



Playwork People 3:
research into the
characteristics of the
playwork workforce

Regional Summary:
West Midlands

September 2007

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0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Playwork People survey is SkillsActive's biennial survey of the playwork workforce. It is the largest dedicated survey of playworkers in England, and provides an invaluable source of quantitative information about the characteristics of the workforce.

This report presents the findings of the third Playwork People survey for the West Midlands. The data is based on the findings of two separate questionnaires: one of playwork employers and one of playwork employees conducted from January to April 2007. In the West Midlands 184 responses were received to the survey of employees and 108 to the survey of employers.

The Playwork People survey aims to provide data and information to underpin and inform the development and understanding of the playwork workforce and training / qualifications provision.

The bullet points below provide a summary of the main findings for the West Midlands.

The Playwork Workforce

- Playwork is a female dominated profession; in the West Midlands 87.9% of the workforce are women.
- 91.4% of playworkers across England describe their ethnic origin as white. The ethnic make-up of the workforce differs considerably by region, and in the West Midlands 91.5% of playworkers are white but there is a higher proportion of Asian and Asian British workers and less black or black British employees in the sector when compared to the national average.
- Over one third (36.1%) of respondents to the employee survey describe themselves as playworkers. 18.0% work as managers and 7.7% as senior playworkers.
- According to employers, approximately 9.3% of all playwork employees are working as volunteers and nearly half (49.1%) of all play settings are run by a voluntary management committee.
- Most playwork jobs are part-time or seasonal and there is a tendency for playworkers to make up a full-time equivalent role by working in more than one playwork job. One in three (27.3%) playworkers in the West Midlands hold more than one playwork job.
- The playwork workforce is predominately part-time, with over half (57.8%) working part-time.
- The average hourly salary reported by playwork employees is £6.60. This is lower than that reported for England as a whole (£7.70) and may in part be due to the different make-up of respondents.
- 8.9% of respondents to the survey had less than one year's service in the sector. 45.2% had less than five years experience.
- Positively, three quarters of respondents to the employee survey (76.5%) said they are "very likely" or "quite likely" to be working in the sector in 2009.
- Two out of four employees (48.4%) would leave the sector because of low pay compared to other industries, while 35.8% would leave for better prospects or career paths in other industries.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

- Working with children was more important to respondents, when choosing their next job, than staying in the play sector. 70.1% stated that working with children is very important compared to 46.4% who said that working in the play sector is very important.

Playwork Organisations

- Playwork settings can generally be termed as micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees. 65.7% of employers stated that they employ ten or less full-time, part-time, paid or unpaid staff.
- The majority of employers run out of school clubs (81.5%) and/or holiday play schemes (61.1%). Over half the employers that run out of school clubs are also running holiday play schemes, providing year round provision. As might be expected, the majority (70.4%) of play provision is located on school premises.
- 40.7% of respondents stated that they work for a private play setting whilst only 23.1% work for an organisation run by a local authority. 28.0% are employed by a voluntary organisation or charity.
- Over three quarters (76.9%) of play organisations rely on income from parents and carers as one of their sources of funding.
- 62.9% of employers described the prospects for their play provision as optimistic, compared to 67.1% in England. Employers described the biggest challenges to their play provision as funding, staff, premises / equipment and government policy.

Skills, Qualifications and Training

- Team working, child protection and maintaining safety are perceived by employers to be the most important skill for the play sector, whilst relatively low importance is given to foreign languages and basic computer / IT skills by employers in the sector.
- Over three quarters (76.9%) of playwork employers thought that the level of skill needed to do playwork jobs is increasing.
- Employers were most likely to say that “new legislation or regulatory requirements” (65.9%) or “government policy, initiatives or new funding” (43.3%) had affected the skills they needed in their workforce over the last three years.
- Nearly half of all playwork employers are experiencing a skills gap in their current workforce (47.7%). This is equivalent to the proportion for England as a whole and worryingly suggests that skills gaps are a significant problem for playwork employers.
- The key skill lacking in the workforce is “Initiative” identified by 56.1% of employers as lacking in their current workforce and ‘Knowledge of playwork values and principles’ which 51.2% of employers stated was lacking in their current workforce.
- The biggest impact skills gaps has on play provision is increased workload for other staff (55.6%). Skills gaps also impacts on nearly half of organisations in the sector through difficulties introducing new working practices (40.0%).
- To counter the impact of skills gaps playwork employers are most likely to provide further training for their workforce (86.7%). Only 8.9% of employers would take no action at all.
- More than four out of five (84.9%) employers identify that skills specific to playwork are lacking in new recruits.
- The majority of respondents (51.8%) hold a level 3 qualification and 80.1% of these level 3 qualifications are in playwork. 18.2% of the playwork workforce hold a level 4 or 5 qualification whilst 24.4% hold a level 2. 5.5% of the sector stated that they hold no qualifications at all.

- For the majority of respondents the highest playwork qualification they hold is a level 3 (32.1%), whilst for 12.0% level 2 is their highest playwork qualification and for 2.7% it's level 4 or above. Over half of employees (53.3%) hold no playwork specific qualification at all. 21.7% of respondents are working towards a Level 3 Diploma in Playwork and 17.4% a NVQ Level 3 in Playwork.
- According to employers, two thirds (66.6%) of all employees received some form of training (including informal in-house training) in the last 12 months.
- The majority of organisations (33.3%) spent between £100 and £499 on training in the past 12 months. Nearly 10% of playwork organisations do not spend anything on training at all.
- In the last 12 months, workers in the playwork sector are most likely to have undertaken training in first aid (79.1%), child protection (67.3%), food hygiene (51.6%) and health and safety (43.1%).
- Just over one third of playworkers (36.7%) received between one and three days training in the last 12 months.
- Overall, one in nine respondents (94.7%) believes that they have received adequate training in order to do their job.
- According to employers a large proportion of training is delivered by external consultants or training providers (69.5%). 49.5% of employers state that training is delivered by dedicated government or local authority team and 34.3% by a further education institution.
- One of the biggest factors limiting the provision of training is the time of day when courses are run. Three quarters (75.7%) employers cited this as a barrier. The cost of training to employers also presents a barrier for 56.3% of employers.

Recruitment and Vacancies

- 254 vacancies were reported in the last 12 months by the 108 employers responding to the Playwork People Survey in the West Midlands. This equates to 23.3% of all employment being vacancies. Over a third (36.6%) of vacancies were described as hard-to-fill, which is an equivalent proportion to England as a whole (38.5%).
- The three most likely reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies are “not enough people interested in this type of job” (57.1% of employers experiencing a hard-to-fill vacancy), “low number of applicants with the required skills” (47.6%) and “job entails unsociable hours” (46.0%).
- The most frequently cited implications of hard-to-fill vacancies are an increased workload for other staff (56.9% of employers) suggesting that other staff take on the duties and workload of those hard-to-fill vacancies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Playwork People survey is SkillsActive's biennial survey of the playwork workforce. It is the largest dedicated survey of playworkers in England, and provides an invaluable source of quantitative information about the characteristics of the workforce.

This report presents the findings of the third Playwork People survey for the West Midlands. It is based on the results of two separate questionnaires: one of playwork employers and one of playwork employees conducted in 2007.

1.1 Background

The Playwork Unit at SkillsActive works to set and maintain standards in training and qualifications for playworkers, and aims to increase the profile of play. To ensure that this remit is met there is a need for robust and reliable data about the characteristics of the playwork workforce. The Playwork People survey has an important role to play in understanding the playwork workforce and its skills and qualifications, particularly where this information is not available from national data sources.

The focus of this report is the findings of Playwork People 3, which builds on the previous phases of research and analyses data from both employees and employers. The questionnaires were developed in the light of previous findings and where possible aimed to produce results that would be comparable to Playwork People 1 and 2 on a national basis. This phase of Playwork People research also aimed to achieve enough responses to provide an analysis of results on a regional basis.

This year's project was publicised extensively through relevant trade press and networks. SkillsActive would like to thank all those that took the time to promote and participate in this year's surveys.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of the Playwork People survey for the West Midlands is to:

Provide data and information to underpin and inform the development and understanding of the playwork workforce and training / qualifications provision.

The specific objectives of Playwork People 3 were to:

- Develop and conduct a survey of playwork employers to profile the workforce, understand recruitment and vacancies, identify workforce skills and skills gaps and assess workforce development and training.
- Develop and conduct a survey of employees in the playwork sector in order to profile the characteristics of the workforce, their skills and qualifications.

- Use the findings as a basis for on-going research and to identify gaps in knowledge for future quantitative or qualitative research projects.
- To provide regional workforce information to update the Sector Skills Agreement Regional Action Plan and to influence regional strategic bodies including funders.

1.3 Methodology

The Playwork People survey consists of two confidential self-completion questionnaires: one for playwork employers and one for playwork employees. These populations were defined as follows:

- **Playwork employees** - all those working in playwork, at any level, including volunteers, the self-employed and those where playwork is not their main job. For example, owners / managers of a setting, play leaders, playworkers, play development workers, supervisors and holiday play scheme workers. More than one employee at a play setting could complete a questionnaire.
- **Playwork employers** - The person responsible for recruitment and managing staff at one or more play settings. For example, the owner or manager of a setting or the play service manager at a local authority. Only one person could complete this questionnaire for each play setting.

Fieldwork was conducted between January 15th to April 27th 2007 by using self-completion questionnaires that were distributed by post, via the internet and email and given out at events. The aim was to reach as many playworkers as possible, across the whole spectrum of playwork settings. There is no single source of contacts for playworkers or playwork employers. As such the survey was reliant on the contact databases of SkillsActive's Regional Centres for Playwork Education and Training and a snowball effect of questionnaires being passed on through networks and at events. As with any self-completion questionnaire there is an element of self-selection where only those who consider themselves to be playworkers or playwork employers and feel that the questionnaire is relevant to them will respond.

Questionnaires were designed and piloted by SkillsActive based on the questionnaires used for Playwork People 2 and fieldwork was conducted with the help of SkillsActive's regional managers for playwork.

1.4 Size and structure of the survey

573 responses were received from playwork employers and 1,295 from playwork employees across England. 108 of these employers and 184 of the employees stated that they work mainly in the West Midlands. This is enough responses to give us a broadly reliable picture of playwork in the West Midlands.

1.5 Reporting

This report presents data from both the survey of employers and employees for the West Midlands (the source of the data is denoted by the reference at the bottom of each table or chart). The findings for the West Midlands have been presented against the results for England as a whole to allow comparison with the national picture.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAYWORK WORKFORCE

2.1 Demographic profile

Playwork is a female dominated profession. Nationally, four out of five respondents (85.9%) are women and the picture is no different in the West Midlands, where an even greater proportion of the workforce is women (87.9%).

Table 2.1(a) Gender

Are you...	Male	Female
West Midlands	12.1%	87.9%
England	14.1%	85.9%

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

In the West Midlands the age profile for playworkers is similar to that for England as a whole with most aged between 25 and 54. When looking at age against gender there are slightly more male playworkers in the 25 to 34 age range than any others and most women are aged between 19 and 24 or over 55.

