

# Research Paper

## The Impact of Acas Open Access Training

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(BMG Research)

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# Research Report



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Prepared for: Acas

Prepared by: June Wiseman, Board Director  
and Linda Balodis, Research Manager

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## **1. Executive Summary**

BMG Research was commissioned by Acas in November 2015 to conduct a programme of research to evaluate the Acas Open Access Training. A mixed method approach consisting of a survey of 4,400 training delegates (with a response rate of 39 per cent) and five case studies was undertaken with participants in the training in order to assess its impact.

### **1.1 Key survey findings**

- Delegates participating in Acas training tended to come from larger than average organisations (66 per cent with at least 50 employees).
- Two thirds were from private sector businesses (67 per cent), 16 per cent public sector and 14 per cent voluntary/not for profit.
- In terms of industry sector, there was a broad range, including manufacturing businesses (13 per cent), health and social work (12 per cent), other community services (12 per cent) and education (10 per cent).
- The main reason for delegates attending the Acas training was to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course (82 per cent mentioned this overall).
- More than half the delegates felt that the training was 'very worthwhile' in retrospect (57 per cent).
- 95 per cent of delegates were satisfied ('fairly satisfied' or 'very satisfied') with the training.
- Nine in ten delegates are likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager (90 per cent).
- More than nine in ten delegates are likely to attend further Acas training in the future (95 per cent).
- A large proportion of delegates felt the training addressed the needs of an organisation their size well (96 per cent).
- At least half of delegates feel the training has increased personal benefits across all specific aspects to some extent; including their willingness to undertake more training and development in the future, and confidence in their job generally.
- As a result of taking part in the training, around three quarters of delegates have made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation (73 per cent).
- Four in ten delegates have revised, reviewed or introduced practices or procedures related to absence or attendance management (40 per cent).
- Of those who had made a change to practices or procedures, two fifths believe it is likely they would have been able to make or plan to make the changes if they had not attended the Acas training (41 per cent).
- 60 per cent of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in the organisation to some extent.
- The extent to which delegates feel the training they attended improved their performance in relation to implementing or administering specific policies, practices and procedures in their organisation tended to be linked to the content of the course.

- Just under half of delegates have taken actions as a result of attending the Acas training that they feel have improved the performance of their organisation (47 per cent).
- A quarter of delegates feel that they would have been able to find similar training elsewhere (24 per cent).
- Over seven in ten delegates feel it is likely that they would have attended alternative training if Acas had not provided the course they attended (72 per cent).
- Four in ten feel that Acas is generally cheaper than other providers (39 per cent).
- Around a quarter of delegates would have considered attending the course they attended if it had been delivered as a webinar (23 per cent).
- Less than one in ten delegates have taken one of Acas' e-learning courses (9 per cent).
- When delegates were asked to consider any improvements that would help to increase the impact of the training on them or their organisation, one in ten feel the courses need to be more in-depth for the subjects covered (11 per cent).

### **1.2 Time series data**

The table below shows a comparison of the current survey data to findings from 2010, where applicable. The 2010 survey was undertaken in a similar manner to the 2016 survey, sampling delegates training events between March and August 2010, with 1,393 completed questionnaires.

There are modest statistically significant increases in the overall satisfaction rate and the 'likelihood to recommend Acas' since 2010 (up two and five percentage points respectively). In terms of the impact of the training on their organisation, 60 per cent of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in their organisation to some extent, a thirty percentage point increase from the 2010 survey. However, the proportion citing revisions to procedures related to absence or attendance management has fallen since 2010, (a fifteen percentage point drop) although this most likely reflects the prevalence of delegates attending absence-related courses in 2010 (compared to this survey).

**Table 1: A comparison of 2016 to 2010 data**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Reason for attending training</b>	The main reason for delegates attending the Acas training was to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course (82% mentioned this overall).	The main reason for delegates attending the Acas training was to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course (81% mentioned this overall).
<b>Specific benefits</b>	According to the survey, the vast majority (93%) of delegates returned to their workplace with a good understanding of the subjects addressed by the course.	According to the survey, the vast majority (92%) of delegates returned to their workplace with a good understanding of the subjects addressed by the course.
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	95% were satisfied to some extent with the training.	93% were satisfied to some extent with the training.
<b>Likelihood to recommend</b>	90% are likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager.	85% are likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager.
<b>Changes to policies and practices</b>	73% of delegates have made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation.	76% of delegates have made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation.
<b>Changes to absence or attendance management</b>	40% have revised, reviewed or introduced practices or procedures related to absence or attendance management.	65% have revised, reviewed or introduced practices or procedures related to absence or attendance management.
<b>Improvement in communication in the organisation</b>	60% of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in the organisation to some extent.	30% of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in the organisation to some extent.
<b>Finding similar training elsewhere</b>	24% of delegates feel that they wouldn't have been able to find similar training elsewhere (50% of delegates 'Didn't know').	19% of delegates said they wouldn't have been able to find similar evidence elsewhere (48% of delegates 'Didn't know').

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background and objectives

Acas provides a range of services aimed at enhancing working relationships, including providing independent advice to employers and employees, dispute resolution services to groups of workers or employers, and a national programme of training to businesses and HR professionals. The training programmes held by Acas include both 'workplace training' events which are delivered to staff within individual organisations and tailored to the unique needs of the organisation and, of relevance to this research, 'Open Access' training which involves courses advertised and open to anyone.

This research provides evidence on the impacts of Acas 'Open Access' training and includes evidence to measure one of Acas' key performance indicators, namely:

"The percentage of delegates reporting that training provided by Acas resulted in a change in policy or practice."

The measurement of performance of Acas services (including open access training) forms part of the Service Level Agreement Acas has with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) – who fund Acas.

Other aims of this impact evaluation were:

- To inform Acas staff and internal and external stakeholders of the longer-term impact and effectiveness of Open Access training (which includes Acas Key Points Sessions, Getting it Right Sessions and In-Depth Sessions);
- To assess the impacts of the training on the individual delegate and also, crucially, the impacts on the organisations for which they work;
- To collect evidence of direct or indirect changes to workplace productivity after receiving training;
- To assess what training delegates think of the level of cost of the training event;
- To highlight areas for service improvement;
- To understand what Open Access users need and want in terms of service transformation;
- To understand the types of customers Open Access training reaches and identify any potential gaps;
- To provide comparable data with previous surveys (e.g. the 2010 impact survey) to allow analysis of the progress of the Acas training programme.

## 2.2 Method

### 2.2.1 *The quantitative survey*

The survey was conducted using a mixed method approach including postal questionnaires, an online survey and follow up telephone chasing/interviewing.

The contacts were provided by Acas, and included all delegates attending an Acas Open Access training course between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015. Following de-duplication and cleaning of contacts, 4,408 contacts were included in the final contact database. As shown below, a total of three postal mailings and two email mailings were undertaken over the course of the fieldwork period, followed by one week of telephone chasing and interviewing.

**Table 2: Key dates and activities**

Date	Activity
22/01/16	Initial postal mailing
28/01/16	Email sent with link to online survey
05/02/16	Postal reminder 1 (no questionnaire)
10/02/16	Email reminder 1
19/02/16	Postal reminder 2 (with questionnaire)
07/03/16	Telephone chasing/interviewing starts
11/03/16	Telephone chasing/interviewing ends
18/03/16	End of all fieldwork

In total, 1,640 questionnaires were completed and returned to BMG (956 by post, 588 online and 96 over the telephone). Having removed the unobtainable numbers and those no longer working in the organisation, the overall response rate was 39 per cent which can be considered good for a study of this type. Appendix 1 shows the full breakdown of response rates over time.

The questionnaire was similar to the one used in 2010 for benchmarking purposes, but also included new questions on the impact of changes made in the organisation following the training, how these may have improved policies and practices, and any personal impact the training may have made on the respondents themselves. The questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The table below shows a comparison of the population of delegates by course topic and Acas office to the sample of respondents. The distribution of each is very similar, suggesting a constant response rate, and also ensuring the sample is representative of the population, providing a robust data set.

**Table 3: Population of delegates compared to the sample of delegates**

	Number of delegates	% of total delegates	Number of respondents	% of total respondents
<b>Course topic</b>				
Attendance/Absence Management	825	19%	305	19%
Bullying and Harassment	48	1%	23	1%
Change Management	7	0%	2	0%
Conflict/Mediation/Relationship Issues	315	7%	125	8%
Discipline and Grievance	588	13%	205	13%
Employment Law (General)	1,162	26%	449	27%
Equal Pay	17	0%	5	<0.5%
Equality and Diversity (General)	114	3%	48	3%
Flexible Working, Hours and Holidays	22	0%	8	<0.5%
Negotiation and Collective Bargaining	12	0%	9	1%
Performance Management	381	9%	115	7%
Recruiting, Contracting and Employing People	214	5%	85	5%
Redundancy	44	1%	20	1%
Stress Management	24	1%	6	<0.5%
Supervision/First Line Management	231	5%	80	5%
Working Families/Parental Rights	276	6%	110	7%
Other	128	3%	45	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,408</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Acas office</b>				
Birmingham	422	10%	147	9%
Bristol	724	16%	304	19%
Bury St Edmunds	215	5%	88	5%
Cardiff	129	3%	50	3%
Glasgow	314	7%	140	9%
Leeds	578	13%	205	13%
London	548	12%	158	10%
Newcastle	213	5%	74	5%
North West	450	10%	163	10%
Nottingham	397	9%	153	9%
South East England	418	9%	158	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,408</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of course type, 69 per cent of the sample comprised Getting It Right Sessions, which are aimed at small and medium sized organisations and generally include more discussion time than Key Point Sessions. Thirty per cent took part in In-Depth Sessions, which are designed for professionals that have existing knowledge of employment legislation and good practice. Finally, one per cent of the sample comprised Key Point Sessions which are aimed at small and medium sized organisations and cover key issues on a particular subject in a brief way. This is exactly the same proportions as found in the target population, for the six month period covered.

### *2.2.2 The case studies*

Case study work was carried out with selected respondents who participated in the survey to explore in more depth the impact of the training on their respective organisations and provide richer insight about user needs. The case study work involved in-depth interviews with participants from five organisations who were involved in the Open Access training and colleagues nominated by the participants who were responsible for HR policies in their organisation.

An overview of the five organisations involved are as follows:

- Greenfylde First School – school for children aged two to four with seven members of staff;
- Citizens Advice Gateshead – a charity with 73 staff in the Gateshead branch;
- Education People - a small recruitment agency for education staff, with seven employees;
- Age Concern Central Lancashire - a charitable organisation whose remit is to promote independence and care for people over the age of fifty-five. 141 members of staff;
- A distributor of high-end bathrooms with approximately 200 employees.

Three of these five organisations had no formal HR department, and therefore accessed the training to develop their knowledge on specific HR policies in order to revise or introduce new policies. Some of the changes cited by these organisations include revising current policies and practices, introducing new policies such as a Dignity at Work Policy, and raising staff's awareness of HR policies and requirements.

These changes have impacted on the case study organisations in a number of ways such as:

- Reducing staff absenteeism;
- Reducing the number of formal grievances and investigations raised by staff in their organisation;
- Improving equality and diversity;
- Improving relations between management and employees;
- Improving communication within the organisation.

## **2.3 Report contents**

This report contains a written summary of the full data set.

Graphs and tables are used throughout the report to assist explanation and analysis. Although occasional anomalies appear due to 'rounding' differences, these are never more than +/-1 per cent. These occur where, for example, rating scales have been

added to calculate proportions of respondents who expressed satisfaction with an issue (e.g. the total who said either very or fairly satisfied).

In addition to this written report, a separate data report has been produced, which shows the total results for each question and also the results cross-tabulated by the following respondent sub groups:

- Size of organisation (number of employees);
- Grouped sector (private, public and not-for-profit making organisations);
- Industry sector;
- Respondent job title;
- Whether changed policies/practices since the course;
- Whether organisation has someone with HR responsibility;
- Course topics;
- Acas office.

Data has been analysed by the above sub groups where appropriate to the questions. Where sub groups show a statistically significant difference in response at a confidence interval of 95 per cent this is reported.

The full case study reports can be found in Section 9.



### 3. About The Organisation

#### 3.1 Key findings

- Organisations participating in Acas training tended to be from medium sized organisations (50 to 249 employees) or large organisations (250 or more employees) as 66 per cent of delegates come from organisations of this size.
- Two thirds were private sector businesses (67 per cent), 16 per cent public sector and 14 per cent voluntary/not for profit.
- In terms of industry sector, there was a broad range, including manufacturing businesses (13 per cent), health & social work (12 per cent), other community services (12 per cent) and education (10 per cent). According to ONS statistics the largest industry group is professional, scientific and technical (17.8 per cent).

#### 3.2 Size and sector

Organisations participating in the Acas Open Access training tended to be larger than average when compared to organisational sizes in the wider economy which have an average of 1-9 employees<sup>1</sup>. For Open Access training delegates, more than a third (36 per cent) came from medium sized organisations (50-249 employees) and three in ten (30 per cent) came from larger organisations (250 or more employees). So 66 per cent of delegates came from organisations with 50 or more employees. Few delegates came from organisations with less than 10 employees (seven per cent).

Comparing these figures with Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on 'UK Business: Activity, size and location: 2015'<sup>2</sup> shows that 98 per cent of enterprises registered for VAT and/or PAYE in Great Britain (GB), employ less than 50 people with two per cent of organisations employing 50 people or more.

As might be expected, a greater proportion of Open Access training delegates come from larger organisations (employing 50 people or more) than the distribution of organisation sizes in the wider GB economy. However if the delegate does represent a larger organisation then the potential impact can be bigger because any change to policies or practices at these sized organisations, as a result of attending Acas training, will affect a greater number of people.

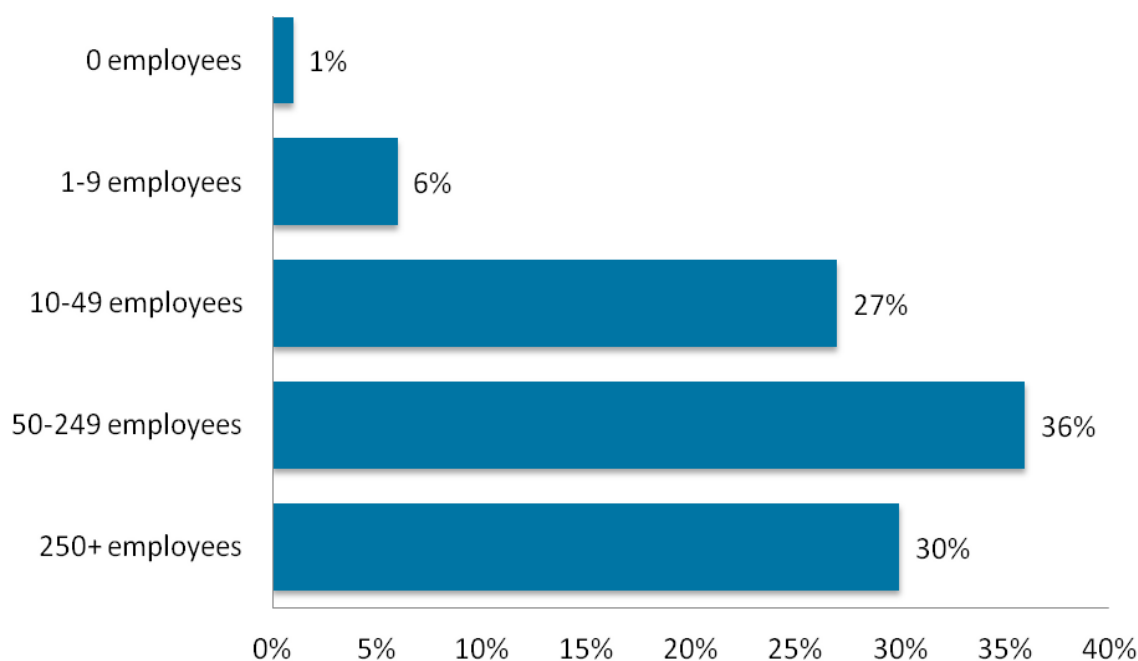
The proportions for organisational size in the 2016 Open Access survey are broadly similar to the results obtained from the 2010 Open Access impact evaluation survey.

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1 Office for National Statistics (2015), 'UK Business: Activity, size and location' available at:  
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation>

2 Ibid.

**Figure 1: Size of business of delegates' organisation**



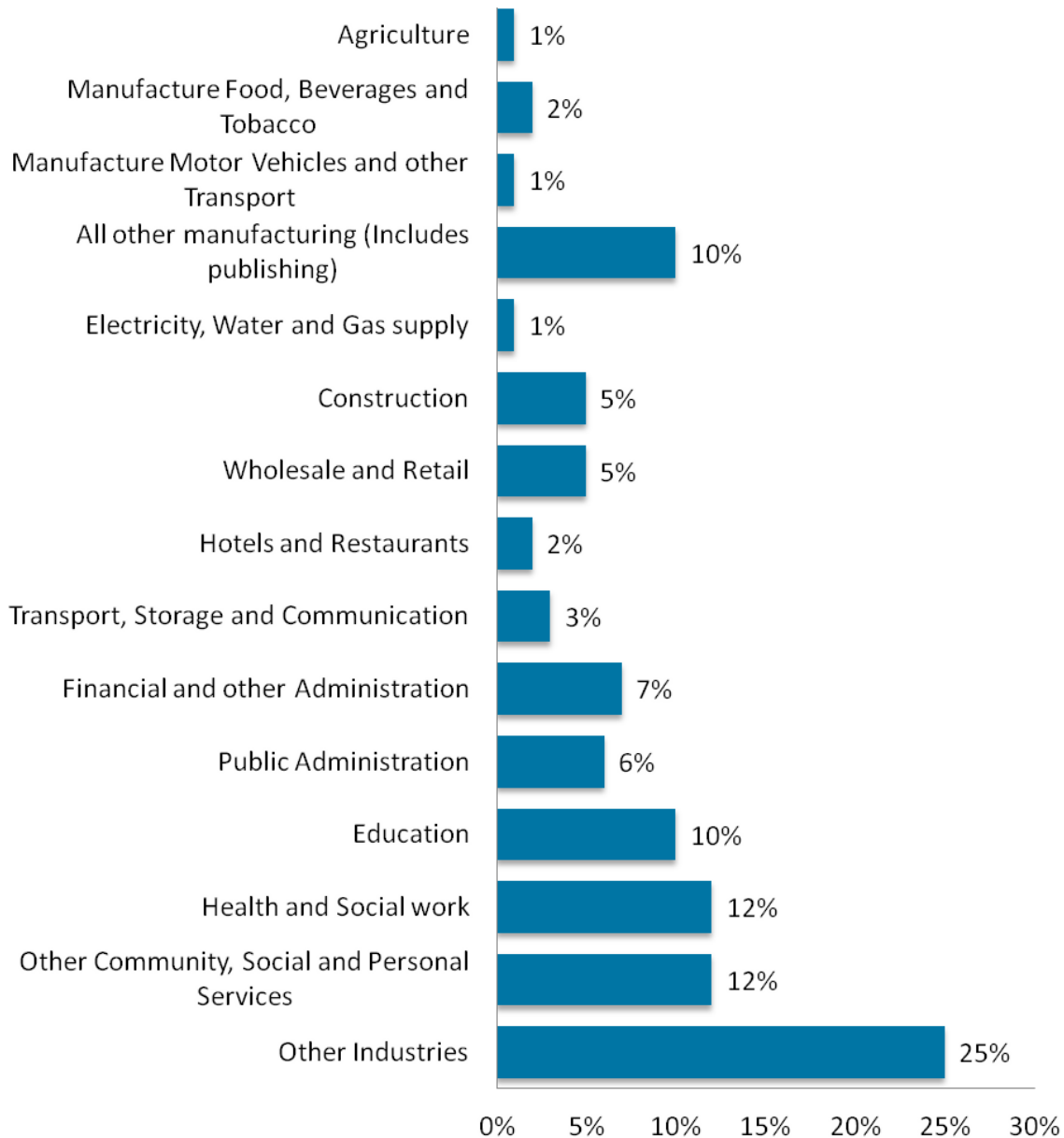
*Q15, base=1640, all respondents*

Overall, 67 per cent of organisations participating in training were private sector businesses, 16 per cent were public sector (six per cent local authorities, four per cent NHS, four per cent other government departments and two per cent public corporations and trading funds), with 14 per cent voluntary/not for profit organisations (three per cent were unclassified). ONS figures<sup>3</sup> show that private sector businesses account for 96 per cent of organisations registered for PAYE and/or VAT in Great Britain (GB); three per cent of organisations are 'Non-profit Body or Mutual Associations' and 0.5 per cent are public sector organisations. Therefore a greater proportion of Open Access training delegates come from public sector and non-profit organisations than the distribution of these in the wider GB economy. Comparisons with the 2010 Open Access impact survey cannot be made as information on sector was not collected at the time of that survey.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics (2015), 'UK Business: Activity, size and location' available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation>

A more detailed breakdown by industry sector is shown in the graph below. A broad range of industry sectors are represented, particularly manufacturing businesses (13 per cent), health & social work (12 per cent), other community services (12 per cent) and education (10 per cent).

