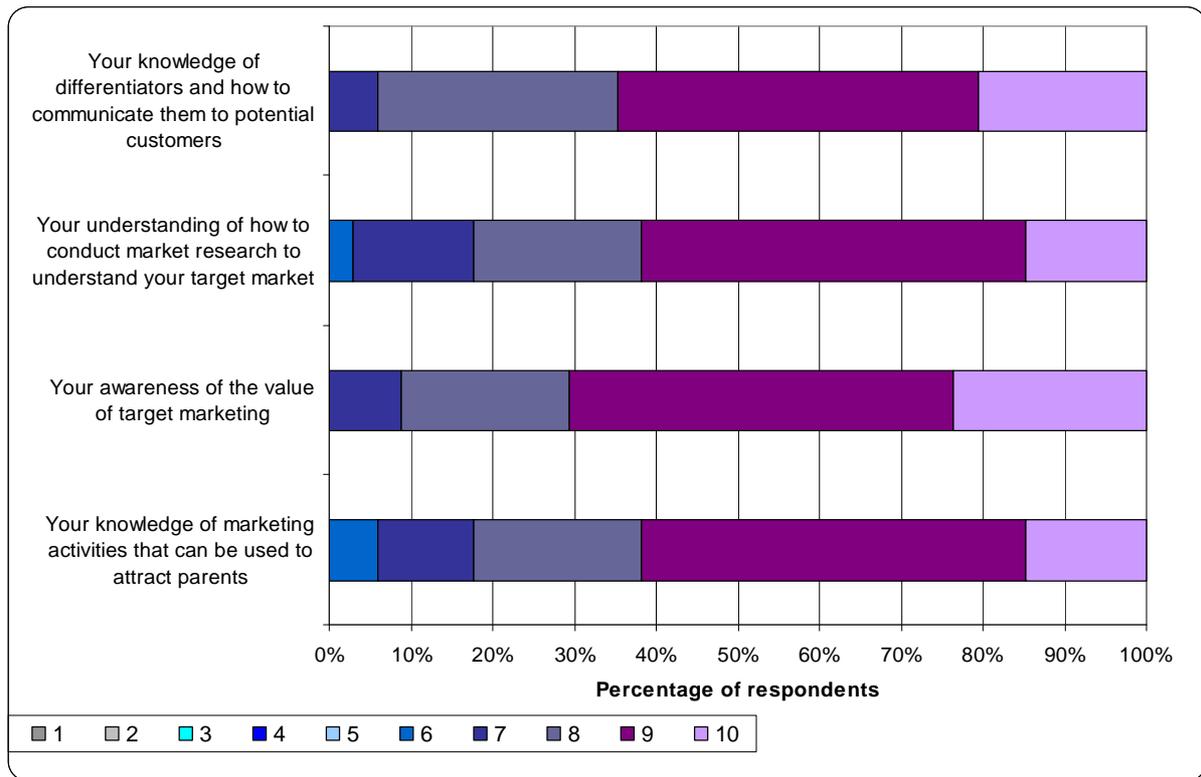
- Before the training, 0% of participants rated their knowledge of differentiators and how to communicate them to potential customers as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 94% after the training.
- Before the training, 3% of participants rated their confidence in their understanding of how to conduct market research to understand their target market as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 82% after the training.
- Before the training, 15% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the value of target marketing as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 91% after the training.
- Before the training, 12% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of marketing activities that can be used to attract parents as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 82% after the training.

Graph 77: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: All 34

Graph 78: Levels of confidence after the training



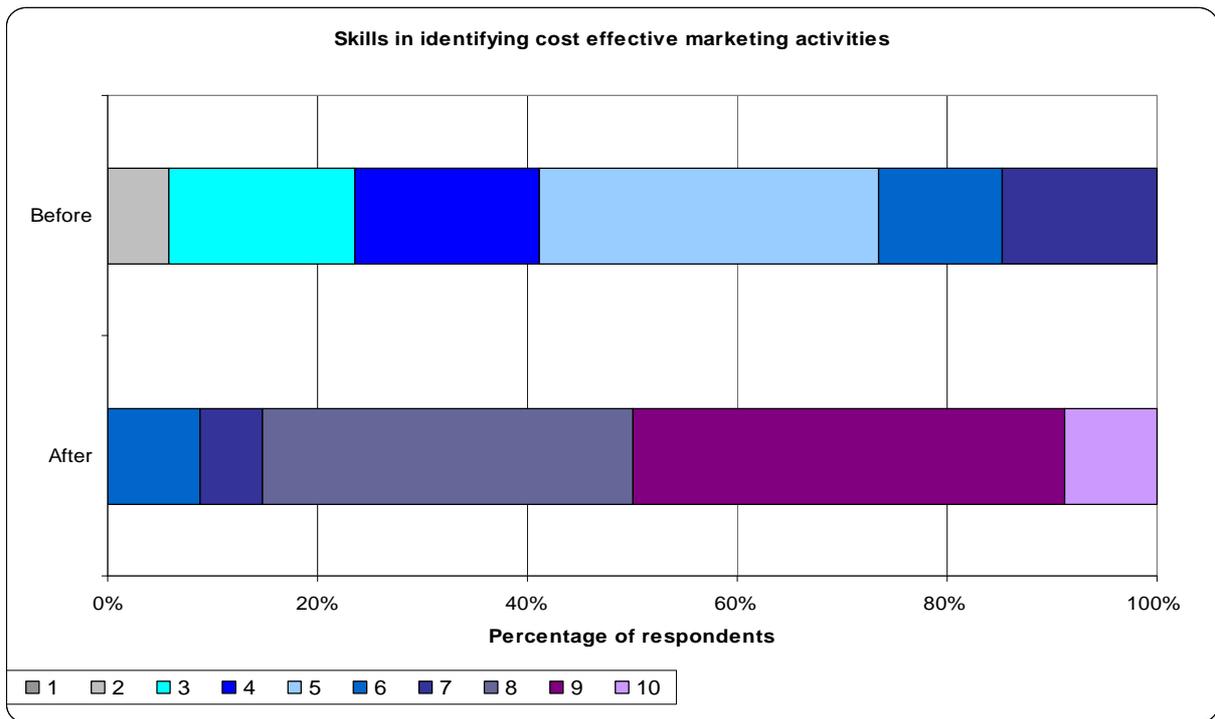
Base: All 34

Skills

The scores reported by participants in relation their skills in identifying cost effective marketing activities show improvement, with 0% of participants rating their skills as 8, 9 or 10 before the training, compared to 85% of participants after the training.

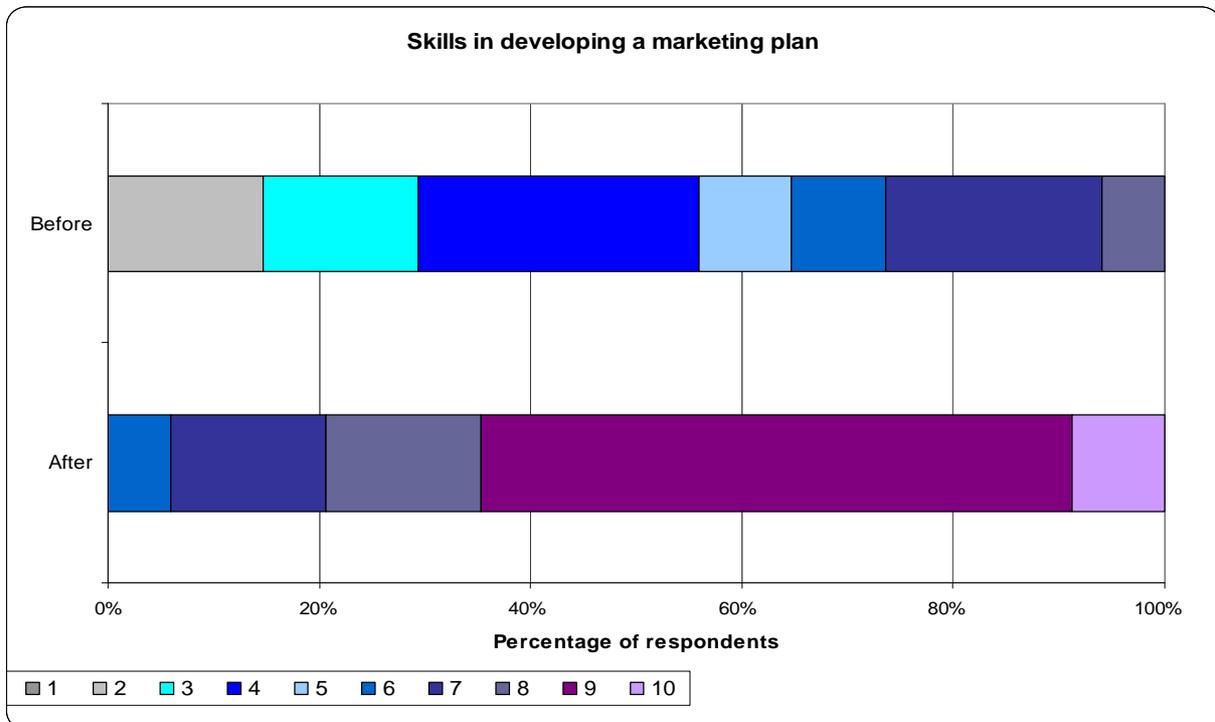
The ratings for skills in developing a marketing plan also show improvement, although the baseline or ‘before’ level of confidence was higher than for identifying cost effective marketing activities. Before the training, 6% of participants rated their skills as 8,9 or 10, compared to 79% after the training. These findings are shown in graphs 79 and 80 below.

Graph 79: Skills in identifying cost effective marketing activities – before and after



Base: 34

Graph 80: Skills in developing a marketing plan - before and after



Base: 34

Using the learning from the training

Participants were asked an open question about the ways in which they intended to use the learning from the training. The responses can be grouped into the following themes:

- To better market an existing business, for example through developing a marketing plan and other materials:

“Market research. Develop a marketing plan, plan for “show-rounds”. Identifying differentiators. Produce more advertising (focus online).”

“Put a marketing plan in place and try to keep it up and running.”

- To provide advice and support to providers with marketing (local authority staff):

“To support providers during my visits to settings with marketing strategies”

- To help in the establishment of a new business, or with an expansion/move within a business:

“I have started a new nursery in November 2012. So the training has been very valuable”

“Moving to new premises so will use all info from today to help build a better presence”

- To develop more specific marketing knowledge and skills i.e. focused on a particular setting:

“It was most helpful to apply my existing general marketing knowledge to the specific setting in which I volunteer as the marketing coordinator.”

Other comments

In other comments, participants described the training as excellent and reported that they had been useful and enjoyable. Some of the comments were:

“Excellent presentation, thank you - will be implementing all (hopefully)”

“Found course extremely helpful”

“Real eye-opener - thank you!”

“Really enjoyed the sessions. Paced well. Now to implement marketing plan”

4. Children’s Centres: Pathways for Community Development - Sandwell

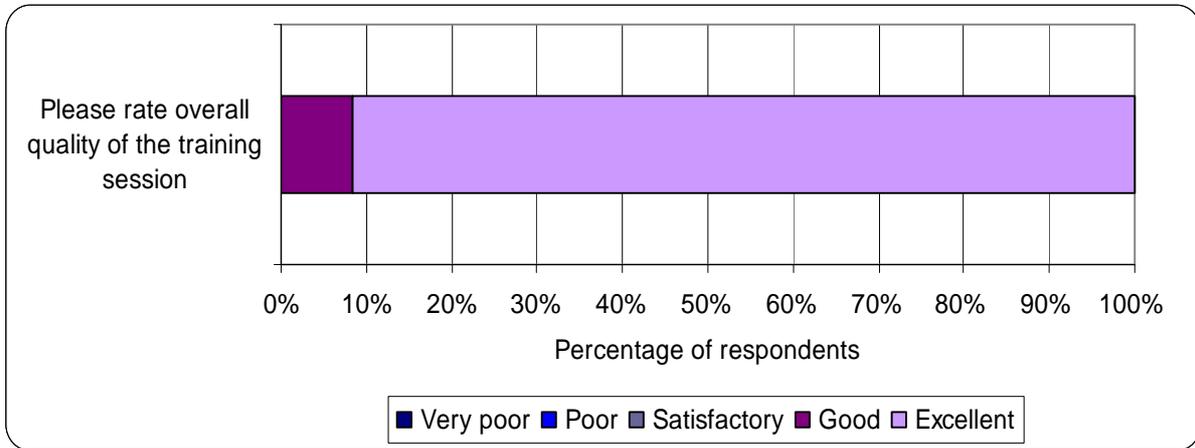
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Sandwell
- 14 attendees, 12 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Children’s centre workers, leads, community development, involvement, outreach, engagement workers, family support coordinator, volunteer and training coordinator, training and education officer.
- Type of organisation: The majority were children’s centres, also one children’s charity.
- Sector: 6 not-for-profit, 4 voluntary, 2 unknown.

Experience of the training

As shown in graph 81, the overall quality of the training session was rated as excellent by 92% of the participants, with the remaining one participant (representing 8%) rating the session as good.

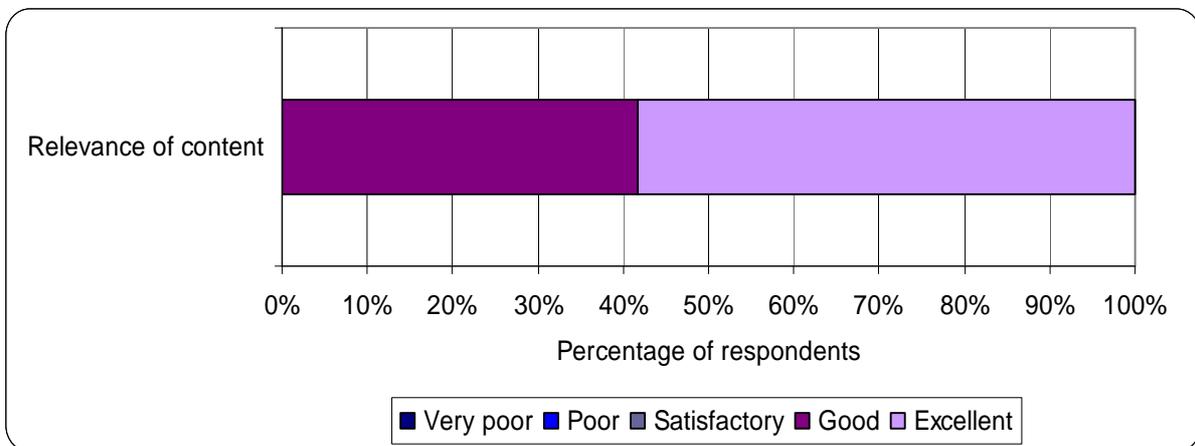
Graph 81: Overall quality of the session



Base: 12

The relevance of the session for the day-to-day work of participants was also rated highly, with all participants either considering it excellent (58%), or good (42% - see graph 82).

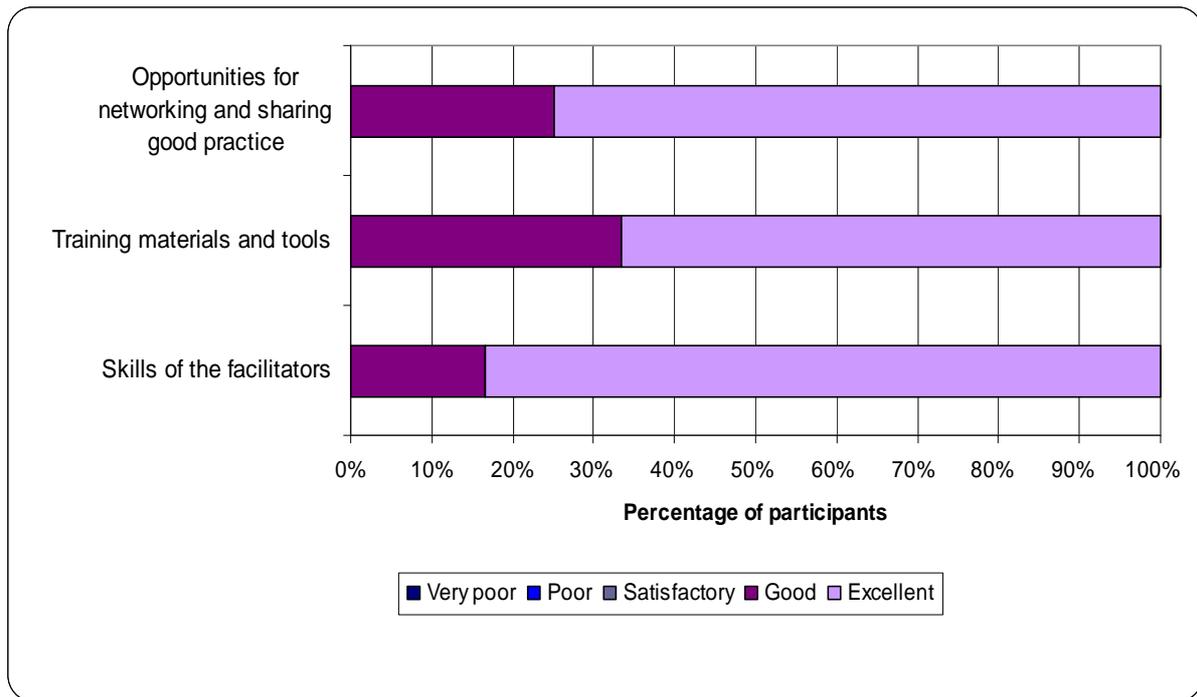
Graph 82: Relevance of the session



Base: 12

As can be seen in graph 83, the separate elements of the training were rated excellent by the majority of participants in all cases, with the remainder considering them good. Particularly highly rated were the skills of the facilitators, which were considered excellent by 83% of participants.