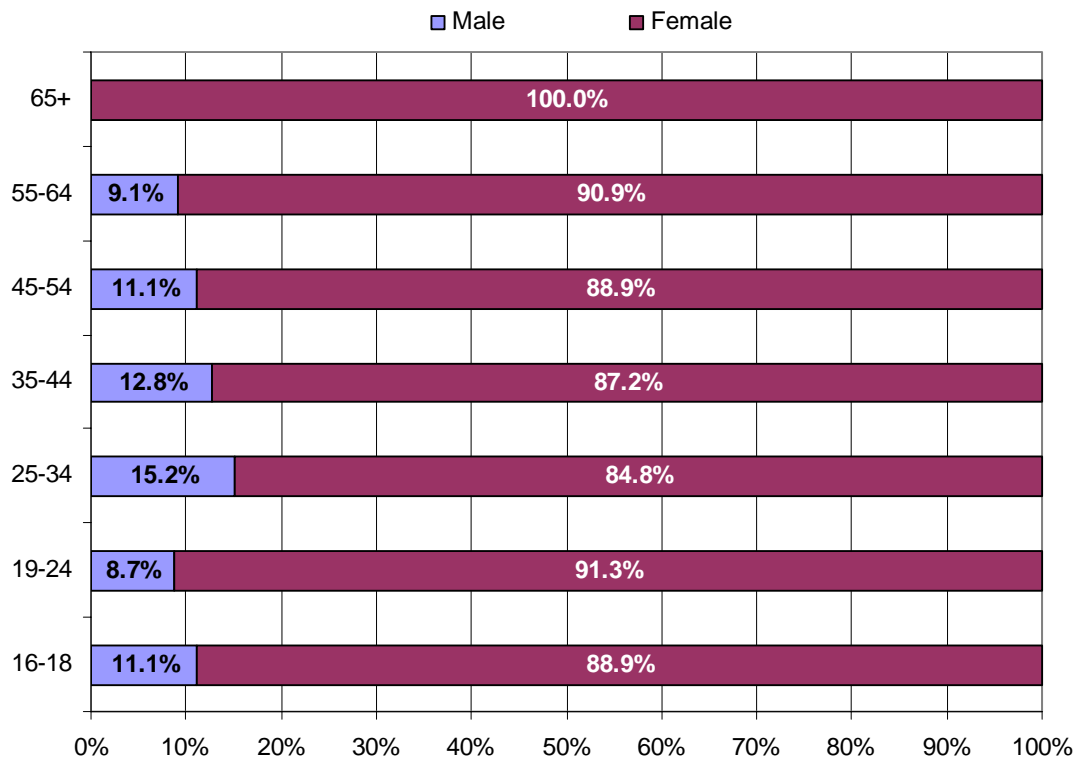
Table 2.1 (b) Age

How old are you?	England	West Midlands
16 - 18 years old	2.8%	4.9%
19 - 24 years old	18.3%	12.6%
25 - 34 years old	23.3%	25.1%
35 - 44 years old	26.0%	26.2%
45 - 54 years old	22.3%	24.6%
55 - 64 years old	6.6%	6.0%
65 years plus	0.6%	0.5%
Total	100%	100%

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 2.1(a) Age bands by gender



Base: Playwork Employees, 2007 West Midlands

Nationally, the playwork workforce is predominantly white. Overall, 91.4% of respondents stated their ethnic origin as white in 2007 (93% in 2005). As would be expected, Playwork People highlights regional differences in the ethnic background of playworkers which usually reflects the ethnic make-up of local populations. In the West Midlands there is the same proportion of white playworkers but among the proportion of ethnic minorities represented there are more Asian and Asian British employees and less black or black British employees in the sector when compared to the national average.

Table 2.1(a) Ethnic background of playworkers

How would you describe your ethnic origin?		Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese	Mixed Race	White	Total
West Midlands	%	4.0%	1.7%	0.6%	2.3%	91.5%	176
	<i>n</i>	7	3	1	4	161	
England	%	2.7%	4.0%	0.4%	1.4%	91.4%	1251
	<i>n</i>	34	50	5	18	1,144	
Unclassified							44
Total							1295

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

2.2 Occupational profile

36.1% of respondents to the employee survey in the West Midlands described themselves as playworkers, 18% work as managers and 7.7% as senior playworkers. Job roles are varied and respondents included workers in the early years sector, who would not normally be associated with playwork, for example childminders who still felt that playwork formed an important part of their role. Small numbers of respondents, who may not ordinarily be considered as part of the playwork sector but who consider themselves to include play in their method of working, defined themselves as leisure workers or uniformed group leaders.

All respondents are directly involved in some way with play and playwork. All respondents reported to be in face-to-face playwork positions or managers or directors of services, owners or proprietors of provision or committee members.

Table 2.2(a) Occupation

Which of the following best describes your main occupation?

	England	WM
	%	%
Playworker	28.8%	36.1%
Manager	18.5%	18.0%
Senior Playworker	8.0%	7.7%
Play Assistant	5.2%	7.1%
Supervisor	6.0%	4.9%
Play Leader	8.0%	3.8%
Childminder	2.8%	3.3%
Play Development Officer	5.1%	3.3%
Owner/Proprietor	2.4%	3.3%
Trainer/Assessor	3.2%	1.6%
Assistant / Deputy Manager	0.8%	1.6%
Holiday Play Scheme Worker	0.7%	1.1%
Chairperson	0.5%	1.1%
Director	0.9%	1.1%
Adventure Playground Worker	0.7%	0.5%
Nursery Nurse	1.6%	0.5%
Committee Member	0.4%	0.5%
Play Ranger	0.8%	0
Hospital Play Specialist	0.4%	0
Other	5.4%	4.4%

Playwork Employees, 2007

2.3 Volunteers

Volunteers are a valuable part of the playwork sector and in many cases are responsible for setting up after school clubs and contributing to their continuation. According to employers in the West Midlands, approximately 9.3% of all playwork employees are working as volunteers (compared to a reported 19.3% in England as a whole). We also know that many playworkers work in a voluntary capacity as well as being paid and may hold both a voluntary role and a paid role at the same or different play settings.

Nearly half of all play settings (49.1%) are run by a voluntary management committee (47.6% in England). At the time of completing the questionnaire 38.9% had a vacancy on their voluntary management committee (36.2% in England).

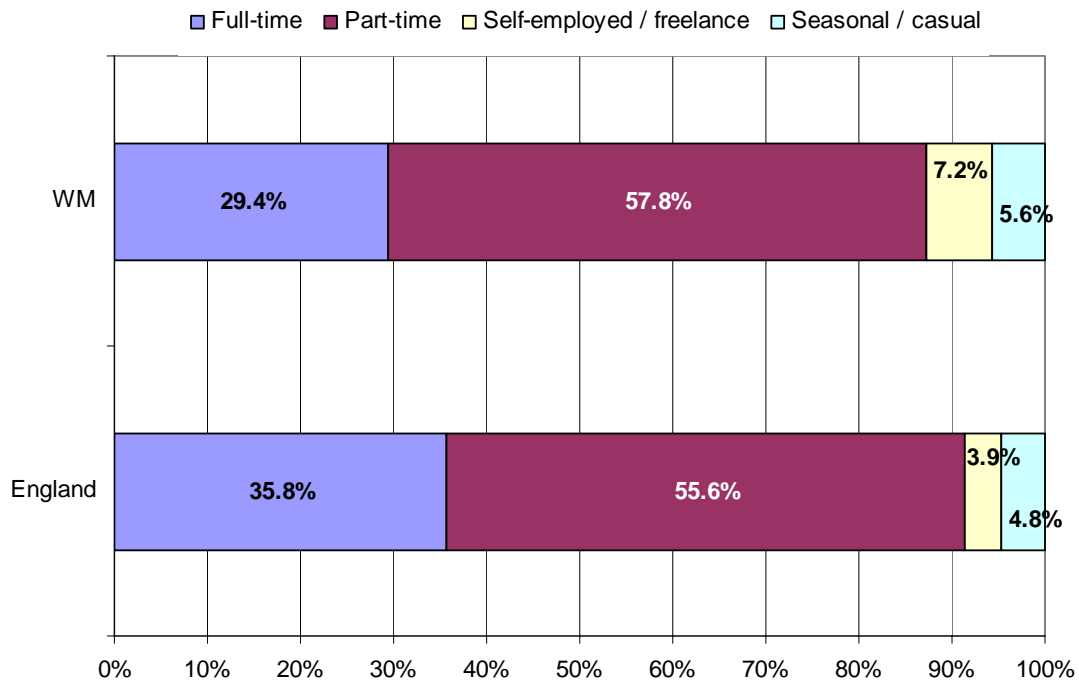
2.4 Work patterns

Employees were asked to give details of their main playwork job when asked about their working patterns. They were asked to judge this based on the hours worked for their main employer rather than on income received. Thus the main playwork job could be paid or voluntary work. Asking about the main job recognised that some playworkers may have jobs in more than one role, setting or type of work.

27.3% playwork employees has more than one playwork job (33.4% in England). Most of the playwork jobs that are available are part-time or seasonal and it is common for playworkers to make up a full-time equivalent job by working in two or more part-time jobs e.g. at a breakfast club in the morning and an after-school club in the afternoon. Or, to have one job which covers term-time and another the school holidays to provide year-round employment e.g. an after school club and a holiday play scheme. Playworkers may also work in other childcare roles as well as their playwork job, for example, at a breakfast club on school premises before school and in the school during the day as a classroom assistant.

Most playworkers work part-time (56% work part-time compared to 36% full-time across England). The West Midlands is no exception with 57.8% part-time workers compared to only 29.4% full-time workers and a larger proportion of self-employed (7.2% in the West Midlands compared to 3.9% in England). It should be noted that the time period over which data collection took place (January to April) would have a significant impact on the proportion of seasonal / casual workers responding as these people are most likely to be employed and therefore responding to questionnaires over the school summer holidays. It is also possible that many respondents working part time at the time of the survey will work full-time during the school holidays as many playworkers work in out of school clubs during term time and holiday play schemes during the school holidays.

Diagram 2.4(a) Mode of employment

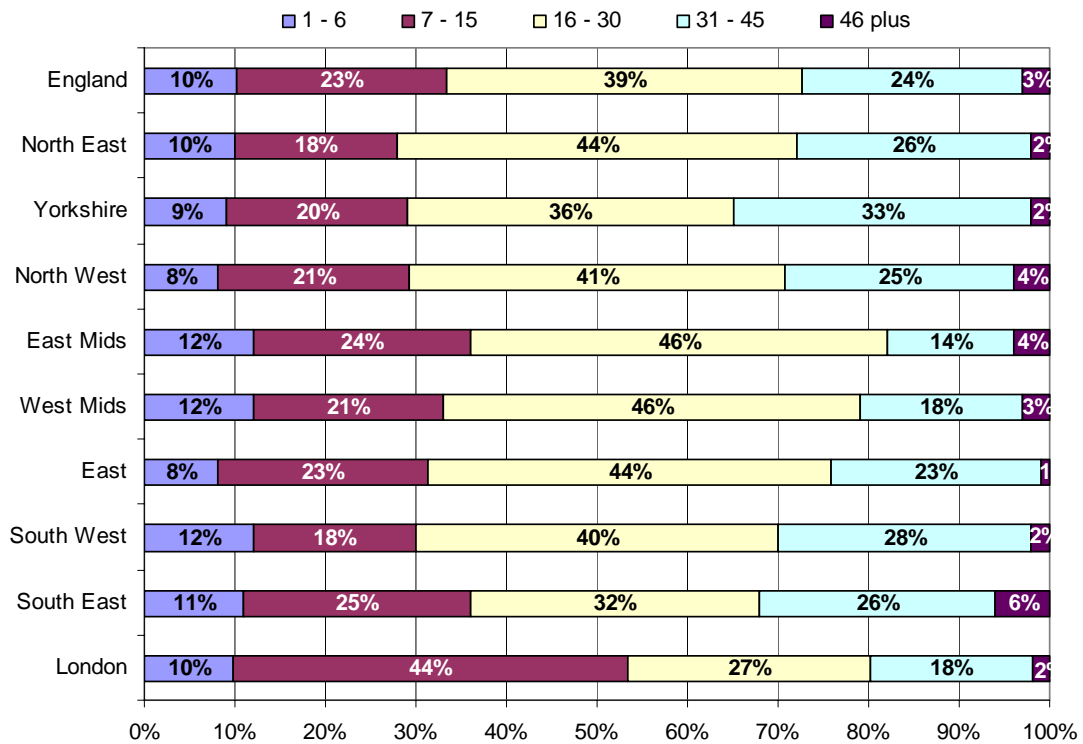


Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

The chart below illustrates the hours worked per week by the playwork workforce, including full-time and part-time employees, the self-employed and volunteers. There are a large proportion of part-time workers in the playwork sector and the average number of hours worked by employees in the sector is lower than the national average for all job types.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 2.4(b) Number of hours per week worked by employees in their main playwork job



Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

Employees, working in paid playwork roles, were asked how much they are paid per hour in their main playwork job. Overall, approximately 60% of respondents (756 playwork employees) answered this question.

The average salary reported by playwork employees in the West Midlands is £6.60 compared to £7.70 per hour in England. This is the lowest reported salary for the playwork sector out of all of the English regions but this may in part reflect the different make up of respondents in the West Midlands. More play assistants replied from the West Midlands than in England as a whole.

Table 2.4(a) Average hourly salary

Region	Average hourly salary (£)
London	£9.70
South West	£8.80
South East	£7.80
Yorkshire and the Humber	£7.80
North East	£7.50
North West	£7.40
East of England	£7.30
East Midlands	£7.00
West Midlands	£6.60
England	£7.70

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

2.5 Employment turnover and retention

Length of employment in the playwork sector in the West Midlands is broadly similar to the picture across England. 8.9% of respondents to the survey of employees in the West Midlands had less than one years service in the sector and 45.2% had less than five years experience. There are more employees with between five and ten years experience in the West Midlands (34.1%) than in England as a whole (27.0%).