**Figure 2: Industry sector of delegates' organisation**



*Acas management information, base=1640, all respondents*

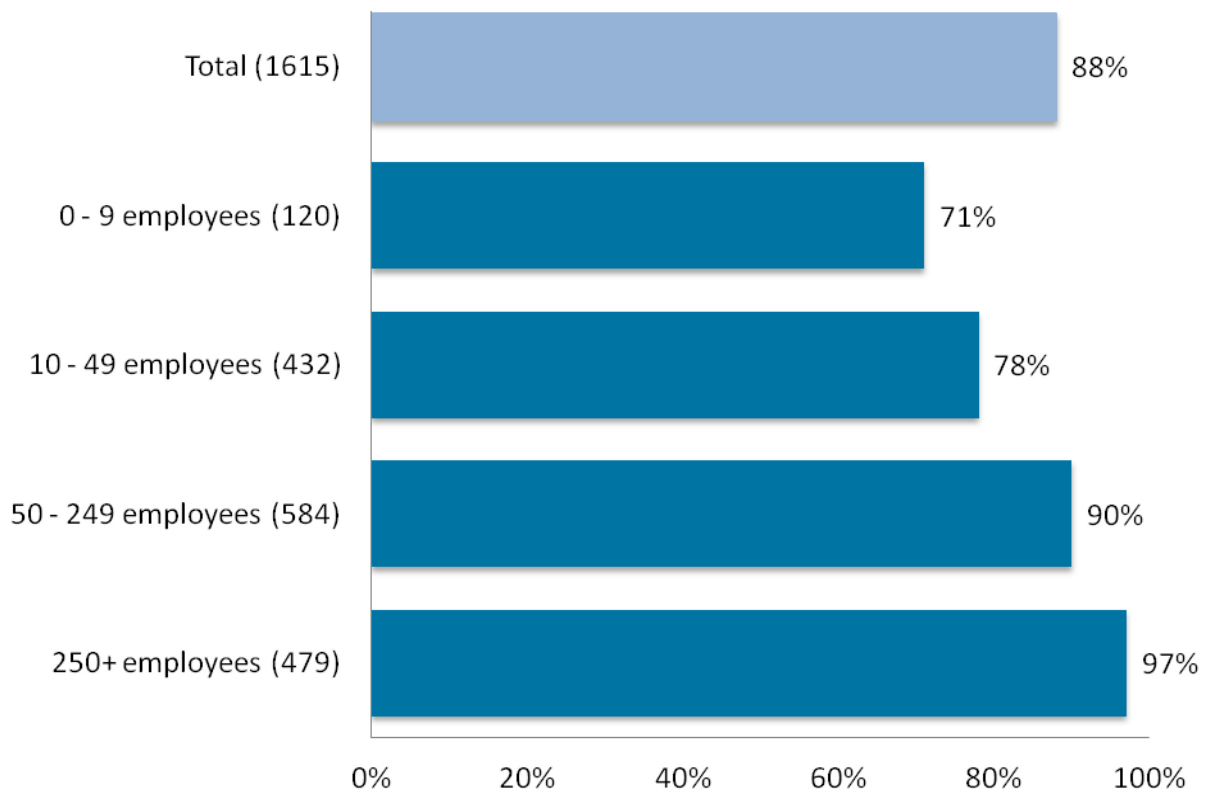
### 3.3 Responsibility for human resources

Among the organisations participating in the training, 88 per cent have someone in their organisation that has specific responsibility for human resources, or staff and personnel.

Not surprisingly, the proportion falls among smaller organisations, as shown in the graph below. This follows the same pattern as the 2010 survey which found that over 70 per cent of the delegates from larger organisations were Human Resource

personnel/personnel specialists compared to just over a quarter (28 per cent) from small organisations (less than 50) and 60 per cent from medium size organisations (50-249). This is to be expected, as smaller organisations are less likely to have human resource specialists hence employment relations issues are likely to come under the remit of general managers.

**Figure 3: Whether there is someone in the organisation with responsibility for human resources, by size of organisation**



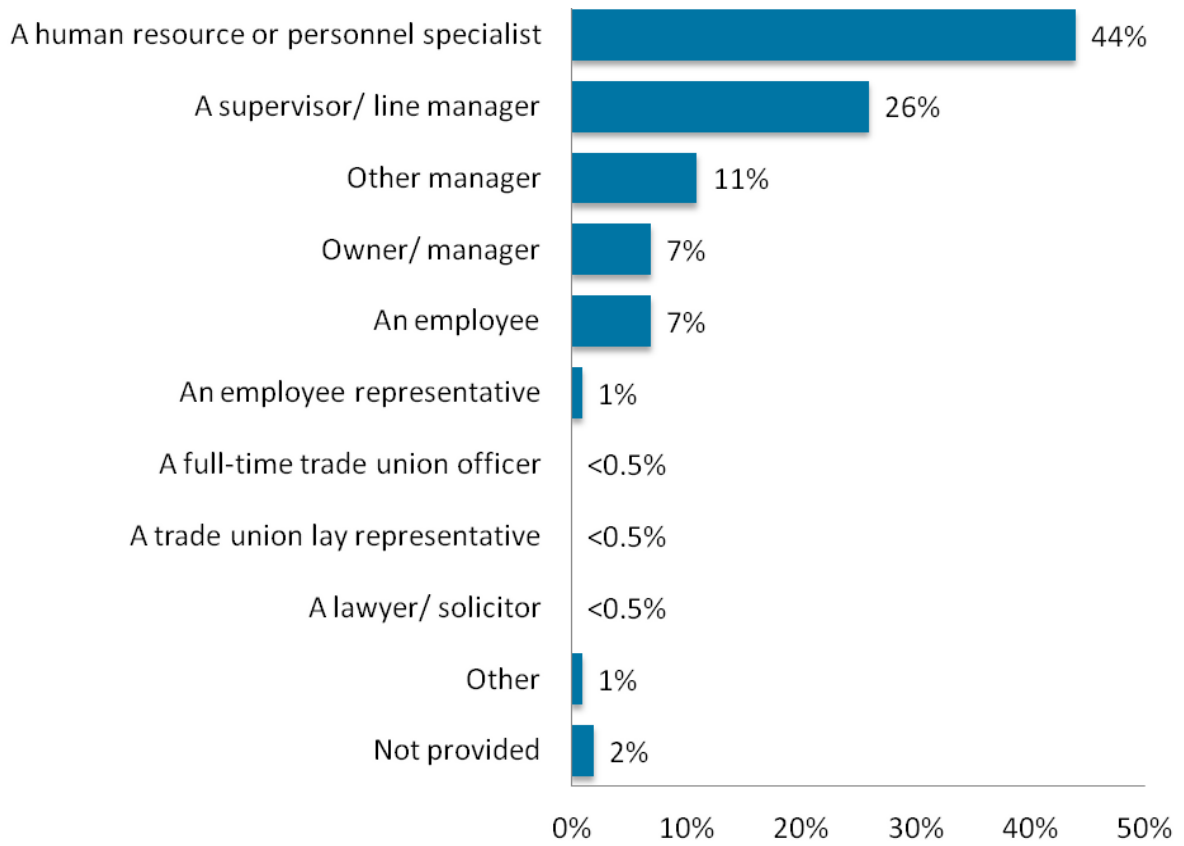
Q17, base=1640, valid responses

### 3.4 Respondent job title at the time of training

At the time of attending the Acas course, almost half the delegates were a human resource or personnel specialist (44 per cent), with sizeable proportions also being a supervisor/line manager (26 per cent) or other manager (11 per cent). The 2010 findings show that over half the delegates were a human resource or personnel specialist (55 per cent), 17 per cent were a supervisor/line manager, or other manager (11 per cent).

Human resource or personnel specialists were less likely to attend a course relating to Attendance/Absence Management (10 per cent compared to 39 per cent of those in a Supervisor/Line manager role). Similarly, only three per cent of human resource or personnel specialists attended a course in Performance Management, compared to 14 per cent in a Supervisor/Line manager role.

**Figure 4: Respondent job title at the time of training**



Q18, base=1640, all respondents

## 4. About The Training

### 4.1 Key findings

- The main reason for delegates attending the Acas training was to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course (82 per cent mentioned this overall).
- More than half the delegates felt that the training had been 'very worthwhile' (57 per cent).
- 95 per cent of delegates were ('very' or 'fairly') satisfied with the training.
- Nine in ten delegates are likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager (90 per cent).
- More than nine in ten delegates are likely to attend further Acas training in the future (95 per cent).

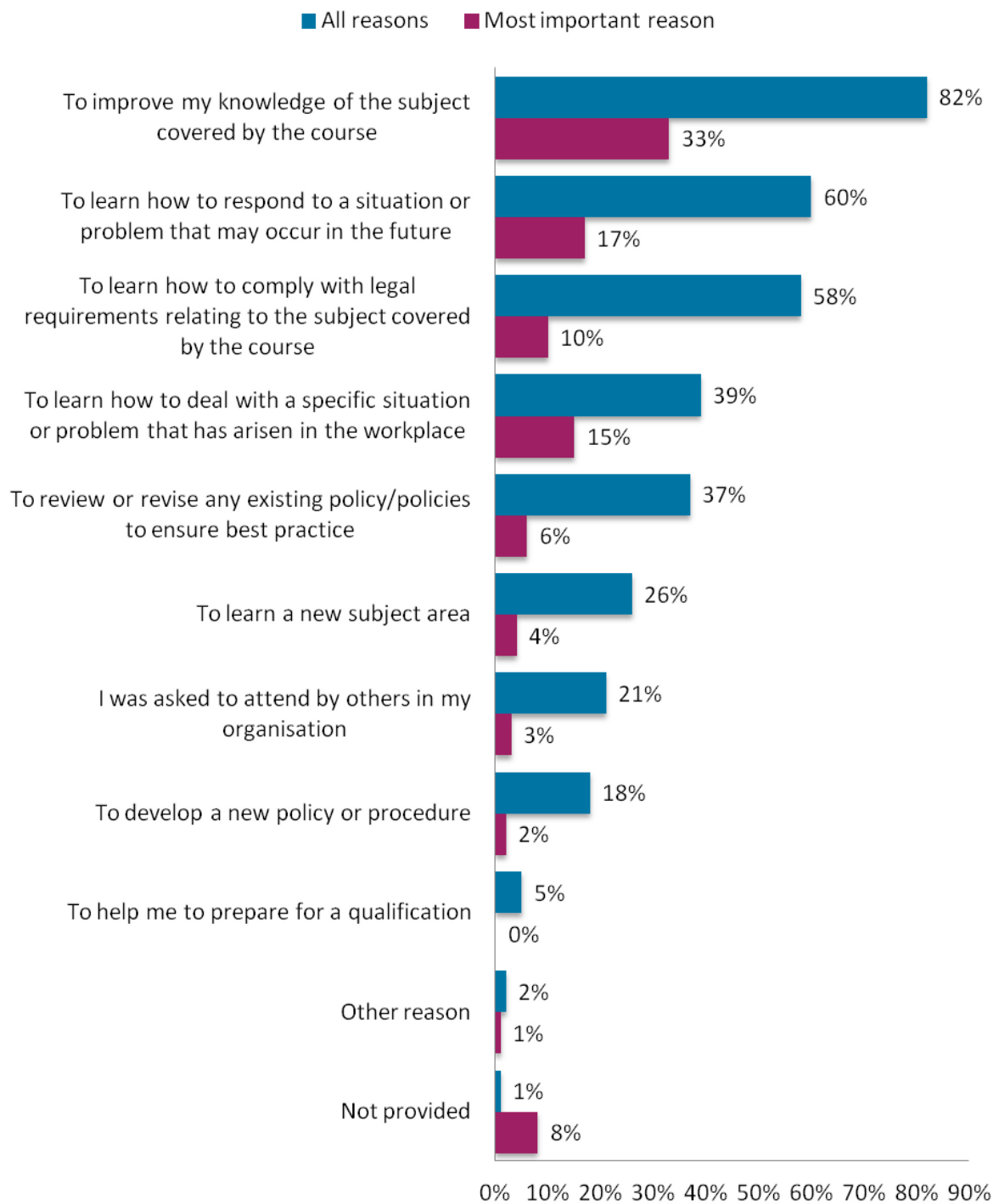
### 4.2 Reasons for attending the training

The main reason delegates gave for attending the Acas training was 'to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course' (82 per cent gave this reason overall, compared to 81 per cent in the 2010 survey), with around six in ten also mentioning 'to learn how to respond to a future situation' (60 per cent) or to learn how to comply with a legal requirement (58 per cent). More than a third of delegates said they had attended Acas training in order to learn how to respond to a previous workplace problem (39 per cent) or to review existing policies to ensure best practice (37 per cent).

When asked to cite the single most important reason for attending, this followed a similar response pattern with improvement in knowledge (33 per cent) and learning how to respond to a future situation (17 per cent) being the top two reasons given.

Figure 5 below gives a breakdown of the reasons given in full.

**Figure 5: Reasons for attending the training**



Q1, base=1640, all respondents

When representatives from organisations involved in the case study work were asked their reasons for attending the training, a couple explained that it is because they are new to a particular job role. For others, their reasons were to learn how to respond to a situation or problem that may occur in the future, to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course, and/or to learn how to comply with legal requirements relating to the subject covered by the course.

The table below shows all the reasons given during this year's survey for attending the Acas training, cross-tabulated by the training topic. (Where the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant this is denoted by a shaded cell).

Those delegates attending an Employment Law course (86 per cent), a Conflict/Mediation course (70 per cent) or a Supervision/First Line Management course (70 per cent) were significantly more likely to say that they had attended in order to improve their subject knowledge. By contrast, those delegates who attended a Discipline/Grievance course (74 per cent) or an Attendance/Absence Management course (71 per cent) were significantly more likely to say that they had done so in order to learn how to respond to a future situation, as were those attending an Employment Law course (49 per cent) or a Recruiting / Contracting People course (44 per cent).



**Table 4: Reasons for attending the training, by training topic**

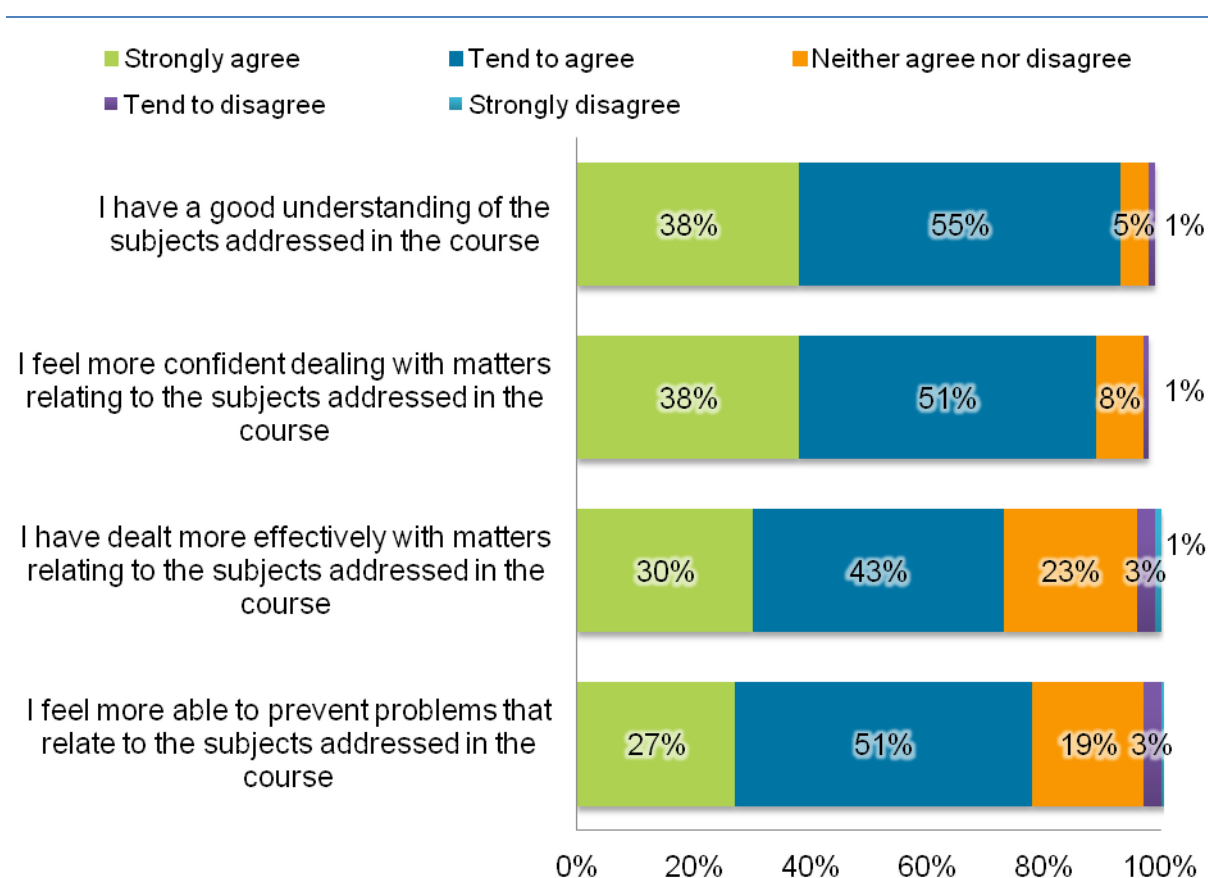
	Total	Attendance / Absence Management	Conflict / Mediation Issues	Discipline / Grievance	Employment Law	Equality / Diversity	Performance Management	Recruiting / Contracting People	Supervision / First Line Management	Working Families / Parental Rights	Other
To improve my knowledge of the subject covered by the course	82%	81%	70%	85%	86%	88%	85%	87%	70%	79%	86%
To learn how to respond to a situation or problem that may occur in the future	60%	71%	68%	74%	49%	48%	54%	44%	70%	55%	63%
To learn how to comply with legal requirements relating to the subject covered by the course	58%	51%	35%	68%	63%	56%	48%	74%	28%	76%	62%
To learn how to deal with a specific situation or problem that has arisen in the workplace	39%	45%	67%	42%	24%	31%	43%	36%	63%	17%	54%
To review or revise any existing policy/policies to ensure best practice	37%	34%	25%	38%	43%	38%	45%	48%	29%	25%	35%
To learn a new subject area	26%	31%	20%	18%	29%	19%	17%	21%	29%	38%	24%
I was asked to attend by others in my organisation	21%	38%	10%	15%	16%	21%	25%	22%	34%	7%	10%
To develop a new policy or procedure	18%	20%	10%	8%	13%	17%	24%	16%	13%	58%	13%
To help me to prepare for a qualification	5%	8%	2%	2%	6%	10%	3%	6%	6%	0%	3%
Other reason	2%	2%	4%	1%	1%	4%	3%	0%	3%	0%	1%
Not provided	1%	<0.1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Q1, all respondents</b>											
<b>Bases</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>118</b>

### 4.3 Benefits of the training course

Delegates were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that the Acas training had resulted in four specific areas of benefit to them, now that they were back at work: their understanding of the subject, their confidence and ability to deal effectively with matters relating to that subject, and their ability to prevent relevant future problems.

At least seven in ten respondents agreed that the training had benefited them across all four specific aspects. Indeed, almost four in ten *strongly* agreed that the course had given them a good understanding of the subjects addressed (38 per cent) and that they now felt more confident dealing with matters relating to the subjects addressed (38 per cent). More than a quarter also *strongly* agreed that they had dealt more effectively with matters relating to the subject at issue (30 per cent), and that they now felt more able to prevent problems relating to that subject (27 per cent).