Graph 83: Ratings of specific elements of the training



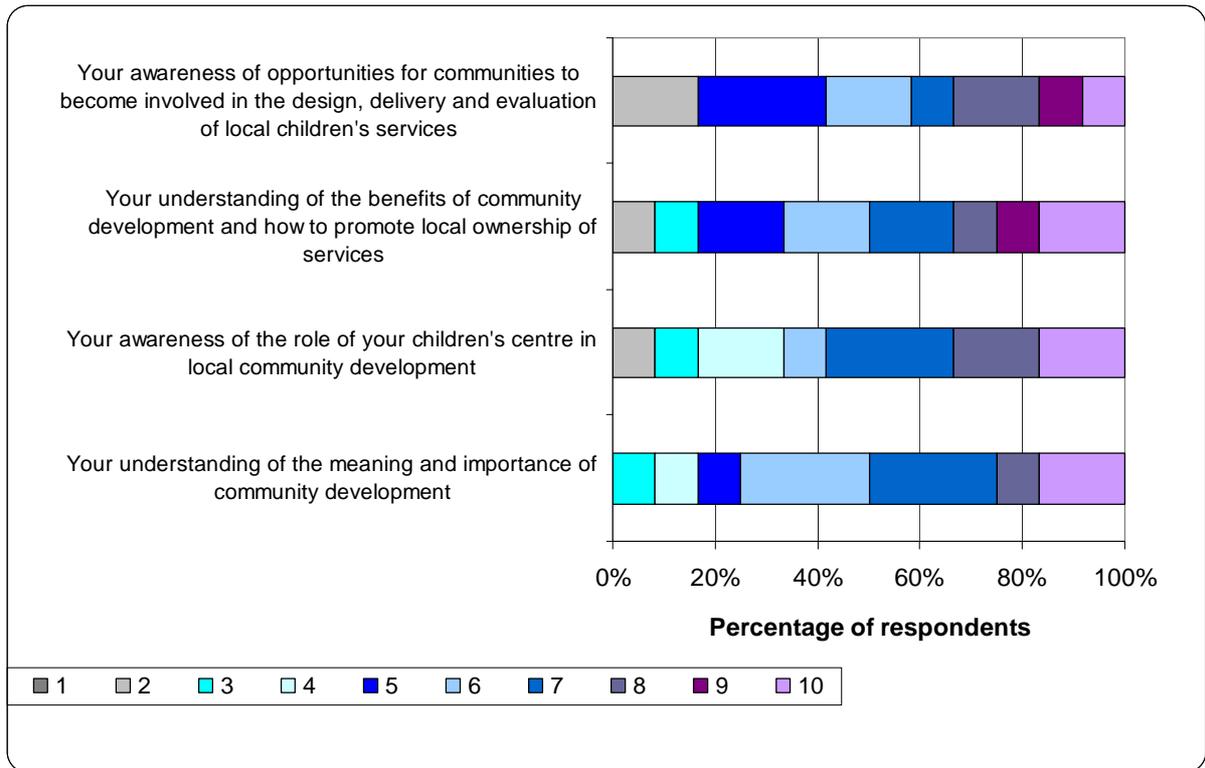
Base: 12

Knowledge and awareness

Evidence from the ratings reported for confidence in different areas before and after the training suggests improvements were experienced by most participants (see graphs 84 and 85). While the participants varied widely in confidence in these areas before the training, afterwards almost all participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10. Specifically:

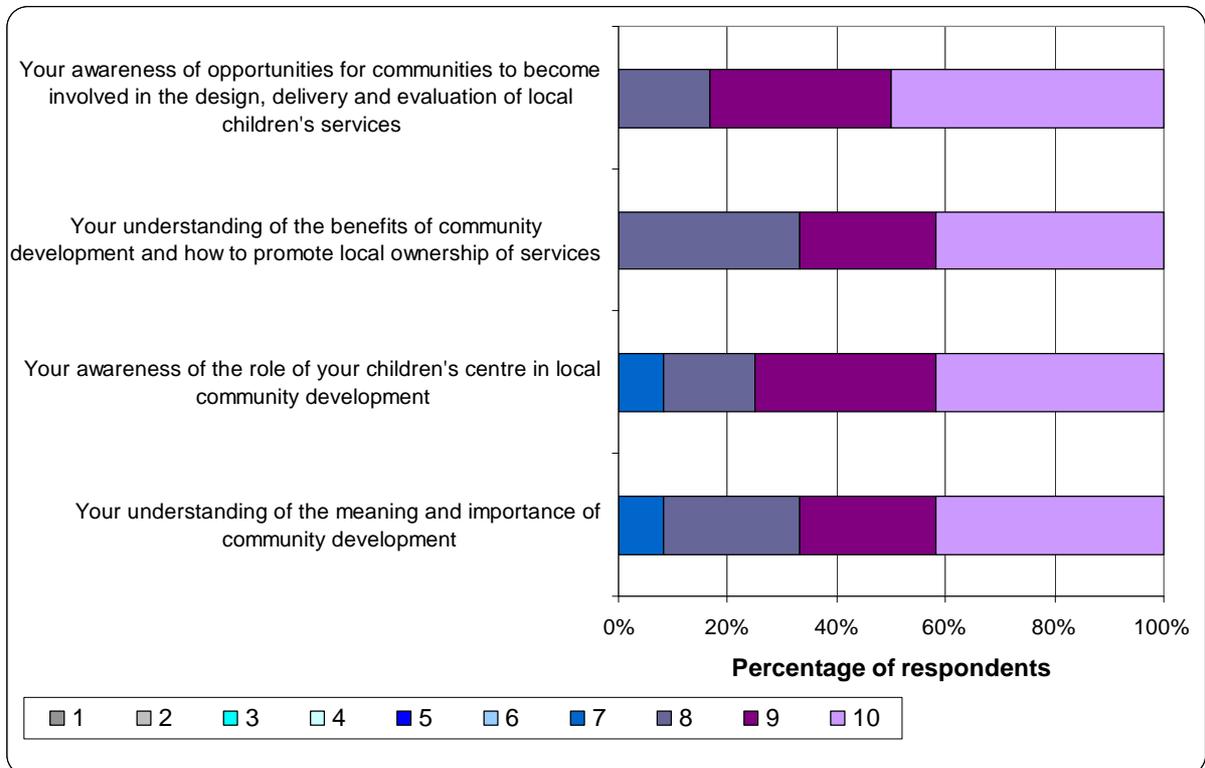
- Before the training, 33% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of opportunities for communities to become involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of local children’s services as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- Before the training, 33% of participants rated their confidence in understanding the benefits of community development and how to promote local ownership of services as 8, 9 or 10, compared to all participants (100%) after the training.
- Before the training, 33% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the role of their children’s centre in local community development as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 92% after the training.
- Before the training, 25% of participants rated their confidence in their understanding of the meaning and importance of community development as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 92% after the training.

Graph 84: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 12

Graph 85: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 12

Using the learning from the training

Below are some of the themes from open comments provided by participants about the ways in which they would use the learning from the training:

- Knowledge of SROI, cost effectiveness and measuring outcomes
“SROI – use in order to record impact in terms of social returns.”
- Community engagement
- Volunteer recruitment strategies

Other comments

Participants provided positive feedback about the training through open comments, including:

“I have been doing my job for nearly 4 years, but I have learned a lot today ... I had an opportunity to look at my job in a different light.”

“I think the training was really beneficial and I enjoyed enhancing my knowledge on this. I now have a good understanding of SROI”

“Thank you for all the information sharing and knowledge I have learnt today”

A couple of participants also commented that they would recommend others take this course.

5. Out of School Clubs: Employment Law - Nottinghamshire

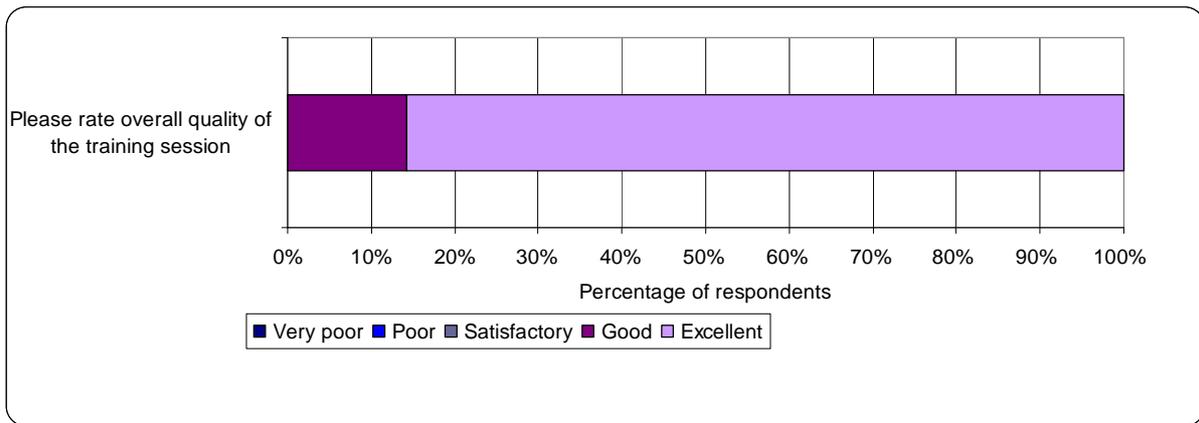
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Nottinghamshire
- 15 attendees, 14 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Treasurers, owner/managers, director, administrators, chair-persons, business managers.
- Type of organization: Majority out-of-school clubs, some preschools, one nursery/out-of-school care
- Sector: 8 not-for-profit, 4 private, 2 voluntary

Experience of the training

As can be seen in graph 86, the overall quality of this session was rated very highly by participants, with 86% considering it excellent, and the remaining 14% rating it as good.

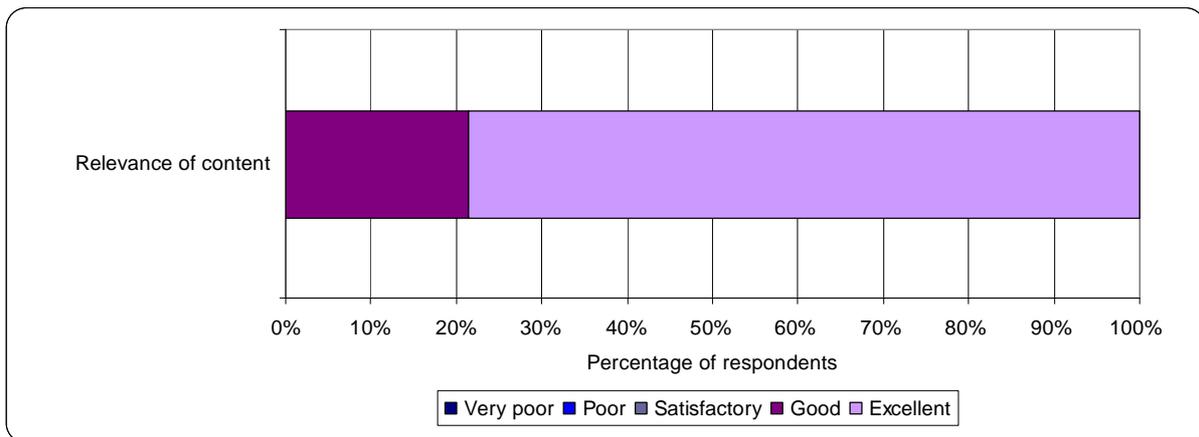
Graph 86: Overall quality of the session



Base: 14

Whilst most of the other sessions were considered very relevant to participants' day-to-day work, this one was rated particularly highly, with 79% rating it as excellent, and the remaining 21% rating it good (see graph 87)

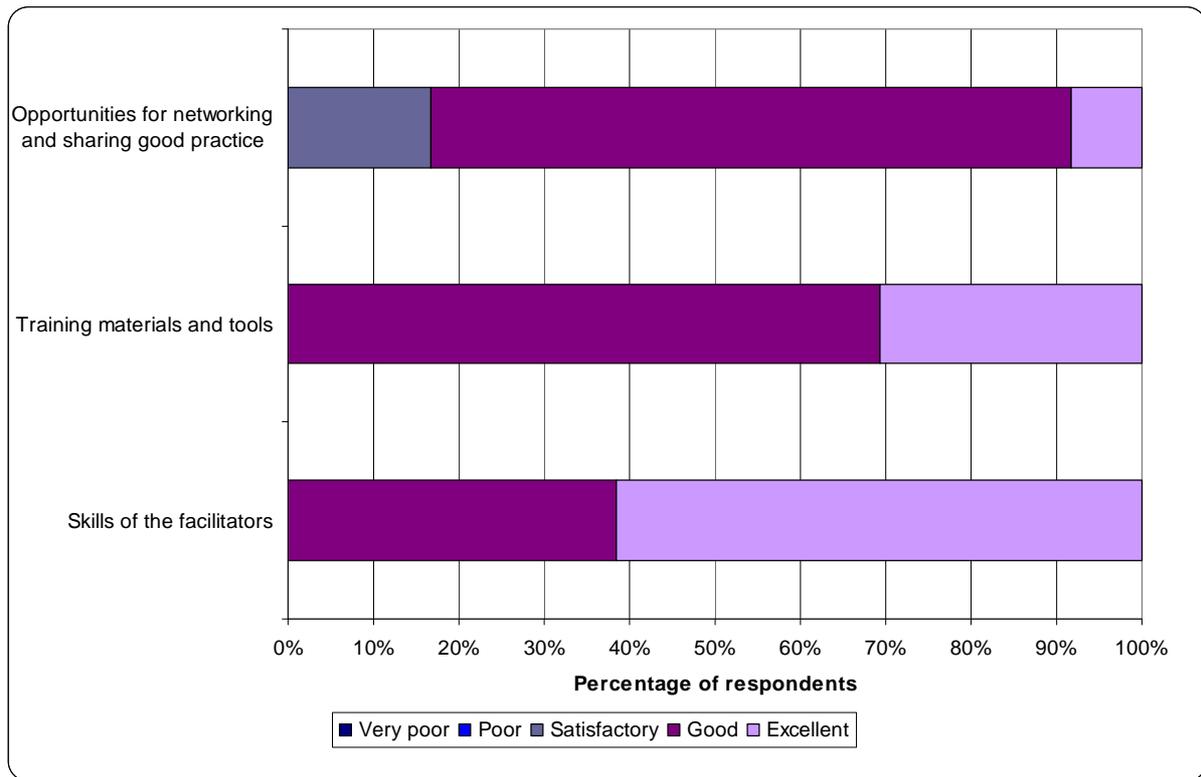
Graph 87: Relevance of the session



Base: 14

Graph 88 shows how participants rated specific elements of the training. The skills of the facilitators, and training materials and tools, were rated as either good or excellent by all the participants. The majority of participants considered the opportunities for networking and sharing good practice as good (75%), and 8% rated this as excellent, however 17% of participants considered this only satisfactory.

Graph 88: Rating of specific elements of the training



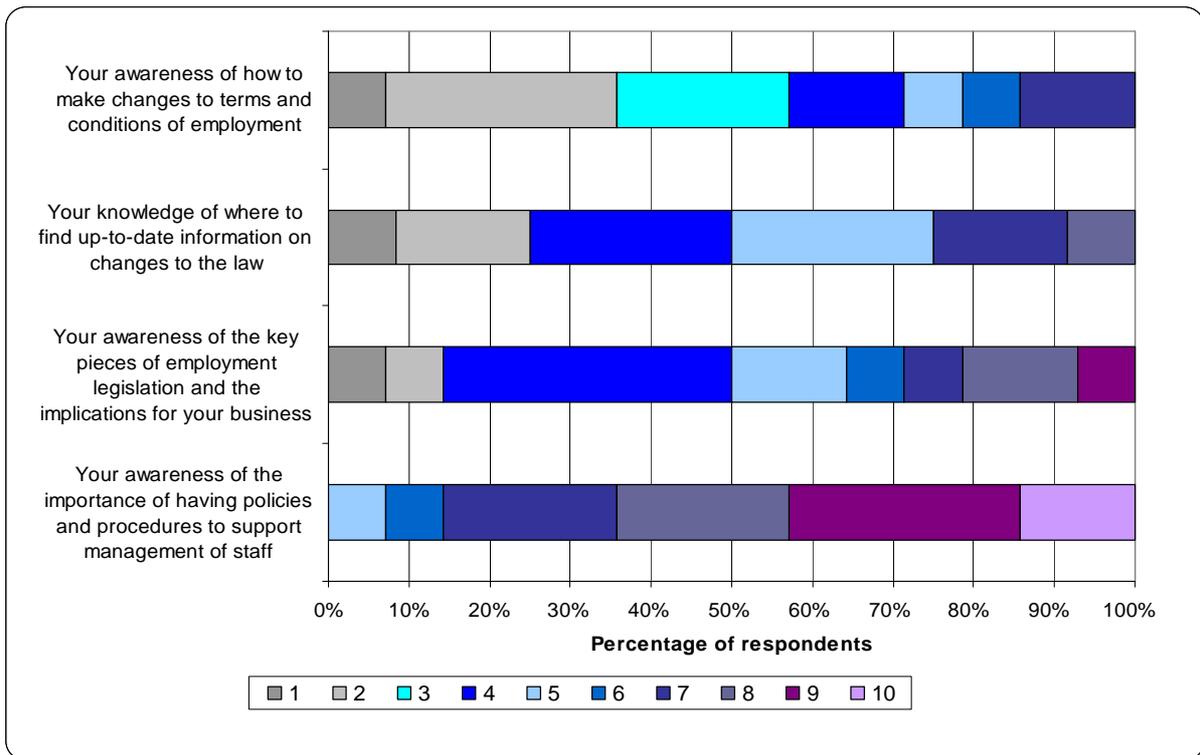
Base: 12, 13, 13

Knowledge and Awareness

Analysis of the ratings provided by participants of their confidence in relation to different topics before and after the training suggests that large improvements in confidence were experienced by participants in several of the topics addressed (see graphs 89 and 90). Specifically:

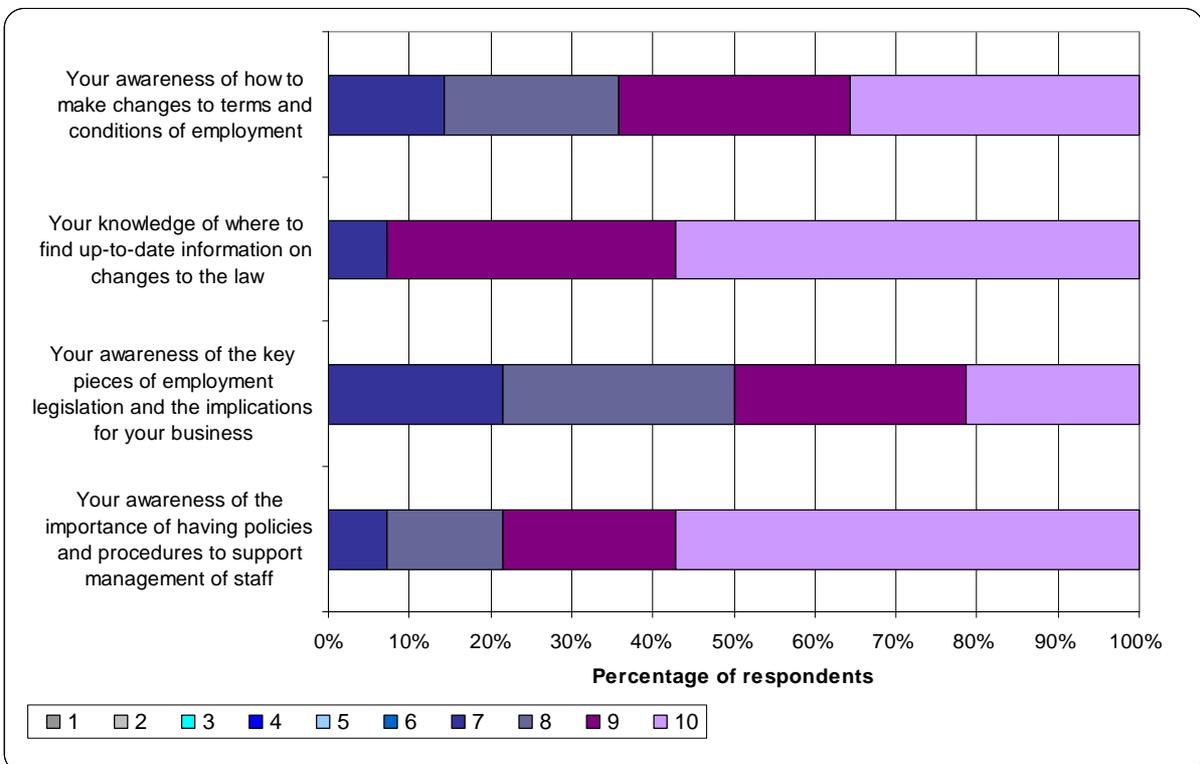
- Before the training, no participants (0%) rated their confidence in their awareness of how to make changes to terms and conditions of employment as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 85% after the training.
- Before the training, 8% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of where to find up-to-date information on changes to the law as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 93% after the training.
- Before the training, 21% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the key pieces of employment legislation and the implications for their business as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 79% after the training.
- Before the training, 64% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the importance of having policies and procedures to support management of staff as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 93% after the training.

Graph 89: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 14, 12, 14, 14

Graph 90: Levels of confidence after the training

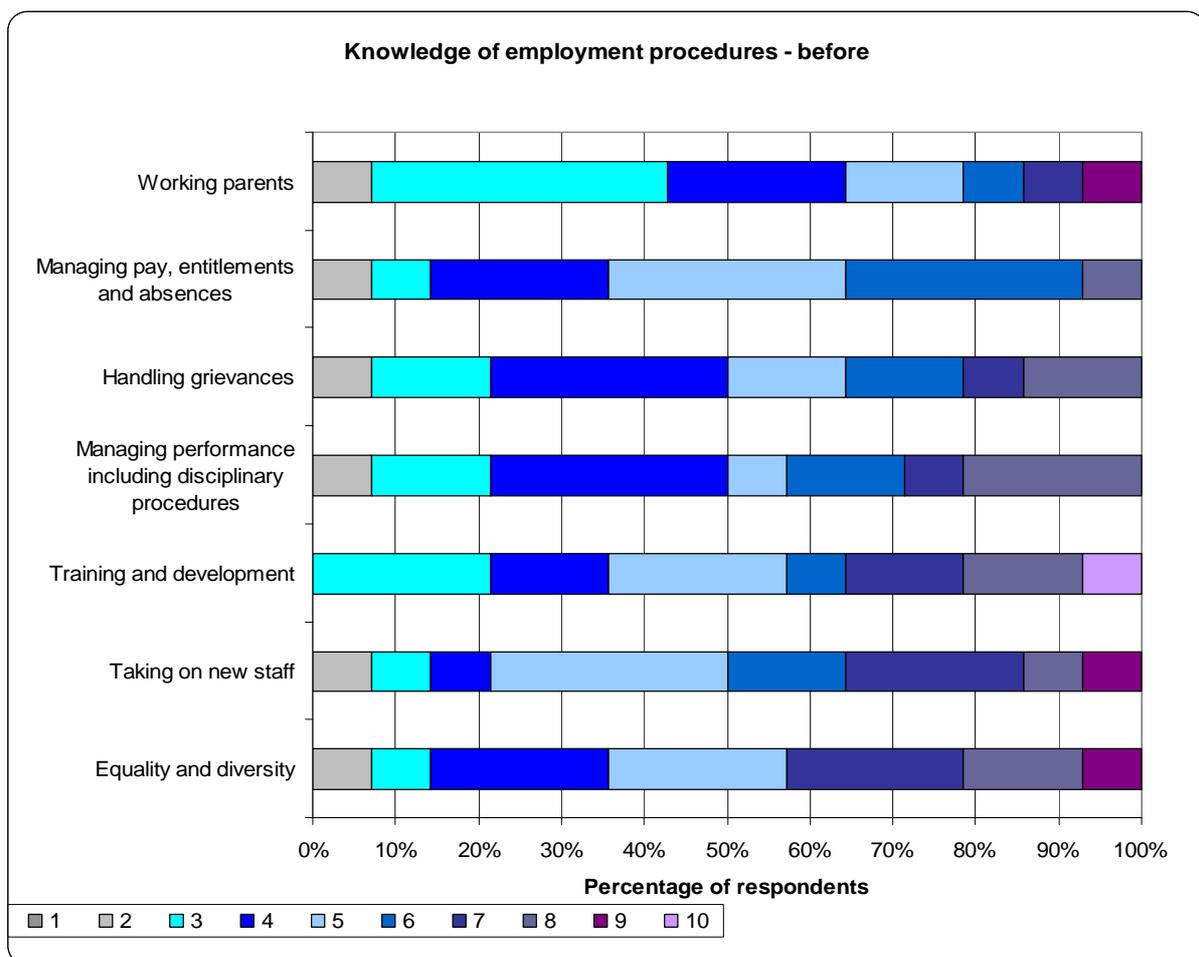


Base: 14, 14, 14, 14

Participants were also asked to rate their knowledge of different employment procedures before and after the training. Graphs 91 and 92 show the ratings. The improvements were:

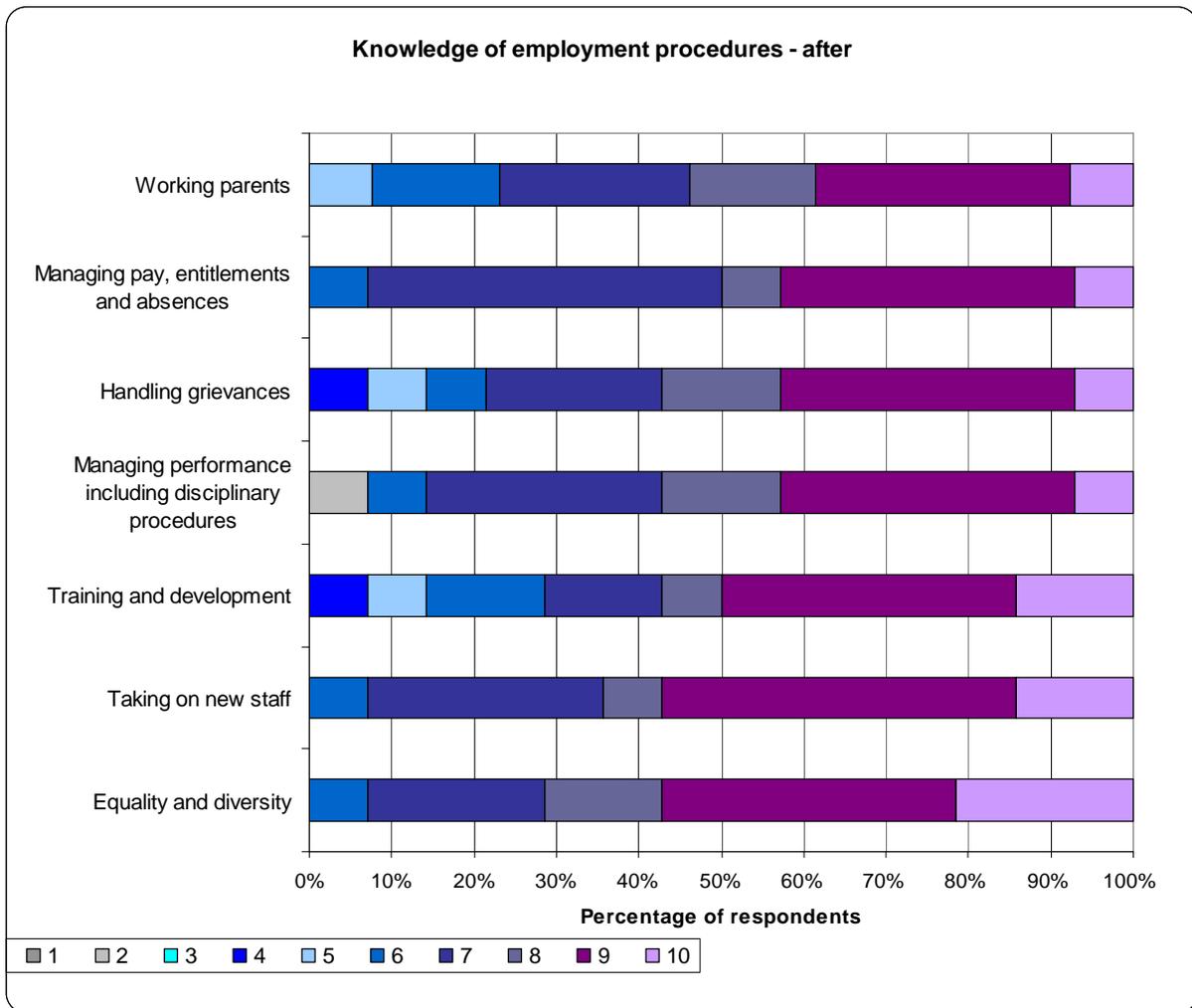
- Working parents: before the training 7% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 54% after the training.
- Managing pay, entitlements and absences: before the training 7% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 50% after the training.
- Handling grievances: before the training 14% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 57% after the training.
- Managing performance including disciplinary procedures: before the training 21% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 57% after the training.
- Training and development: before the training 21% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 57% after the training.
- Taking on new staff: before the training 14% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 64% after the training.
- Equality and diversity: before the training 21% of participants rated their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 71% after the training.

Graph 91: Knowledge of employment procedures before the training



Base: 14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14

Graph 92: Knowledge of employment procedures after the training



Base: 13, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14, 14

Using the learning from the training

When asked about the ways in which they would use the learning from the training, participants highlighted the following themes:

- Reviewing and updating staff contracts
 - “I will check contracts for hours of work, lay off clauses”
 - “Write staff contracts for individuals not whole team”
- Reviewing and updating policies
 - “Provides a framework for review of policies which I will use”
 - “create new policies on use of social media and disciplinary actions”
- Bringing knowledge back to settings
 - “Take knowledge back to setting”
 - “To enable me to have better knowledge for the employees”

Other comments

Only two participants provided further comments, these were:

“Excellent training but I’ve still so much to learn”

“Fantastic signposting to appropriate websites for employment law”

6. Out of School Clubs: Employment Law – Slough

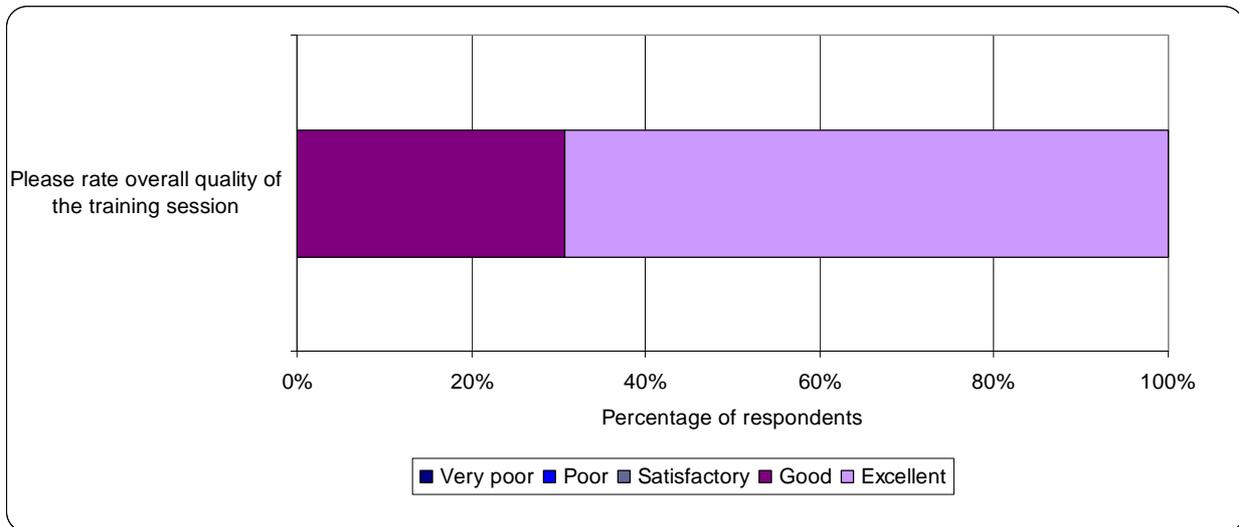
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Slough
- 15 attendees, 15 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Managers, deputy managers, owners, room leaders, childminders and administrators.
- Type of organisation: Preschools or nurseries, out of school clubs and childminders. Some local authority staff also attended.
- Sector: 3 not-for-profit; 8 private, 2 voluntary and 2 local authority.

Experience of the training

Ratings for the overall quality of the training were high, with 70% of participants rating it as excellent, and 30% as good. These findings are shown in Graph 93 below.

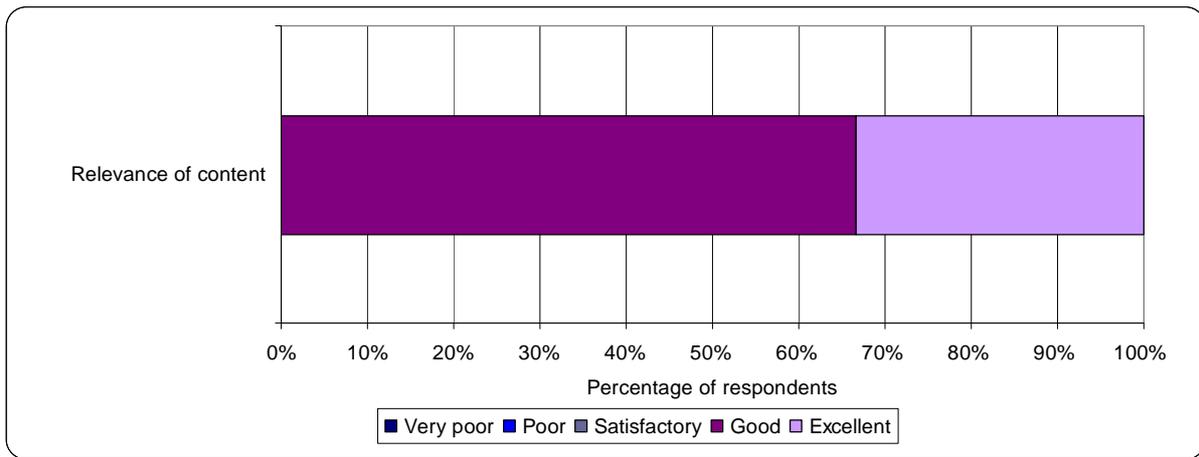
Graph 93



Base: 13

Similarly, when asked to rate the relevance of their training to their day-to-day roles, all participants rated the training as good or excellent, but unlike with the overall quality, a higher proportion reported it to be good (67%), as shown in graph 94.

Graph 94: Relevance of content

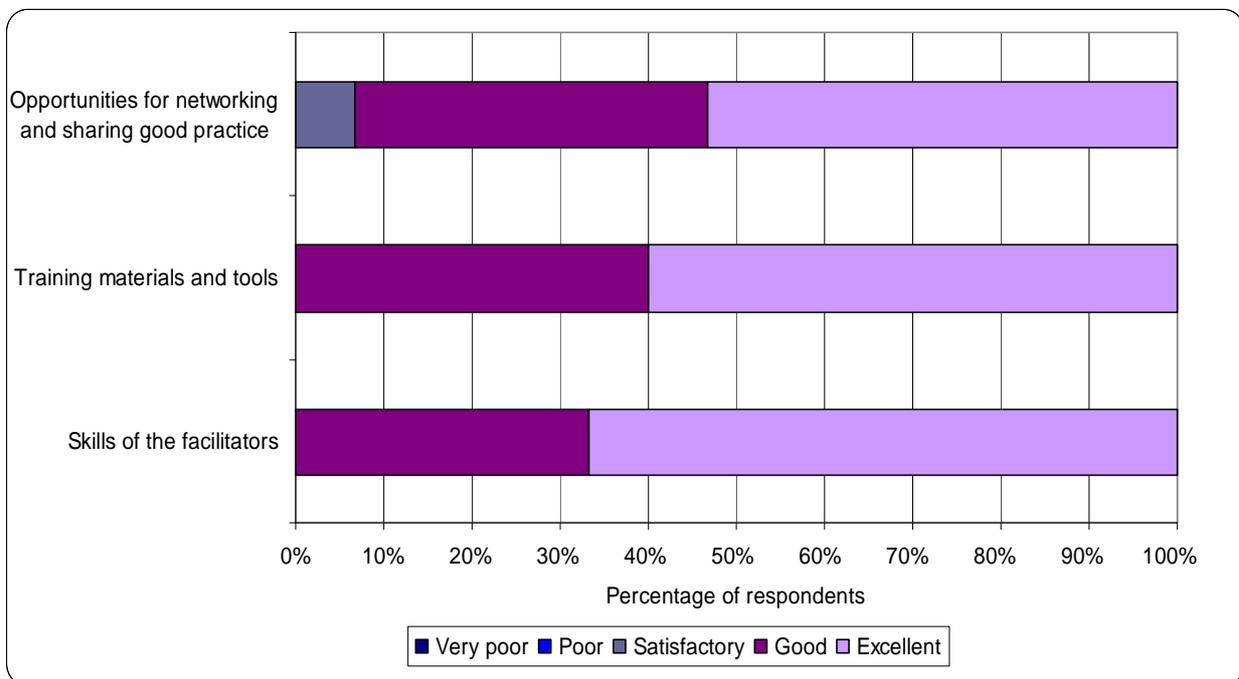


Base: 15

Graph 95 shows how participants rated the different elements of the training. Overall the findings are positive; with all participants rating the skills of the facilitator as good (33%) or excellent (66%), and the training materials and tools as good (40%) or excellent (60%).

The opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were also rated as good or excellent by the majority of participants, and, although 6% rated it as satisfactory, this only represents one participant.

Graph 95: Ratings of specific elements of the training



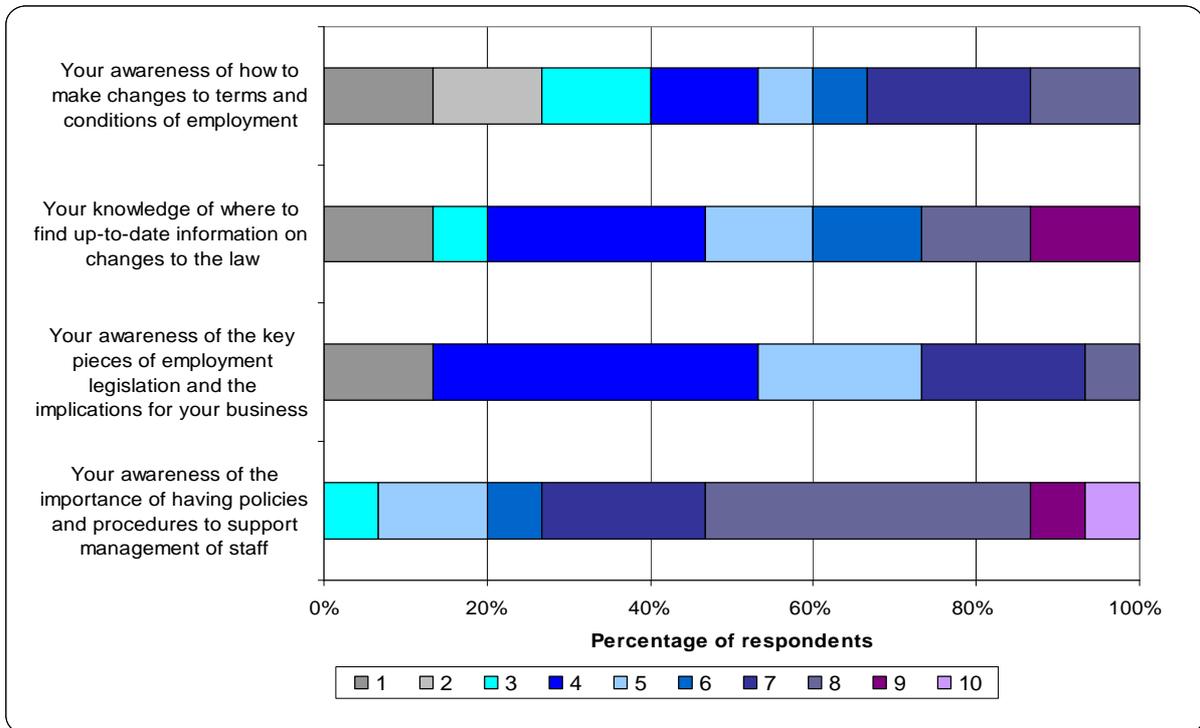
Base: All 15

Knowledge and awareness

Evidence from the ratings reported for confidence in different areas before and after the training suggests improvements to confidence have been experienced across all topics,

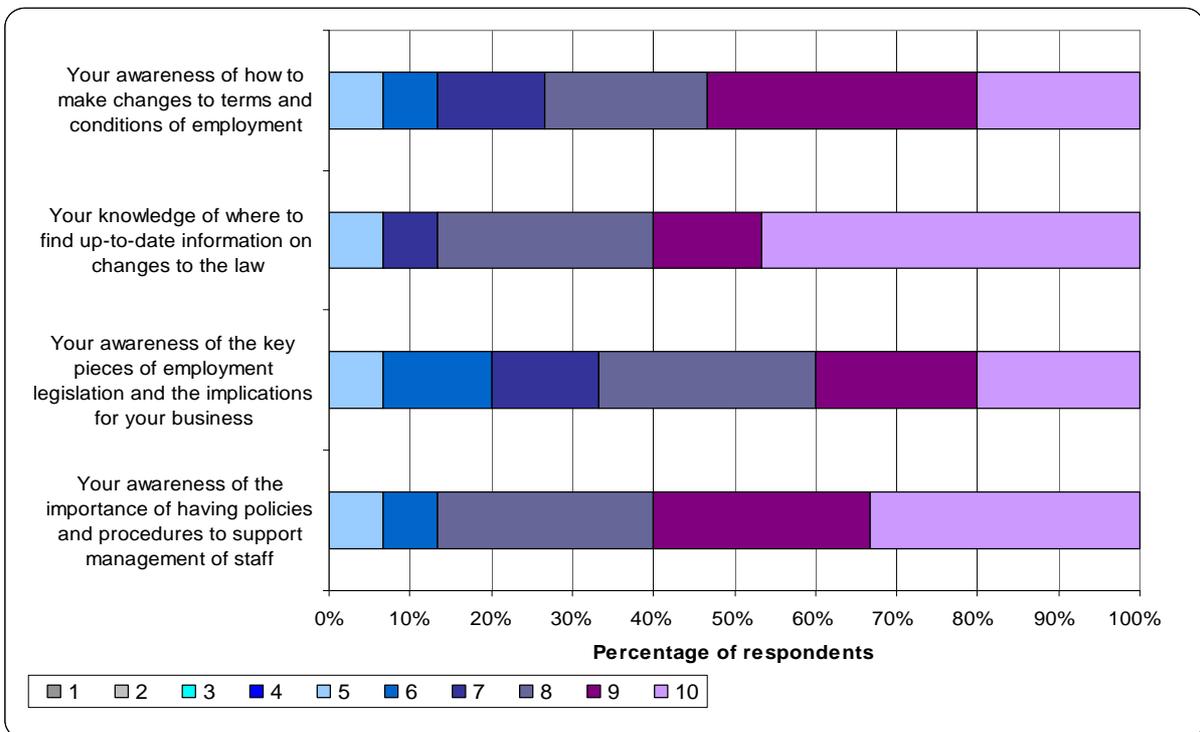
although the baseline levels were higher compared to many of the other training sessions. Graphs 96 and 97 show these findings.

Graph 96: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 15

Graph 97: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 15

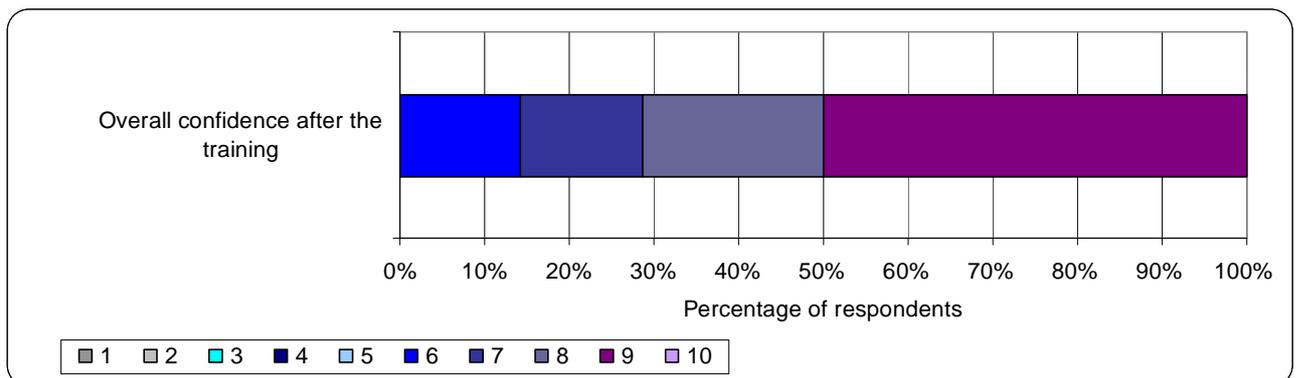
As the graphs show:

- Before the training, 13% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of how to make changes to terms and conditions of employment as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 67% after the training.
- Before the training, 26% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of where to find up-to-date information on changes to the law as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 87% after the training.
- Before the training, 7% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the key pieces of employment legislation and the implications for their business as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 67% after the training.
- Before the training, 53% of participants rated their awareness of the importance of having policies and procedures to support management of staff as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 87% after the training

Overall confidence

Participants were also asked to rate their overall confidence after the training, and the findings show that 71% rated their confidence as 8,9 or 10, as shown in graph 98.

Graph 98: Overall confidence after the training



Using the learning from the training

Participants reported they would use the learning from the training in the following ways:

- To review existing policies and procedures, and to look at specific areas e.g. discrimination:
 - “Check the policies and procedures that we have in place.”
 - “Encourage reviews of some current policies. Also ideas for developing new ones”
 - “Looking again at all the member of staff working contract”
 - “Issues around discrimination and sickness”
- To improve recruitment processes specifically:
 - “Revising application forms”
 - “When employing new members of staff”

- To complete the online health check and access other online resources:

“Use the websites provided to do a health check”

“Go on relevant websites that have been advised”

Other comments

In the open question at the end of the form participants described the training as ‘very useful’ and as an ‘eye opener’:

“Good to review what you think you know as legislation is constantly changing”

“Excellent training; an eye opener to some issues”

7. Out of School Clubs: Employment Law - Derbyshire

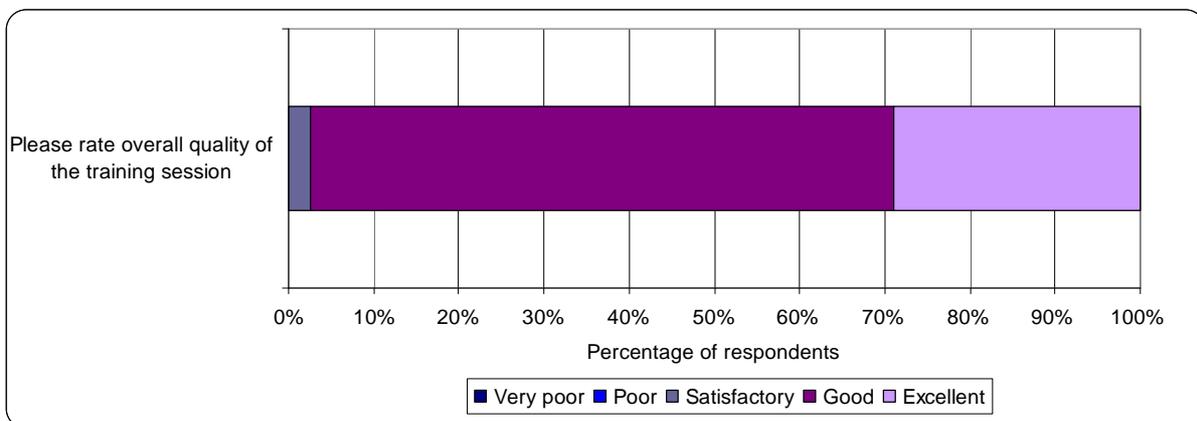
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Derbyshire
- 39 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: The largest proportion of participants were managers/deputy managers/assistant managers, also many committee chairpeople, members and secretaries, as well as administrators, supervisors, directors, an owner, teaching assistant, and headteacher.
- Type of organisation: Most were preschools or nurseries, also out of school clubs, kids clubs, playgroups, playschool and a school & childcare company.
- Sector: 14 not-for-profit; 13 private, 12 voluntary.

Experience of the training

As can be seen in graph 99, the overall quality of this session was rated good or excellent by 97% of participants, although the proportion of excellent ratings was somewhat lower than many of the other sessions, at 29% (along with 68% good), and one individual (representing 3%) rated it only satisfactory.

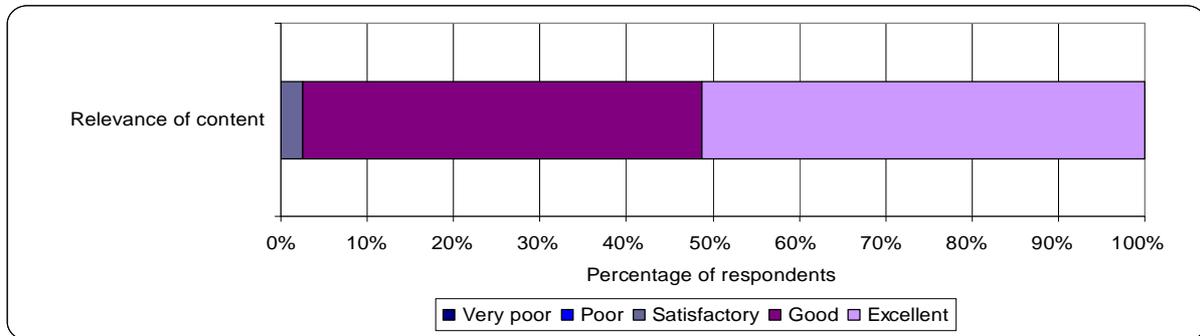
Graph 99: Overall quality of the training



Base: 38

The relevance of this session to participants' day-to-day work was rated relatively highly, with 46% considering it good, 51% considering it excellent, and only one individual (representing 3%) considering it only satisfactory.

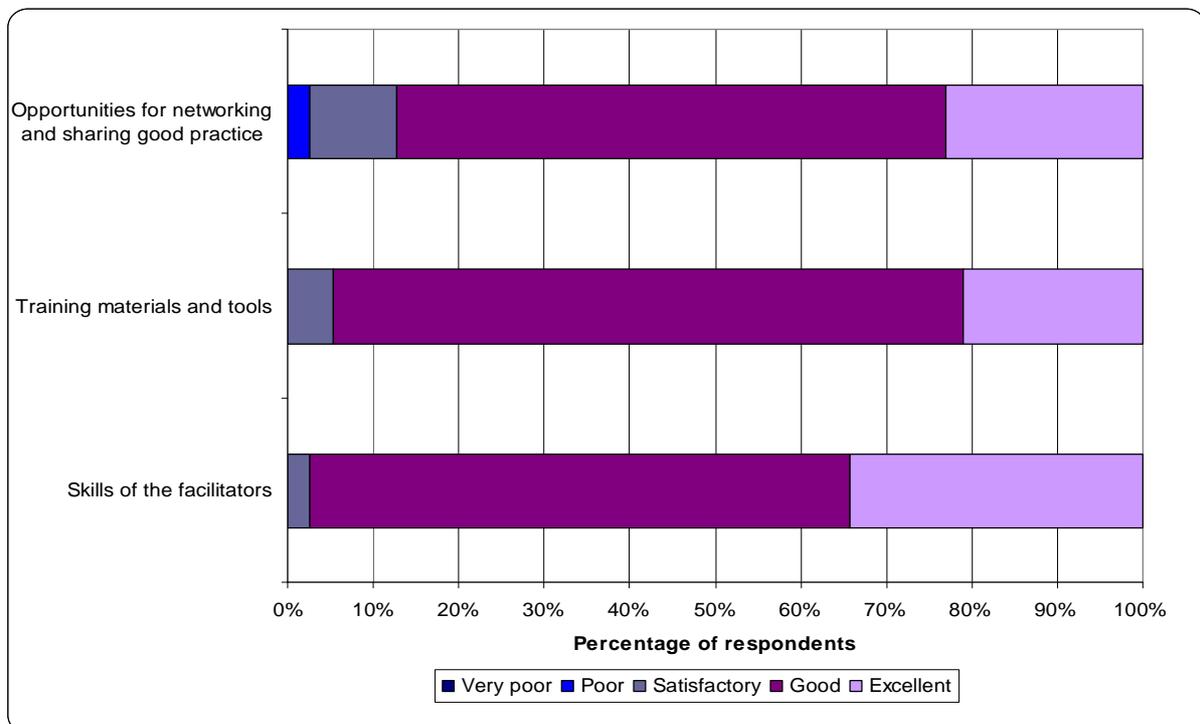
Graph100: Relevance of the session



Base: 39

Graph 101 shows how participants rated different elements of the training. A large majority of participants considered all three elements either good or excellent, and as has been the case across the sessions, the skills of the facilitators was the most highly rated element, with 34% of participants considering it excellent, and 63% considering it good. However a small minority of participants did rate the elements of the training less highly, in particular, the opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were rated as satisfactory by 10% of participants, and poor by 3% of participants.