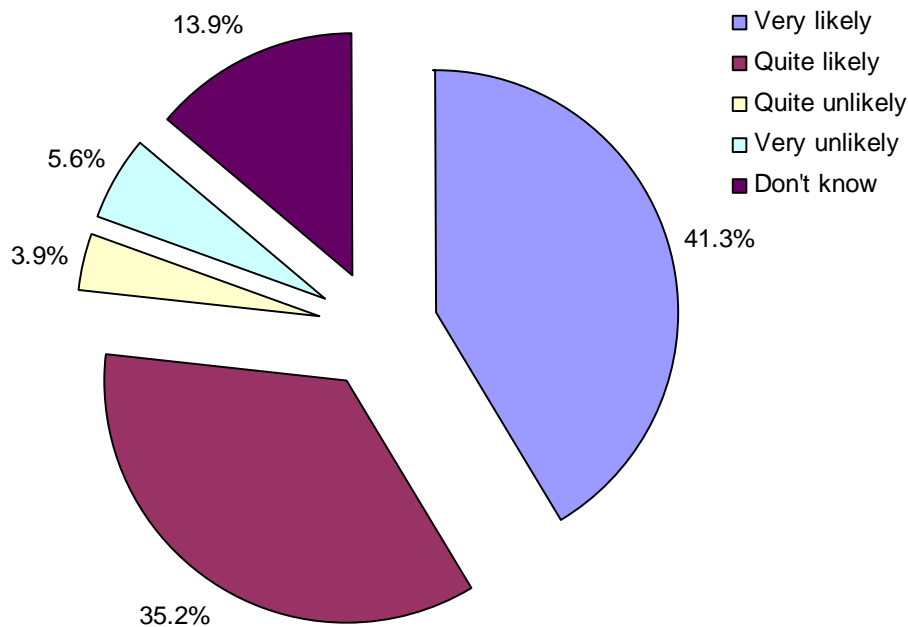
Table 2.5(a) Length of employment in playwork

How many years have you worked in playwork?	England	WM
Less than one year	8.4%	8.9%
1-2 years	13.6%	11.7%
3-5 years	27.9%	24.6%
5-10 years	27.0%	34.1%
10 years plus	23.2%	20.7%

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

Employees in the playwork sector were generally positive in terms of remaining in the sector over the next three years. Over three quarters of respondents in the West Midlands (76.5%) said they are very likely or quite likely to be in the sector in 2009 compared to 77.2% in England as a whole. Only 5.6% said they would be very unlikely to be working in the sector in three years time.

Diagram 2.5(a) How likely are you to be working in the sector in three years time?



Playwork Employees, 2007 West Midlands

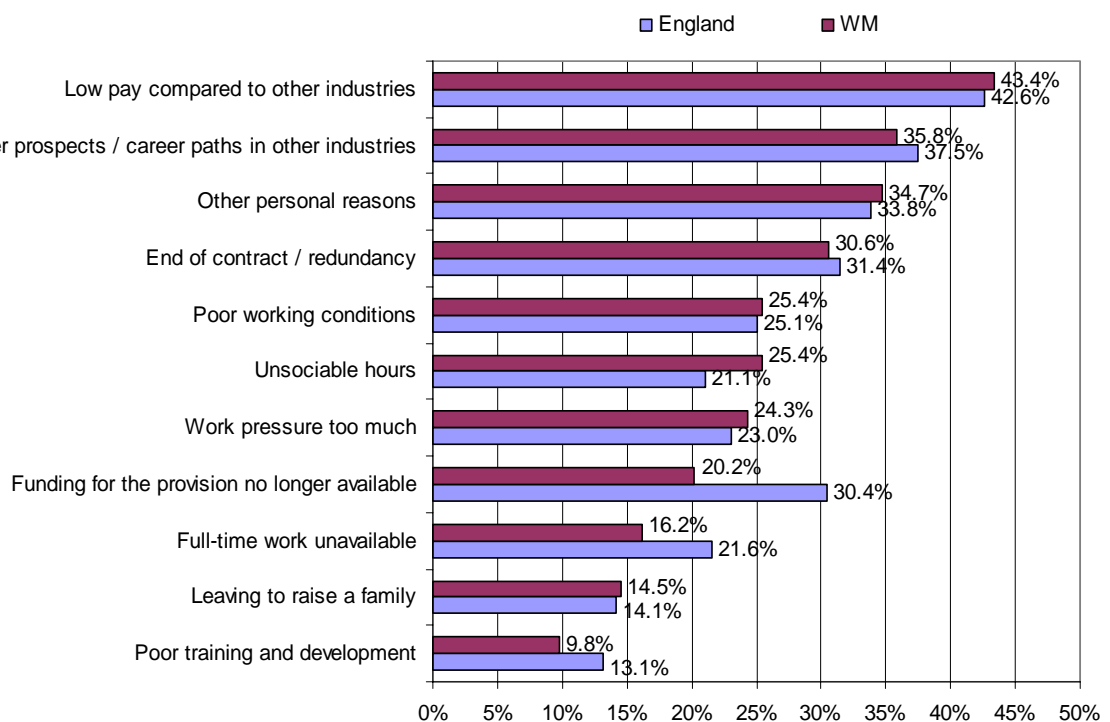
Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Nearly half of employees (48.4%) in the West Midlands would leave the sector because of low pay compared to other industries, while 35.8% would leave for better prospects or career paths in other industries.

A third of employees (30.6%) would leave the sector because of the end of a contract / redundancy and 20.2% because funding for the provision is no longer available. Although funding appears to be less of a problem for the West Midlands than in England as a whole, it is important to note that the structure of the sector where settings or play schemes are dependant on project based funding has a negative affect on employees' perceptions of job security.

Poor training and development is one of the factors least likely to make employees in the region leave the play sector, although it was still mentioned by 9.8% of respondents suggesting that there is still room for improvement in terms of continuing professional development. It should also be noted that this question may be affected by other drivers such as the expectations of respondents who do not expect, or perhaps want, training and development opportunities.

Diagram 2.5(b) What factors, if any, would make you leave the play sector?

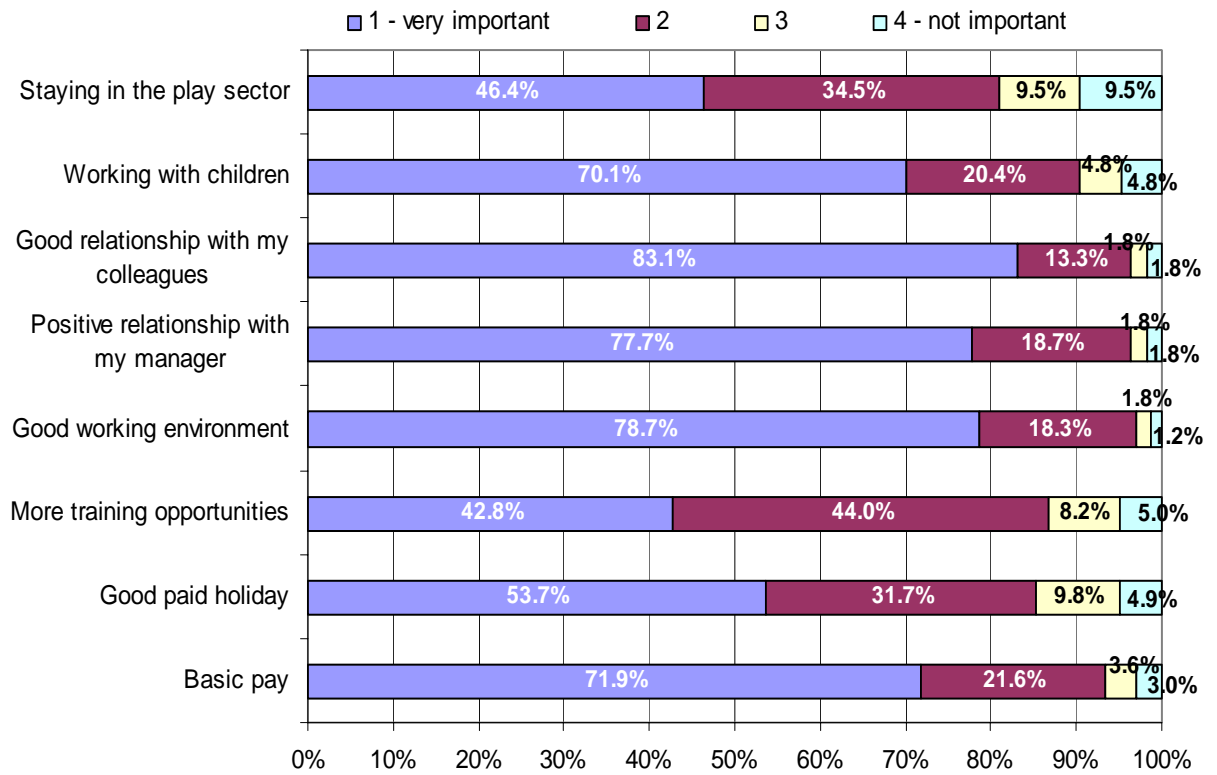


Playwork Employees, 2007

When asked what factors were important to them when it comes to choosing their next job, 83.1% of respondents said a good relationship with my colleagues compared to only 1.8% who attached no importance to this factor at all. Linked to this is a good working environment which came a very close second with 78.7% considering it very important when choosing their next job. Working with children was more important to respondents than staying in the play sector, with 70.1% stating that working with children is very important compared to 46.4% saying working in the play sector is very important.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 2.5(c) How important are the following factors to you in choosing your next job?



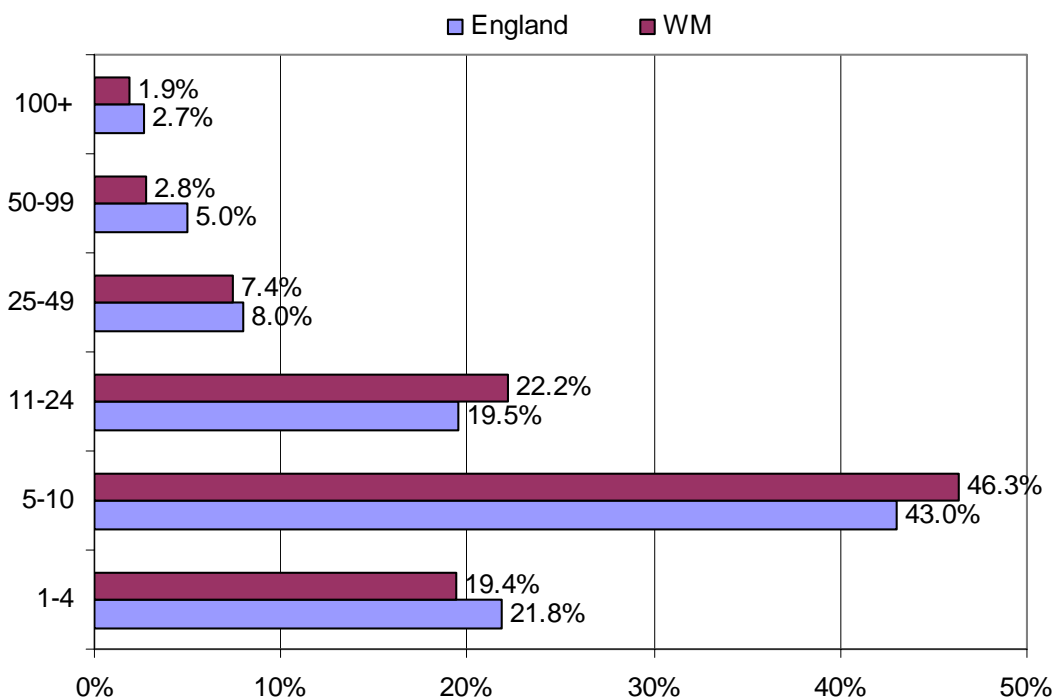
Playwork Employees, 2007 West Midlands

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYWORK ORGANISATIONS

3.1 Size of play provision

Play settings can usually be described as micro-organisations employing 10 or less people. Two thirds of employers (65.7%) in the West Midlands stated that they employ 10 or less full-time, part-time, paid or unpaid staff. There are more play settings in the West Midlands employing between 11 and 24 people and fewer employing between one and four than in England as a whole.