**Figure 6: Agreement that the training resulted in specific benefits**



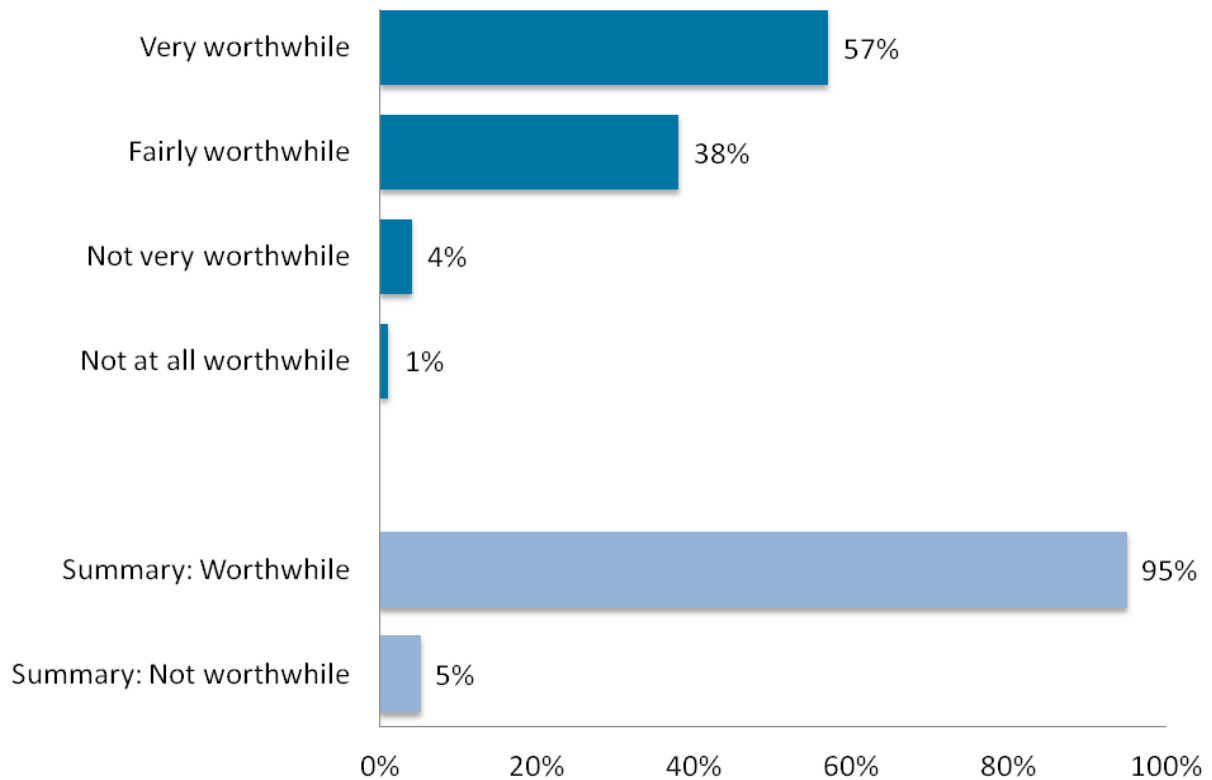
Q2, base=1640, valid responses

There were few differences across sub groups including course topic, however, those delegates attending Conflict / Mediation courses (52 per cent) were more likely to strongly agree that they felt more confident dealing with matters relating to the subject addressed. Those attending an Attendance / Absence Management course (36 per cent), and Employment Law course (26 per cent) or a Supervision Management course (20 per cent) were more likely to strongly agree that they had dealt more effectively with such matters. Those attending an Employment Law course (23 per cent) were also more likely to strongly agree that they felt more able to prevent relevant problems. There were no significant differences by product type.

#### 4.4 How worthwhile the training was overall

Delegates were asked to say how worthwhile they judged the training to have been now they were back at work. More than half felt that the training had been *very worthwhile* (57 per cent), with around a further four in ten saying it had been *fairly worthwhile* (38 per cent).

**Figure 7: How worthwhile the training was overall**



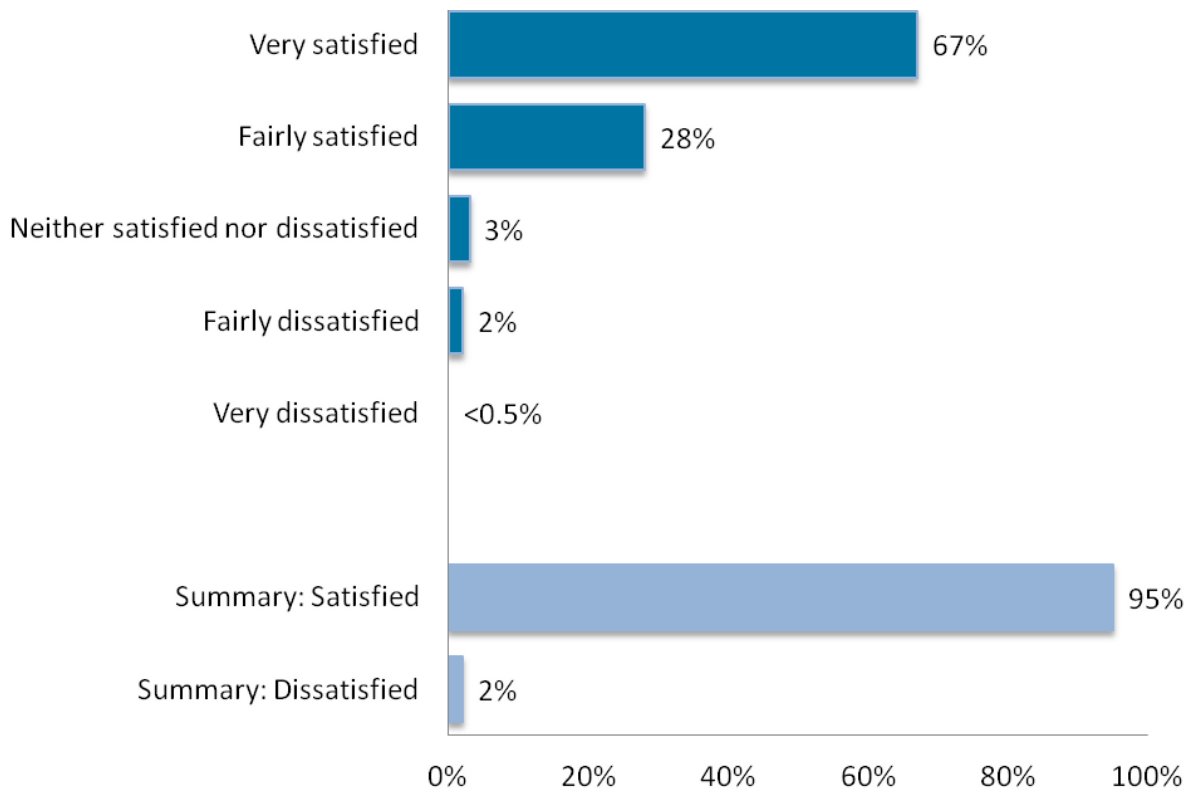
*Q11, base=1620, valid responses*

The proportion of delegates rating the training as 'very worthwhile' was significantly higher among those attending a Conflict / Mediation course (68 per cent).

#### 4.5 Satisfaction with the training

Overall, two thirds of delegates reported that they were very satisfied with the Acas training overall (67 per cent). Just over a further quarter were fairly satisfied (28 per cent), giving a net satisfaction rate of 95 per cent, which is a two percentage point increase since this survey was last run in 2010.

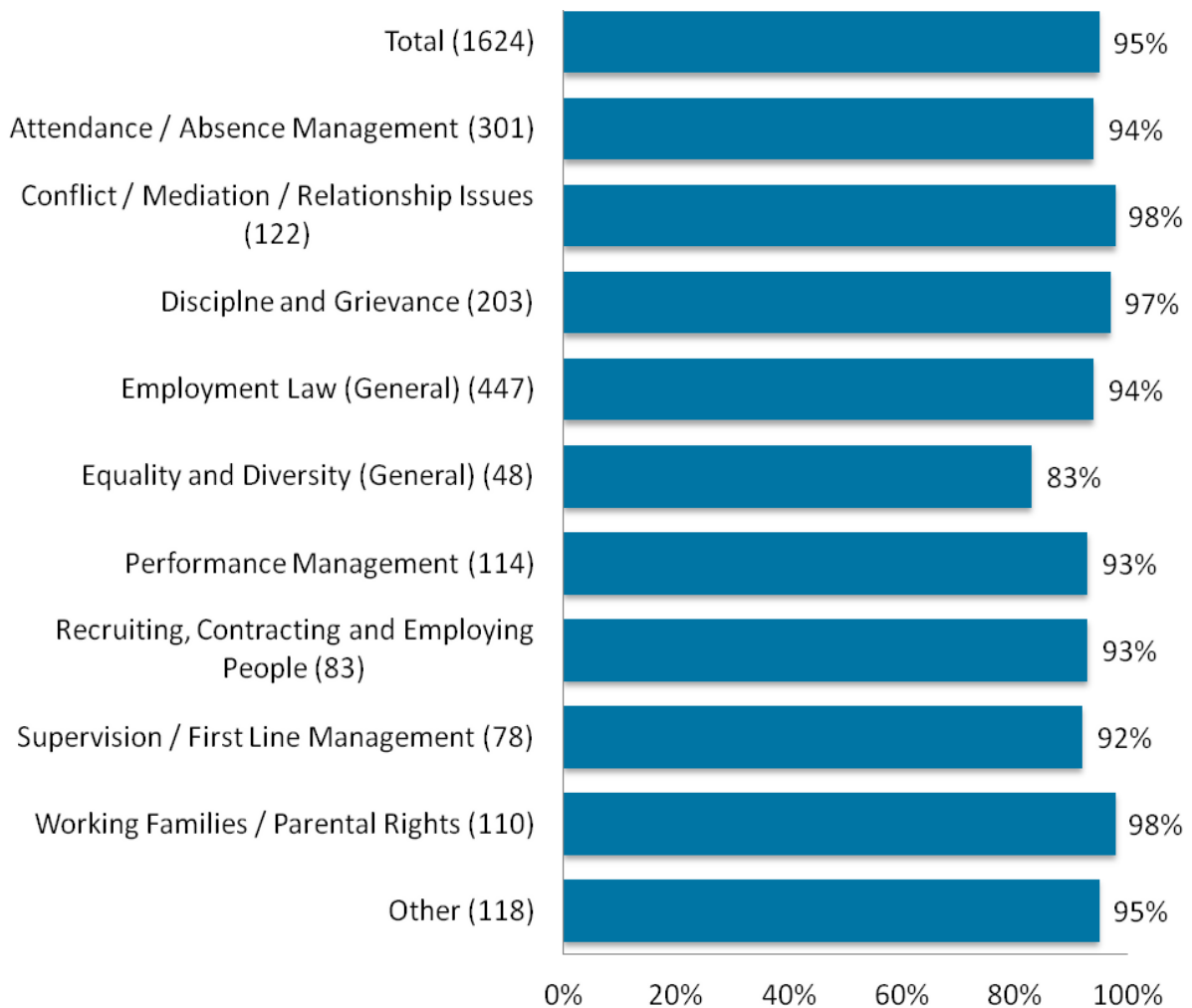
**Figure 8: Overall satisfaction with the training**



*Q12a, base=1624, valid responses*

Figure 9 below shows the proportion of delegates who were either very or fairly satisfied with the training, by course topic. Delegates attending an Equality and Diversity course are notable for being significantly less satisfied (83 per cent) and significantly more dissatisfied (eight per cent). There were no notable differences by product type.

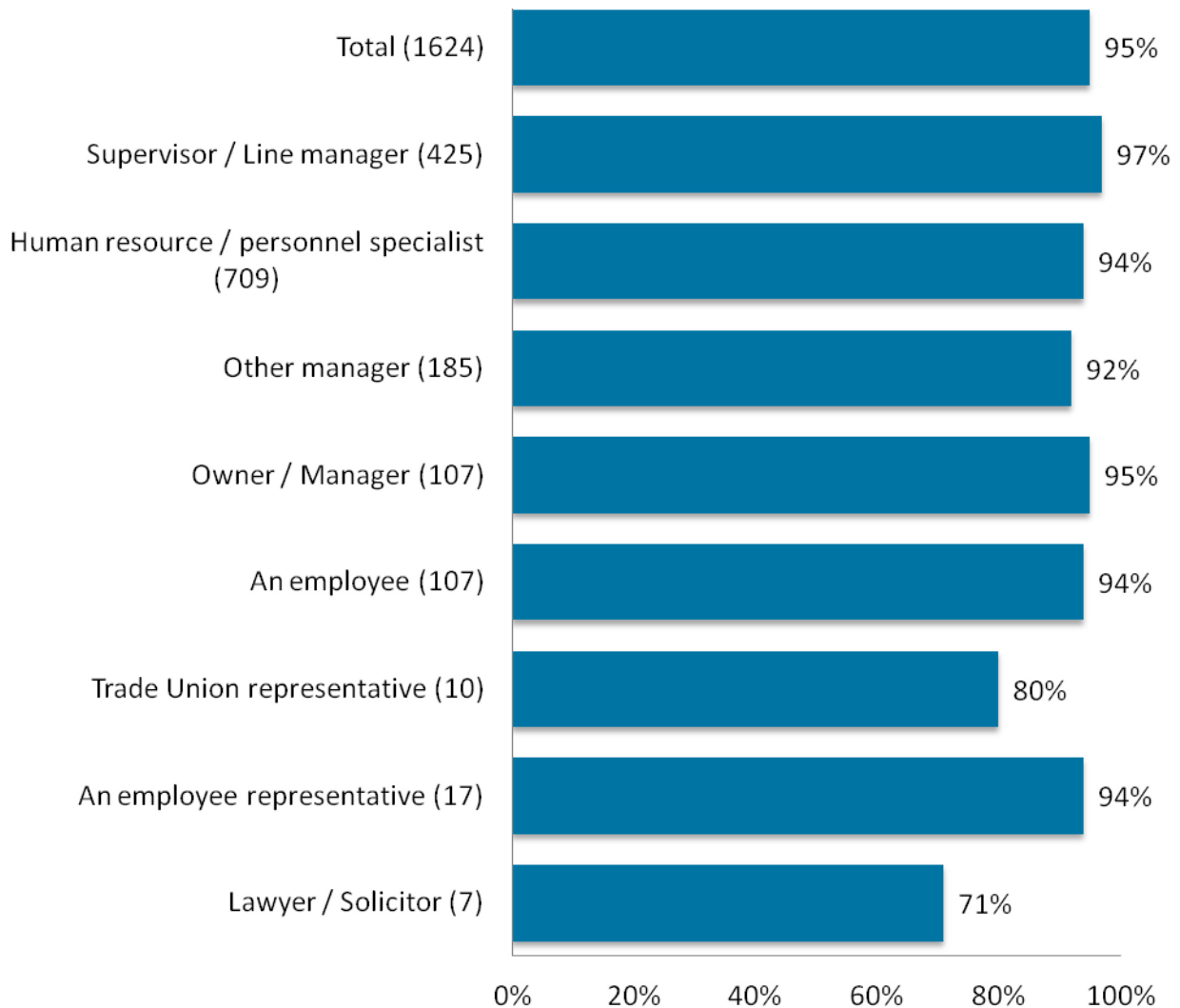
**Figure 9: Proportion very or fairly satisfied, by course topic**



*Q12a, bases shown in brackets, valid responses (please note low base for Equality and Diversity (General))*

Figure 10, below shows the proportion very or fairly satisfied with the training by delegate role. Delegates in a supervisor or line manager role were significantly more likely to be very or fairly satisfied with the training (97 per cent).

**Figure 10: Proportion very or fairly satisfied, by delegate role**



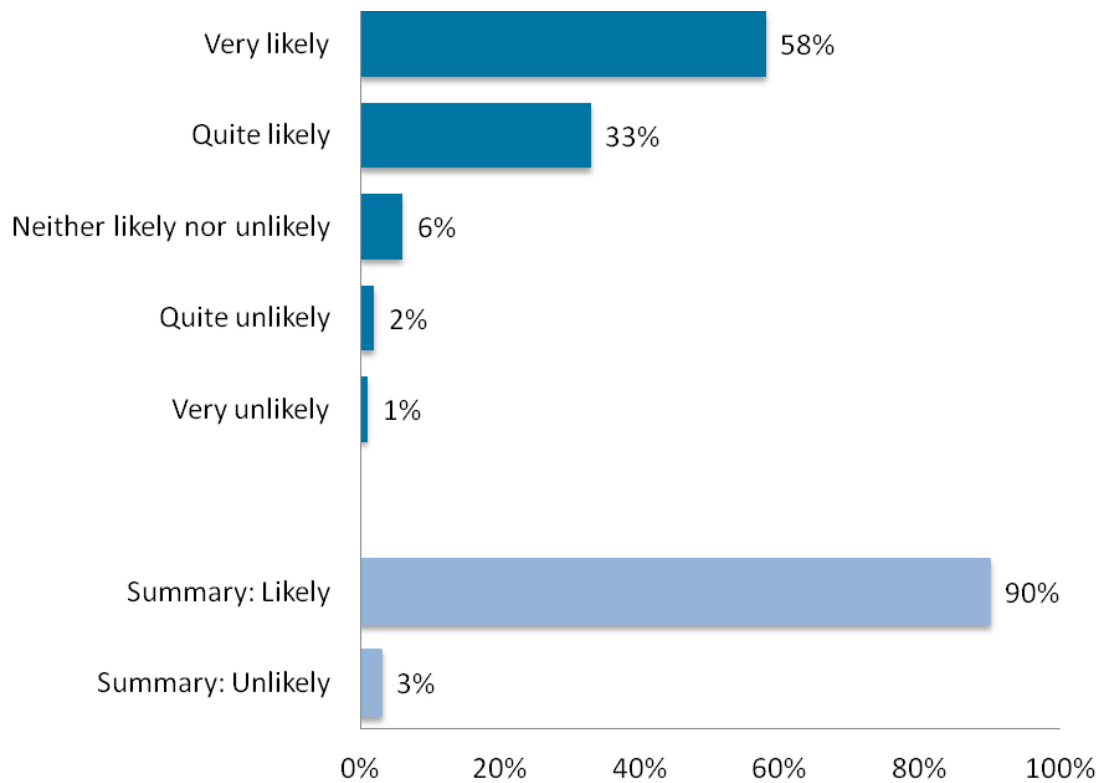
*Q12a, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

Only eleven delegates were dissatisfied with the training; of these, seven explained that they were dissatisfied because the course content was basic, not varied/advanced enough, or offered nothing new.

#### **4.6 Recommending the training to colleagues**

Nine in ten delegates reported that they are likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager (91 per cent), with over half stating they are very likely to do so (58 per cent). This is a five percentage point increase since 2010, when the survey was last run.

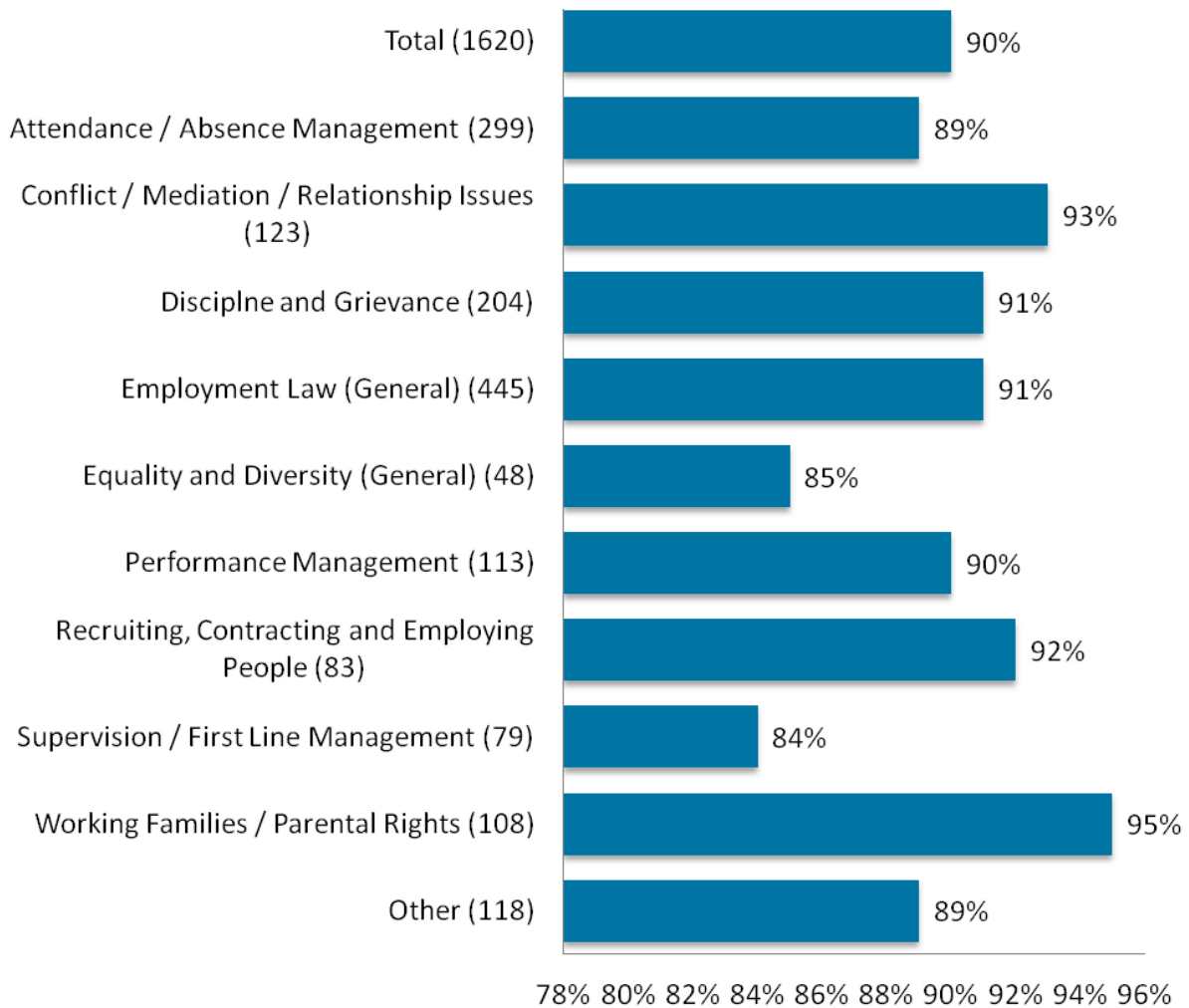
**Figure 11: Likelihood that delegates would recommend the training to a colleague or other manager**



*Q13a, base=1620, valid responses*

Figure 12 below shows the proportion of delegates who are very or quite likely to recommend the training by course topic. Delegates attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were the most likely to recommend the training (95 per cent), followed by those attending a Conflict / Mediation course (93 per cent). Delegates attending a Supervision / First Line Management course or an Equality and Diversity course were significantly less likely to recommend the training (84 per cent and 85 per cent respectively). There were no significant differences by product type.