Graph 101: Rating of specific elements of the training



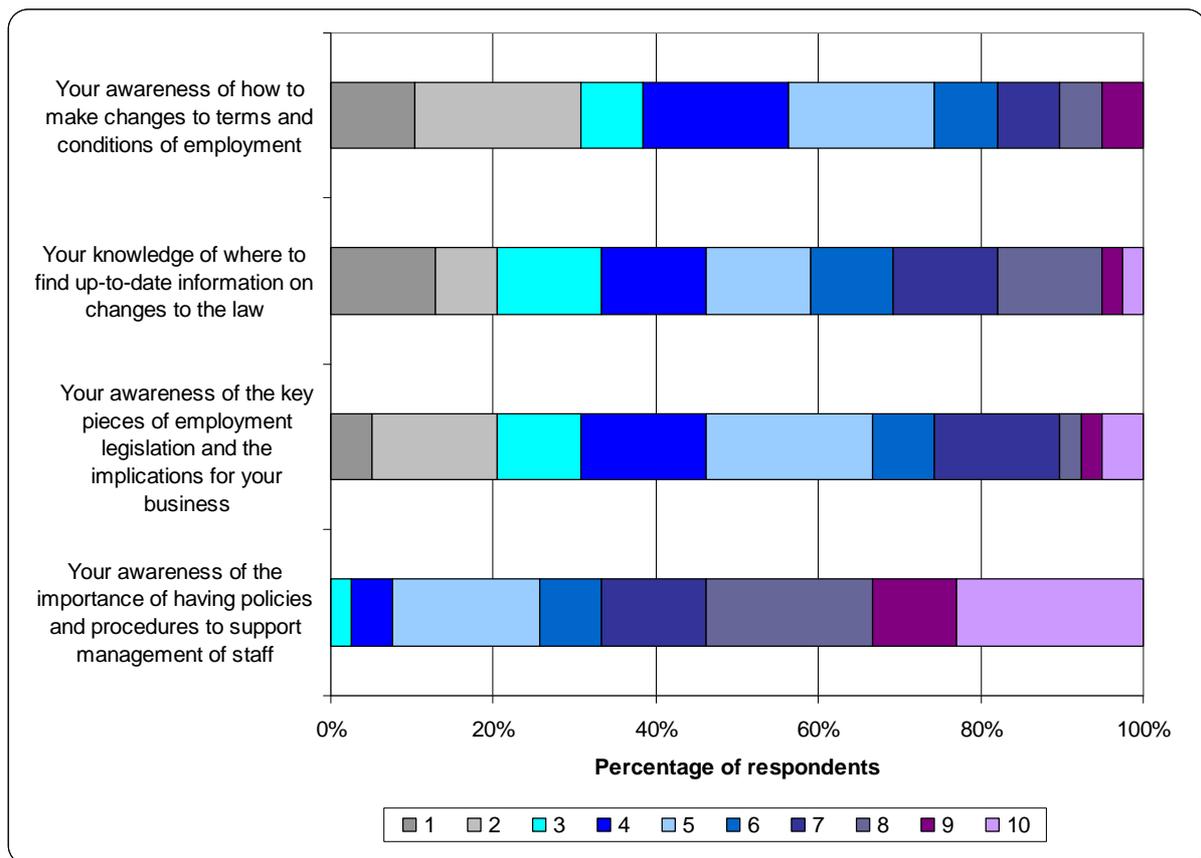
Base: 39, 39, 38

Knowledge and awareness

As shown in graphs 102 and 103, levels of confidence in the different aspects of the training were improved for most participants after the training. Specifically:

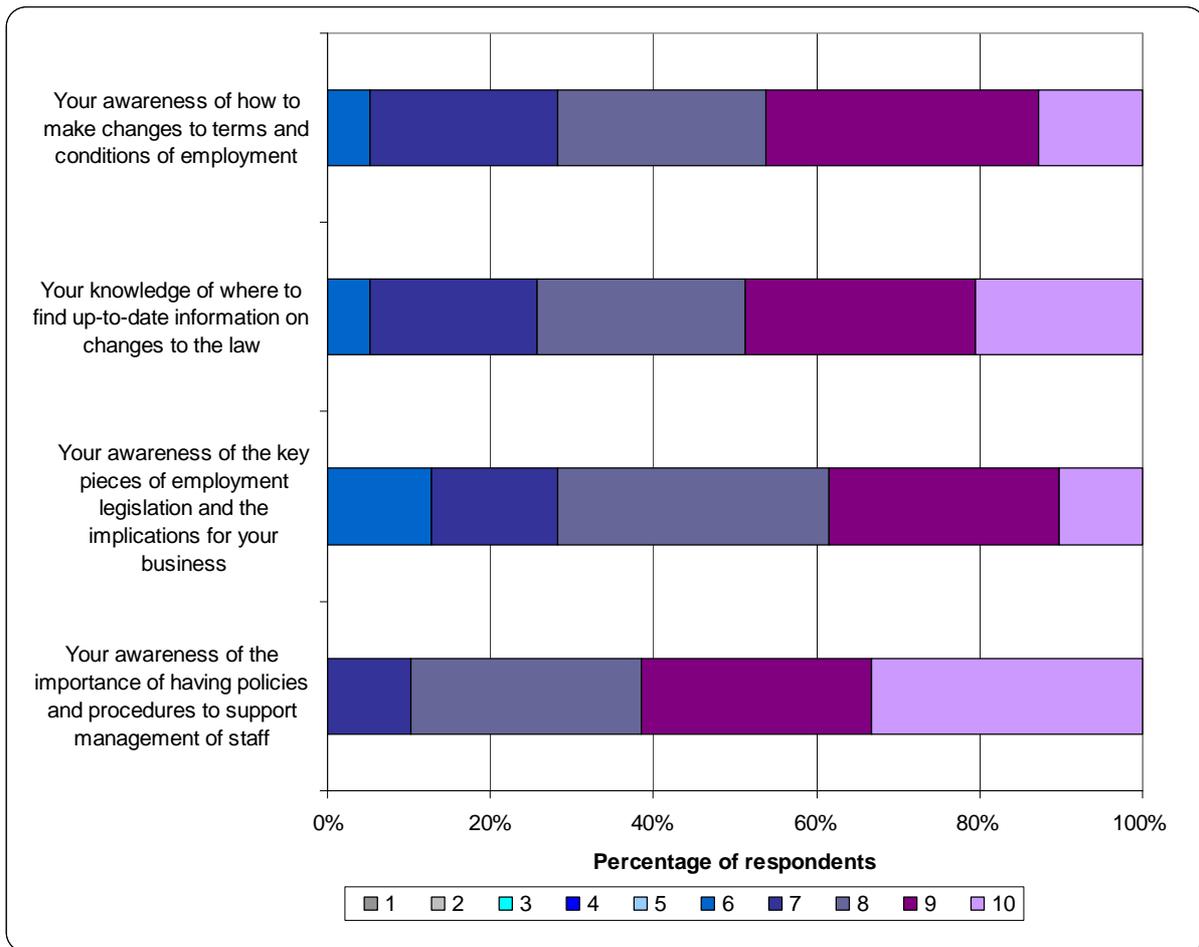
- Before the training, 10% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of how to make changes to terms and conditions of employment as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 72% after the training.
- Before the training, 18% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of where to find up-to-date information on changes to the law as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 74% after the training.
- Before the training, 10% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the key pieces of employment legislation and the implications for their business as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 72% after the training.
- Before the training, 54% of participants rated their awareness of the importance of having policies and procedures to support management of staff as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 90% after the training.

Graph 102: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 39

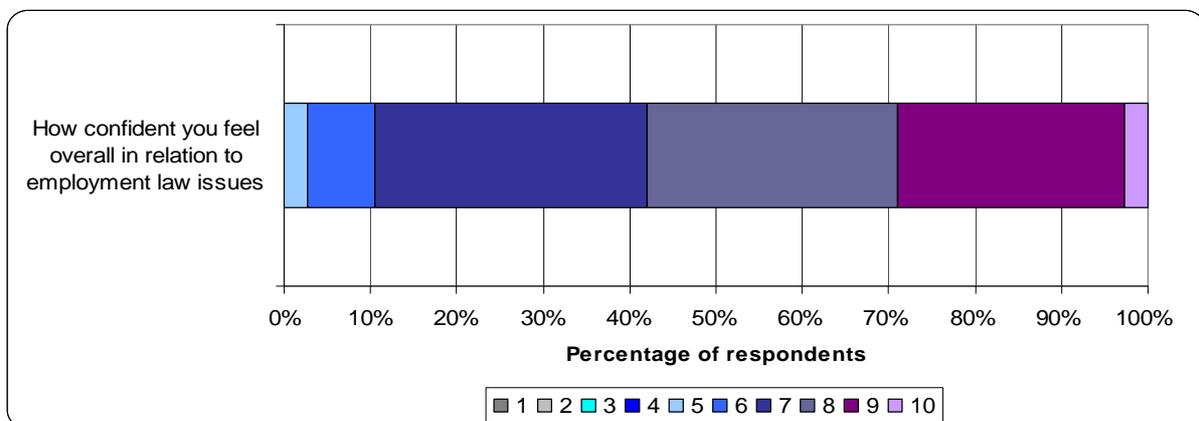
Graph 103: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 39

Participants in this session were also asked to rate their overall confidence in relation to employment law issues after the training. As can be seen in graph 104, 58% of participants rated their confidence in this as 8, 9 or 10, while a further 32% rated it as 7, and the remaining 11% rated their confidence as 5 or 6.

Graph 104: Overall confidence in relation to employment law issues after the training



Base: 38

Using the learning from the training

A large number of participants took the opportunity to comment on how they would use the learning from the training, and several themes emerged. In particular, over half of those who commented mentioned contracts as an area in which they would use the learning. For example:

“Lots of useful and important info on contracts”

“Writing a contract to link all legal requirements”

“Will be able to review contracts”

“Looking at updating contracts”

Other themes which emerged include:

- Reviewing and updating policies

“Look at and update policies”

“Check existing policies”

- Reviewing recruitment procedures

“I will be re-assessing all our staff management policies, our contracts and recruitment process.”

“Updating employment documents. Updating job application/references.”

- Equal opportunities

“Will be looking at equal ops policy”

“... re-write equal ops policy”

Other comments

Participants used the open comments space to give positive general feedback on the session, for example:

“Brilliant informative training – 2½ hours on a dark, wet November night well spent Thank you!”

“At last – some good meaningful training for managers. Keep it up.”

“Very interesting and useful information.”

“Interesting course. Well worth attending.”

8. Out of School Clubs: Employment Law - Essex

Background and profile of participants

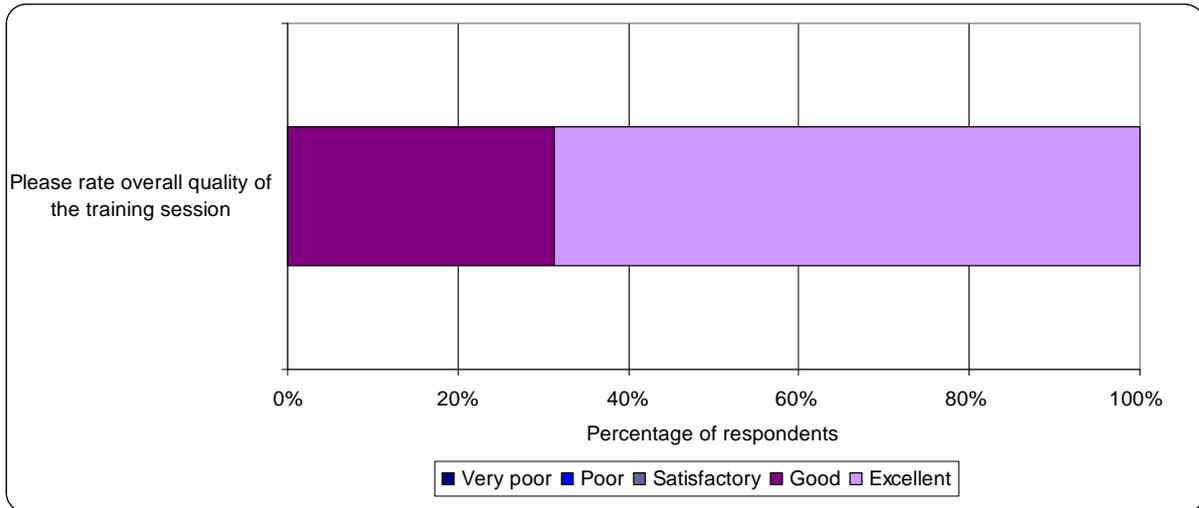
- Location of session: Essex
- 18 attendees, 17 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: Managers, Deputy Managers, Chairs of committees, administrative staff, and some local authority staff

- Types of organisation: preschools, nurseries, and local authority
- Sectors: 9 private, 3 not-for-profit, 1 voluntary, 1 other and 3 local authority

Experience of the training

When asked to rate the overall quality of the training, all participants rated the training favourably, with 69% rating it as excellent and 31% as good.

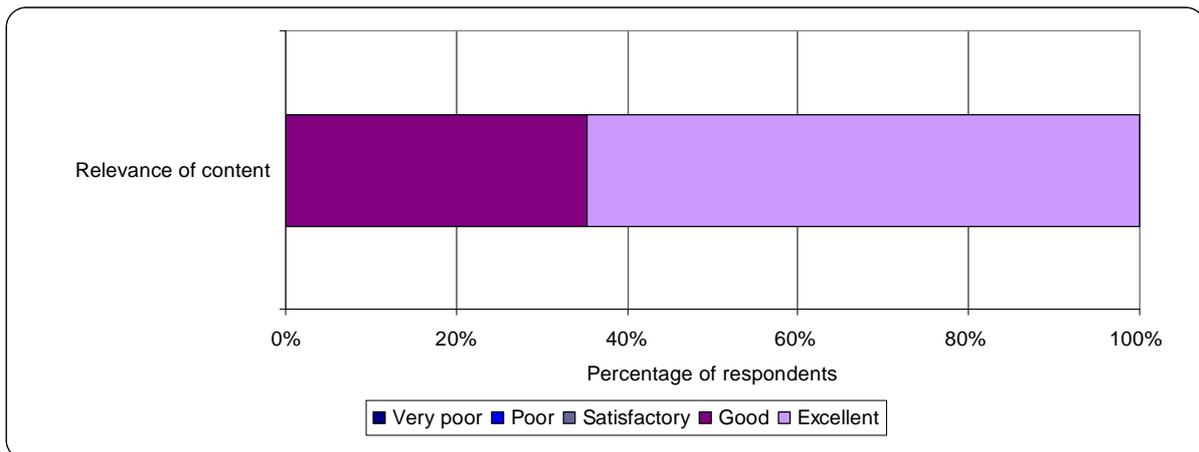
Graph 105: Overall quality of the training



Base: 16

Graph 106 shows how the participants rated the relevance of the training for their day-to-day roles. The findings are similar to the ratings for the overall quality, with 65% of participants rating the training as excellent and 35% rating it as good.

Graph 106: Relevance of the session

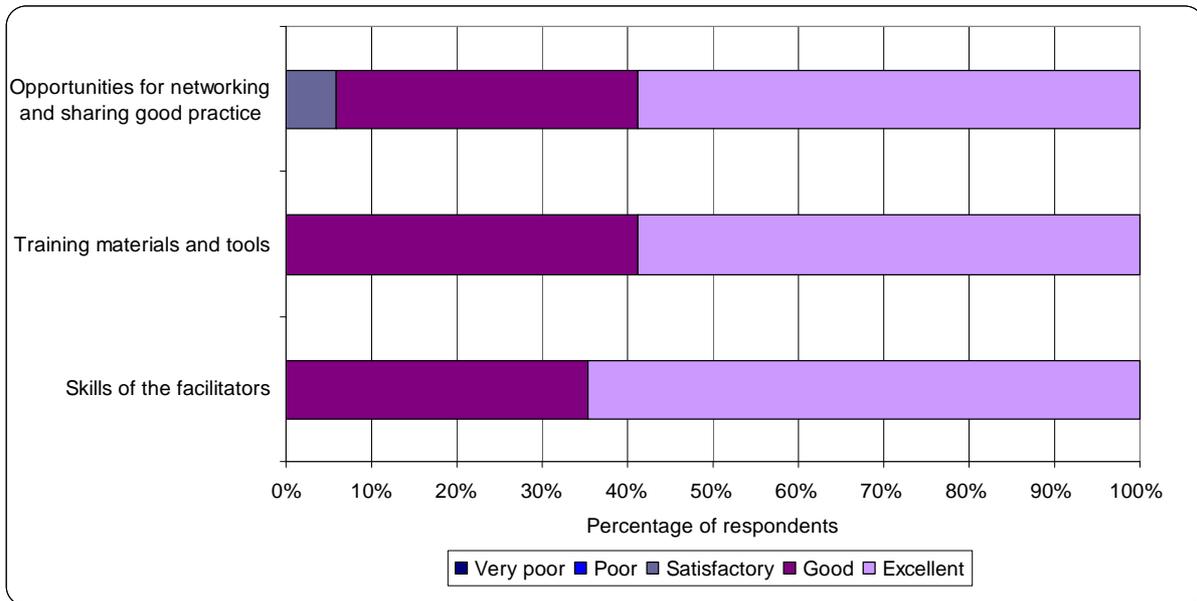


Base: 17

Participants were also asked to rate the quality of particular aspects of the training session. The element that received the highest ratings were the skills of the facilitator; 65% of participants felt these were excellent and 35% good. The other elements were also rated

highly, although the opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were rated as satisfactory by one participant (representing 6% of responses).