Diagram 3.1(a) Size of organisation

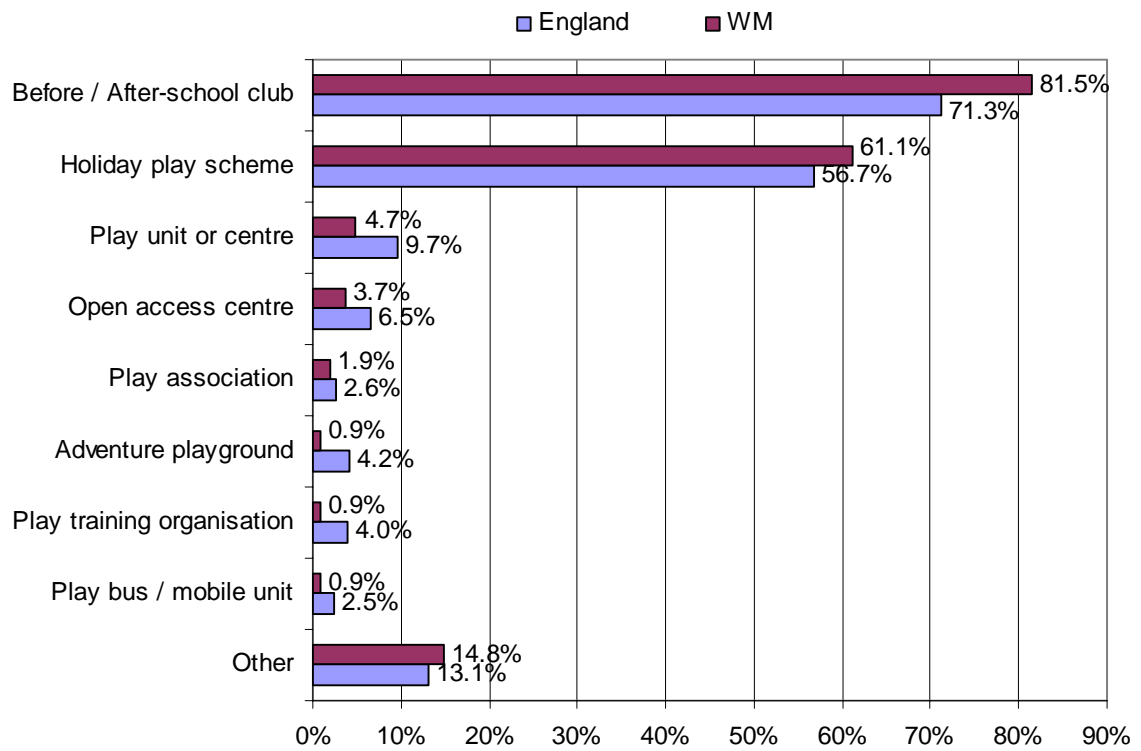


Base: Playwork Employers, 2007

3.2 Type and location of provision

Play happens anywhere and playworkers are employed in a broad range of settings. However most staffed play provision is out of school clubs and / or holiday play schemes, with four out of five play settings in the West Midlands (81.5%) running before / after school clubs and over half (61.1%) holiday play schemes. 57.8% of employers in the West Midlands who run out of school clubs also run holiday play schemes, providing year round provision.

Diagram 3.2(a) Type of play provision run by employers

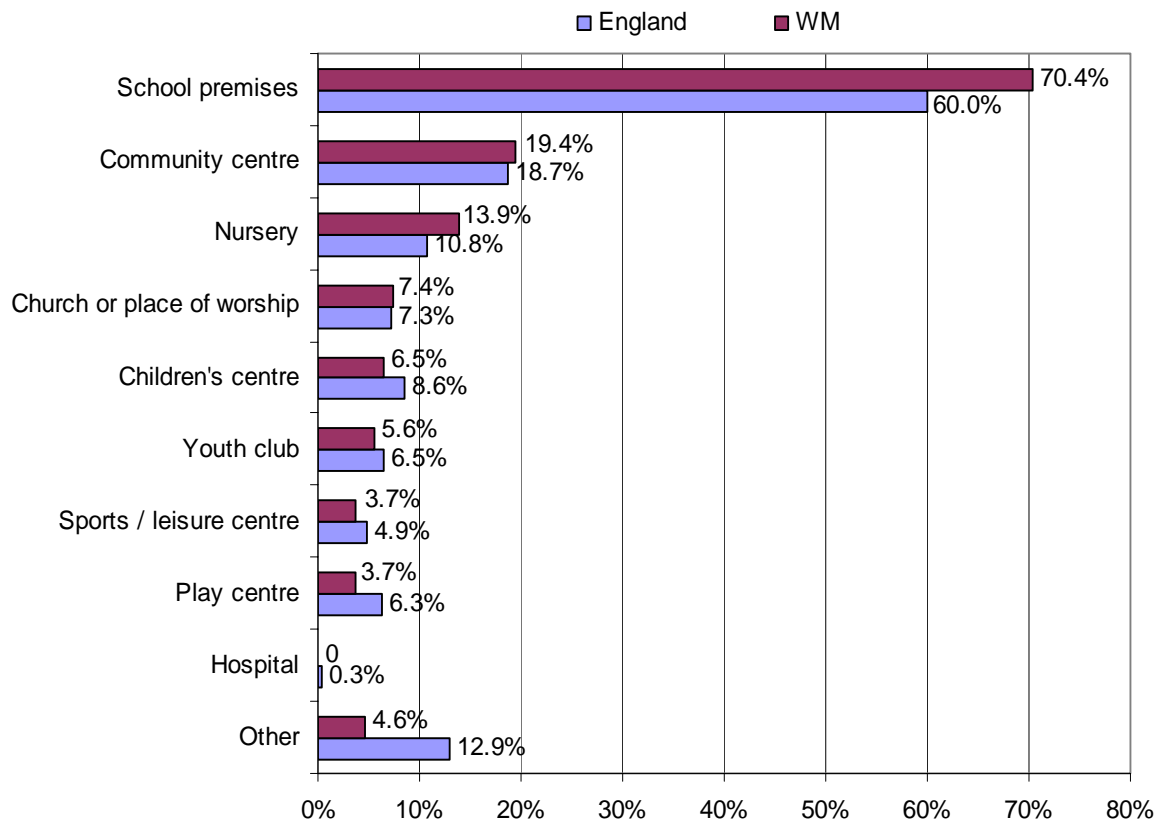


Base: Playwork Employers, 2007

As might be expected from the chart above, the majority of play settings (70.4%) are located on school premises.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 3.2(b) Type of location of play provision



Base: Playwork Employers, 2007

Playworkers in England are fairly evenly spread across the voluntary, public and private sectors. In West Midlands however there are significantly more private play settings (40.7%) than local authority play settings (23.1%).

Table 3.2(a) Type of organisation where employees work

How would you describe the organisation that you work for?

	England %	WM %
Voluntary organisation or charity	34.1%	28.0%
Organisation run by a local authority	30.9%	23.1%
Private business	28.4%	40.7%
Other	7.5%	9.3%

multiple choice, does not sum to 100%

Base: Playwork Employees, 2007

Three quarters of play settings in the West Midlands operate in a town or city (74.1%), whilst under a quarter (17.6%) are run in a village or rural setting and the remainder cover both locations. Compared to England, there are more play settings operating in urban settings.

Table 3.2(b) Type of area where play provision is located

Does your organisation operate in...	England %	WM %
A town or city	66.0%	74.1%
A village or other rural place	23.7%	17.6%
Both	10.3%	8.3%
Total	100%	100%

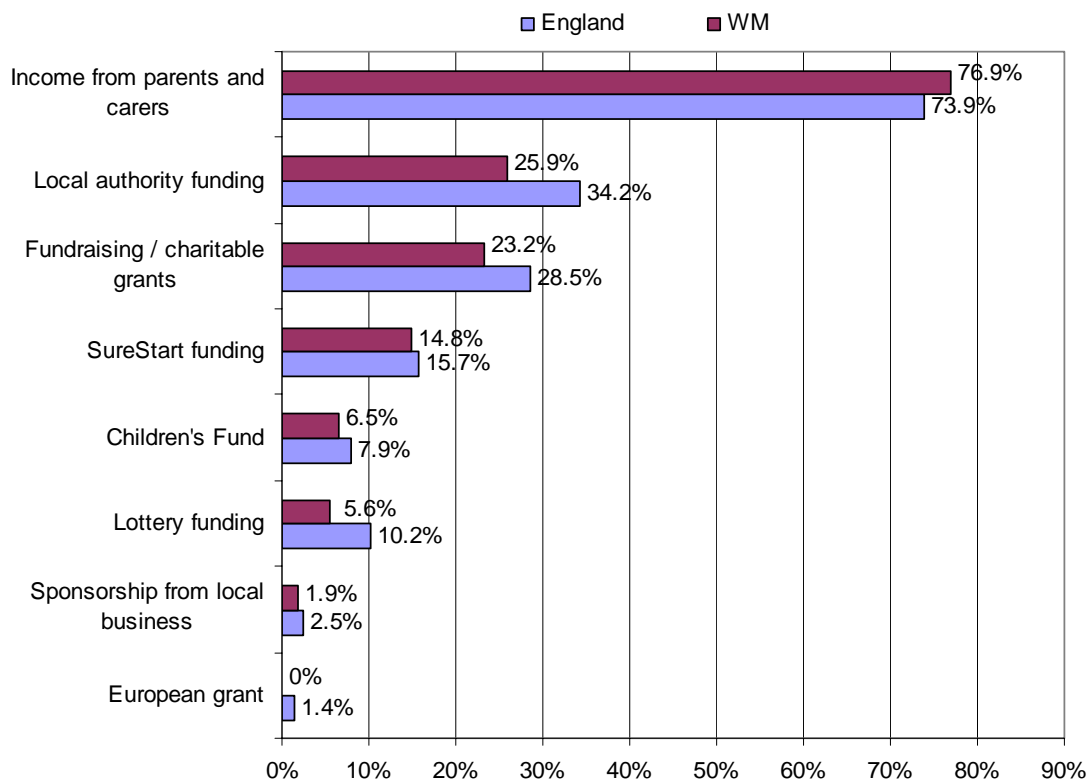
Base: Playwork Employers, 2007

3.3 Funding

Playwork organisations rely on a combination of income sources. Income from parents and carers is often used to supplement funding from other sources. Over three quarters of employers (76.9%) stated that this source of funding had contributed to the financing of their setting, compared to a quarter (25.9%) who receive local authority funding. There are no play settings that are in receipt of a grant from a European fund.

We know that maintaining funding is frequently a challenge for play settings and many are reliant on time specific or project related funding.

Diagram 3.3(a) Funding structure of playwork provision



Playwork Employers, 2007

3.4 Organisation aim or purpose

12.6% of play settings in the West Midlands (17.5% in England) stated that they work especially with children who have disabilities.

Other organisational aims (stated in response to an open ended question) focused around providing quality low-cost childcare, promoting children's play or responding to specific local needs. Although the responses are too varied to collate into reliable statistics, some illustrative quotes are given below as examples:

"To be inclusive settings wherever possible and to offer affordable and stimulating childcare to all parents that wish to use the service".

"To enable parent/carers to return to work or access further training opportunities".

"To provide good quality low cost childcare and play provision throughout the Borough".

"To offer a service which is good quality, easy accessible, safe and fun for children".

3.5 Prospects for play provision

Employers were asked to describe the prospects for their play provision over the next three years. 62.9% of employers described the prospects for their play provision as optimistic, compared to 67.1% in England. Employers described the biggest challenges to their play provision as:

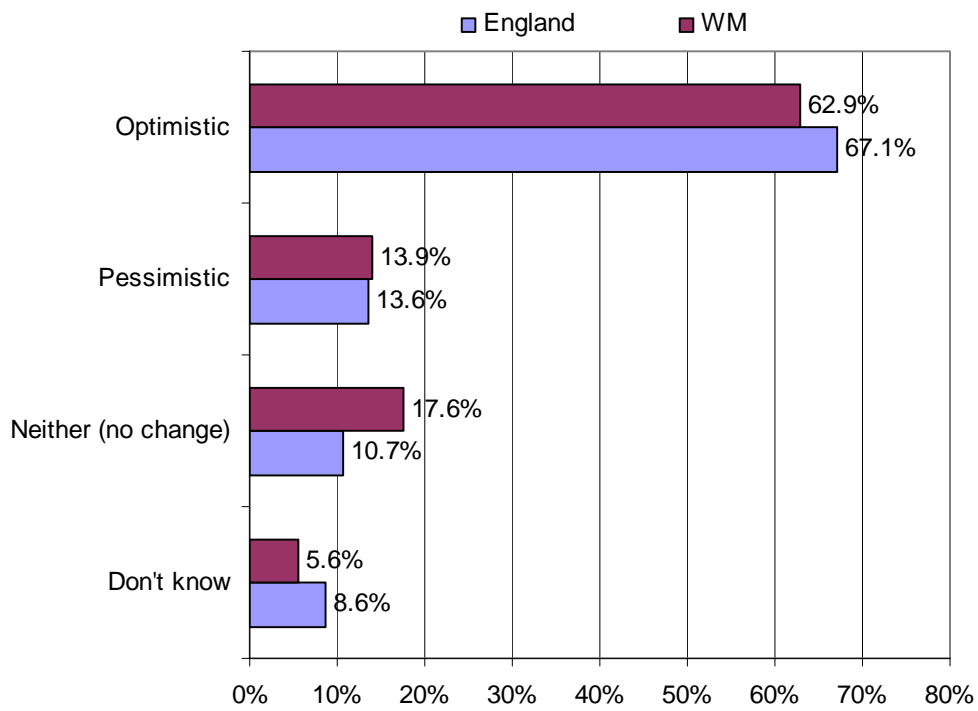
Funding - Respondents described a lack of funding as creating insecurity in terms of the long-term future of their play provision, but also in terms of employment and job security. Key challenges were: maintaining funding, creating sustainability for provision through continued funding and fundraising through applying for grants.