**Figure 12: Proportion very or quite likely to recommend the training to a colleague or other manager**



*Q13a, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

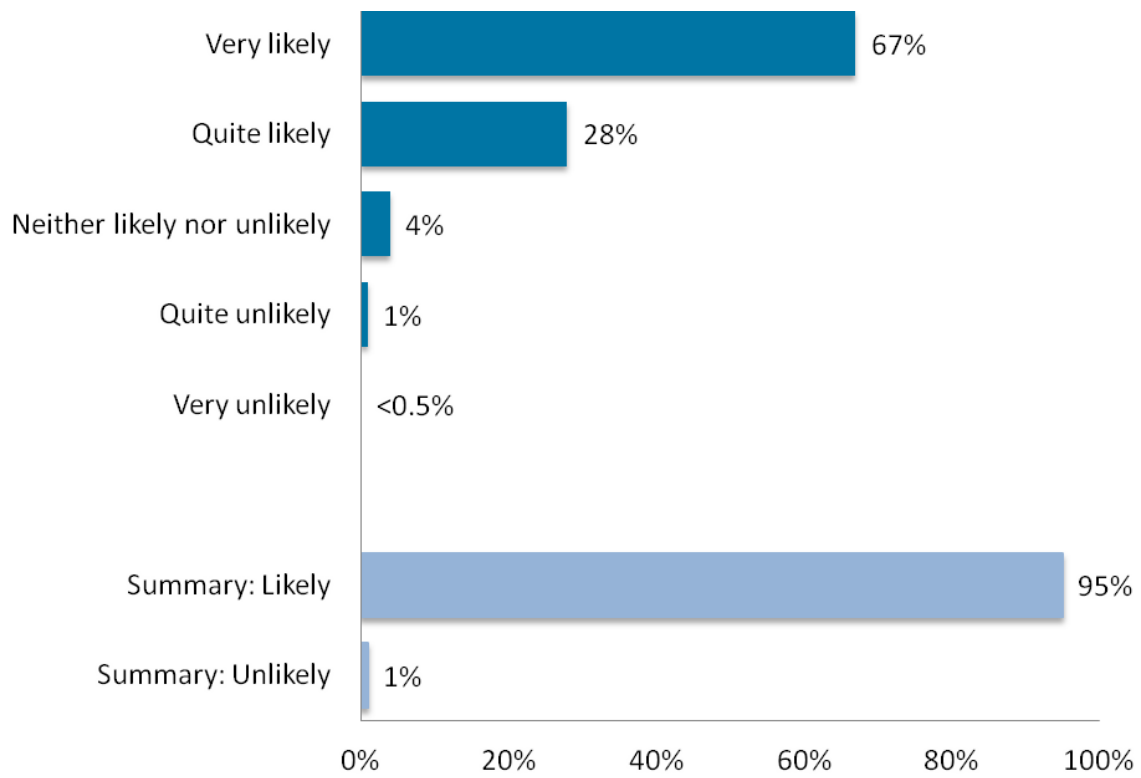
#### **4.7 Attendance at future Acas training**

More than nine in ten delegates confirmed that they are likely to attend further Acas training in the future (95 per cent), with two thirds being very likely (67 per cent). This compares to just 1 per cent of delegates who are unlikely to attend further Acas training.



**Figure 13: Likelihood of attending further Acas training in the future**

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*Q14a, base=1620, valid responses*

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## 5. The Impact of Training

### 5.1 Key findings

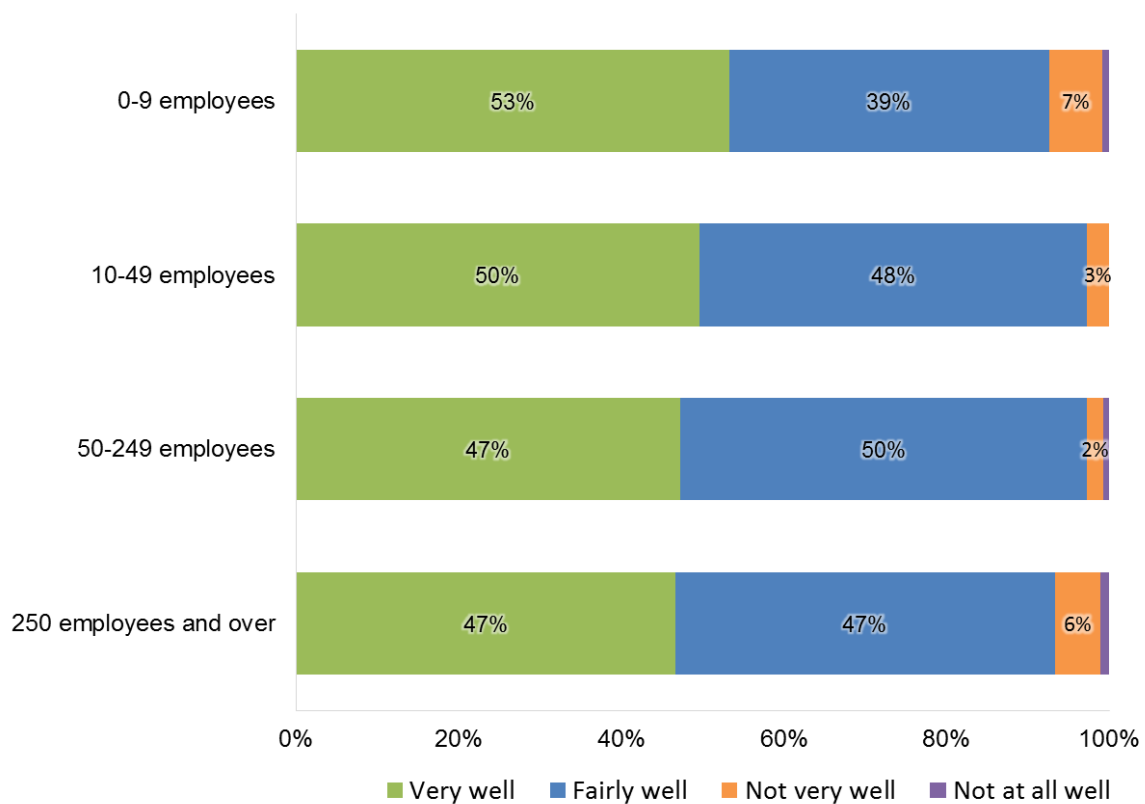
- The vast majority of delegates felt the training addressed the needs of an organisation their size well (96 per cent).
- The majority also report personal benefits. Delegates were presented with a list of eight specific personal benefits that might have resulted from the training. For each measure, more than half the delegates reported an increase as a result of the training, including their willingness to undertake more training and development in the future, and their confidence in their job generally.
- Three quarters of delegates have made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation (73 per cent) as a result of taking part in the training, with four in ten delegates having revised, reviewed or introduced practices or procedures specifically related to absence or attendance management (40 per cent).
- More than a third believe it is unlikely they would have been able to make or plan to make the changes to policies and practices if they had not attended the Acas training (36 per cent).
- 60 per cent of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in their organisation.
- The impact of the training in terms of improving their performance in implementing or administering specific policies, practices and procedures in their organisation tended to be linked to the content of the course. For example, those attending an Attendance / Absence Management course were significantly more likely to feel they have made a significant improvement with regards to absence or attendance management (25 per cent), while delegates attending a Conflict / Mediation course were more likely to feel they have made a significant improvement to bullying and harassment (22 per cent).
- Just under half of delegates have taken actions as a result of attending the Acas training which they feel have improved the performance of their organisation (47 per cent).

The questionnaire included a suite of different questions to assess the impact of the training on delegates and their organisations, particularly in terms of the bearing the training has had on policy and practice formulation and development.

### 5.2 Whether the training addressed the needs of the organisation

Delegates were asked specifically to say how well they felt the Acas training had addressed the needs of *an organisation their size*. Overall, the vast majority of delegates felt that the training *had* addressed the needs of an organisation their size well (96 per cent); the split here was equal, with 48 per cent saying 'very well' and 48 per cent 'fairly well'.

**Figure 14: How well the training addressed the needs of an organisation of the respondent's size**



Q16, base=1613, valid responses

This was significantly more likely among delegates from organisations with 50-249 employees where 97 per cent felt that the training addressed the needs of an organisation their size well.

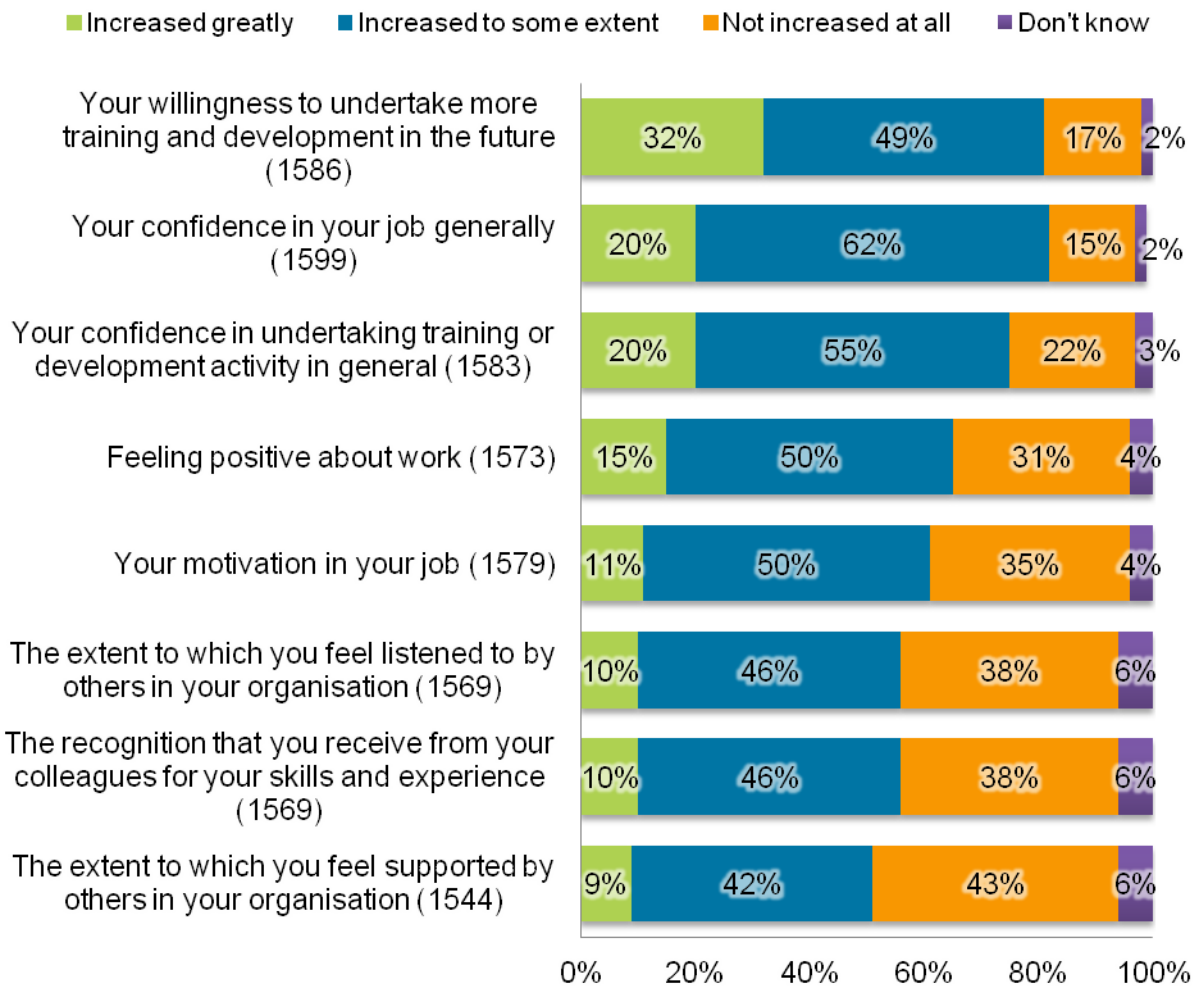
### 5.3 The personal benefits and impact of the training

Delegates were presented with a list of eight areas of specific personal benefit and were asked to indicate how far these had increased as a result of the Acas training, if at all (these are shown in Figure 15, below).

For each of these areas of personal benefit, more than half the delegates reported an increase as a result of the training, to *at least* 'some extent'. A third of delegates said that their willingness to undertake more training and development in the future had 'increased greatly' (32 per cent). One in five judged that their confidence in their job had 'increased greatly' (20 per cent) and their confidence in undertaking training or development activity in general (20 per cent).

When looking at these personal benefits overall as to whether the effect of the training had 'increased greatly' or 'increased to some extent', then the greatest impacts for the delegates were to increase their confidence in their job and their confidence in undertaking further training. This was followed by an increase in their motivation and positive feelings about their work. The least impact, but still positive, was the effect the training had on feeling supported by others in their organisation.

**Figure 15: Extent to which specific personal benefits have increased as a result of the Acas training**



*Q19, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

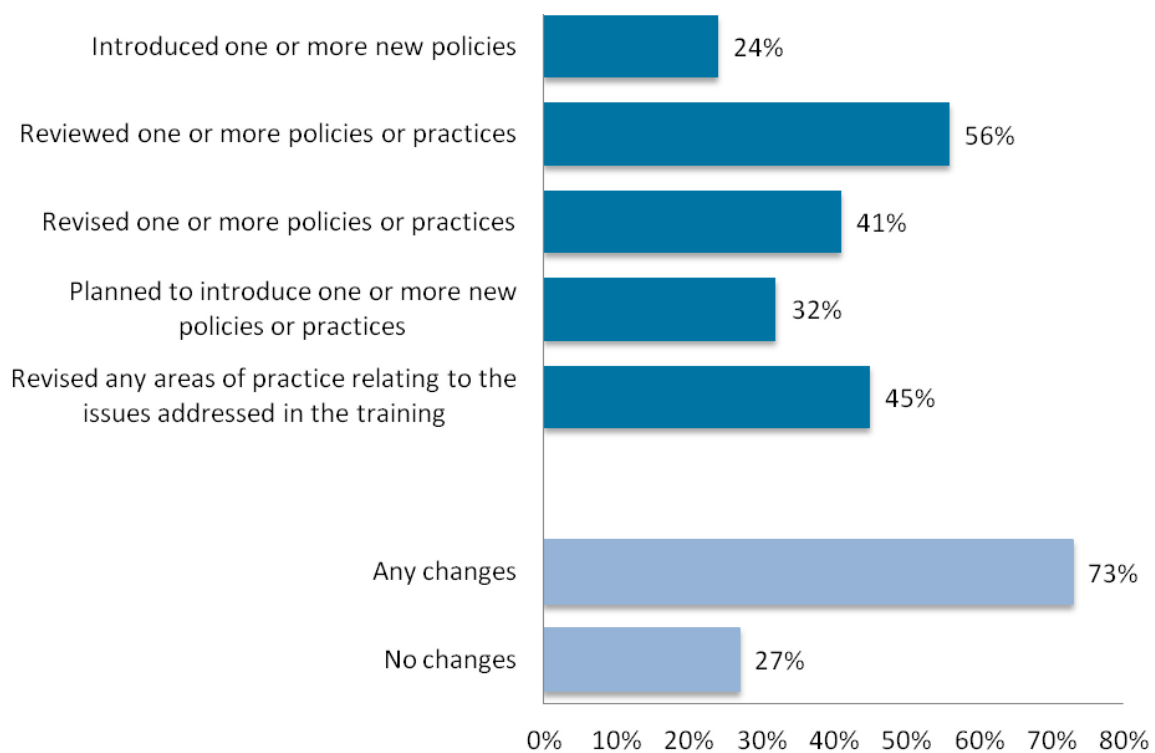
There were few differences across most sub groups; however the following can be observed:

- Those attending a Recruiting / Contracting people course were more likely to say that being listened to by others in the organisation had increased greatly (23 per cent);
- Those attending a Conflict / Mediation / Issues course were more likely to feel their confidence in the job had increased greatly (28 per cent);
- Those attending an Attendance / Absence Management course were more likely to judge that their positivity to work had increased greatly (20 per cent);
- Those attending an Employment Law course were more likely to confirm that their willingness to undertake more training in the future had increased greatly (35 per cent);

### 5.4 Changes in policies or practices as a result of the training

Delegates were asked to say whether they or anyone working with them had introduced, reviewed, revised or planned the introduction of policies or practices as a result of the Acas training. Here, around three quarters of delegates confirmed having made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation (73 per cent). This is in line with the findings from 2010 which found that 76 per cent had made some form of change. This year more than half have reviewed one or more policy or practice (56 per cent) and more than two fifths have revised an area of practice relating to the issues addressed in the training (45 per cent).

**Figure 16: Changes in policies or practices as a result of the Acas training**



Q3, base=1640, all respondents

The table below illustrates the differences in action taken by product type. Generally, those on 'Getting it Right' sessions were significantly more likely to undertake each of the actions, whilst those on 'In-Depth' sessions were significantly less likely to do so. However, this in part is likely to be impacted by the topic of the course. The 2010 survey findings highlighted that delegates who had been on Key Point Sessions were more likely to report that they had reviewed or revised one or more policy or practice.

**Table 5: Changes in policies or practices by product type**

	Total	Getting It Right session	In-Depth session	Key point session
Introduced one or more new policies	24%	29%	11%	25%
Reviewed one or more policies or practices	56%	62%	42%	56%
Revised one or more policies or practices	41%	47%	28%	38%
Planned to introduce one or more new policies or practices	32%	35%	24%	50%
Revised any areas of practice relating to the issues addressed in the training	45%	43%	48%	38%
Any of the above changes	73%	75%	68%	81%
None	27%	25%	32%	19%
<b>Sample Bases</b>		<b>1,129</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>16</b>

When looking at specific course subjects, those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course emerge as being significantly more likely to have *introduced* one or more brand new policies (58 per cent).

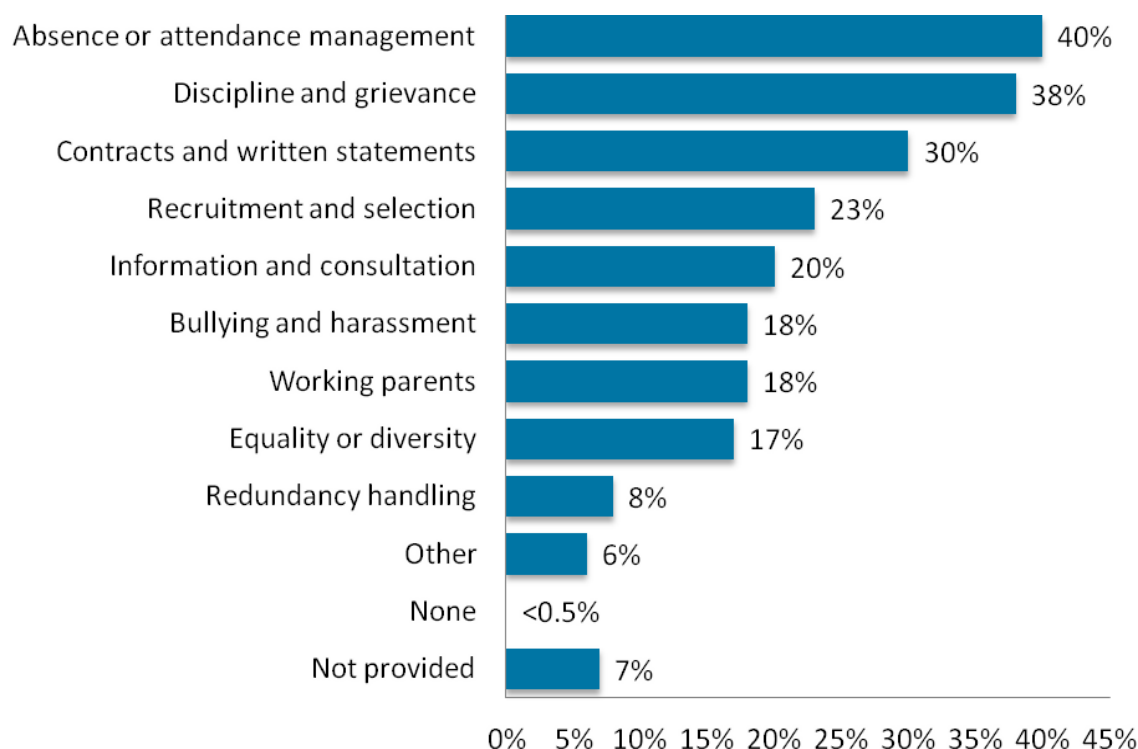
Taking a broader viewing, and looking at all five measures of policy/practice change together, it emerges that delegates who attended an Employment Law course were more likely to effect a policy/practice change as a result of training, while those that attended a Conflict/Mediation course were less likely.