Graph 107: Rating of specific elements of the training



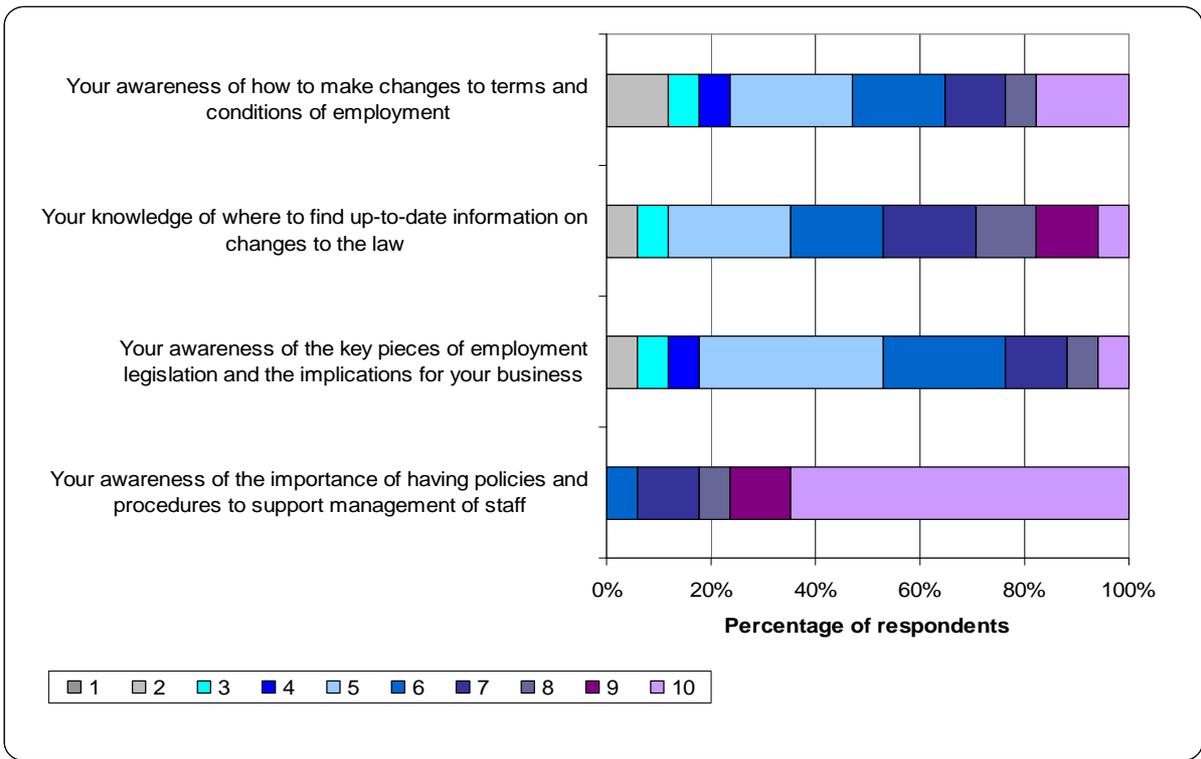
Base: All 17

Knowledge and awareness

Graphs 108 and 109 display participant ratings for their confidence in the different topics covered by the training before and after. Overall there were improvements across all topics and particularly awareness of employment legislation and the implications (the proportion of participants rating their knowledge as 8, 9 or 10 increased by 82%). The specific findings are:

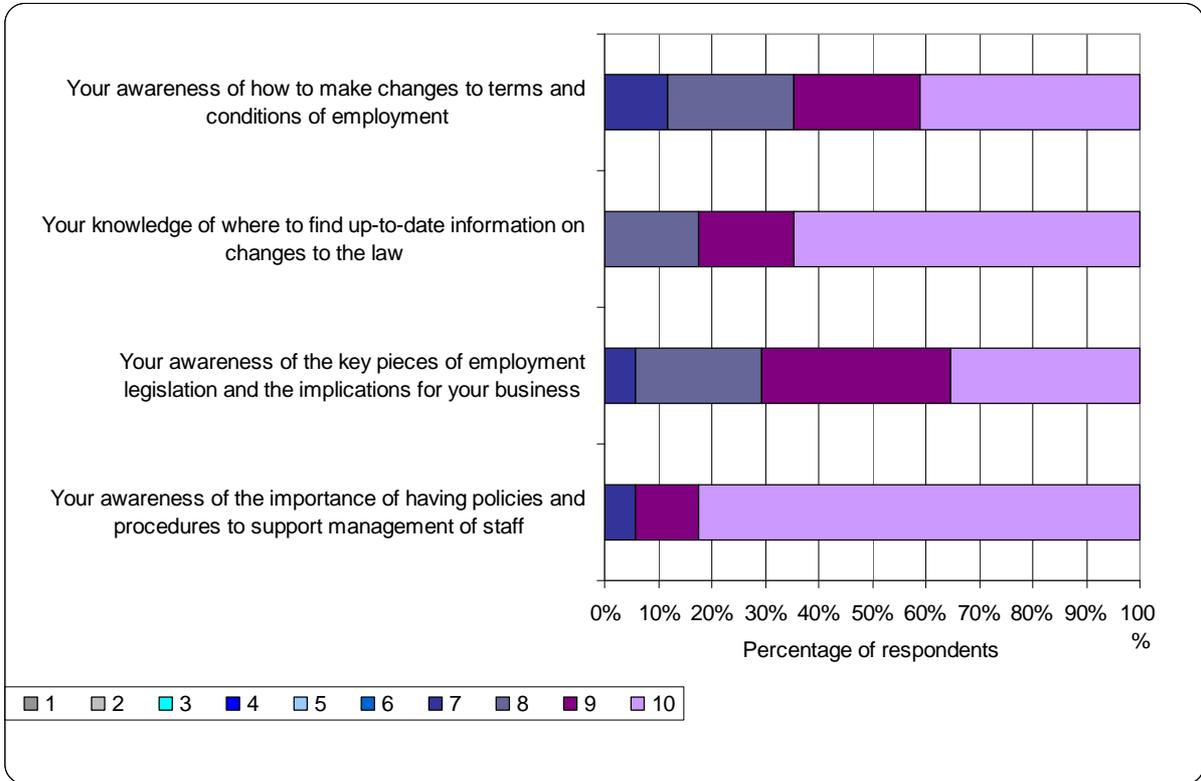
- Before the training, 24% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of how to make changes to terms and conditions of employment as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 88% after the training.
- Before the training, 29% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of where to find up-to-date information on changes to the law as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 100% after the training.
- Before the training, 12% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of the key pieces of employment legislation and the implications for their business as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 94% after the training.
- Before the training, 82% of participants rated their awareness of the importance of having policies and procedures to support management of staff as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 94% after the training.

Graph 108: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: All 17

Graph 109: Levels of confidence after the training

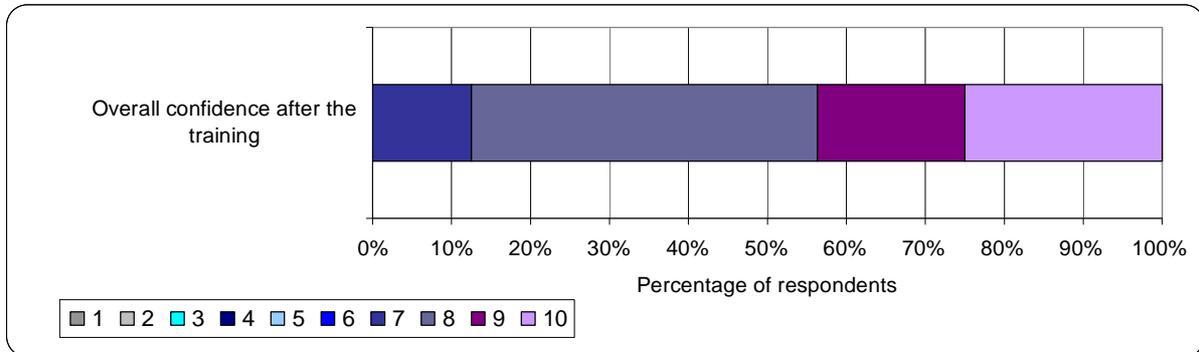


Base: All 17

Overall confidence

Participants were also asked to rate their overall confidence after the training, and the findings show that 88% rated their confidence as 8,9 or 10, as shown in graph 110.

Graph 110: Overall confidence after the training



Base: 16

Using the learning from the training

Participants identified a number of key ways in which they would use the learning from the training:

- To review internal documentation and processes, for example staff contracts
“Review contracts already in place and improve wording of new contracts”
“Look more closely at staff contracts for many issues raised today”
“To review and update employment documentation in setting”
- To hold meetings with staff and communicate the learning within their organisation:
“Will relay this back to the setting/management team”
“Meetings with staff and director”
“To signpost and advise other colleagues!”
- To keep their knowledge up-to-date, for example by developing resources or running training (local authority participants):
“Develop further resources and training opportunities for the sector”
“It will enable me to deliver a high quality and up-to-date service to providers who contact our service for support”

Other comments

Participants provided some additional comments to say that the training had been very useful, and particularly to praise the facilitation:

- “This course was presented very well. Liked the quiz way of getting us to discuss”*
- “Very good facilitator. Thank you!”*
- “Very good session!”*

9. Out of School Clubs: Managing Employees - Redbridge

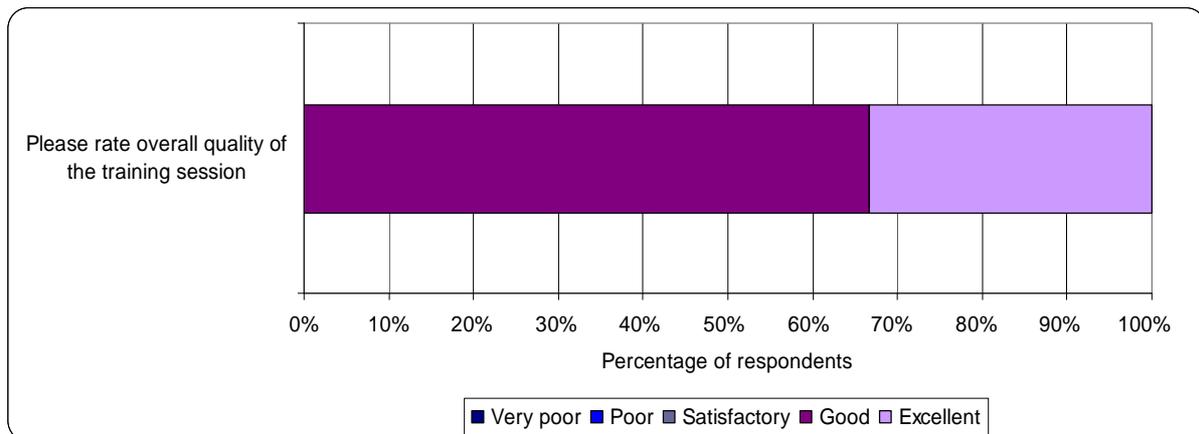
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Redbridge
- 25 attendees, 24 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: the majority of participants were managers/deputy managers; others were senior practitioners, a fundraising manager, and an EYFS coordinator.
- Types of organisation: preschools, nurseries, daycare, primary school, community centre, local authority.
- Sectors: 11 private, 7 not-for-profit, 3 voluntary, 3 other

Experience of the training

As seen in graph 111, a third of participants considered the overall quality of the training session to be excellent (33%), while the remaining two-thirds felt it was good (67%).

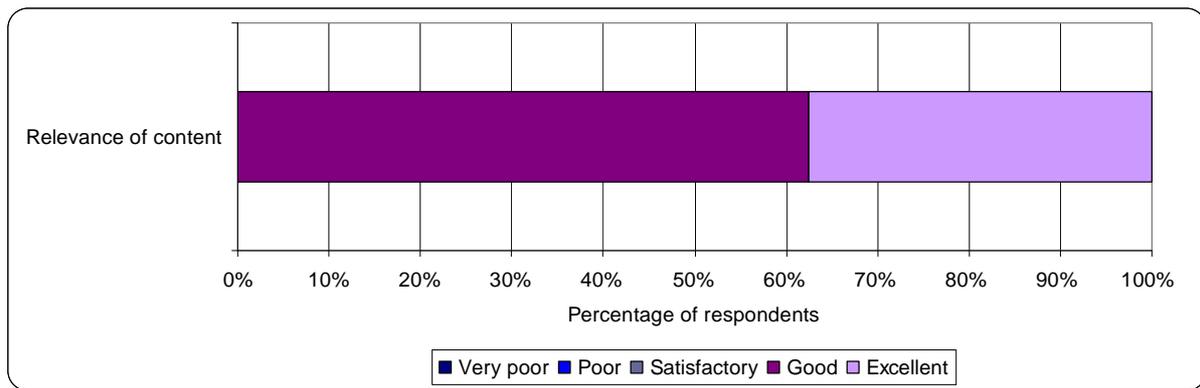
Graph 111: Overall quality of the training session



Base: 24

A similar proportion of participants considered the relevance of the session to their day-to-day work to be excellent (38%), and good (62%), as can be seen in graph 112.

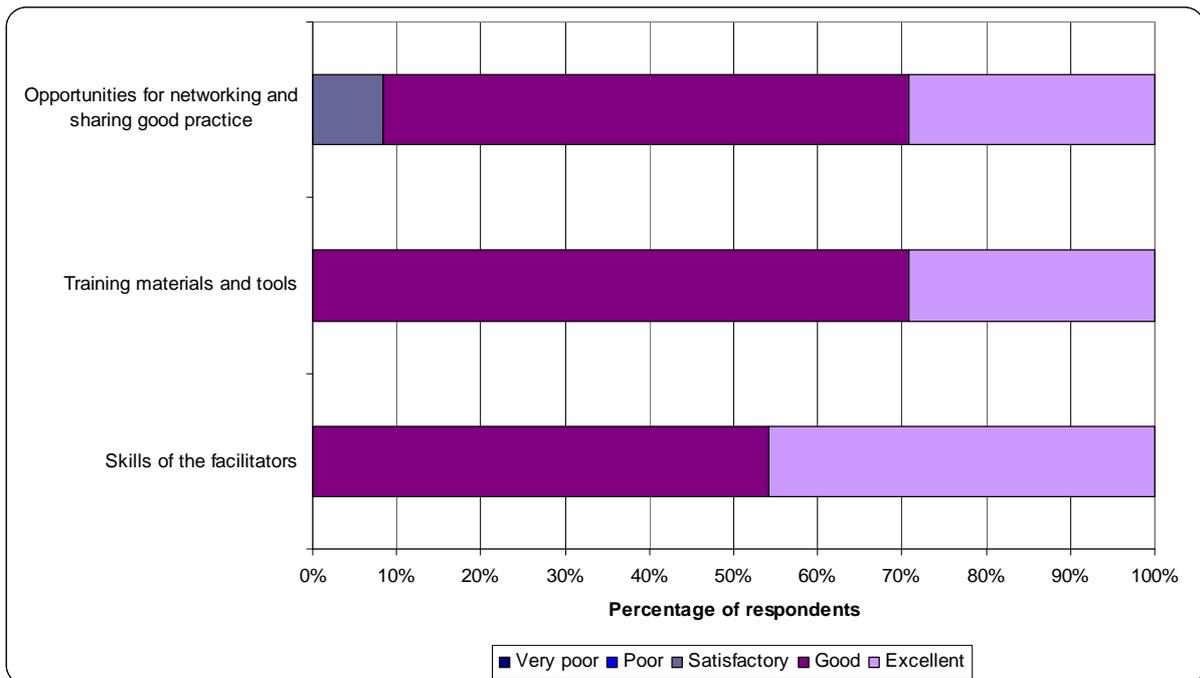
Graph 112: Relevance of the session



Base: 24

When rating the specific elements of the training, all participants felt the skills of the facilitators, and the training materials and tools were good or excellent. The opportunities for networking and sharing good practice were also rated highly by most participants.

Graph 113: Rating of specific elements of the training



Base: 24

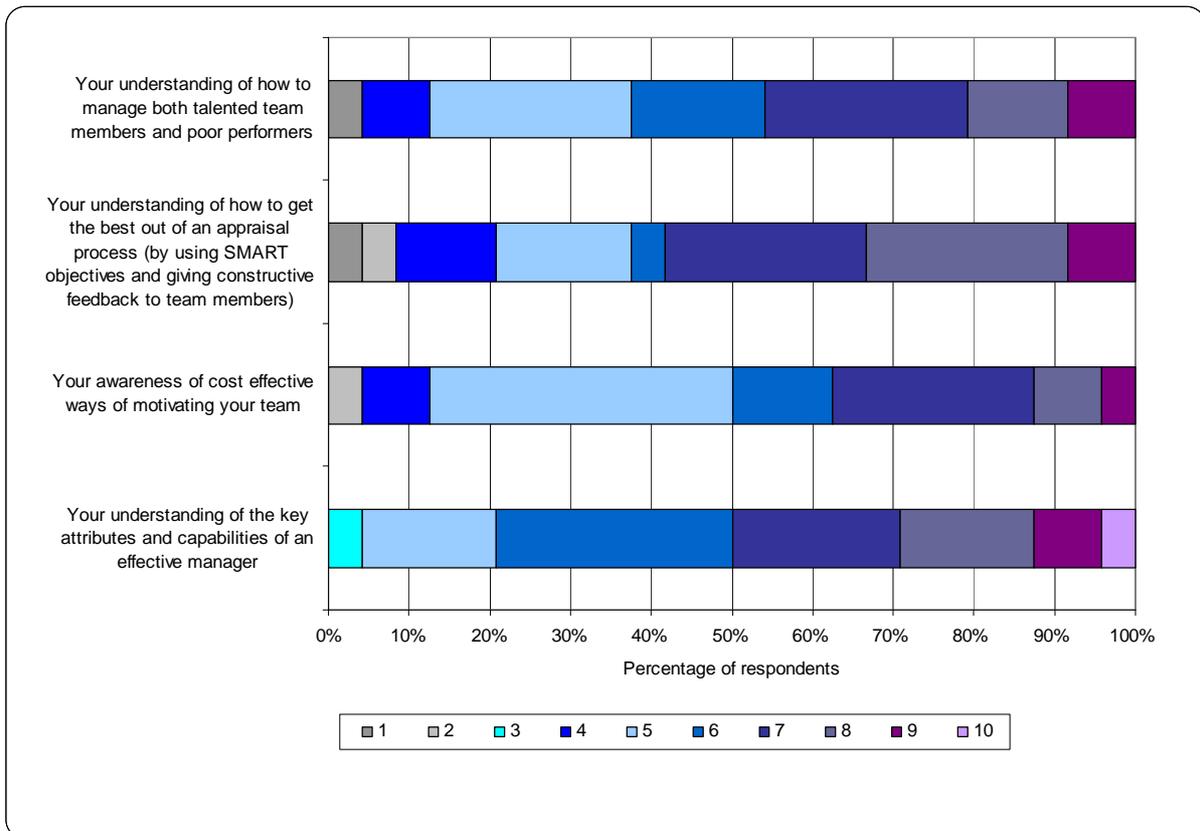
Knowledge and awareness

The data presented in graphs 114 and 115 show that levels of confidence reported by participants improved across all the different topics covered in the training. Specifically:

- Before the training, 21% of participants rated their confidence in their understanding of how to manage both talented team members and poor performers as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 83% after the training.