Staff – Respondents have difficulty finding and retaining staff with the appropriate qualifications, at all levels, especially to meet Ofsted standards. Maintaining the number of volunteers in voluntary management committees was also seen as a key challenge in this area.

Premises / equipment - Respondents felt that premises or equipment were going to be a big challenge for them over the next three years. A lot of comments focused on the need to move premises or to renew worn equipment as well as the challenges of inadequate or shared premises.

Government policy is seen as a big challenge over the next three years. Every Child Matters, the Common Core of Skills and Knowledge and the Extended Schools Agenda were mentioned by respondents.

Diagram 3.5(a) Prospects for play provision over the next three years



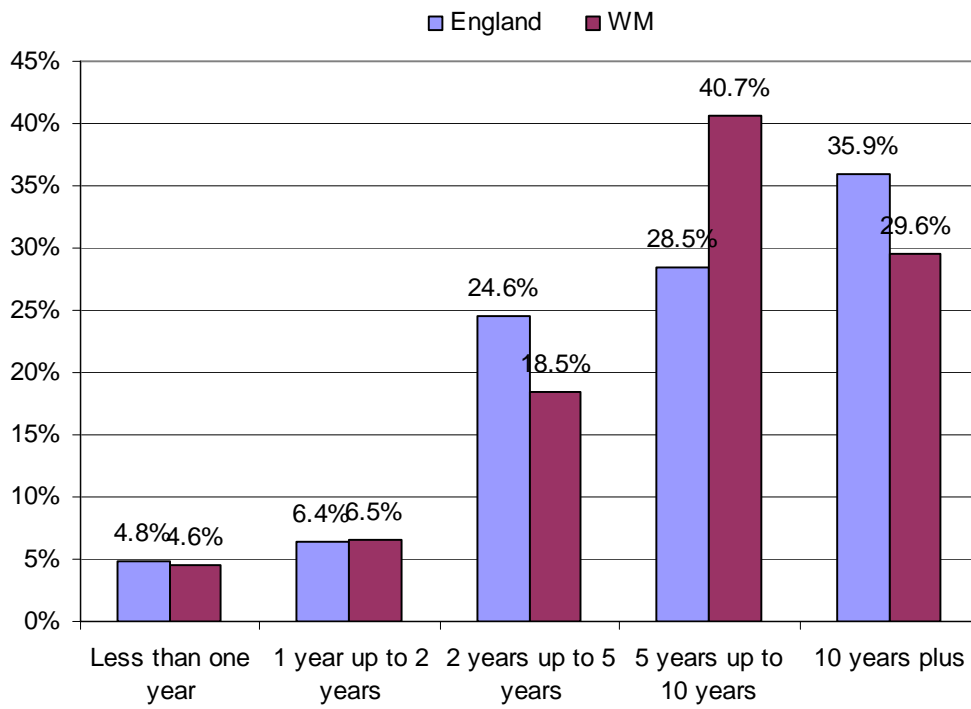
Playwork Employers, 2007

3.6 Sustainability

More play provision in the West Midlands (40.7%) has been established for between five and ten years than in England as a whole (28.5%).

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 3.6(a) Number of years that play provision has been running



Playwork Employers, 2007

4. SKILLS, QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

4.1 Skills

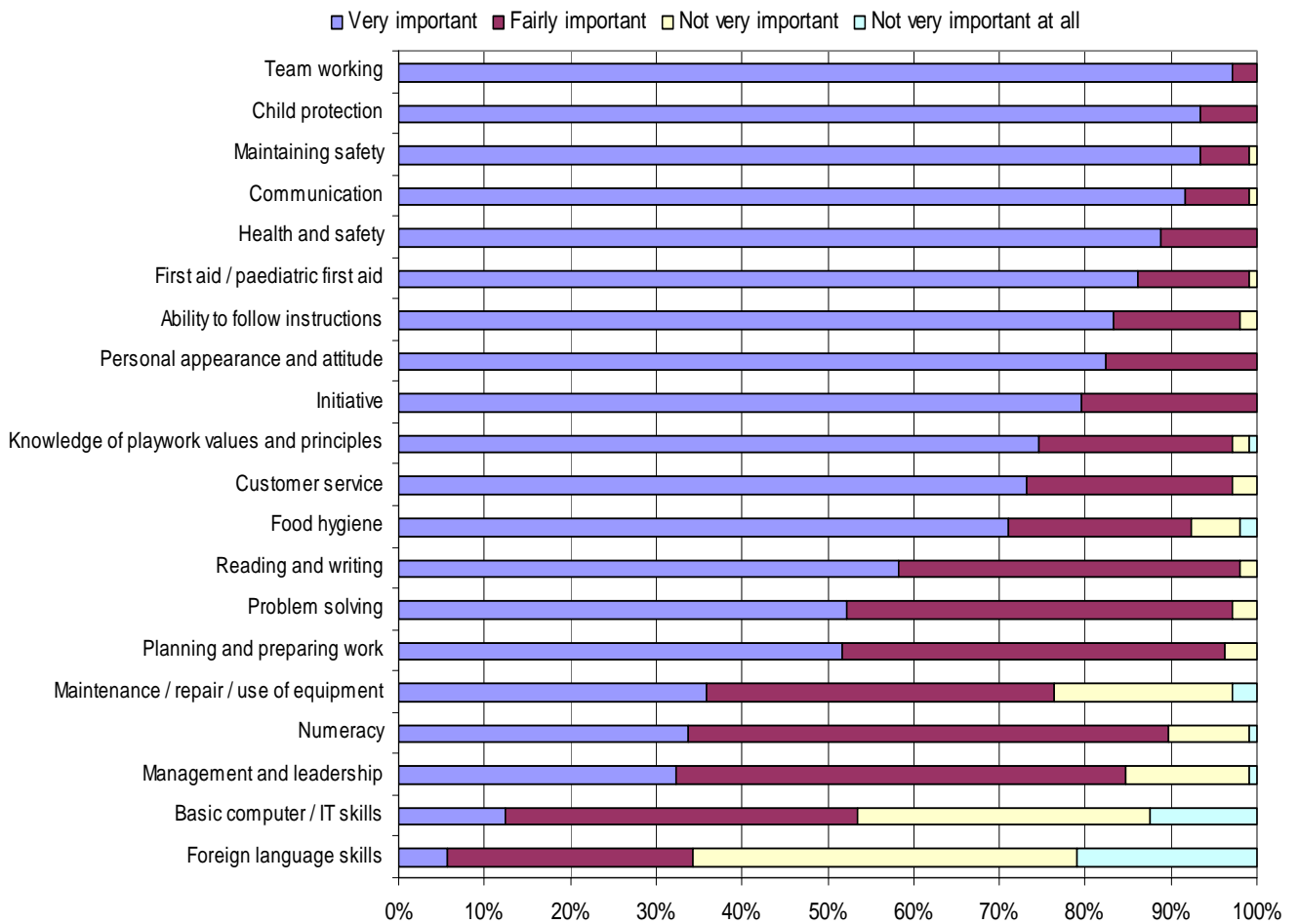
In the West Midlands, team working was perceived by employers to be the most important skill for the play sector. 100% of employers stated that team working is 'very important' or 'fairly important'. As might be expected, child protection and maintaining safety were rated highly with 100% of employers stating that maintaining safety is 'very important' or 'fairly important' and 99.1% rating child protection as 'very important' or 'fairly important' to their setting. The need to work as part of a team, communicate with parents, children and funders and maintain safety appears to be more important skills in the sector than more academic skills such as reading, writing and numeracy.

As might be expected, child protection and health and safety are accepted as being very important in the sector. Arguably, these two skills, as well as maintaining safety, are closely linked and require some degree of formal training and are obviously important in a sector that has to meet regulatory requirements for the care of children.

Relatively low importance is given to foreign languages and basic computer / IT skills by employers in the sector. 64.5% of employers said that foreign language skills were 'not very important' or 'not very important at all', whilst 46.2% feel that basic computer skills are 'not very important' or 'not very important at all'. The demand for foreign language skills differs regionally, probably as a consequence of the make-up of the local community, and the importance attached to foreign language skills by employers in the West Midlands is slightly higher than the average for England as a whole. The importance of particular skills is also likely to differ depending on occupation and computer / IT skills, for example, may be more highly demanded in management and supervisory roles for marketing, fundraising and budget control, rather than face-to-face playwork roles.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 4.1(a) Importance of specific skills to playwork employers



Playwork Employers, 2007 West Midlands

Table 4.1(a) Importance of specific skills to playwork employers

Thinking of your playwork staff, how important are the following skills?

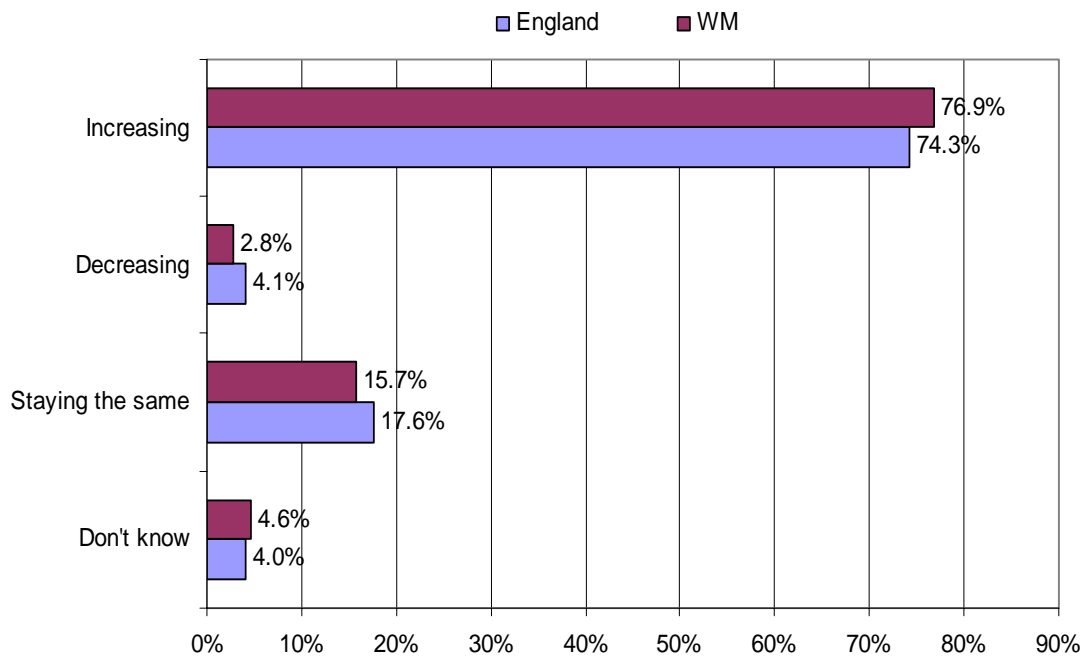
	Very important %	Fairly important %	Not very important %	Not very important at all %
Team working	97.2%	2.8%	0	0
Maintaining safety	93.5%	5.6%	0.9%	0
Child protection	93.5%	6.5%	0	0
Communication	91.7%	7.4%	0.9%	0
Health and safety	88.8%	11.2%	0	0
First aid / paediatric first aid	86.1%	12.9%	0.9%	0
Ability to follow instructions	83.3%	14.8%	1.9%	0
Personal appearance and attitude	82.4%	17.6%	0	0
Initiative	79.6%	20.4%	0	0
Knowledge of playwork values and principles	74.5%	22.6%	1.9%	0.9%
Customer service	73.2%	24.1%	2.8%	0
Food hygiene	70.4%	21.3%	5.6%	1.9%
Reading and writing	58.3%	39.8%	1.9%	0
Problem solving	52.3%	44.9%	2.8%	0
Planning and preparing work	51.9%	44.4%	3.7%	0
Maintenance / repair / use of equipment	35.9%	40.6%	20.8%	2.8%
Numeracy	33.7%	56.1%	9.4%	0.9%
Management and leadership	32.4%	52.4%	14.3%	0.9%
Basic computer / IT skills	12.3%	40.6%	33.9%	12.3%
Foreign language skills	5.6%	28.0%	43.9%	20.6%

Base: Playwork Employers, 2007 West Midlands

In the West Midlands, over three quarters (76.9%) of playwork employers thought that the level of skill needed to do playwork jobs is increasing (74.3% in England). Two in three (65.9%) employers who believe that the level of skill needed in their workforce is increasing said that new legislation or regulatory requirements had impacted on the level of skill needed in the last three years.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 4.1(b) Playwork employers view on the level of skill needed in the playwork workforce



Playwork Employers, 2007

Employers were most likely to say that “new legislation or regulatory requirements” or “government policy, initiatives or new funding” had affected the skills that they need in their workforce over the last three years. This perhaps points towards recent changes in the sector and the impact of the extended schools agenda and Every Child Matters.