### **5.5 Areas in which changes in policies or practices were introduced**

Of those delegates who have revised, reviewed or introduced practices or procedures, four in ten did so in relation to absence or attendance management (40 per cent) and 38 per cent in relation to discipline and grievance. Changes in these areas were also the most common in the 2010 study (65 per cent and 27 per cent retrospectively).

Figure 17 shows the areas in which policies, practices or procedures were changed.

**Figure 17: Areas in which policies, practices or procedures were revised, reviewed or introduced (or plan to introduce)**



*Q6a, base=1203, all respondents where changed policies or practices*

Examples where policies and/or procedures that have been changed or introduced as a result of attending Acas training were demonstrated by the organisations that took part in the follow on case study work.

One of the organisations taking part in the case studies explained that as a result of the training they had introduced a 'fit to work' policy, so that if a person is off sick for health reasons they know the correct way to deal with it.

Another participating organisation explained that following Acas training they had introduced a Dignity at Work Policy, based on Equality and Diversity principles. While for another organisation the training course highlighted the importance and benefits of appraisals and one-to-ones which resulted in them introducing a policy of conducting weekly one-to-ones with each member of staff. One organisation has introduced work rules and they have revised their stress management policy, while another has revised how they deal with diversity in the workforce and how they best engage with employees.

These case study examples illustrate the impact that Acas training courses can have on a delegates' organisation and the employment policies that they put in place.

The next table below shows the area of policies, practices or procedures changed, by the type of change made. Those figures shaded in the table are statistically significantly different than the total or average figures. Delegates were most likely to have made some sort of change to absence or attendance management (40 per cent) and 38 per cent had made some form of adjustment relating to discipline and grievance. This compares to just eight per cent who had made some sort of change to how they handle redundancy.

**Table 6: Areas in which policies, practices or procedures were changed, by the type of change**

	Introduced	Reviewed	Revised	Plan to introduce	Revised practice
Absence or attendance management	47%	45%	47%	47%	41%
Discipline and grievance	42%	41%	42%	40%	44%
Contracts and written statements	40%	34%	37%	37%	31%
Recruitment and selection	31%	25%	28%	30%	27%
Information and consultation	24%	21%	23%	24%	22%
Bullying and harassment	21%	18%	19%	21%	20%
Working parents	29%	19%	22%	20%	16%
Equality or diversity	23%	19%	22%	23%	20%
Redundancy handling	13%	8%	10%	10%	10%
Other	5%	7%	7%	6%	7%
None	0%	0%	0%	<0.5%	<0.5%
Not provided	4%	5%	4%	5%	7%
<b>Q6a, all respondents where changed policies or practices</b>					
<b>Bases</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>731</b>

The table below shows the areas in which policies, practices or procedures were changed, by course topic. Those figures shaded are statistically significant.

As can be expected, for each course topic the most popular change related to the subject of the course itself. For example, delegates who attended a course in Attendance Management made some sort of change to policies, practices or procedures related to absence or attendance management (62 per cent). Similarly, those who attended a course in Employment Law or Recruiting and Employing People were most likely to have made some change in regards to policies, practices or procedures related to contracts and written statements (48 per cent and 77 per cent retrospectively).



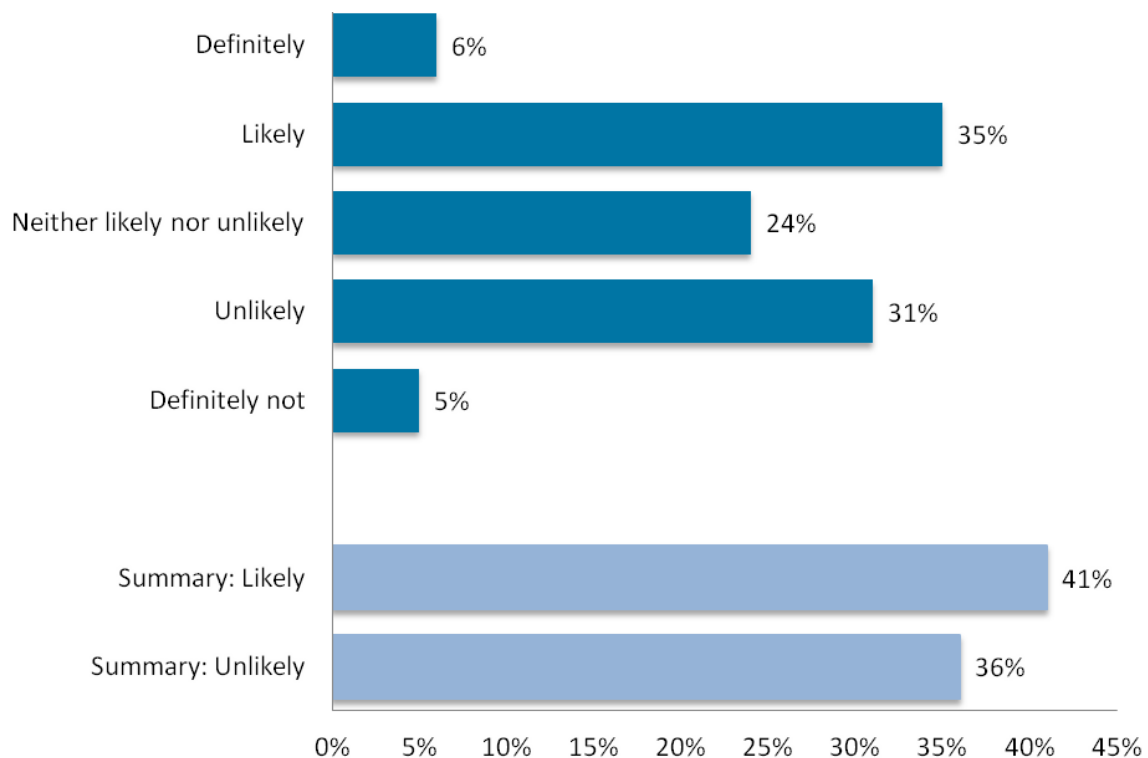
**Table 7: Top three areas in which policies, practices or procedures were changed, by course topic**

<b>Course topic</b>	<b>Top most popular change</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most popular change</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most popular change</b>
<b>Attendance Management</b>	Absence or attendance management (62%)	Discipline and grievance (37%)	Information and consultation (26%)
<b>Conflict / Mediation Issues</b>	Discipline and grievance (63%)	Bullying and harassment (46%)	Absence or attendance management (35%)
<b>Discipline and Grievance</b>	Discipline and grievance (80%)	Absence or attendance management (33%)	Contracts and written statements (20%)
<b>Employment Law</b>	Contracts and written statements (48%)	Absence or attendance management (47%)	Discipline and grievance (33%)
<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	Equality or diversity (65%)	Discipline and grievance (35%)	Bullying and harassment (32%)
<b>Performance Management</b>	Absence or attendance management (31%)	Information and consultation (31%)	Discipline and grievance (28%)
<b>Recruiting and Employing People</b>	Contracts and written statements (77%)	Recruitment and selection (47%)	Absence or attendance management (29%)
<b>Supervision / First Line Management</b>	Discipline and grievance (54%)	Absence or attendance management (42%)	Bullying and harassment (31%)
<b>Working Families / Parental Rights</b>	Working parents (80%)	Absence or attendance management (18%)	Equality or diversity (13%)
<b>Q6a, all respondents where changed policies or practices, bases vary (391-915)</b>			

### **5.6 Whether the changes would have been introduced without the Acas training course**

In order to examine the counterfactual, delegates who reported having made a policy or practice change (or planned to) were asked to say whether they would have been able to make (or be in a position to plan to make) such a change *if they had not attended the Acas training*. Two fifths judged that they would (41 per cent) and a similar proportion (36 per cent) said that they would not. Only a small proportion was sure either way, with six per cent feeling they 'definitely' would and five per cent answering 'definitely not'.

**Figure 18: Likelihood of respondent being able to make changes to policies, practices or procedures if they had not attended the Acas training**

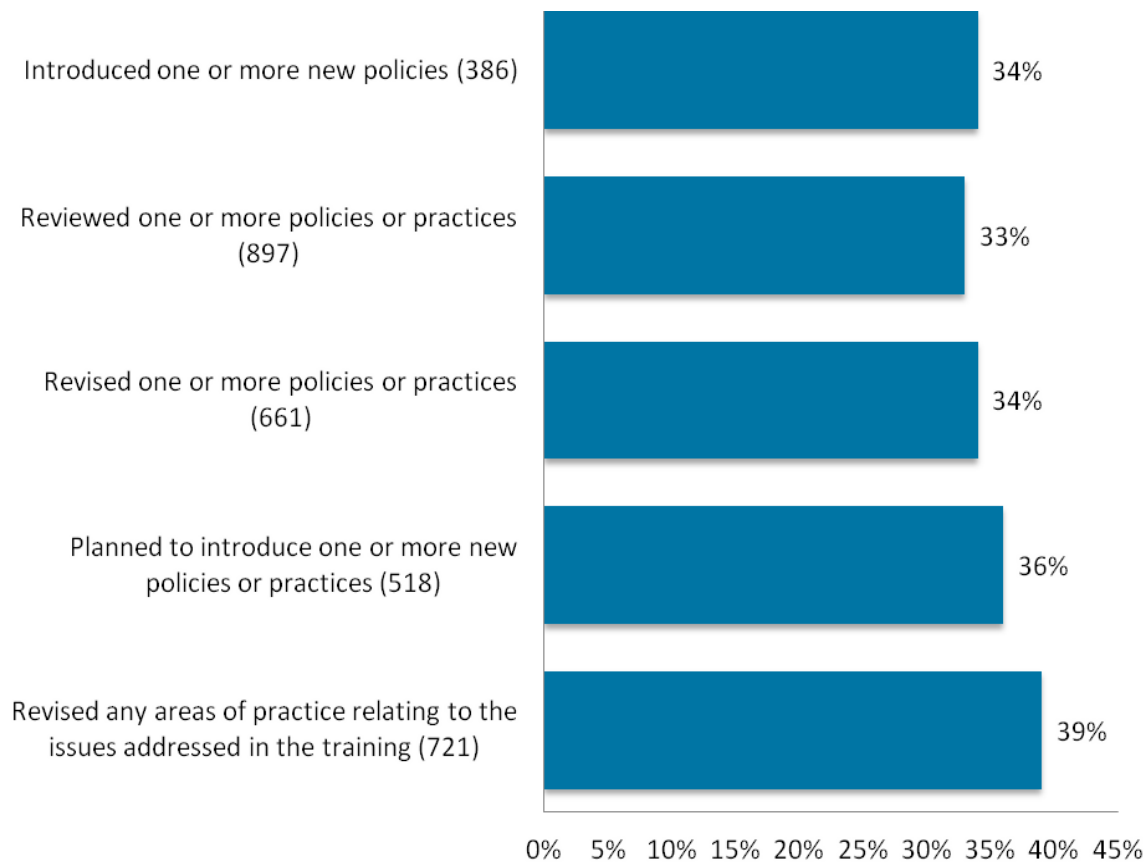


*Q4, base=1185, valid responses where changed policies or practices*

Perhaps not surprisingly, organisations with 250+ employees were more likely to feel that they *would* have been able to make the changes to policies and practices even if they had not attended the Acas training (48 per cent). Similarly, those in a human resource or personnel specialist role were more likely say the same (46 per cent). Delegates attending an Employment Law course were also more likely to feel they *would* have been able to make or plan to make the changes they did (45 per cent), while those attending a Conflict / Mediation course were less likely (24 per cent) i.e. they were more reliant on the training in this regard.

As illustrated in Figure 19, perceived reliance on Acas for effecting change is found to be most pronounced for those who *revised an area of practice* relating to the issues addressed in their training; 39 per cent of these delegates judged that they would have been unable to do this were it not for the Acas training course.

**Figure 19: Proportion unlikely or definitely not likely to be able to make changes to policies, practices or procedures if they had not attended the Acas training, by the type of change**

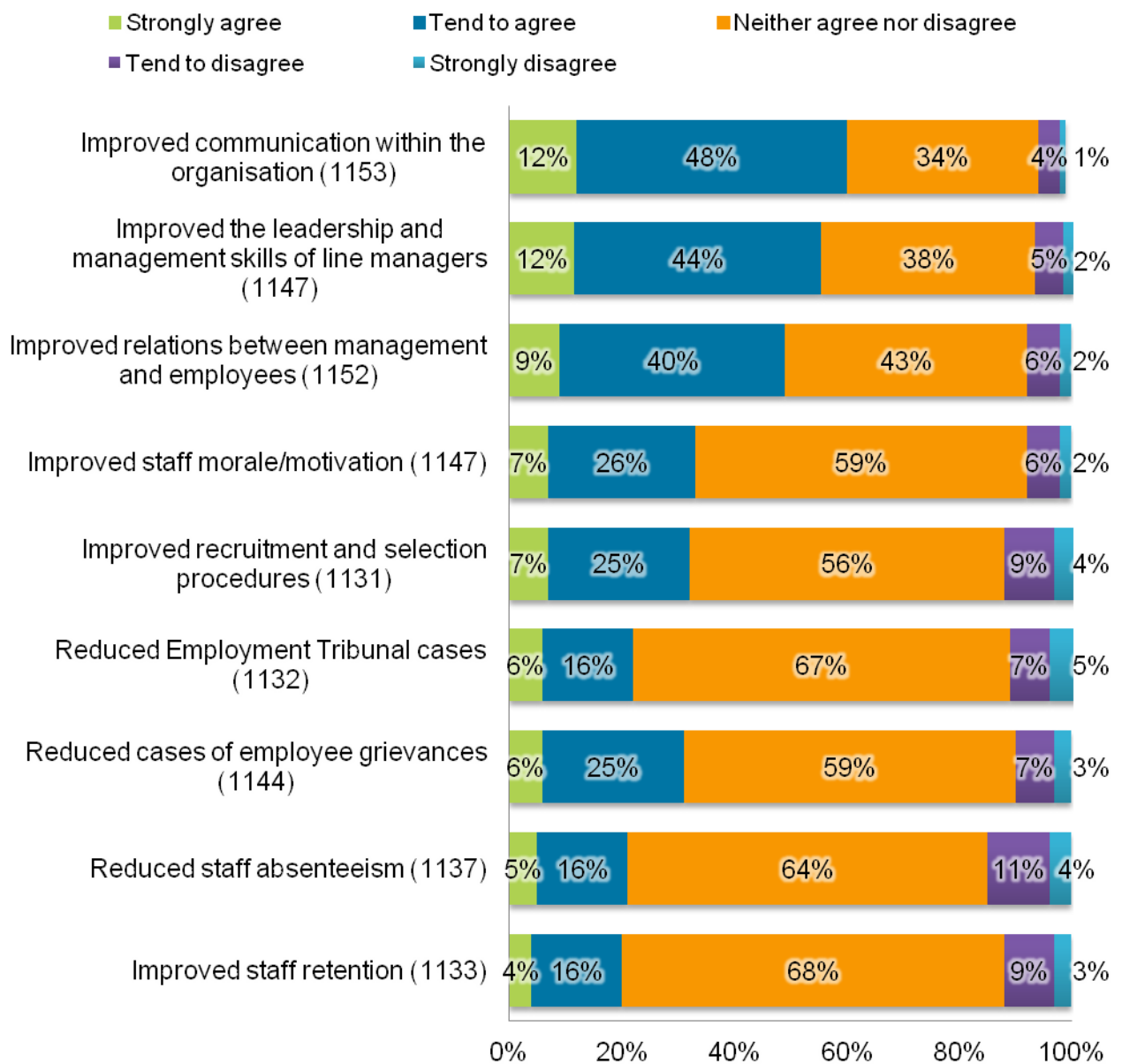


*Q4, bases shown in brackets, valid responses where changed policies or practices*

### **5.7 Agreement that the changes resulted in specific improvements**

Delegates were subsequently asked to what extent they feel that the changes they have made have resulted in various specific improvements in their organisation. At least one in five delegates agreed (to some extent) that the changes they had made had brought about each area of improvement.

**Figure 20: Agreement that the changes resulted in specific improvements in the organisation**



*Q5a, bases shown in brackets, valid responses where changed policies or practices*

A number of differences by course topic are in evidence.

- Those attending a Supervision Management course were the most likely to agree that the changes have resulted in improved communication skills within the organisation (73 per cent).
- Delegates attending a Discipline and Grievance course were more likely to agree that the changes have improved the leadership and management skills of line managers (36 per cent), while those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were significantly less likely (10 per cent) to say this.
- Delegates attending an Attendance / Absence Management course were more likely to feel that the changes have resulted in improved relations between

management and employees (35 per cent), while those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were significantly less likely (nine per cent) to say this.

- Those attending a Conflict / Mediation course were more likely to agree that the changes have improved staff morale and motivation (44 per cent), while those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were significantly less likely (15 per cent) to say this.
- Delegates attending an Attendance / Absence Management course were significantly more likely to agree that the changes have improved recruitment and selection procedures (40 per cent).
- Those attending a Supervision Management course were the most likely to agree that the changes have resulted in reduced employment tribunal cases (75 per cent).
- Those attending a Performance Management course (71 per cent) or an Attendance / Absence Management course (69 per cent) were more likely to agree that the changes have resulted in reduced cases of employee grievances.
- Those attending a course in Recruiting / Contracting People were the most likely to agree that the changes made have resulted in reduced staff absenteeism (65 per cent), while delegates attending a Supervision Management course (77 per cent) or a Performance Management course (76 per cent) were the most likely to agree that the changes made have resulted in improved staff retention.

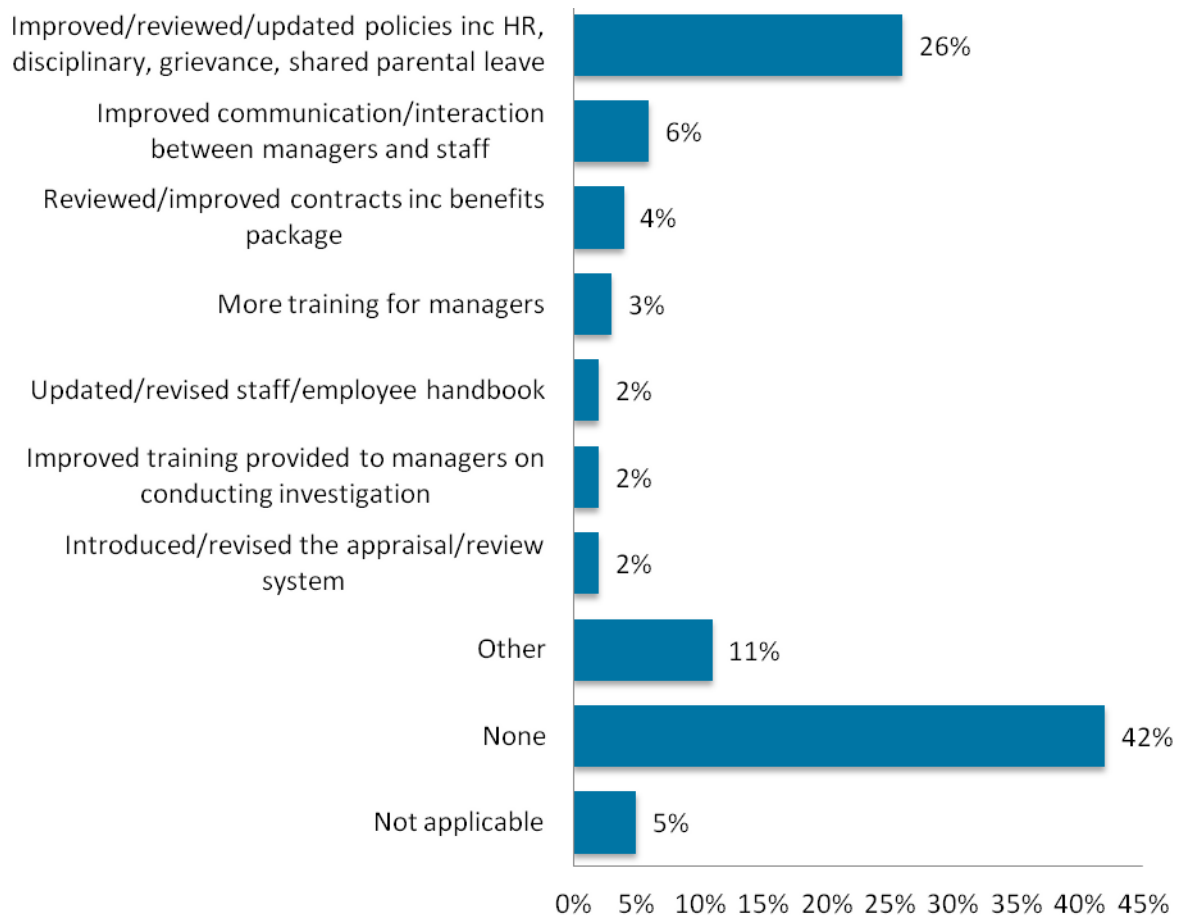
Table 8 below shows the proportions of delegates who agreed that specific improvements in the organisation had been affected by the changes they had made, by the type of change they made. Sixty per cent of delegates had improved the communication within the organisation as a result of the changes made; this is twice as many as in the 2010 survey (30 per cent). Over half of delegates had improved the leadership and management skills of line managers (56 per cent).