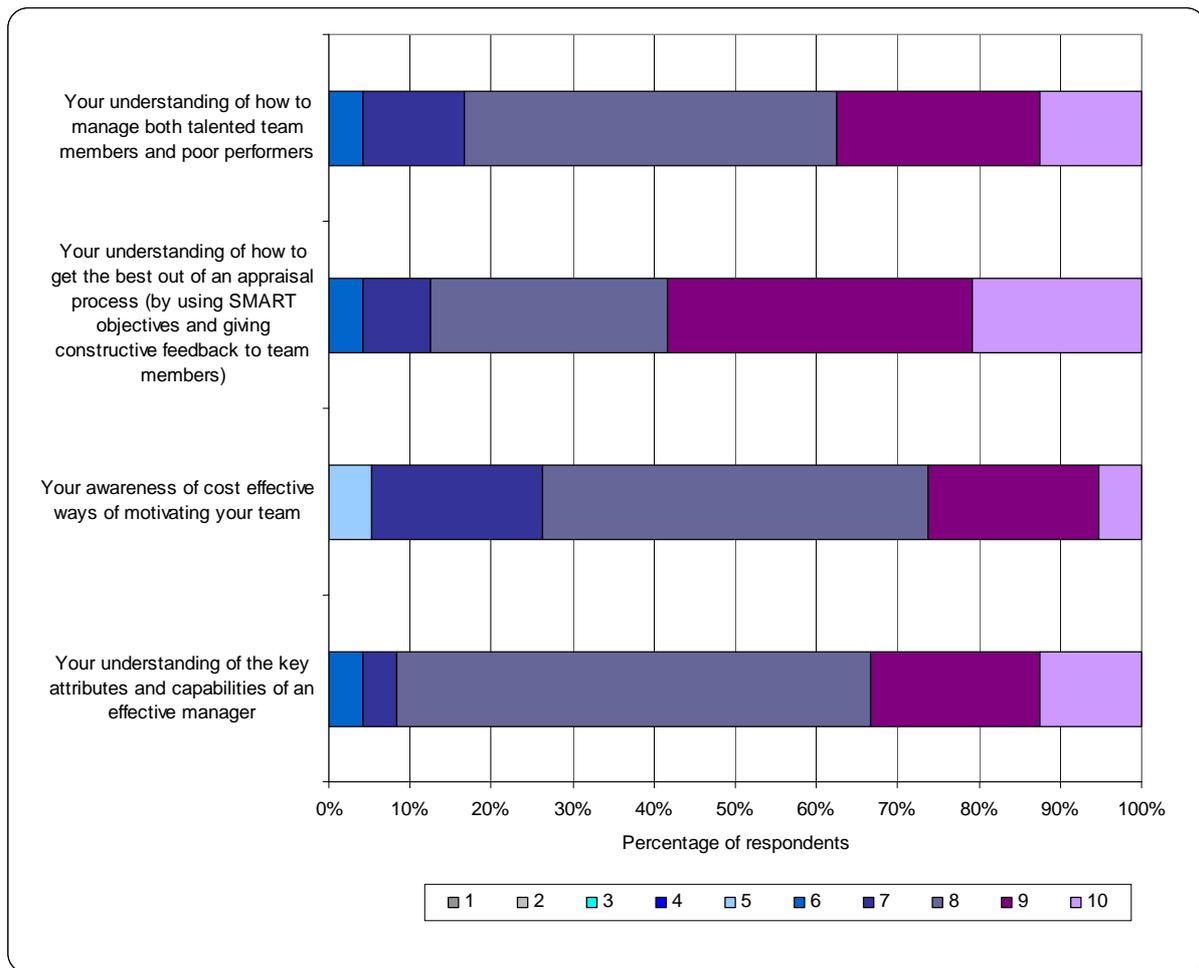
- Before the training, 33% of participants rated their confidence in their understanding of how to get the best out of an appraisal process (by using SMART objectives and giving constructive feedback to team members) as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 88% after the training.
- Before the training, 13% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of cost effective ways of motivating their team as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 74% after the training.
- Before the training, 29% of participants rated their confidence in their understanding of the key attributes and capabilities of an effective manager as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 92% after the training.

Graph 114: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: 24, 24, 24, 24

Graph 115: Levels of confidence after the training



Base: 24, 24, 19, 24

Using the learning from the training

Participants reported a number of ways in which they would use the learning from the training. In particular a large number of comments focused on using the learning in relation to appraisals, for instance:

“Preparation for appraisals”

“I will feel more confident in undertaking appraisals”

“Add SMART to appraisals”

“Will consider using a self-assessment form for staff before staff appraisals”

Some other themes addressed by participants were:

- Developing managerial skills and accepting feedback

“Self assessment and reflection on my own personal management style”

“Keep booklet in office feedback to manager”

- Dealing with underperforming staff

“Dealing with staff members who are underperforming using SMART”

Other comments

Several participants provided feedback in the open section, commenting that the course was “enjoyable” and “very informative”.

The presentation of the session was also praised, in particular by one participant who commented that the presenter “was really good at explaining, and involved everybody in the room.”

10. Pre-schools: Effective Committees – Bromley

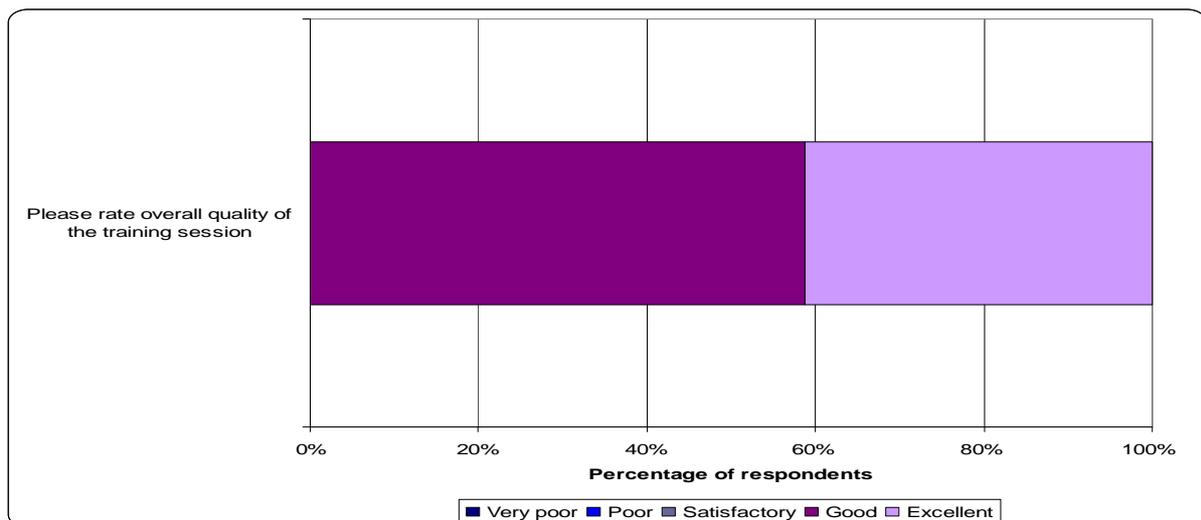
Background and profile of participants

- Location of session: Bromley
- 22 attendees, 18 forms received. *Note: not all participants answered all questions on the form so response rates are given in relation to a base rate for each question.*
- Roles: pre-school managers/leaders, and committee members (including chairs and treasurers)
- Type of organisation: pre-schools, nurseries and schools.
- Sector: 6 not-for-profit sector, 7 voluntary and 5 other

Experience of the training

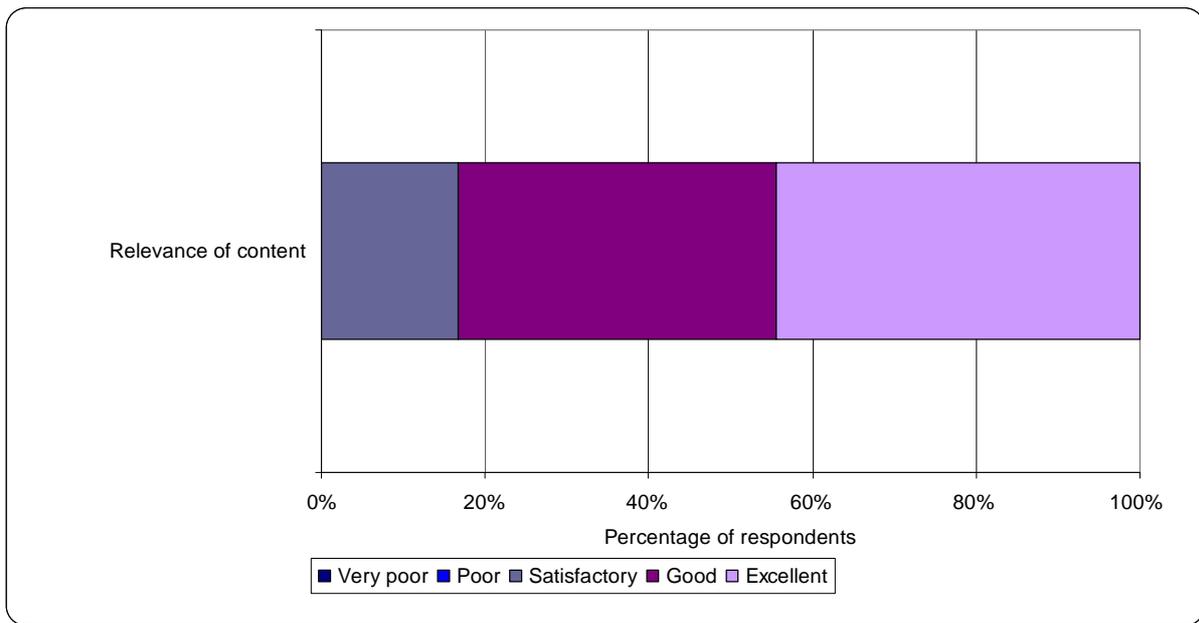
As graph 116 shows, participants rated the overall quality of the session highly: 59% reported it to be good, and 41% reported it to be excellent.

Graph 116: Overall quality of the training



Base: 17

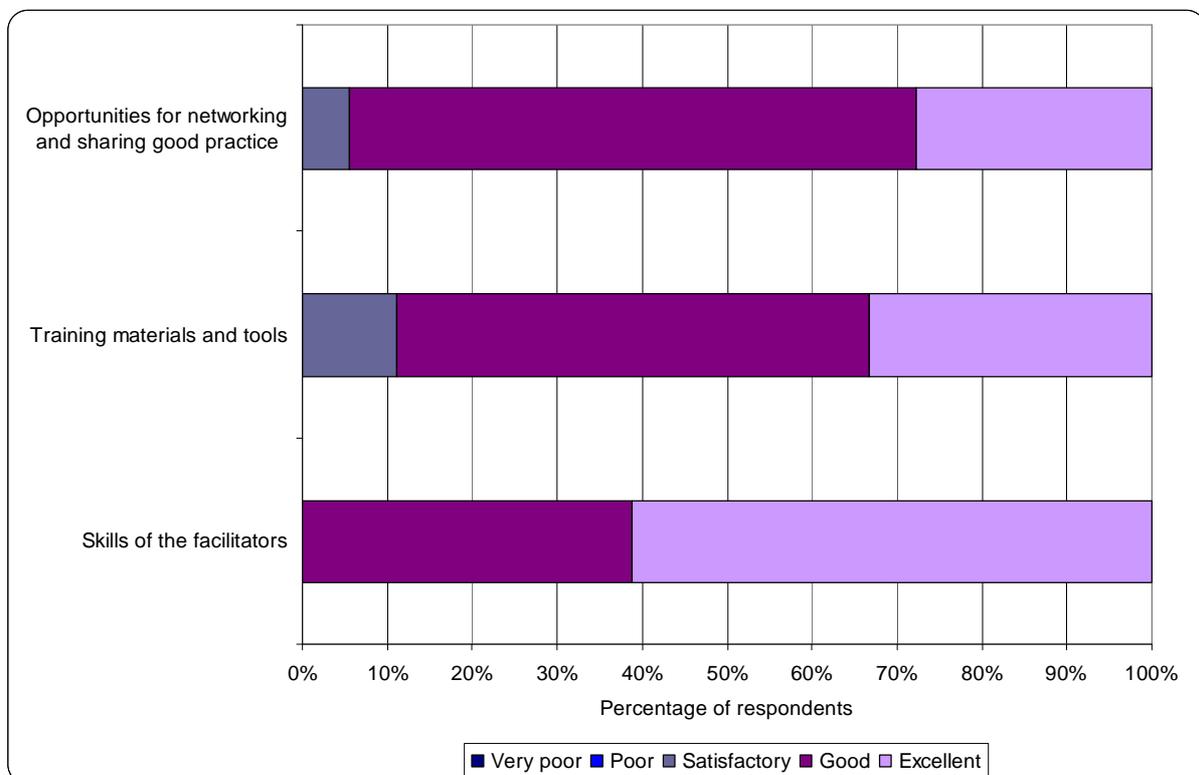
Graph 117: Relevance of the session



Base: 18

The relevance of the session was rated as good or excellent by the majority of participants (39% and 44% respectively), and as satisfactory by 17% of participants. These findings are shown in Graph 117 above.

Graph 118: Ratings of specific elements of the training



Base: All 18

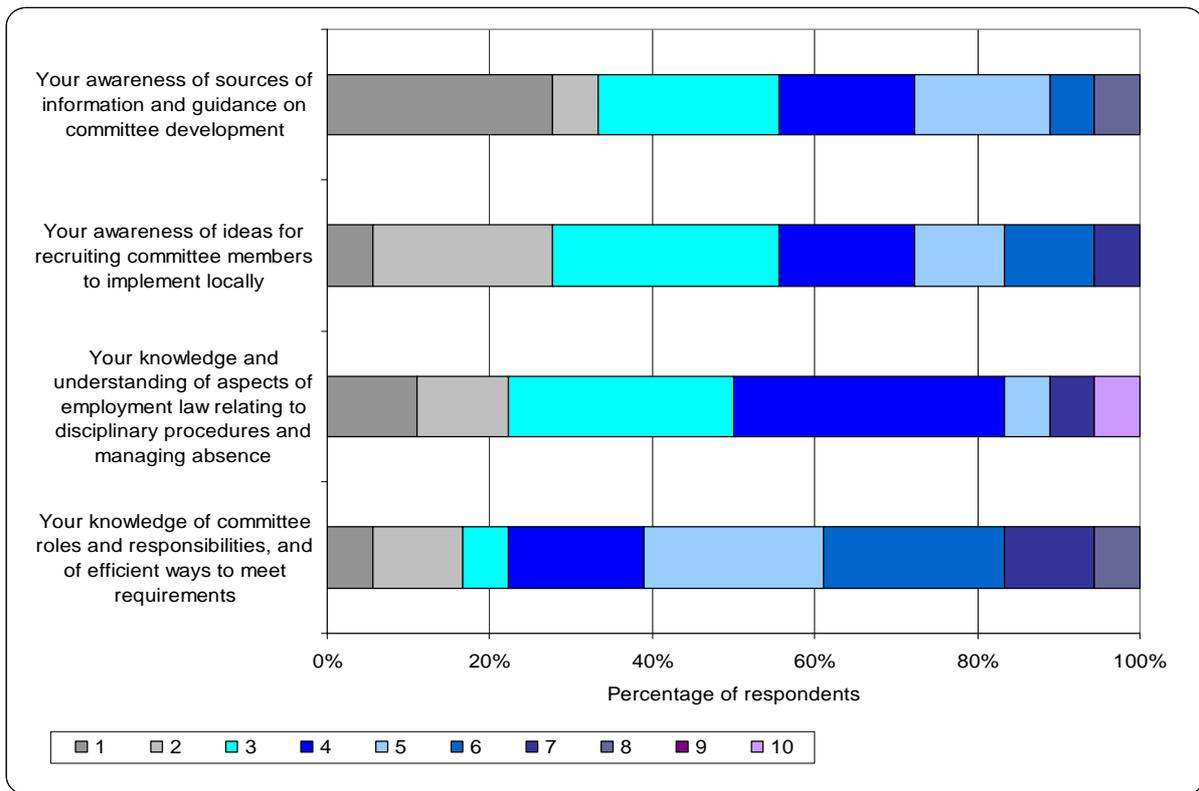
The scores for different elements of the training show that whilst overall most participants felt each element was good or excellent, some trainees rated the training materials and tools, and the opportunities for networking as satisfactory (11% and 6% respectively) – this represents a small number of participants. The skills of the facilitator were rated particularly highly, with 61% of participants rating them as excellent.

Knowledge and awareness

Graphs 119 and 120 show that participants' confidence in their knowledge and awareness of different topics in the training increased before and after. Key findings are:

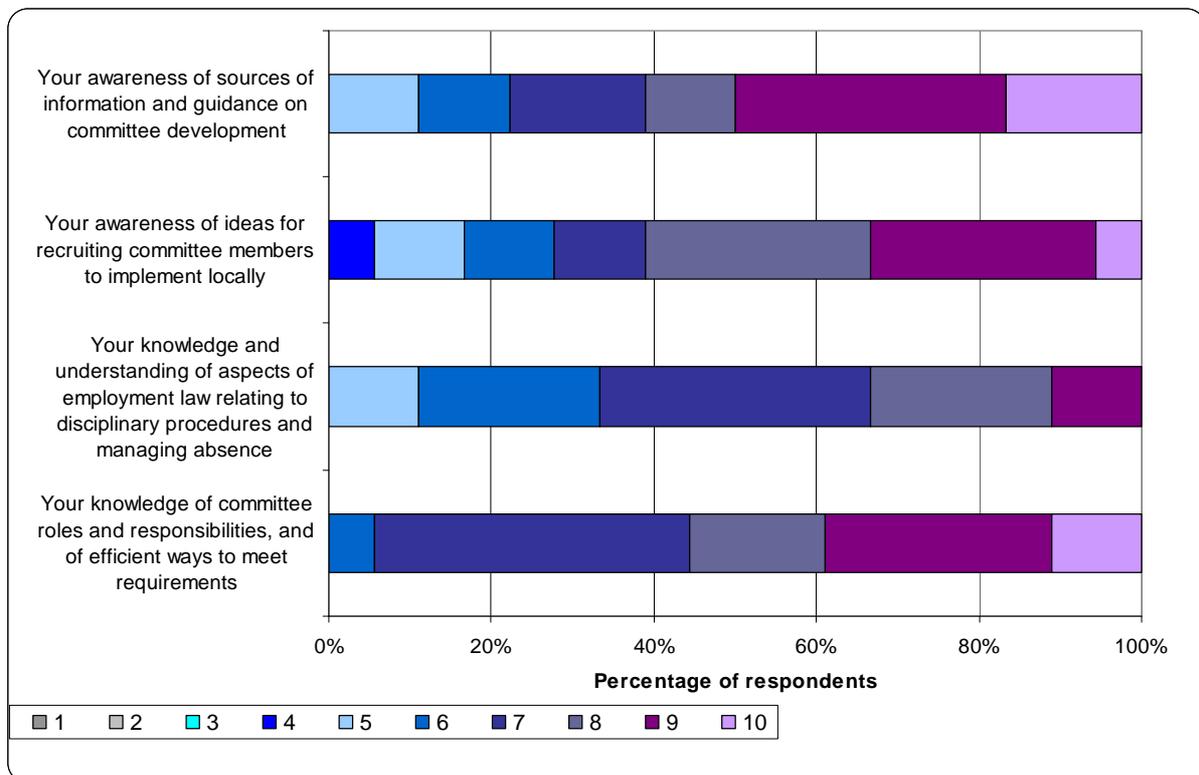
- Before the training 6% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of sources of information and guidance on committee development as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 61% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 0% of participants rated their confidence in their awareness of ideas for recruiting committee members as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 61% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 6% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge and understanding of aspects of employment law relating to disciplinary procedures and managing absence as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 33% of participants after the training.
- Before the training 6% of participants rated their confidence in their knowledge of committee roles and responsibilities, and of efficient ways to meet the requirements as 8, 9 or 10, compared to 56% of participants after the training.