The 2007 employer survey also allows us to measure the impact of short term or project based funding on play settings and see the affect it has on skills, with two out of five (39.2%) employers stating that the need to generate their own funding has affected the skills employers need over the last three years. This factor has a big impact on all types of play setting, with play units or centres and play training organisations stating that they are the most affected. ‘New legislation or regulatory requirements’ appears to have the biggest impact on holiday play schemes, while ‘government policy / initiatives / new funding’ and ‘the expectations of children parents / carers’ appear to affect the skills needs of adventure playgrounds the most.

Table 4.1(a) Factors affecting employers skill needs in the past three years

Over the last three years (or for the period you have been running, if less than three years), have any of the following affected the skills you need?

	England %	WM %
New legislation or regulatory requirements	64.3%	65.9%
Government policy / initiatives / new funding	39.5%	43.3%
The need to generate our own funding	36.7%	39.2%
The expectations of children and parents / carers	32.3%	34.0%
Insurance / codes of practice / warranty issues	13.6%	16.5%
Difficulties meeting required quality standards	12.1%	14.4%
The addition of new facilities the last 2-3 years	13.4%	11.3%
New IT facilities	9.6%	11.3%
Skills needs have not really changed	8.3%	10.3%

Playwork Employers, 2007

4.2 Skills gaps

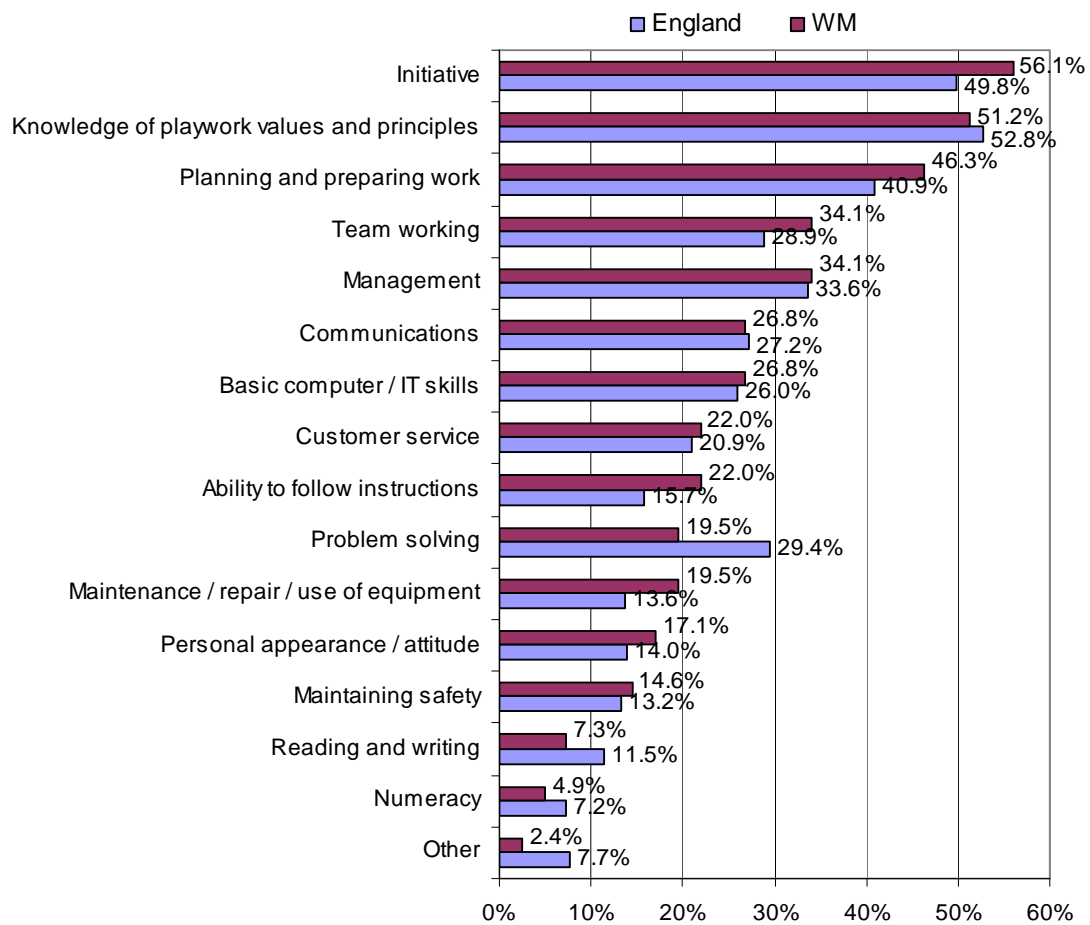
Skills gaps exist when members of the existing workforce are thought to have lower skills than are necessary to meet business or industry objectives, in other words when employers regard some of their staff as not being fully proficient to meet the requirements of their job.

Nearly half of all playwork employers in the West Midlands are experiencing a skills gap in their current workforce (47.7%). This is equivalent to the proportion for England as a whole and suggests that skills gaps are a significant problem for playwork employers in the region.

These respondents identified a spread of skills lacking in their organisations, and key to this is 'Initiative' which 56.1% of employers stated was lacking in their current workforce and 'Knowledge of playwork values and principles' stated by 51.2% of employers. Planning and preparing work (46.3%) and team working (34.1%) skills were other key skills found lacking in the current workforce. Both of these skills are rated as being of high importance to employers in their workforce.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

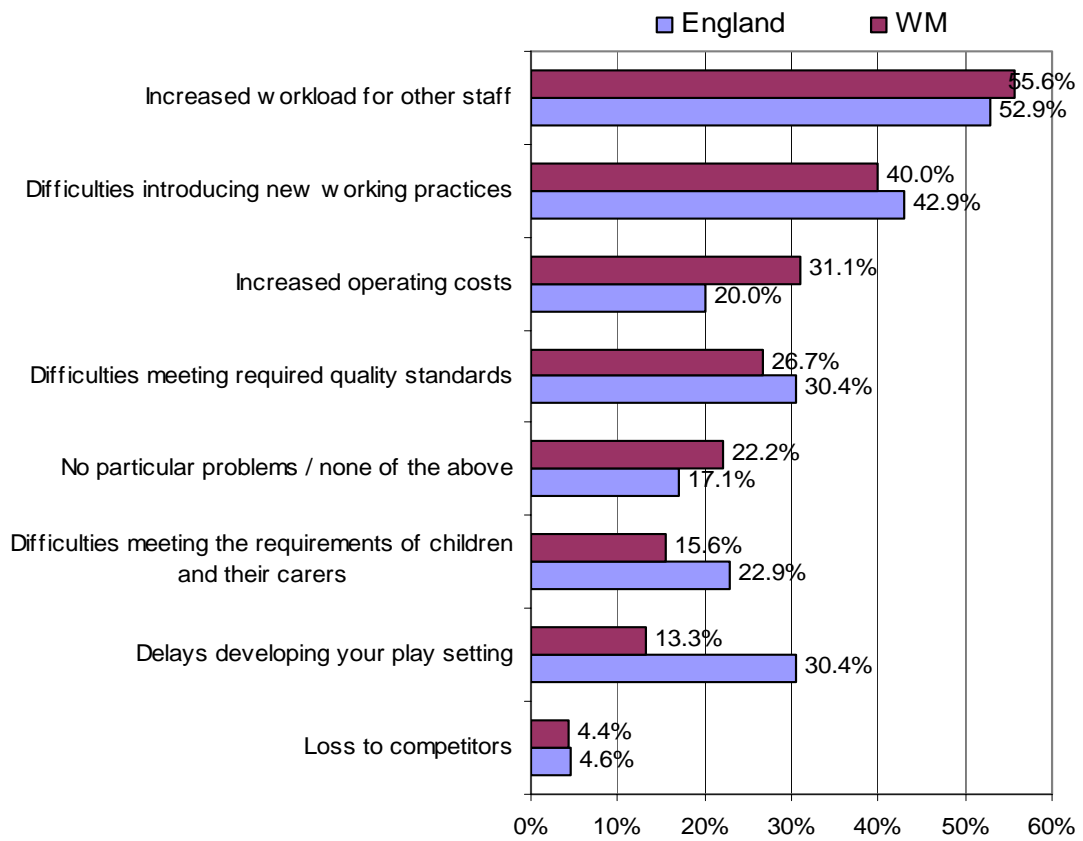
Diagram 4.2(a) Skills gaps experienced



Playwork Employers, 2007

The biggest impact of skills gaps on play provision in the West Midlands, as in England as a whole, is increased workload for other staff (55.6%). Skills gaps also impact on two out of five organisations through difficulties introducing new working practices (40.0%).

Diagram 4.2(b) Affect of skills gaps on organisations over the last three years

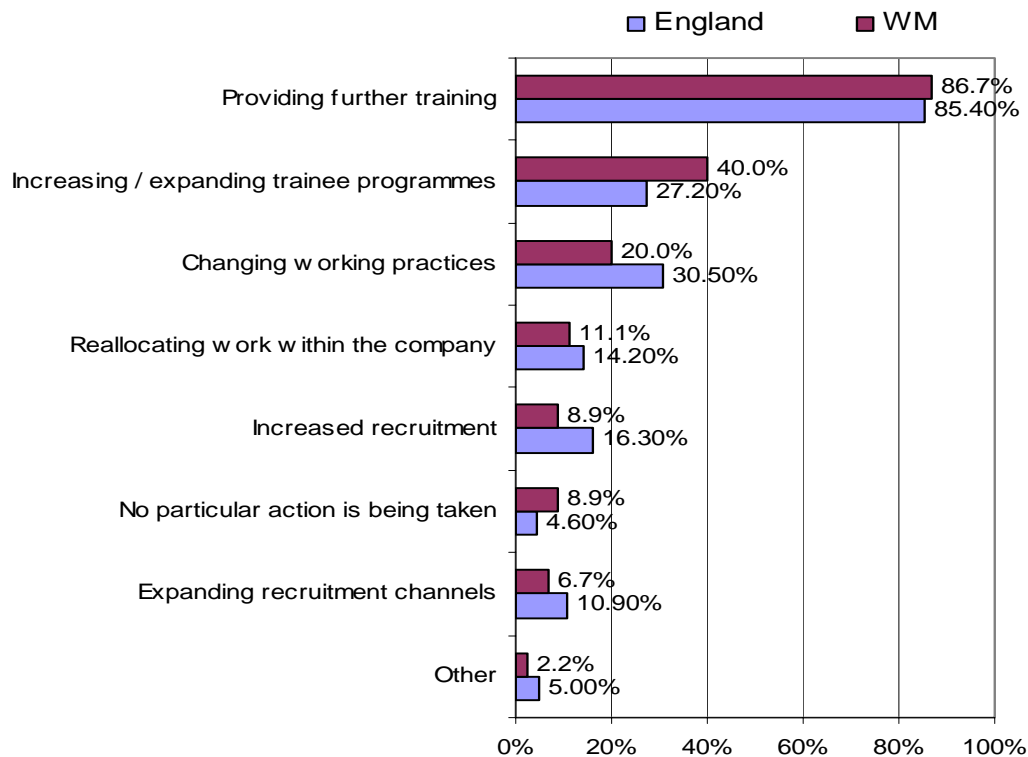


Playwork Employers, 2007

To counter the impact of skills gaps playwork employers are most likely to provide further training for their workforce (86.7%). Only 8.9% of employers would take no action at all.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 4.2(c) Action taken by playwork organisations to overcome skills gaps



Playwork Employers, 2007

Research shows that although new recruits are skilled, often they do not have the skills required for the playwork jobs they are applying for. This is often because the qualifications they do have are not specific to playwork. Notably, four out of five employers (84.9%) find that skills specific to playwork are lacking in new recruits.