**Table 8: Proportion strongly agreeing or tending to agree with specific improvements in the organisation, by the type of change**

	Total	Introduced	Reviewed	Revised	Plan to introduce	Revised areas relating to training
Improved communication within the organisation	60%	72%	63%	67%	67%	65%
Improved the leadership and management skills of line managers	56%	60%	56%	58%	58%	60%
Improved relations between management and employees	49%	60%	51%	54%	56%	55%
Improved staff morale/motivation	33%	41%	33%	37%	41%	38%
Improved recruitment and selection procedures	31%	41%	35%	38%	41%	35%
Reduced Employment Tribunal cases	22%	28%	23%	25%	24%	27%
Reduced cases of employee grievances	31%	40%	33%	35%	34%	35%
Reduced staff absenteeism	21%	30%	24%	26%	26%	25%
Improved staff retention	21%	30%	22%	24%	24%	24%
<b>Q5a, valid responses where changed policies or practices</b>						
<b>Bases vary (369-1153)</b>						

Delegates were asked to say if there were any other changes they have made that have resulted in other improvements in their organisation. A quarter of delegates said that they *had* additionally improved, reviewed or updated policies including HR, disciplinary, grievance, and shared parental leave (26 per cent).

**Figure 21: Changes made that resulted in other improvements in the organisation**

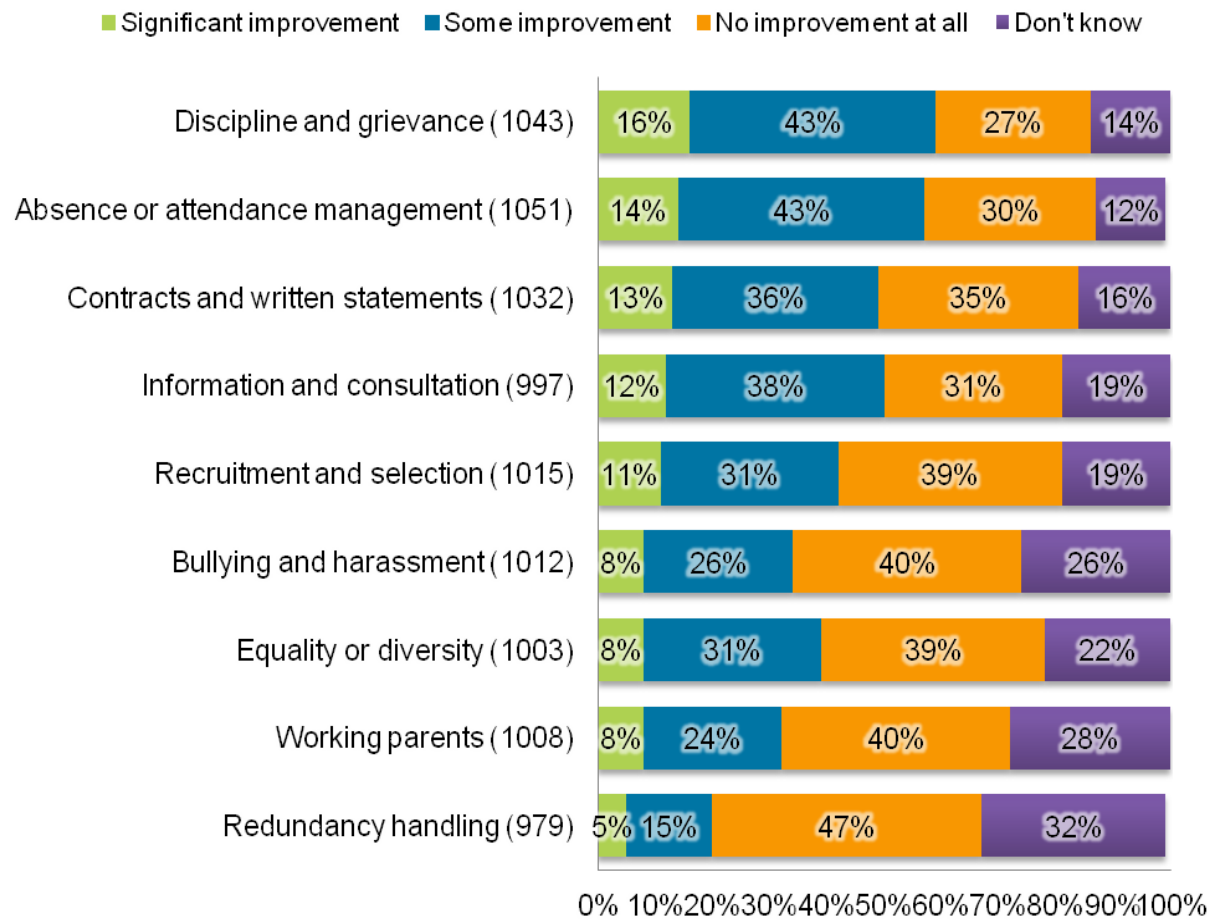


*Q5b, base=290, valid responses where changed policies or practices*

### **5.8 Improvements in performance as a result of the changes to policies or practices**

Delegates were asked to what extent they feel the training they attended improved their performance in relation to implementing or administering specific policies, practices and procedures in their organisation. At least one in five delegates felt that the training has improved their performance across all areas to at least some extent.

**Figure 22: Level of improvement to performance of specific areas by implementing changes**



*Q6b, bases shown in brackets, valid responses where changed policies or practices*

Not surprisingly, and in line with the 2010 survey findings, the results here show good alignment between course topics and performance improvements related to those very topics:

- Those attending an Attendance / Absence Management course were significantly more likely to feel they have made a significant improvement with regards to absence or attendance management (25 per cent), while delegates attending a Conflict / Mediation course were more likely to feel they have made a significant improvement to bullying and harassment (22 per cent).
- Similarly, those attending a course in Recruiting / Contracting People were more likely to feel they have significantly improved performance in relation to contracts and written statements (34 per cent).
- Delegates attending a course in Discipline and Grievance were more likely to feel they have made significant improvement to this area (35 per cent), whereas those attending an Employment Law course (12 per cent) or a Working Families / Parental Rights course (0 per cent) were significantly less likely.
- Those attending a course in Equality and Diversity were more likely to have made a significant improvement in relation to this area (21 per cent).



- Delegates attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were less likely to feel they have made significant improvement in relation to information and consultation (three per cent).
- Those attending a course in Recruiting / Contracting People were more likely to feel they have significantly improved performance in relation to recruitment and selection (23 per cent), while those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were significantly less likely (0 per cent).
- Those attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were also less likely to have made significant improvement in relation to redundancy handling (0 per cent). However, delegates attending a Working Families / Parental Rights course were unsurprisingly more likely to feel they have made a significant improvement in relation to this topic, while those attending a Conflict / Mediation course were significantly less likely (0 per cent).

Organisations involved in the case study work claimed that the training has resulted in improved performance in relation to:

- absence and attendance;
- bullying and harassment;
- equality and diversity;
- working parents;
- contracts and written statements;
- discipline and grievance;
- information and consultation; and
- recruitment and selection.

Some organisations highlighted improved performance in a number of the areas listed above, illustrating that the Acas training can have multiple areas of impact.

The table below shows the proportions of delegates reporting that they have made a significant performance improvement, by the type of change they made. Around a quarter of delegates who had introduced one or more new policies felt that the Acas training had significantly improved their performance in relation to implementing or administering policies, practices or procedures related to discipline and grievance, and absence or attendance management (24 per cent).

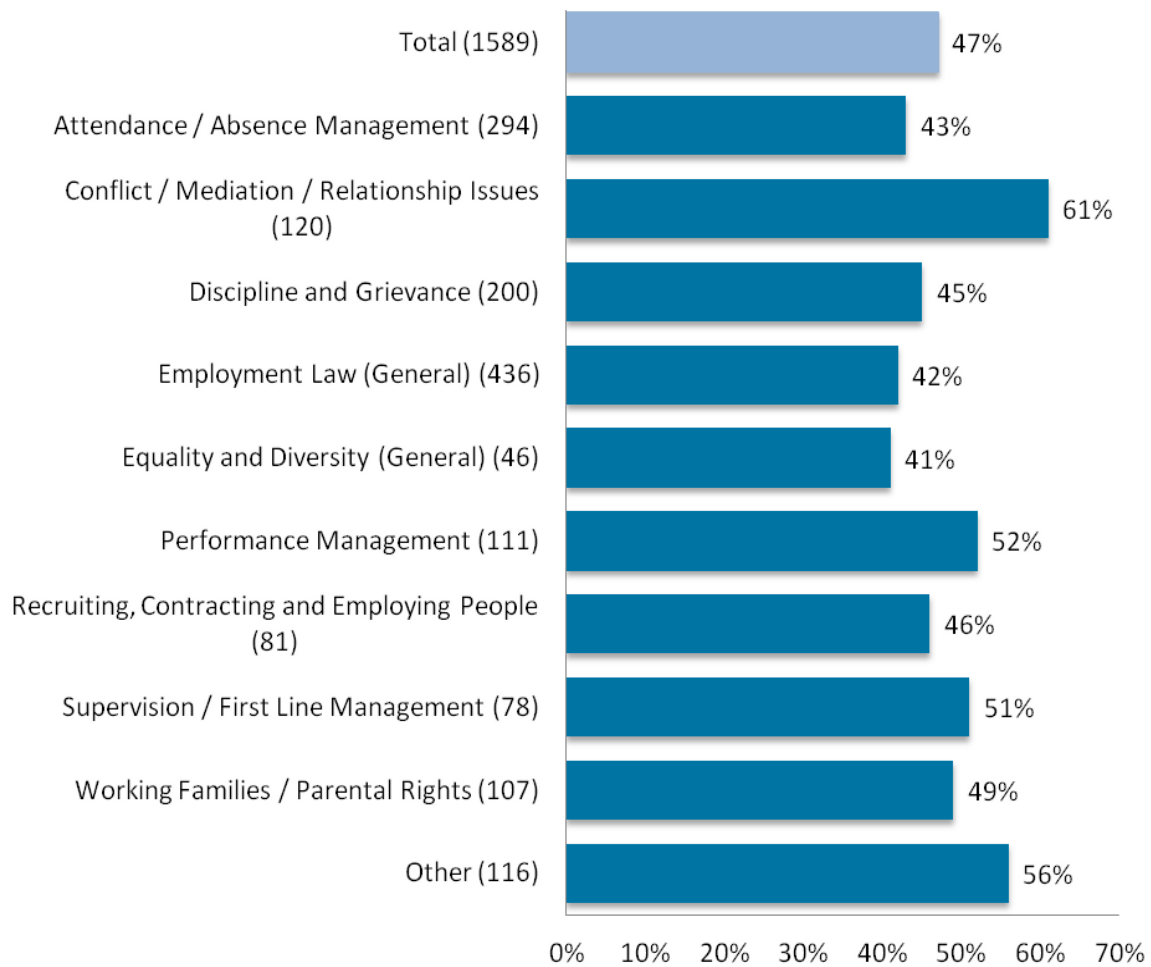
**Table 9: Proportion saying significant improvement to performance of specific areas by implementing changes, by the type of change**

	Introduced	Reviewed	Revised	Plan to introduce	Revised areas relating to training
<b>Discipline and grievance</b>	24%	17%	18%	17%	20%
<b>Absence or attendance management</b>	24%	15%	17%	18%	17%
<b>Contracts and written statements</b>	23%	15%	17%	18%	17%
<b>Information and consultation</b>	19%	13%	15%	16%	14%
<b>Recruitment and selection</b>	19%	12%	14%	17%	14%
<b>Bullying and harassment</b>	13%	8%	10%	11%	9%
<b>Equality or diversity</b>	14%	9%	10%	10%	9%
<b>Working parents</b>	17%	9%	11%	11%	9%
<b>Redundancy handling</b>	10%	5%	7%	7%	7%
<b>Q6b, valid responses where changed policies or practices</b>					
<b>Bases vary (979-1119)</b>					

### 5.9 Actions taken as a result of attending the Acas training

Respondents were asked whether they had taken actions as a result of attending the Acas training which they felt had 'improved the performance of their organisation'. Just under half (47 per cent) of all respondents confirmed having taken such action. Those attending a Conflict / Mediation course were significantly more likely to have taken actions that have improved organisational performance (61 per cent), whereas delegates attending an Employment Law course were significantly less likely (42 per cent).

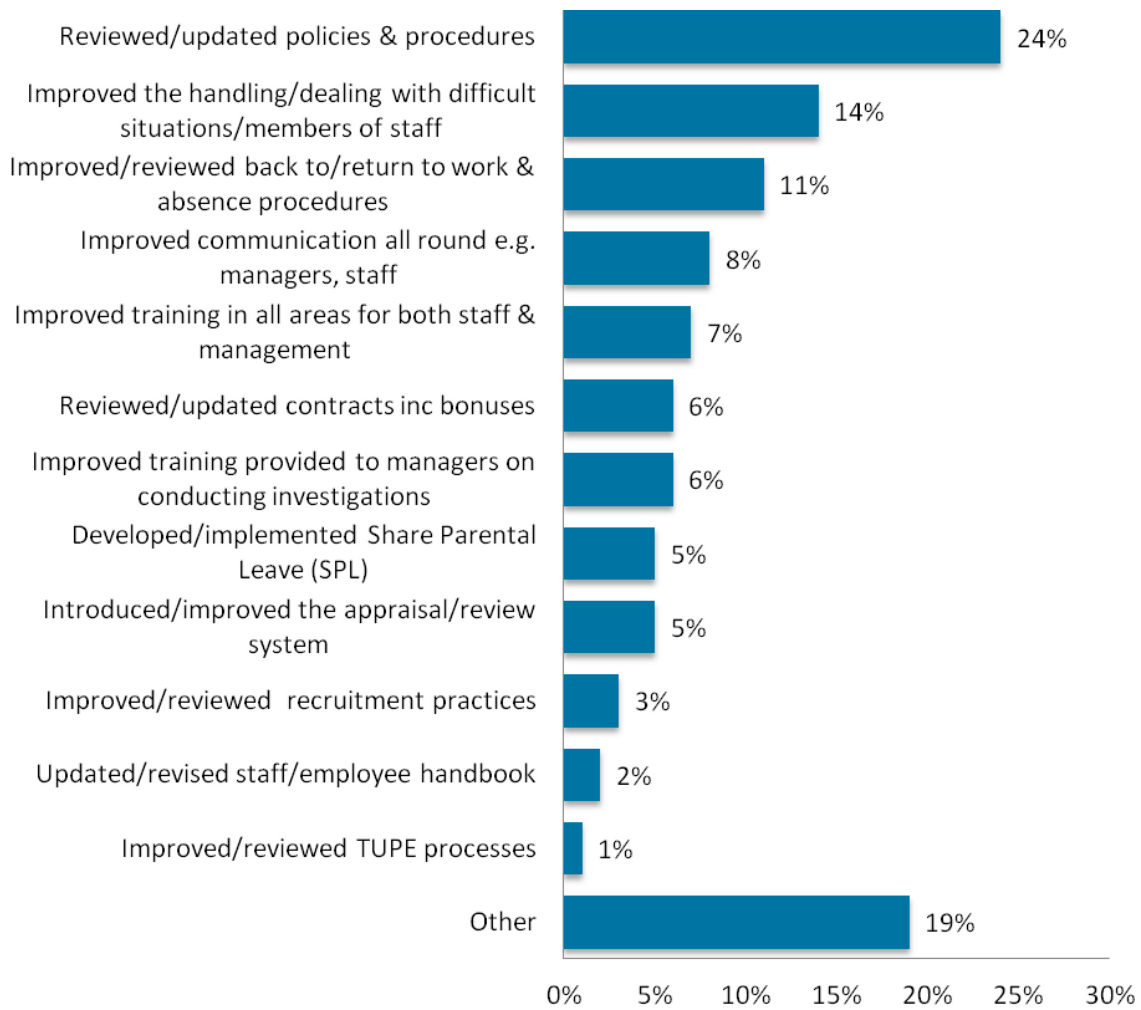
**Figure 23: Proportion of respondents who have taken actions as a result of attending the Acas training which has improved the performance of the organisation, by course topic**



*Q10a, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

Delegates were subsequently asked to give details about the actions leading to improvements in organisational performance. The most typical action undertaken was reviewing or updating policies and procedures, with a quarter of delegates citing this (24 per cent). More than one in ten delegates said they had improved the way they handle and deal with difficult situations or members of staff (14 per cent) and improved or reviewed return to work and absence procedures (11 per cent).

**Figure 24: Actions undertaken which have improved the performance of the organisation**



Q10b, base=219, valid responses

## 6. Alternative Course Availability

### 6.1 Key findings

- A quarter of delegates feel that they would have been able to find similar training elsewhere (24 per cent).
- Over seven in ten delegates feel it is likely that they would have attended alternative training if Acas had not provided the course they attended (72 per cent).
- Four in ten feel that Acas is generally cheaper than other providers (39 per cent).

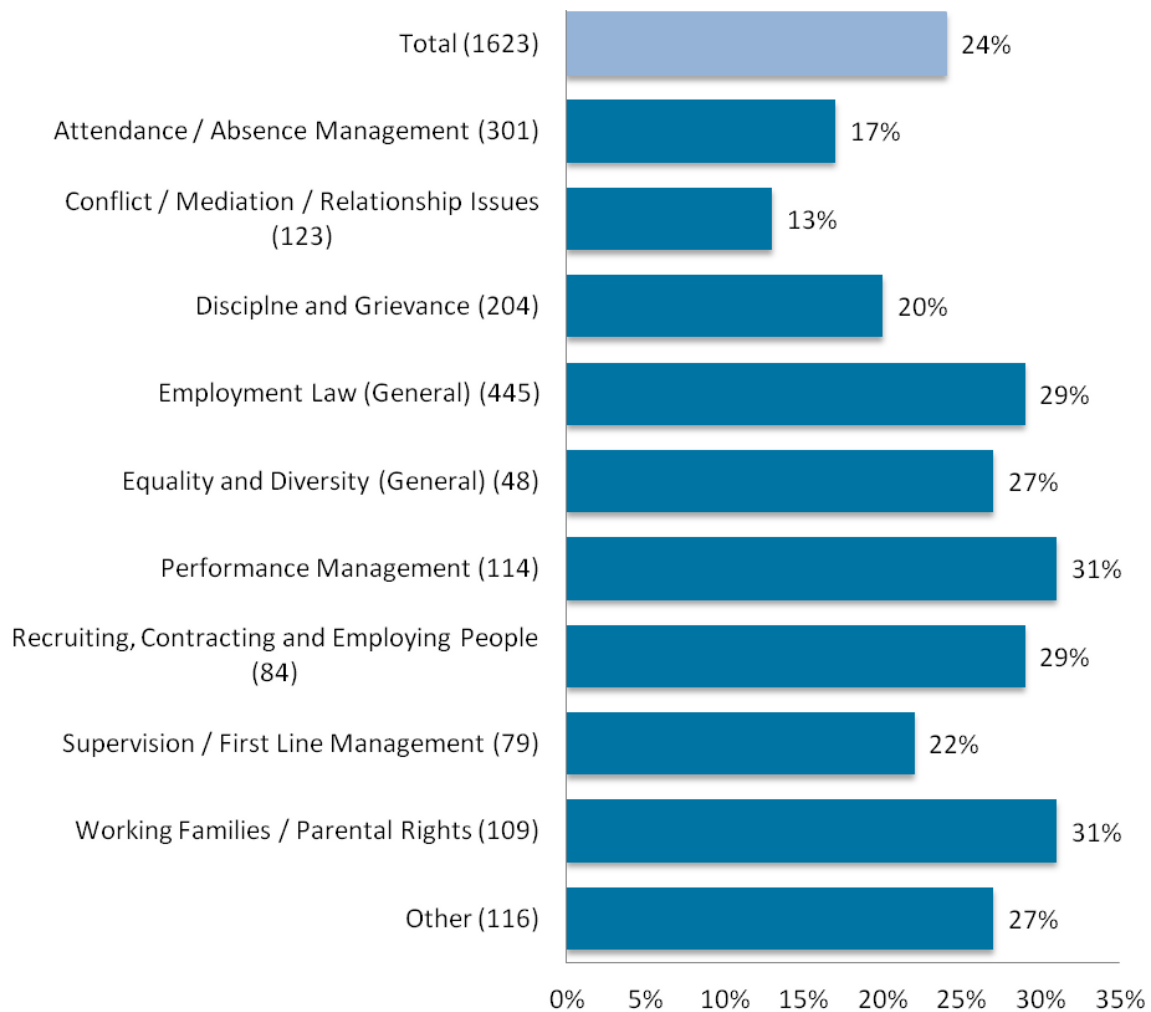
### 6.2 Whether able to find similar training elsewhere

When asked if they thought that they would have been able to find similar training to the Acas course they attended elsewhere, a quarter of delegates answered 'No' (24 per cent), with the same proportion saying 'Yes' (24 per cent) and half saying that they didn't know (51 per cent). One organisation involved in the subsequent case study work highlighted that they cannot think of anywhere else they could go to get the same range of expertise as Acas.