Graph 119: Levels of confidence before the training



Base: All 18

Graph 120: Levels of confidence after the training

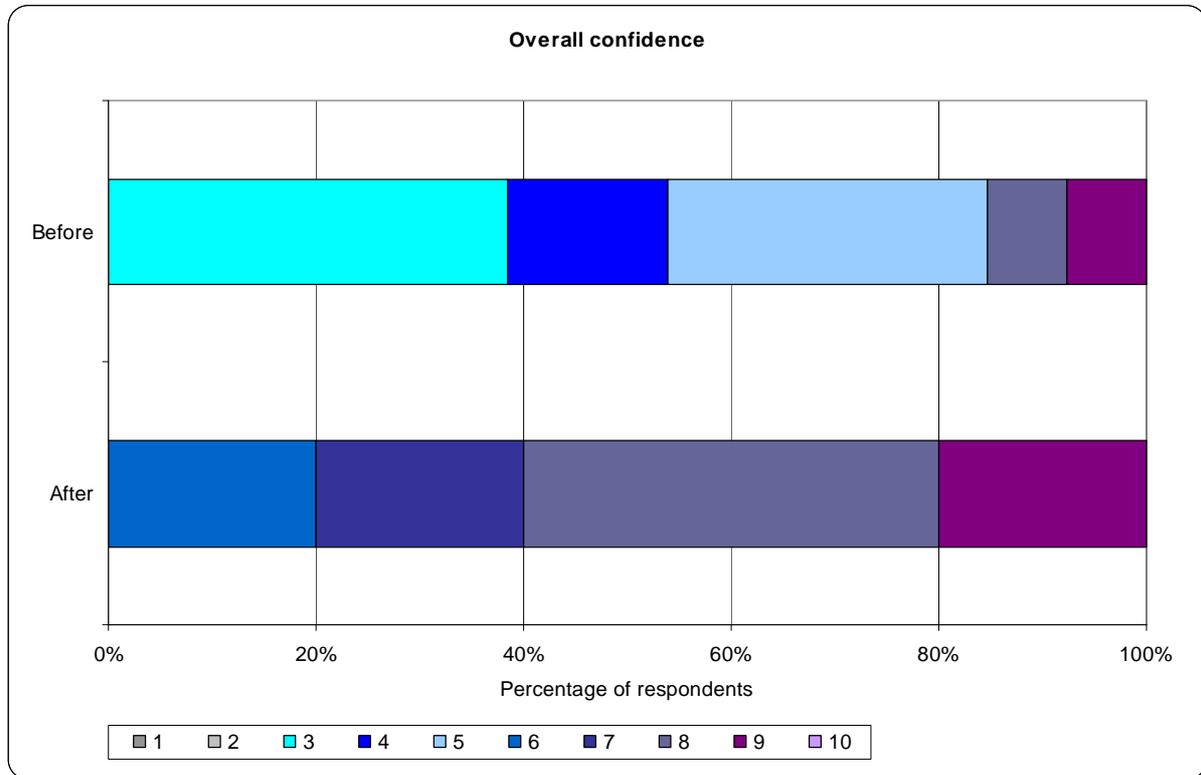


Base: All 18

Overall confidence

Participants were also asked to rate their overall confidence before and after the training. Graph 121 shows the findings: before the training 15% of participants rated their confidence as 8, 9 or 10, and after the training this increased to 60% of participants.

Graph 121: Overall confidence before and after the training



Base: 13, 10

Using the learning from the training

The ways in which participants reported they would use the learning from the training were:

- To review policies and procedures, particularly the roles of committee members:
 - “The individual roles of all committee members will be distributed throughout the trustees to ensure all ‘jobs’ are being carried out!”*
 - “Review constitution, review policies”*
 - “Accumulate the recommended material into folders that can be reference material or included in policies and procedures”*
- To discuss with the wider committee and advise future members:
 - “Advising and supporting future chairs of committee”*
 - “Take back the information to the other committee members and ensure the members have proper roles i.e. treasurer, secretary, etc”*

Other comments

There were positive comments from participants about the training overall, including that it was useful, relevant and informative, and that further sessions would be valuable:

“I found this information in this session very informative and useful. Thank you”

“Please run this course, or similar, more frequently”

Appendix 2: Example questionnaire for provider training sessions

Pre-School Committees - Supporting Committees Development

This survey has been designed in order to capture information about your experiences of the 4children business skills training session. **Please complete sections 1 and 2 before the training, and section 3 and 4 afterwards.**

Section 1: About you (to be completed BEFORE the training)

1. What is your job title?

2. Please tell us what type of organisation you currently work for or whether you are self-employed:

3. Which sector do you currently work in? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

- Not for profit
- Voluntary
- Private
- Other *(please state)*

4. Which region are you based in? *(Please tick the appropriate box)*

- East of England
- East Midlands
- London
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber

Section 2: Your knowledge and awareness BEFORE the training

5. On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = extremely confident) please rate how confident you feel overall in relation to childcare committee development:

(Please tick one box as in the example)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Example</i>			✓							

6. On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = extremely confident) please rate how confident you feel about your knowledge of the topics in the table below:

(Please tick one box for each of the topics)

	Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Your understanding of the committee role within the 'bigger picture' of children's services delivery										
2.	Your knowledge of committee roles and responsibilities										
3.	Your awareness of solutions to some of the challenges encountered by committees										
4.	Your awareness of ideas for recruiting committee members										

Please see the next page for sections 3 and 4.

Please complete the following sections AFTER the training

Section 3: Your experience of the training

8. Please rate the overall quality of today’s training session (*circle the appropriate box*):

Very poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
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9. Please rate the following elements of the training (*tick the appropriate box*):

	Very poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Skills of the facilitators					
Training materials and tools					
Opportunities for networking and sharing good practice					

10. How relevant do you think the content was for your day-to-day work? (*Please circle the appropriate box*):

Very poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
-----------	------	--------------	------	-----------

11. In what ways, if at all, are you likely to use the learning from the training in your future practice?

Section 4: Your knowledge and awareness AFTER the training

12. On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = extremely confident) please rate how confident you feel overall in relation to childcare committee development **after** the training:

(*Please tick one box as in the example*)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Example</i>						✓				

13. On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not at all confident and 10 = extremely confident) please rate how confident you feel about your knowledge of the topics in the table below **after** the training (*Please tick one box for each of the topics*):

	Topic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Your understanding of the committee role within the 'bigger picture' of children's services delivery										
2.	Your knowledge of committee roles and responsibilities										
3.	Your awareness of solutions to some of the challenges encountered by committees										
4.	Your awareness of ideas for recruiting committee members										

15. Do you have other comments you would like to make?

Thank you for your time, it is greatly appreciated

Appendix 3: Interview guide for Business Champion interviews

Introduction

The Office for Public Management (OPM) has been funded by the Department for Education to conduct an independent evaluation of the business champions training programme being rolled out by 4Children. This training is part of a wider training programme that aims to improve the business skills of the childcare sector across England.

The purpose of this interview is to gain your views and experiences about the business champions training course that you recently completed. We want to find out about the extent to which the training course;

- a) Impacted upon your knowledge of business skills and how to be a business champion
- b) Impacted upon your skills set of how to be a business champions
- c) Impacted on your confidence
- d) How equipped you now feel to be a business champion in your area

This interview will last for 45 minutes. Everything you say will be anonymous and will contribute towards the final evaluation report which will be submitted to the Department for Education in April 2013.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Background information

1. Could you tell me a bit about your current role in relation to childcare?
2. How long have you been in a business support role?
3. How did you hear about the business champions training?
4. Have you been on any previous training courses about business support? (if so, what training?)
5. Do you have any business support qualifications? E.g. Sfed
6. Why did you decide to participate in the training?
7. Could you please provide an outline of the structure of training sessions (NB there were three training days with assignments required in between. Accredited course)

Knowledge

8. To what extent do you feel your business knowledge has improved?
9. What are some of the main things that you learnt about? (Probe on extent to which they had heard about concepts before and how much was new to them)
10. What about the training enabled you to acquire this knowledge, e.g. style of facilitator, good text books and resources etc
11. Is there anything you feel could have been done differently which would have supported you to gain more knowledge from the course?

12. Do you feel you have learnt any new skills whilst on the course? If so, what skills have you learnt?
13. What about the course do you think enabled you to learn these new skills? (Probe on facilitator, resources, group size, type of exercises)
14. Is there anything you feel could have been done differently which would have supported you to gain more skills from the course?

Confidence

15. Would you say that your confidence has increased as a result of the training?
16. What about the course had led to an increase in your confidence? (if hasn't increased, why not?)
17. Is there anything you feel could have been done differently which would have supported you to gain more confidence as a result of participating in the course?

Success factors and improvements

18. What were the main things you felt made the course successful? (e.g. timescales, length of session, days it was run, location, facilitation style)
19. Did you come across any challenges throughout the course? (e.g. timescales, length of session, days it was run, location, facilitation style)
20. Is there anything about the course you felt could have been improved?

Going forward

21. Have you used the learning from the programme? Will you be using it (and if so, how)?
22. Have you done any thinking about how else you might use learning from the programme, aside from in the business champion role?
23. Would you recommend this training to others?
24. What are the key messages that should be used to promote the course to others?
25. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the training or feed into the evaluation?

We are going to be conducting area- based case studies between September – November this year. Where we decide to conduct these will be based on sampling, would you be interested in potentially being a case study site?

Thanks and close.

Appendix 4: Case study interview guide

Interview with business champion

Introduction

OPM (the Office for Public Management) are an independent not-for-profit research organisation and are conducting this evaluation of the 4Children business skills programme for the Department for Education.

The programme is being run over two-years and aims to improve business skills across the childcare sector through three strands of work: training events with childcare providers, an online self-audit tool and web resources, and through local business champions.

This case study aims to look at the business champion strand of the programme. We want to find out about:

- Your experiences of the 4Children programme, including the three-day training programme and assignments, and whether/how you have used the learning in your work;
- The types of support you are giving to providers, including any barriers or facilitators to providing it;
- The extent to which support provided through your role as a champion is enhancing the business skills and knowledge of local providers;
- Any other impacts of the programme for you, your organisation, and local providers.

The interview should last for up to an hour. Would you mind if I record it?

The case study will be written up as part of the final evaluation report to DfE (in February 2013). Everything you say will be anonymous and we will not identify you, although we would like to use some direct quotes. Would this be okay?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background information

1. Can you tell me about your role in relation to the childcare sector?
2. How did you become involved in the 4Children business skills programme?
(Prompt: through existing role? Probe: how did you hear about it? What attracted you to the programme?)
3. What does your role as a business champion involve? *(Probe: what does it involve on a daily basis? How does it align with your work?)*
4. What gaps in your knowledge and skills did you have prior to taking part in the programme?

Experience of the 4Children training

5. What was your experience of the three-day training delivered by 4Children? *(Probe: strengths, weakness, differences between the days?)*
6. What was your experience of the assignments/work with providers? *(Prompt: how easy/difficult was it, what did you learn?)*

7. To what extent do you feel the training improved your business knowledge and skills? *(Probe: why?)*
8. Thinking back to my questions about the kinds of skills or capabilities you felt you lacked before the programme, to what extent did the programme meet these gaps?
9. To what extent do you feel the training increased your confidence in discharging your role? *(Probe: why? Can you give me an example of how you have demonstrated that you are now more confident)*
10. To what extent do you feel the training prepared you to support providers with their businesses?
11. Which of the training sessions was most useful/least useful? *(Probe: topics covered between the days, what were the most/least useful aspects of each session?)*
12. Is there anything you feel could have been done differently which would have supported you to gain more knowledge from the course?

Providing support for childcare providers

13. How many providers have you supported as a champion?
14. What types of provider have you supported? *(Probe: age range, size, reasons for certain types)*
15. Can you tell me about the support have you given to providers in your role as a champion? *(Probe: frequency, intensity and quality of support for individual providers)*
16. What do you think have been the key facilitators/key barriers in enabling you to provide support as a champion?
17. What do you think the key qualities of a successful business champion are? *(Probe: knowledge, skills, experience)*
18. What could enable you to further develop these qualities/what are the barriers to doing so?
19. How effectively do you feel the champion role is working overall? *(Probe: in building capacity, knowledge and skills in the sector)*

Impact of the programme

20. What impact has the champion role had for you? *(Probe: professionally/in your work? personally? Please give specific examples)*
21. How has it compared to your expectations to date?
22. What impact do you feel the support has had for providers? *(Prompts: any impact on their business knowledge, skills or confidence? Please give specific examples)*
23. Have the providers you have worked with made any changes to their businesses as a result of the support? *(Probe: for examples, if no, why not?)*
24. What would help providers to embed such changes/make improvements to their business practices? *(Prompt: support needed longer term?)*
25. How are you working to make your role as a champion sustainable? *(Prompt: support from your colleagues/organisation? Other training? Connection to other local initiatives?)*
26. Do you know if the providers you have supported have received any other forms of support in terms of managing their businesses? *(Prompt: have they accessed the 4Children self-audit tool or attended training?)*

27. To what extent do you think on-line tools and approaches could be an effective way through which to deliver future training (*Probe: would you use websites; what would be most useful?*)
28. What impact has the champion role had for your organisation? (*Probe: any impact on colleagues, on other forms of support on offer?*)
29. Do you think there are any unintended impacts of the role? (*Probe: if yes, what?*)
30. Is there anything else you would like to tell me/any other comments?

Many thanks for your time

Interview with providers

Introduction

OPM (the Office for Public Management) are an independent not-for-profit research organisation and are conducting this evaluation of the 4Children business skills programme for the Department for Education.

The programme is being run over two-years and aims to improve business skills across the childcare sector through three strands of work: training events with childcare providers, an online self-audit tool and web resources, and through local business champions.

This case study aims to look at the business champion strand of the programme. We want to find out about:

- Your experiences of the receiving support from the business champion, including the type and frequency of support, and whether it has met your needs;
- The extent to which you feel the support provided by the champion has enhanced your business skills and knowledge;
- Any changes to practice that have resulted from the support received.

The interview should last for up to an hour. Would you mind if I record it?

The case study will be written up as part of the final evaluation report to DfE (in February 2013). Everything you say will be anonymous and we will not identify you, although we would like to use some direct quotes. Would this be okay?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background information

1. Can you tell me about your role? (*Prompt: job title, type of childcare provider, how long they have been in the role*)
2. How involved are you with the business management/administration within your organisation?
3. Were you aware of the 4Children business skills training programme before this interview? (*Probe: if yes, how did you find out about it?*)
4. What do you perceive to be the main gaps in skills and capabilities that you and your colleagues have?
5. How did you find out/come into contact with the business champion?

Receiving support from a business champion

6. Why did you decide to access support from the business champion? (*What were your needs?*)
7. What types of support have you accessed? (*Probe: purpose, format e.g. face-to-face meetings, resources*)
8. Have you had support once, or on multiple occasions?
9. How effective did you find the support? To what extent did it meet your needs? (*Probe for each instance/type of support*)
10. What, if any, were the key strengths of the support you received?
11. What, if anything, could have improved it?
12. What do you think the key qualities of an effective business champion should be? (*Probe: knowledge, skills, experience*)
13. Would you go to the champion for further support? (*Probe: if yes, what types of support and why. If no, why not?*)
14. Would you recommend the support to other providers? (*Probe: if yes, why? If no, why not?*)

Impact of the programme

15. What impact do you feel the support has had for you? (*Probe: in your role, in your organisation*)
16. To what extent do you feel it has impacted on your business skills and knowledge? (*Please give specific examples*)
17. To what extent do you feel it has impacted on your confidence? (*Please give specific examples*)
18. Has the support led to any changes to practice in your business? (*Probe: if yes, what are the changes, and if no, why not?*) (*Prompts: changes to prices? Expansion?*)
19. To what extent has the support had an impact on your attitude to other providers?
20. Have you received any other support in relation to your business? (*Probe: If yes, what? How does it compare to the support received from the champion?*)
21. Where would you have gone for the support if you did not have the champion?
22. To what extent do you think on-line tools and approaches could be an effective way through which to deliver future training (*Probe: would you use websites; what would be most useful?*)
23. Have you accessed any other support concerning business skills from 4Children? (*Probe: awareness of the training events and online resources – any signposting from the champion? Have they used these? Would they use these?*)
24. Is there any further support that you feel you need? If yes, to what extent do you feel the champion can provide this?
25. Is there anything else you would like to tell me/any other comments?

Many thanks for your time