Table 4.2(a) Types of skills employers have found lacking when recruiting

When recruiting for your play provision, what skills have you found lacking?	England %	WM %
Skills specific to playwork	82.0%	84.9%
Skills specific to your setting	19.6%	18.6%
Generic skills like team working, communications or numeracy	25.6%	33.7%

Playwork Employers, 2007

Where employers had detailed “other specific skills required” most talked about a lack of level 3 qualified playwork staff available to meet the needs of their setting and wanting to see initiative, energy and enthusiasm, in part-time staff. Other skills mentioned were specialist or specific to the setting, for example:

“Hard to find level 2/3 play workers”.

“Lack of knowledge of Ofsted requirements/standards. Staff did not meet my high expectations”.

“Properly qualified staff hard to come by”.

“Ability to communicate and play with younger and older children in the same area”.

“Common sense, initiative, enthusiasm”.

“Because the posts are part time (maybe) a lack of drive and enthusiasm”.

“Willingness to undertake NVQ programmes/skills/qualifications for a part time job.”.

4.3 Qualifications

Respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of qualification which they hold (whether a playwork qualification or any qualification). The majority of respondents in the West Midlands, as in England, hold a level 3 qualification and 80.1% of these level 3 qualifications are in playwork. A smaller proportion holds a level 4 or above qualification (18.2%) than across England as a whole whilst 24.4% holds a level 2. 5.5% of the sector stated that they hold no qualifications at all.

Table 4.3(a) Highest level of education

What is your HIGHEST level of education?		
	WM	England
Level 2	24.4%	20.3%
Level 3	51.8%	46.0%
Level 4	15.2%	26.7%
Level 5 or above	3.0%	4.3%
None	5.5%	2.8%
Total	100%	100%

Playwork Employees, 2007

There are a range of nationally recognised qualifications in playwork, including taught playwork courses and work-based learning. Respondents were asked to choose from a list of playwork qualifications which ones they currently hold and which ones they are working towards. Respondents could indicate all those playwork qualifications that they hold, not just the highest. Most respondents currently hold or are working towards a NVQ Level 3 in Playwork or a Level 3 Diploma in Playwork.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Table 4.3(b) Playwork qualifications currently held and being worked towards

What qualifications do you have in PLAYWORK or are you currently working towards?

	Currently hold		Working towards	
	WM	England	WM	England
NVQ Level 2 in Playwork	19.8%	25.6%	21.7%	16.2%
Level 2 Certificate in Playwork	17.4%	20.8%	15.2%	10.9%
Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Playwork Practice	0	1.1%	0	0.6%
Level 2 Diploma in Playwork	2.3%	2.6%	0	0.6%
NVQ Level 3 in Playwork	29.1%	34.3%	17.4%	31.6%
Level 3 Certificate in Playwork	4.7%	7.5%	6.5%	7.5%
Level 3 Diploma in Playwork	24.4%	14.1%	21.7%	13.1%
Level 3 Diploma in Supporting Playwork Practice	0	0.8%	2.2%	0.6%
Level 3 Award in Playwork	2.3%	2.3%	0	1.9%
Level 3 Certificate of Professional Development in Work with Children and Young People	3.5%	2.4%	4.3%	0.6%
Level 3 Certificate in Work with Children (APEL)	1.2%	1.0%	0	0
Level 3 Award in Playwork for Early Years and Child Care Workers	5.8%	4.1%	4.3%	2.2%
Level 3 Award in Early Years and Child Care for Playworkers	7.0%	3.9%	0	2.2%
NVQ Level 4 in Playwork	1.2%	1.4%	2.2%	3.1%
NVQ Level 4 Early Years, Care and Education	3.5%	3.4%	0	4.4%
Playwork Foundation Degree	1.2%	2.3%	6.5%	6.3%
BA Honours Playwork	0	3.4%	0	4.7%

Playwork Employees, 2007

Playwork qualifications range from level 2 on the National Qualifications Framework up to level 4 and beyond. The table above has been used to calculate the highest level of playwork qualification held by respondents. For the majority of respondents the highest playwork qualification they hold is a level 3 (32.1%), whilst for 12.0% level 2 is their highest playwork qualification and for 2.7% it's level 4 or above. Over half of employees (53.3%) hold no playwork specific qualification at all.

Table 4.3(c) Highest level of playwork specific qualification held

Highest Playwork Qualification	England	WM%
	%	%
Level 2 playwork qualification	13.3%	12.0%
Level 3 playwork qualification	29.6%	32.1%
Level 4 or above, playwork qualification	4.7%	2.7%
No playwork qualification	52.4%	53.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Playwork Employees, 2007

In an open ended question respondents were asked if they had any other qualifications which they considered to be relevant to their job. Ten or more respondents said they held the following:

- Diploma in Childcare and Education
- PGCE or teaching degree
- Diploma in Pre-School Practice
- NNEB (diploma in nursery nursing).

4.4 Training

According to employers in the West Midlands, 66.6% of all employees received some form of training (including informal in-house training) in the last 12 months.

Nearly 10% of playwork organisations do not spend anything on training, which has obvious implications for the skills and professional development of their workforce (unless these organisations are accessing free training). The majority of organisations in the West Midlands (33.3%) spent between £100 and £499 on training in the past 12 months.

Table 4.4(a) Amount spent by playwork organisations on training in the last 12 months

	England	WM
	%	%
Nothing	9.6%	7.6%
Under £100	14.2%	19.0%
£100 - £499	28.0%	33.3%
£500 - £999	11.6%	15.2%
£1,000 - £4,999	13.5%	8.6%
£5,000 - £9,999	2.8%	1.9%
Over £10,000	2.2%	0
Don't know	18.1%	14.3%

Playwork Employers, 2007

In the last 12 months, workers in the playwork sector are most likely to have undertaken training in first aid, child protection, food hygiene and health and safety.

Table 4.4(b) Main types of training undertaken by playworkers in the last 12 months

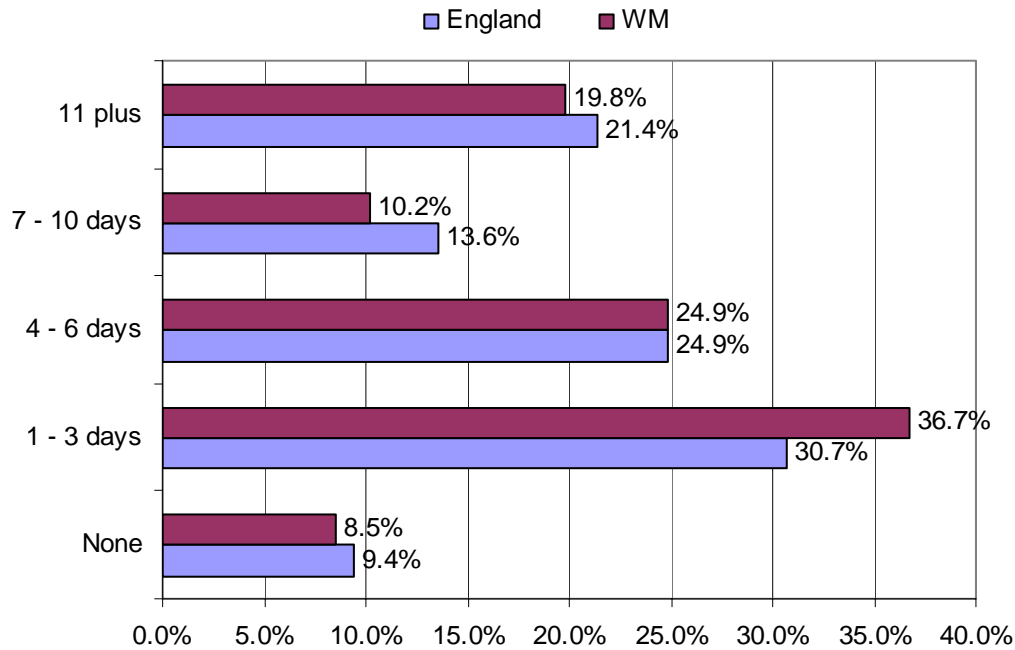
Type of training	WM	England
First Aid/Paediatric First Aid	79.1%	78.3%
Child Protection	67.3%	73.4%
Food Hygiene	51.6%	47.6%
Health and Safety	43.1%	46.6%

Playwork Employees, 2007

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Most playworkers received between one and three days training in the last 12 months. Play assistants were least likely to have received any training in the last 12 months but this may be because it is an entry level position and they are yet to receive training.

Diagram 4.4(a) Number of training and continuing professional development days undertaken in the last 12 months



Playwork Employees, 2007

Respondents were asked whether they thought that they had received adequate training in order to do their job. 100% of volunteers and 100% of those working in a voluntary capacity as well as being paid believe that they have.

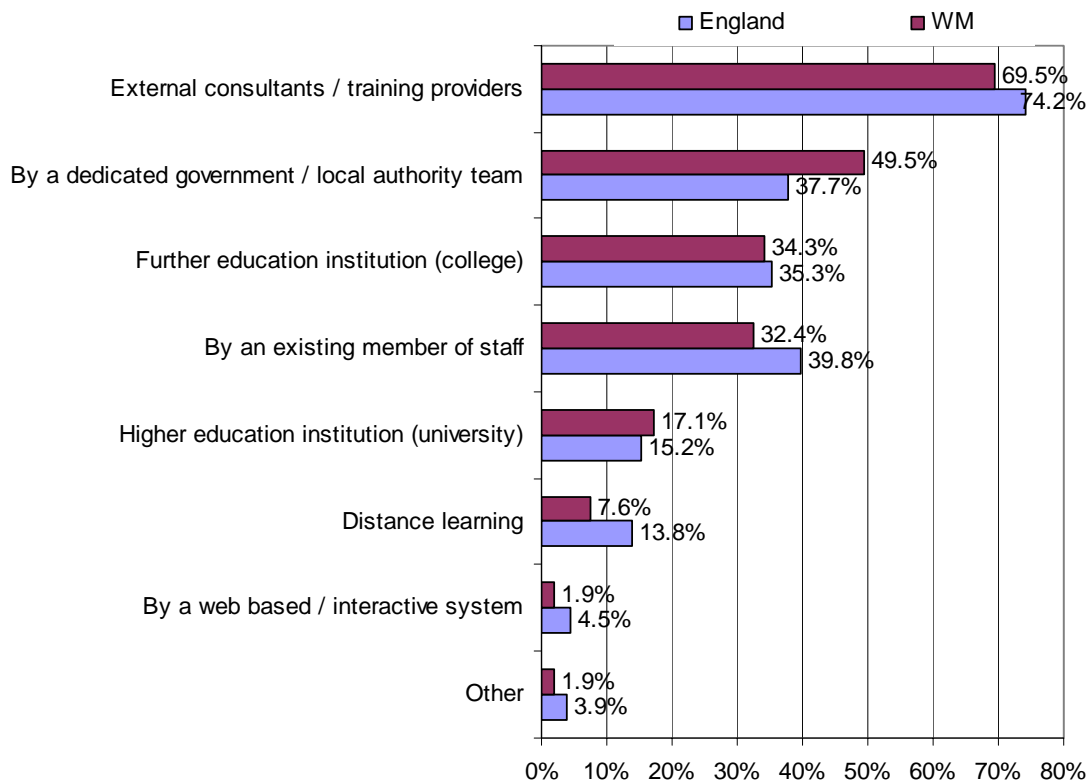
Table 4.4(c) Perception of adequate training received by job type

Overall do you consider that you have been given adequate training to do your job?				
	Paid worker	Volunteer	Both	Total
Yes	94.2%	100%	100%	94.7%
No	5.8%	0	0	5.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Playwork Employees, 2007 West Midlands

According to employers a large proportion of training is delivered by external consultants or training providers (69.5%). Nearly half (49.5%) is delivered by a dedicated government or local authority team and 34.3% by a further education institution.