The survey findings show that delegates attending a course in Employment Law were significantly more likely to feel that they *would* have been able to find similar training elsewhere (29 per cent), as were those in a human resource or personnel specialist role (30 per cent).

However, those most likely to judge that they would *not* have been able to source equivalent training elsewhere were delegates who attended a Conflict/Mediation course (36 per cent) and those in an owner/manager role (35 per cent).

**Figure 25: Proportion of respondents who think they *would* have been able to find similar training elsewhere, by course topic**

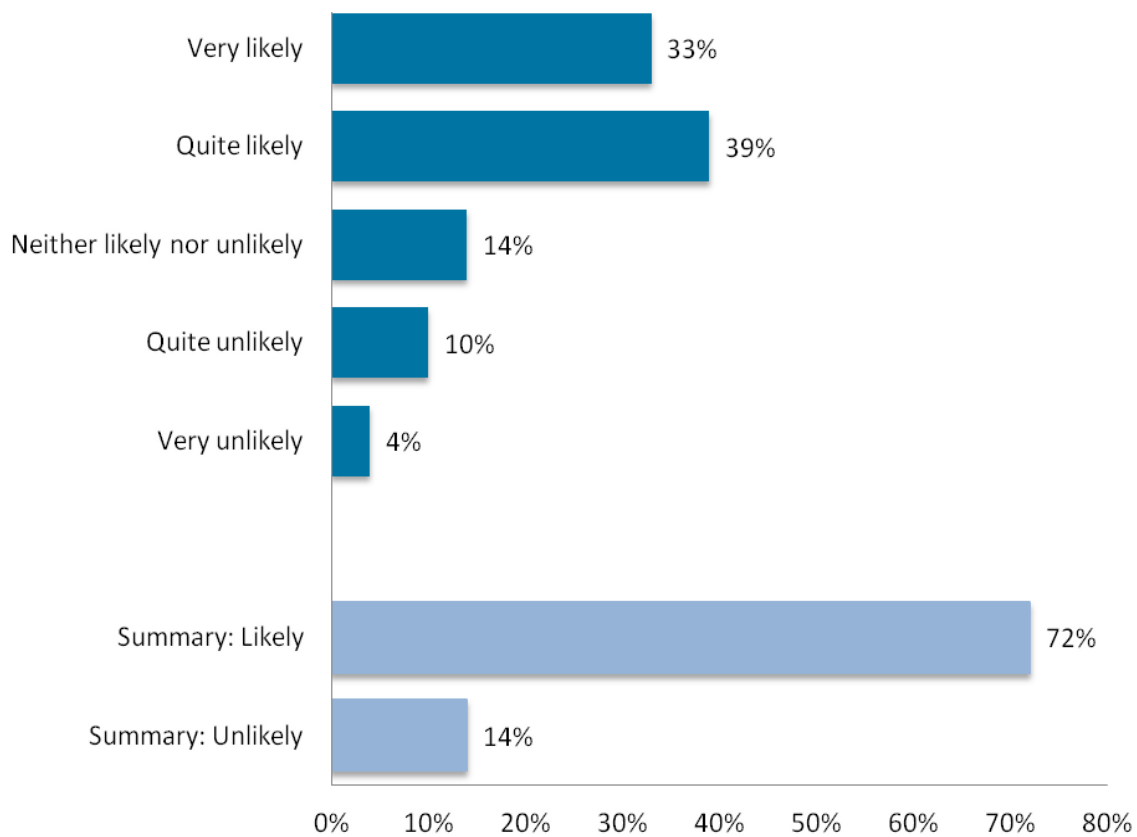


*Q7, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

### **6.3 Likelihood of attending alternative training if Acas had not provided the course**

Delegates who feel they would have been able to find similar training elsewhere were subsequently asked how likely it is that they would have attended this alternative training if Acas had not provided the course they attended. Over seven in ten delegates feel it is likely that they would have attended this alternative training (72 per cent); with a third saying it is very likely (33 per cent). Those attending a course in Employment Law were particularly prone to say they are likely to attend the alternative training (82 per cent); more so than any other group. However, 94 per cent of delegates on this type of course were satisfied, illustrating that this may simply be a reflection of the fact that it is quite a generic course rather than a result of their dissatisfaction.

**Figure 26: Likelihood that the respondent would have attended the alternative training if Acas had not provided the course**



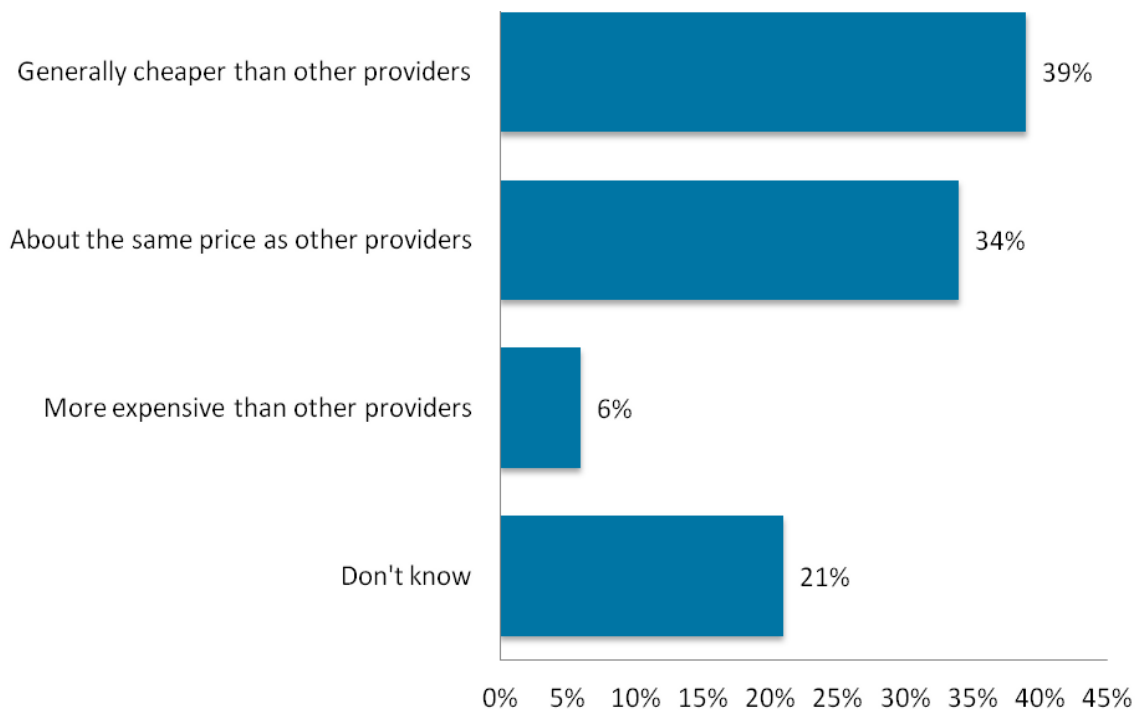
*Q8, base=389, valid responses where would have been able to find similar training elsewhere*

#### **6.4 Perceptions of the cost of Acas' training events vs. other training providers**

When asked to compare Acas' training events to other similar training providers delegates have experienced in terms of costs, judged that Acas is 'generally cheaper than other providers' (39 per cent) and a third feel that Acas is 'about the same price as other providers' (34 per cent). Only six percent of delegates thought that Acas was more expensive than other training providers. It is notable that delegates in a human resource or personnel specialist role – arguably those most exposed generally to training provision – were significantly more likely to feel that Acas training is generally cheaper than other providers (47 per cent).

**Figure 27: How Acas' training events compare to other similar training providers in terms of costs**

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*Q9, base=389, valid responses where would have been able to find similar training elsewhere*



## 7.Channels of Delivery

### 7.1 Key findings

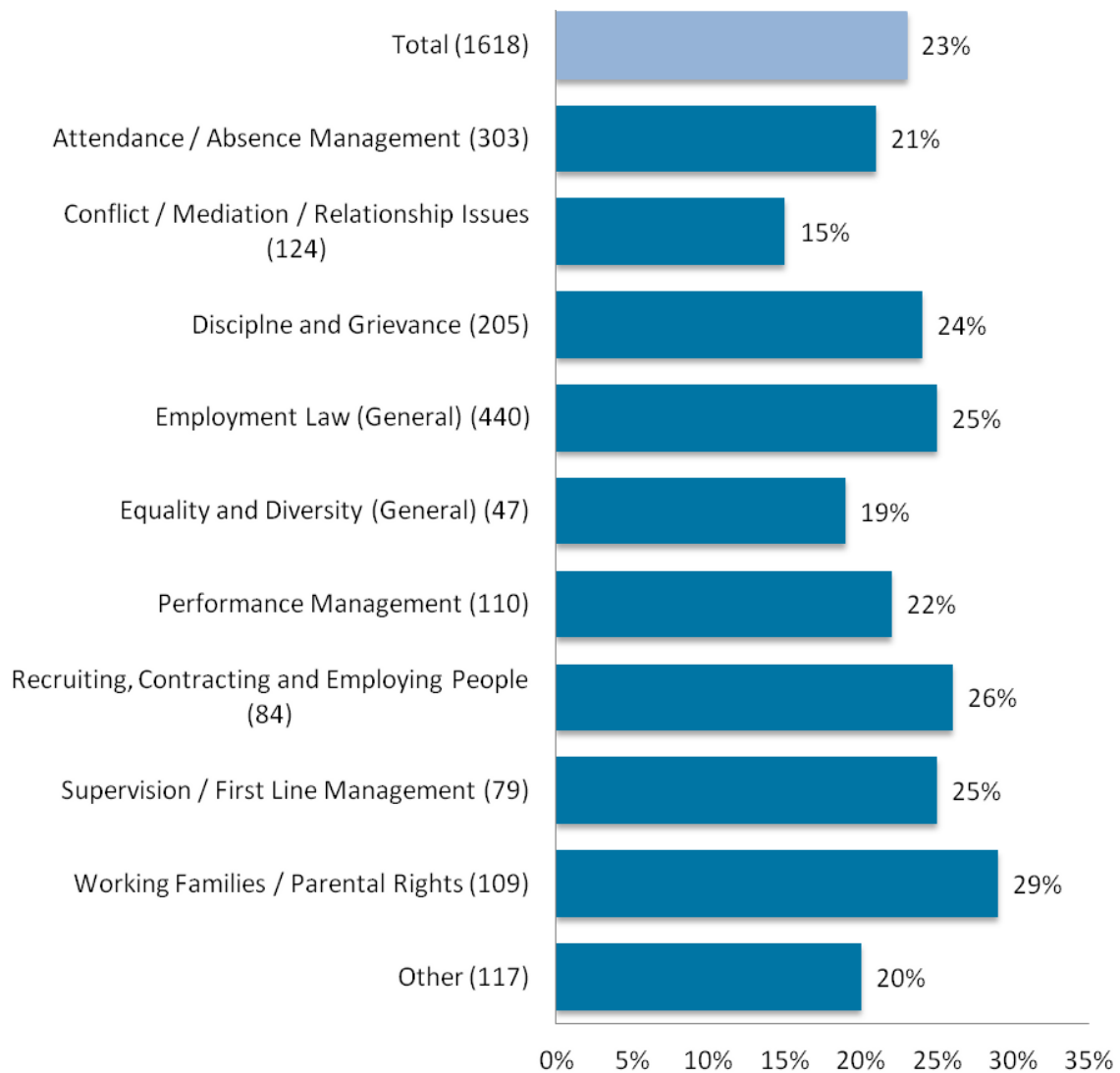
- Around a quarter of delegates would have considered attending the course they attended if it had been delivered as a webinar (23 per cent).
- Less than one in ten delegates have taken one of Acas' e-learning courses (nine per cent).

### 7.2 Consideration of taking part in a webinar

Delegates were asked if they would have considered taking the course they attended if it had been delivered over the internet through video conferencing software, in the form of a 'webinar'. Around a quarter of delegates said that they *would* have considered attending the course if it had been delivered as a webinar (23 per cent) with a further 29 per cent saying 'maybe'. However, more than four in ten delegates said that they would not have consumed the training in this way (45 per cent). Those attending a Conflict / Mediation course are significantly *less* likely to consider attending the course if it had been delivered as a webinar (15 per cent).

Those in a human resource or personnel specialist role were significantly more likely to answer 'Yes' to this question (27 per cent). Although not significant, a higher proportion of delegates in the financial sector answered 'Yes' to this question (29 per cent), and a higher proportion of those in the hotels and restaurants sector answered either 'Yes' or 'Maybe' with regards to this question (25 per cent and 36 per cent retrospectively).

**Figure 28: Proportion of respondents who would have considered attending the course if it had been delivered as a webinar**

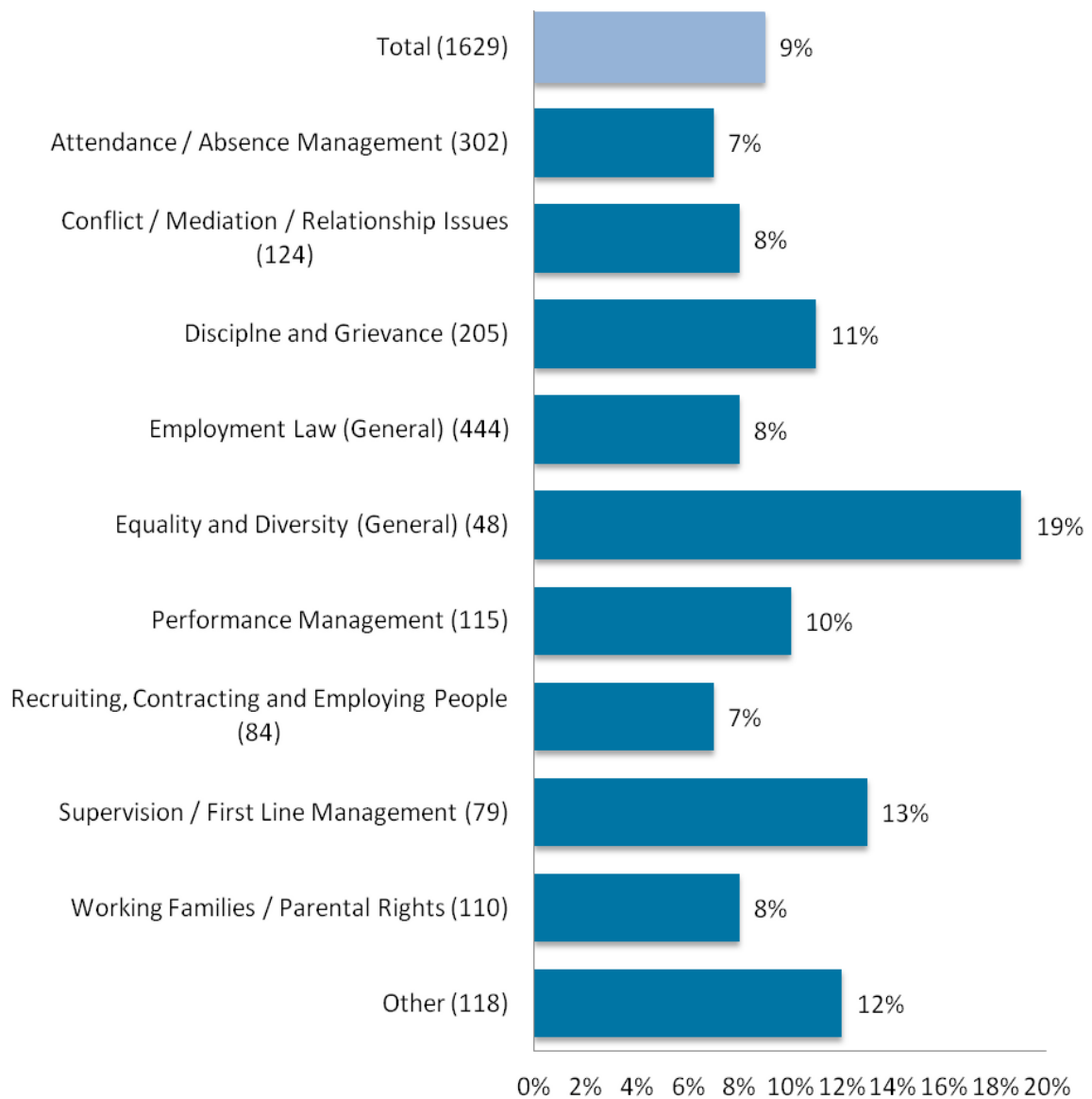


*Q20, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

### **7.3 Participation in Acas' e-learning courses**

Less than one in ten delegates confirmed having previously taken one of Acas' online e-learning courses (nine per cent). Those in a human resource or personnel specialist role (12 per cent) and those attending a course in Equality and Diversity (19 per cent) were significantly more likely to have taken an Acas' e-learning course in the past.

**Figure 29: Proportion of respondents who have taken an Acas' e-learning course**



*Q21, bases shown in brackets, valid responses*

## **8. Other Comments**

Finally, delegates were asked to suggest any improvements that would help to increase the impact of the training on them or their organisation.

- A quarter of delegates only had positive comments to make regarding the training rather than make suggestions for improvements (24 per cent).
- One in ten delegates feel that courses need to be more in-depth for the subjects covered (11 per cent).
- Eight per cent of delegates expressed their preference for face-to-face or classroom based learning.
- Seven per cent said they need the courses to be more local to them in terms of their location.
- Four per cent voiced their opinion that webinars and online training are a good idea.

## 9. Case Studies

### 9.1 Case Study 1

#### Background to the organisation

Greenfylde First School is based in Bristol and caters for children aged two to four years before they transition into school. The school has seven members of staff and is situated on a school site. They have 24 children per session, with approximately 67 on roll.

#### Role of participant

The member of staff who took part in the training is in charge of running the preschool. They joined the school three and a half years ago as deputy leader and were promoted to preschool leader in March 2015. They manage the education side and health and safety maintenance. They are also responsible for keeping up-to-date with appraisal supervisions. They negotiate with the head teacher to make sure everything is completed to Ofsted standards.

#### Participation in the Open Access Training

One member of staff from Greenfylde First School – its newly appointed preschool leader – took part in the Essential Skills for Line Managers training session. The training took place at the beginning of September 2015 and lasted for one day. The role of leader had become available in the school and therefore they chose to take part in the training session to learn the appropriate leadership skills as they had never been in a leadership position before. They had signed up to receive emails from Acas by their own volition and as such became aware of the training through direct mail.

The training session covered procedures such as discipline and grievance, and absence and attendance management. They thought the style of delivery was excellent. The Acas trainer did a couple of 'ice-breakers' that they have subsequently used in internal staff training and staff meetings at the school. The feedback from staff has been very positive. The trainer presented the training session using visual aids, for example flip charts. They liked the fact that participants were from different sectors, all wanting to achieve the same result from the day. Overall, their perceptions of the training were very positive;

*"I learned a lot, there was a lot of paperwork given at the end as well, which was good to refer back to, because it is a lot to take in. Also, he [the Acas trainer] gave me his details as well...there was actually that chance to help after the course as well."*

As well as the trainer using flip charts to get the message across, they set group tasks to get all the participants talking and thinking. As a result of attending the training they have introduced a fit to work policy so that if a person is off sick for health reasons they know the correct way to deal with it. Also, when dealing with discipline and grievance they follow the guidelines defined in the information booklet that Acas provided.