Diagram 4.4(b) Methods of training delivery

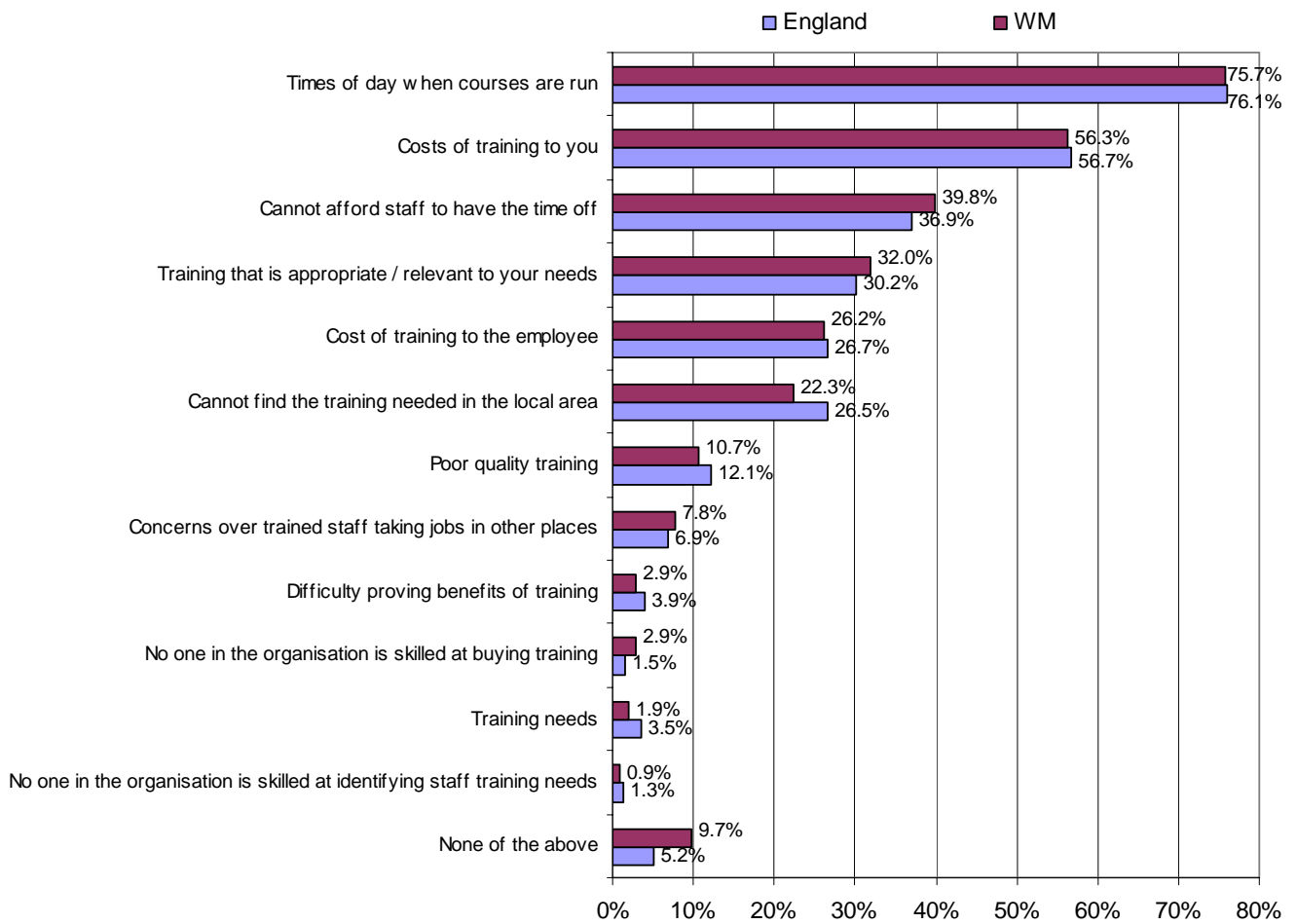


Playwork Employers 2007

One of the biggest factors limiting the provision of training is the time of day when courses are run. Over three quarters (75.7%) of employers cited this factor as a barrier. Many playworkers work part-time around family commitments and as a consequence find training courses difficult to attend. They often mean an additional time commitment and as play settings are generally micro-businesses employers have difficulty in giving members of staff time off to attend training during their normal working hours and still meet statutory staff / child ratios. The cost of training to employers also presents a barrier for 56.3% of employers. Voluntary play organisations or charities are most likely to find the cost of training is a barrier whilst private businesses are most likely to find the times of day when courses are run a barrier.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

Diagram 4.4(c) Barriers limiting the amount of training employers provide for staff



Playwork Employees, 2007

5. RECRUITMENT AND VACANCIES

5.1 Vacancies

In total 254 vacancies were reported in the last 12 months by the 108 employers responding to the Playwork People Survey 2007 (Employers) in the West Midlands. This equates to 23.3% of all employment being vacancies, a smaller proportion than in England as a whole (34.8%). Over one third (36.6%) of vacancies were described by employers as hard-to-fill, suggesting that hard-to-fill vacancies are a significant problem for employers in the West Midlands.

Table 5.1(a) Vacancies and hard to fill vacancies

	England	WM
Vacancies as a percentage of all employment	34.8%	23.3%
Hard to fill vacancies as a percentage of all vacancies	38.5%	36.6%
Hard to fill vacancies as a percentage of all employment	13.4%	8.5%

Playwork Employers, 2007

5.2 Skills shortages

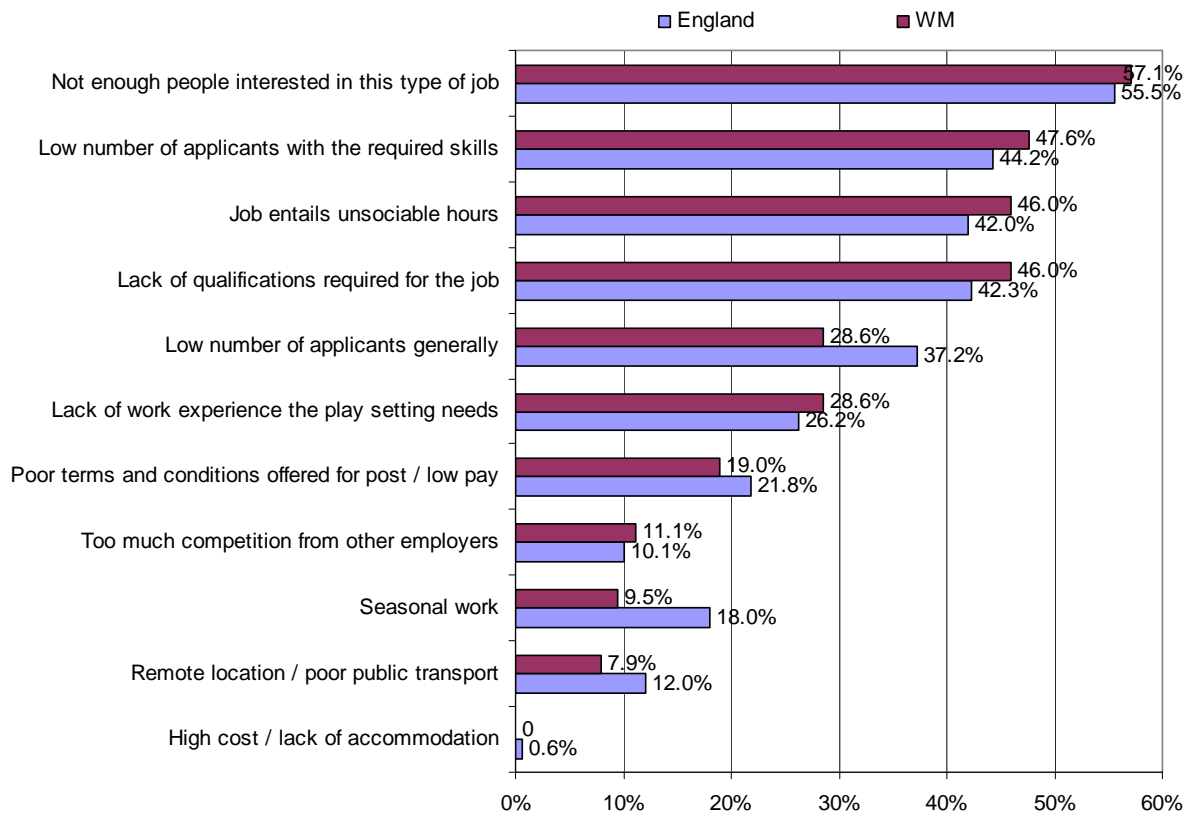
Skills shortages occur when businesses cannot recruit enough people who are appropriately qualified, skilled or experienced. Skills shortages are deemed to exist when employers have a vacancy which they are finding hard-to-fill and the reasons for it being hard-to-fill are related to shortcomings in the skills, qualifications or experience of applicants.

Employers who had experienced a hard-to-fill vacancy in the previous 12 months were asked why these vacancies were hard-to-fill. The three skills shortage reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies (low number of applicants with the required skills, lack of qualifications required for the job and lack of work experience the play setting needs) featured prominently in the main factors given by employers.

The three most likely reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies are “not enough people interested in this type of job” (57.1% of employers experiencing a hard-to-fill vacancy), “low number of applicants with the required skills” (47.6%) and “job entails unsociable hours” (46.0%) pointing towards a lack of awareness of playwork as a profession or poor pay and conditions acting as a disincentive to apply for playwork roles as well as not enough qualified people applying for roles in playwork.

Playwork People 3: West Midlands

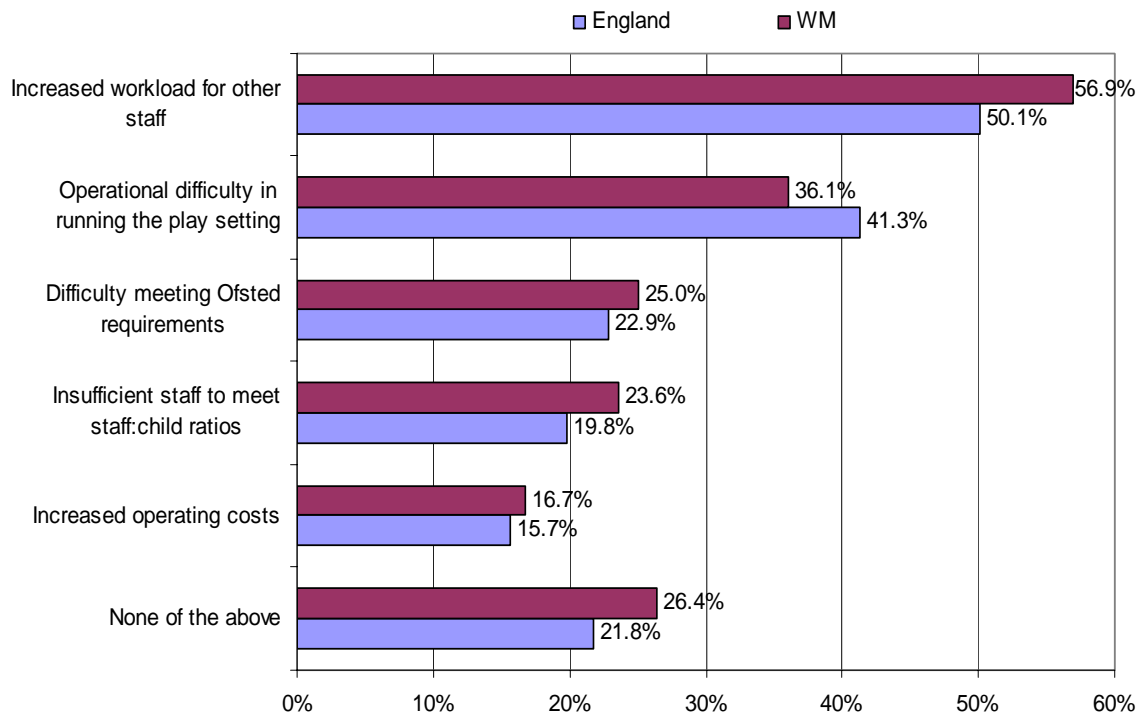
Diagram 5.2(a) Reasons why vacancies have been hard-to-fill



Playwork Employers 2007

It is important to understand the impact that hard-to-fill vacancies have on playwork organisations. The most frequently cited implications are an increased workload for other staff (56.9%) suggesting that other staff take on the duties and workload of those hard-to-fill vacancies.

Diagram 5.2(b) Impact of hard-to-fill vacancies on employers



Playwork Employers 2007