#### Impact of the training

The participant feels they have a good understanding of the subjects addressed at the training, and, as a result is more confident in dealing with matters linked to the training. Prior to the training the school was in need of some improvement. Some of the things

learned on the course have helped get the school to where they are now. They work a lot better as a team and they have learned that communication is vital. In addition, the training was said to have resulted in improved performance in relation to:

- absence and attendance;
- bullying and harassment;
- equality and diversity; and
- working parents

#### Improved absence and attendance

The school was said to have previously had a high number of staff absences; including some who were absent because their children were ill. Since the training, nobody has been off sick and nobody is under disciplinary and grievance due to improved communication and their open door policy.

*"Since January it's all resolved. Since then I've had no absences and no grievances, and problems and issues are solved."*

#### Improved bullying and harassment procedures

Regarding bullying and harassment, the participant has now implemented the philosophy learned during the training programme that you need to talk about any issues and deal with the problem before it escalates. Members of staff are more open and honest with each other and let one another know if they did not deal with a situation in the right way.

*"With bullying, we did have incidences. Everyone's not perfect, but I've got the philosophy now, where I learned on the course, that if something is wrong you need to talk about it. That's where in the past we never did."*

#### Improved equality and diversity

Regarding equality and diversity, the school is making sure that all staff work the same number of hours, have the same number of key children, and roles and responsibilities are divided equally. In the past this was not the case and it used to cause problems within the team.

*"In the past, before December, it wasn't [equal], because of different reasons. That used to cause problems within the team, but now everybody has their own fair share and everyone's happy hopefully."*

### Improved communication with working parents

To aid working parents, the school has implemented an online journal that parents can access, detailing observations and progress of their child. The journal also allows parents to add their own comments and observations. Due to this improved communication staff notice any problems parents may have and address them accordingly, which has resulted in improved trust and friendship between parents and staff.

*"We've introduced new technology, so they can view their child's journals. Basically they're observations and things and communication. They know we have suggestion boxes and any problems, they know who to go to."*

Since the individual took part in the training and took up the role as preschool leader, staff morale and motivation are said to have improved. This was attributed to the leader having a lot more respect from the team and hence giving praise when needed. Staff are said to feel that the leader listens to their ideas and is very tactical when it comes to staff discipline. This improved listening and communication with staff was said to have led to reduced employment tribunal cases, improved staff retention, reduced cases of employee grievances, and has improved relations between management and employees. Furthermore, leadership and management skills of line managers are said to have improved through the individual sharing what they learned during the Acas training.

The key lessons the organisation has learned to date since introducing the changes discussed are related to the subjects addressed at the training;

*"I suppose because it helped immensely, after I did the training, the fit for work and the disciplinary and grievances."*

The individual learned various particular skills for being a manager during the training;

*"I think it's just listening. Also, if anyone has any problems or issues, just work out together how to deal with them. Make sure you make their potential, get what they need. You've got to help them, because you don't want them off sick, because otherwise you've got no staff."*

### Summary of the main benefits

The benefits of attending the training are that it provided the knowledge required for being a leader or line manager for the first time and the participant now feels confident in what to do. They cannot think of any way in which the training could have been improved and feel the most valuable aspect of the training was learning the right way to approach and handle situations. Being able to access support from the Acas advisor after the training was particularly useful in reassuring they are following the right procedures. The participant is interested in using Acas services again in the future; the head teacher at the school is keen for them to build on their leadership skills.

## 9.2 Case Study 2

### Background to the organisation

Citizens Advice Gateshead has 73 staff; 40 of whom are full time and 33 are part time. As a charity they provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

### Role of participant

The member of staff who took part in the training is the operations manager and has responsibility for human resources among a number of other things. They are responsible for health and safety, information assurance and data protection, equality and diversity, and quality assurance. They do a lot of report writing for senior managers based on research and analysis carried out, for example on clinical commissioning group projects.

They have worked in this role for four years, but have worked for Citizens Advice for ten years. They started working for Citizens Advice as an admin worker, before applying for the opportunity to be a debt advisor. As they had a business background Citizens Advice realised they were capable of more and they became a service delivery manager, responsible for performance and reaching targets. They have since progressed to their current role of operations manager.

### Participation in the Open Access Training

One member of staff – the operations manager – from Citizens Advice Gateshead took part in the 'Equality Act – The essentials' training. This was the first Acas training course they took part in, but have since taken part in Shared Parental Leave, Employment Law Changes, Conducting Investigations, and Absence and Attendance Management. Other employees in the organisation have taken part in the Having Difficult Conversations training.

The representative decided to take part in the 'Equality Act – The essentials' training because they had no experience in some requirements of their job role, as they are not qualified in human resources. For example, it was necessary for the participant to ensure that the law is adhered to with regards to equality and diversity because violations of the equality act can lead to some very serious outcomes. It was important they understood what an equality policy should contain and how to apply the principles of it in the workplace.

*"I could read about this on our Citizens Advice website if I wanted to, we've got it all on there, but what I've said to my chief exec on a number of occasions, ACAS has the practical experience of applying it in the workforce, which is a very different matter than just theoretically reading what it's about, which is what I would get from just reading from our website."*

The Equality Act training taught how to treat people fairly and how to avoid discrimination. It started with the definitions in the Equality Act, what is required, and then it looked at areas where discrimination can occur and some ideas on how to avoid that by getting policies and practices right, and making sure that people are trained. The training helped the participant understand what direct and indirect discrimination is in particular. There were some practical exercises where participants were given scenarios to analyse which helped them to apply the principles that they had learnt.



The Acas tutor used a visual presentation to deliver the information, which involved quite a lot of audience participation which was good as it allowed people to share their experiences. This was particularly valued as there were organisations from both the public and private sector, so they got to hear a lot of different experiences, approaches, and different points of view.

*"It's an opportunity to see and hear people outside of your own experience and I think that's quite important."*

Participants got to take material away with them, including a copy of the presentation, which is useful to have as a reference. The training gave the participant a very good understanding of the requirements of the equality act, which is vital as equality is embedded in everything Citizens Advice do. The organisation is required to present an equality and diversity strategy and can be subject to audit on that because as a member of a national organisation, although they run their own business, they still have membership requirements so periodically people will come and check not only that they have this strategy, but that they are implementing it. Recently the organisation lost some funding which resulted in a redundancy issue. This is an instance where the participant had to make sure that everything is applied as it should be in the interest of equality.

As a result of attending the training, the participant has introduced a Dignity at Work Policy which is based on Equality and Diversity principles. The policy starts by explaining the legal framework around it, and then it discusses individuals' responsibilities at work and behaviour; for example concerning gender identity, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. The policy explains step by step what to do if discrimination occurs, from receiving the complaint about discrimination, appointing an investigator, compiling evidence; handling the matter all the way through. Subsequently they discuss early conciliation and employment tribunal claims, and mediation. In this policy they have included a link directly to the Acas website for further information.

The participant thought a number of aspects of the training worked well;

*"I think what worked well was the venue, the timetable, the agenda of the training. You know you had a proper format for what you were going to go through. The handouts were very good, the audience participation was excellent, that was very well facilitated by all of the trainers, so the opportunity for people to express points of view, explain what happens in their workplace, ask questions."*

They felt that the case studies in particular were very good because they got an opportunity to sit in a group setting, discuss what actions they would take and then it was assessed at the end.

*"I think the fact that they're not just trainers from a book. They're hands on people who have practical examples and experience that they can give you and I think that's a real strength of that training."*

The only criticism the participant has of the training is that sometimes the Acas tutor spent too much time on audience participation, which resulted in the training being rushed towards the end.

### Impact of the training

After attending the training, the participant started to put policies and procedures in place straight away. When the organisation is in financial difficulty they apply for funding. The funding applications ask for evidence of quality, evidence of equality and diversity, and evidence of health and safety. The Acas training has enabled them to introduce policies and procedures that are correct so that they can confidently provide that evidence. As well as using the policies introduced for funding applications, they have used them to gain accreditations and they are now perceived as a much more rigorous corporate organisation than they were.

As a business they have expanded over the last three years, and the participant is responsible for ensuring new staff understand policy procedures. Having policies and procedures in place has helped them to add information to their staff handbook that is given to new staff, to make it more up to date. The training has helped the participant to change the induction procedure for staff to make sure that the essential areas are all covered.

The training was said to have improved the organisation's performance in relation to working parents. They have achieved this through their Shared Parental Leave policy which allows male employees as well as female employees to have time off work after the birth/adoption of a child.

*"What it's helped me to do is improve the perception of what's available for working parents, I perhaps would put it. At the minute I'm looking at working carers and seeing how I can do exactly the same for them because I want to come over as an organisation that's family friendly."*

The training was said to have contributed to the organisation being more cohesive, having good policies and practises in place that everybody can see.

*"It's demonstrated a commitment to a safe working place, to a family friendly environment where people know it's controlled properly. That it's fair, and I think it's provided structure, boundaries, principles on which we base our organisation, so there have been a lot of benefits to this training."*

The participant cannot think of anywhere else they could go to get the same range of expertise as Acas. The key lessons the organisation has learnt to date since introducing the changes are to be thoroughly acquainted with the legislation and have an understanding of what it means and how it applies by doing the necessary research. For example, when they consider a new service or approach to client advice, they need to look at the principles of equality to ensure they are applying them. The training has made the participant more confident in knowing when to apply a disciplinary and when not to.

### Summary of the main benefits

The benefits of attending the training are increased confidence, increased knowledge, and improved performance. The training has provided a better framework for the organisation and has given them the ability to apply confidently for funding bids knowing that they are doing things correctly.

*"I feel actually quite proud of the fact that when people come and inspect our policies and procedures that they walk away impressed by what we do. They're not questioned. I feel happy that I'm pleasing my chief exec, she has confidence in me that I'm doing this right."*

The organisation was nominated for the Equality North East award last year as a result of their contribution to equality.

The participant plans to use Acas services again in the future and regularly looks to see if there is anything else they are interested in. If there are changes in legislation that they need to know about they would definitely attend more training. The fact that the training is local and very reasonably priced makes it more attractive.

### **9.3 Case Study 3**

#### Background to the organisation

Education People is a small recruitment agency for education staff. Ninety per cent of their business involves temporary placements, with the remaining consisting of permanent placements within schools. They recruit for primary, secondary, and special needs schools. Education People employ seven members of staff.

#### Role of participant

The member of staff that took part in the training is a manager at Education People and has been in this role for just over two years. They manage a team consisting of a consultant, two admin staff, and a resourcer. They also have a role as a recruitment consultant.

#### Participation in the Open Access Training

The directors at Education People suggested the manager take part in the Appraisals and Performance Management training. The aim was to learn how to respond to a situation or problem that may occur in the future, to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course, and to learn how to comply with legal requirements relating to the subject covered by the course.

Later this month they are taking part in Acas' Employment Law training course; something which the company director has recommended. As the organisation does not have a HR department, it is the participant's responsibility to understand what is required.

Education People have accessed Acas services in the past to ask for advice. The Appraisals and Performance Management training session covered the areas managers should focus on;

*"It was really about looking at your employees and, kind of, what motivates them, and what they're focused on, and how you can relate to their targets and their objectives."*

The programme also taught how to deal with any negativity or an awkward member of staff who might need a bit more support. It went through the types of support staff might need and emphasized putting a time frame on improvements so that staff are accountable for their behaviour. Participants were given a workbook to go through and everyone had a chance to give their opinion. Most participants had a colleague they had struggled with and therefore used that person as an example when deciding how to deal with situations.

The training highlighted different ways to approach certain situations. If a colleague is not behaving appropriately or if they haven't completed a task that has been set, you should decide on the best course of action openly with them and agree on the time scale they have to resolve it. If needed, the participant is able to refer back to her notes;

*"I've still got my notes at home, so if I need to go back to them, I've kept them."*

The representative found the fact that other participants on the course were from different sectors both a benefit and a drawback. It was interesting to hear the different approaches; however, everyone had very different targets.

The participant felt the Acas tutor came across very well; they were able to answer any questions the participants had. Furthermore, the tutor provided contact details so they could contact Acas services for further information if needed.

*"He [tutor] led the team well. Seemed very knowledgeable as well, there didn't seem to be an area that he wasn't confident in."*

The training highlighted the importance of appraisals and one-to-ones and as a result of attending the training, Education People conduct weekly one-to-ones with each member of staff. If there are any jobs or areas that are not being completed they agree a time frame in which they need to be completed. If areas of development are identified during staff appraisals, they ensure staff sign the document as evidence of the discussion and their awareness that they have got a target to work towards. If a member of staff has had a difficult week managers will review their week and provide advice accordingly.

### Impact of the training

The training is said to have significantly improved the organisation's performance in relation to information and consultation, and recruitment and selection. Through being aware of areas of weakness and where the organisation has struggled in the past, when recruiting they ensure they ask the right questions to establish whether the person can cope with the role. For example, they are a very busy office and therefore it is essential that those who they recruit can multitask. The organisation now invites potential employees to spend a day with them so they have a better feel for whether they are going to be able to cope with the role.

These changes are said to have resulted in reduced employment tribunal cases and improved staff retention,

*"We're a bit more open and realistic that not everyone's going to want to do it [the job], or be successful at it, and we give a bit more of a leeway in terms of our expectations as to when they should be able to get it."*

Furthermore, the changes made have resulted in improved relations between management and employees, and improved communication within the organisation. Prior to the training, there was no weekly communication routine; they simply caught up with staff as and when they could. Since attending the training, they have regular one-to-ones with employees which provides an opportunity to manage expectations and raise any concerns.

*"They [employees] can raise them, and we [managers] can raise them as well, so it's very clear about the expectation, and the company's values, and where we need to be. So nothing is hidden, there's no hidden information. You're either performing or you're not, and if you're not, how can we support you to perform better. So, it's very open."*

The training highlighted the commitment you have to make to your staff in having regular meetings.

*"Without that, it's hard to know what people are thinking, and if people are happy. So, I think just getting the commitment of doing it, and if a situation arises, deal with it there and then so hopefully it doesn't escalate."*

Employees at Education People now feel the managers are more approachable and if they have any concerns they can go to them. The organisation tries to create a relaxing but hard-working environment.

Summary of the main benefits

The participant really enjoyed the training and particularly valued the professional expertise of the Acas tutor;

*"He [tutor] came across really well, gave people time and answered a lot of questions as well."*

## **9.4 Case Study 4**

### Background to the organisation

Age Concern Central Lancashire is a charitable organisation whose remit is to promote independence and care for people over the age of 55. They also provide support for people with dementia and they have just won a tender with two other charitable organisations to help people with more complex mental health needs in the community. They currently employ 141 members of staff.

### Role of participant

The member of staff that took part in the training is the Human Resources Officer. They have worked in this role for three years but have worked at the organisation for eight years, previously working as the PA to the Chief Executive. Their day-to-day role includes recruitment, absence management, electronic DBS forms, HR update reports for their trustees, and HR advice as and when it's required for staff and managers. They provide HR support to line managers when dealing with performance management capability and disciplinary.

### Participation in the Open Access Training

The Human Resources Officer took part in the Managing extreme persistent and difficult workplace behaviours training course in January 2016. This was the second part of the training programme; they attended the first part during the summer of 2015. They personally looked for the training and said to their boss they think it would be very helpful if they attend.

The participant was keen to attend the training because being a HR Officer they have to get involved in a lot of situations and they wanted to get more of an understanding of different personalities and the reasons behind their behaviour.

The organisation has used Acas services in the past and they continue to do so. They pay for bespoke training where an Acas senior advisor comes to the organisation on a six monthly basis.

Two Acas tutors delivered the Managing extreme persistent and difficult workplace behaviours training course. A visual presentation was used to get the message across and participants took part in role play exercises where one of the tutors pretended to be an extremely difficult person and the participants subsequently had to tackle the situation.

*"There was a lot of talk, a lot of discussion in the session and it was just overall really well presented and interesting."*

The participant found the Acas trainers very knowledgeable and engaging. Participants were also given an information pack to take away with them which included a handout of the presentation and additional notes, which they thought was excellent.

The training definitely helped resolve the issue that led the participant to seek the training in the first place; as a result of the training they feel they know exactly how to tackle any difficult situation they may come across. Since taking part in the training the organisation has introduced work rules and they have revised their stress management policy. They have refined their policies so that it is very clear that certain behaviours will

not be tolerated. If a member of staff misbehaves or does something that is inappropriate, they tackle it straight away.

### Impact of the training

By being more robust with their policies and procedures, the organisation has made significant improvements relating to contracts and written statements, and absence and attendance management. Whereas prior to the training a manager may not always deal with the matter in hand and as a result it would escalate, managers now feel more confident in having difficult conversations and explain to staff what is required. Staff now have clear boundaries of what is expected of them which has helped both managers and staff.

*"We're just being clearer and more transparent and communicating more and I think staff appreciate it more because they know what's expected of them. There's no grey area."*

Although there was some resistance to change at first, staff seeing that if they behave inappropriately it gets tackled straight away and that everyone is treated consistently has ultimately resulted in the changes being well received.

All managers throughout the organisation take the same approach and this has resulted in a stronger management team. Employment relations at the organisation have since improved. Managers are more professional and are quicker in dealing with situations that arise.

*"At one time if a situation arose we'd be put off if the person had a mental health issue or there was some sort of protected characteristic whereas now we're not fazed by anything. We treat every situation the same but based on the circumstances. So we're just tackling things rather than letting things go. I just think we're being more proactive now, rather than reactive."*

### Summary of the main benefits

The participant is a lot calmer and a lot stronger as a HR professional; they are more confident in their own abilities. In turn they are bringing these qualities to the organisation and according to their performance reviews, their line manager and the trustees are very happy with their performance.

The participant enjoys the interaction of Acas training sessions and is attending the contracts of employment training course later this year.



## 9.5 Case Study 5

### Background to the organisation

The participating organisation is a distributor of high-end bathrooms. They have about 200 employees and are growing.

### Role of participant

The member of staff that took part in the training works part-time as the human resource manager. They have worked in this role for about three years.

### Participation in the Open Access Training

The participant chose to take part in the training in order to find out how to apply the law in a work-life situation. They wanted to get confirmation that they were doing things the way they should be doing them, and get some insight into any legal changes or case law that had come to date. The participant also took part in the Employment Law Update training course a few years ago. They have always had a positive view of Acas and the role that they play;

*"I like Acas, I like the role Acas plays, and I think going on an Acas course as opposed to any other commercial training provider adds a little bit more credibility and confidence in what you're being trained, because of the other roles that Acas do."*

The participant thought the style of delivery of the training was very engaging and involved the audience. It was very much informative to start with and then there were exercises which involved deciding how they would deal with a particular situation, which was then discussed as a group. The tutor subsequently explained the correct course of action;

*"What we should have done was then discussed, and taken from there, so it was very interactive, very engaging and immersive."*

The organisation has got quite a multicultural workforce with very varied roles, so it was beneficial for the participant to learn how to deal with diversity and the best way for it to be managed for both the employees and the company. For example, it was interesting to deal with some of the issues that potentially may arise in terms of people speaking their own language in the workforce.

The participant feels that all aspects of the training were very good and that the trainer was excellent. They were very impressed with the content of the course and the way in which it was delivered. The organisation has asked Acas to deliver an in-house training course over a year period to their middle-management team. It will cover the key areas including discipline and grievance, performance management, and having difficult conversations.

*"The key for us, with a trainer, is somebody that knows their stuff, that knows the law, is able to underpin the learning with facts and legislation, but also is able to apply it in a practical context, as well."*

Since attending the training the organisation has revised how they deal with diversity in the workforce and what the best way to engage with employees is. They are more aware of how to resolve any issues that may arise and proactively manage situations.

*"We have found that, naturally, certain ethnic and minority groups within the warehouse tend to gravitate towards each other. That has caused some conflict, and so we've been working with the managers to actually understand what's happening, to embrace that diversity, and to use the skills and the differences that were potentially causing some friction, to actually make them beneficial and useful to the whole team."*

### Impact of the training

The organisation has noticed an improvement in the working environment, which in turn is likely to have resulted in an increase in productivity. The organisation has seen some improvement related to bullying and harassment, discipline and grievance, equality and diversity, and information and consultation. This has been made possible by raising managers' awareness of how to deal with situations proactively before they arise, and through managing employees in a positive manner. Staff have embraced the diversity which also empowers them to have conversations they may have been hesitant to, for fear of breaching disability or discrimination legislation.

Empowering managers with the confidence to deal with issues proactively instead of letting things escalate, and knowing exactly where they stand in terms of employee legislation has resulted in the following:

- Reduced employment tribunal cases
- Fewer employee grievances
- Improved relations between management and employees
- Improved communication within the organisation

### Summary of the main benefits

The organisation has learnt how to effectively manage a diverse workforce, and has been able to put strategies in place to maximise the positivity and productivity as a result, as well as reduce the conflicts and potential conflict situations. The aspect of the training the participant valued most was the ability of the trainer to adapt the training to real-life situations, and make it practical in the workforce.

## 10. Conclusions

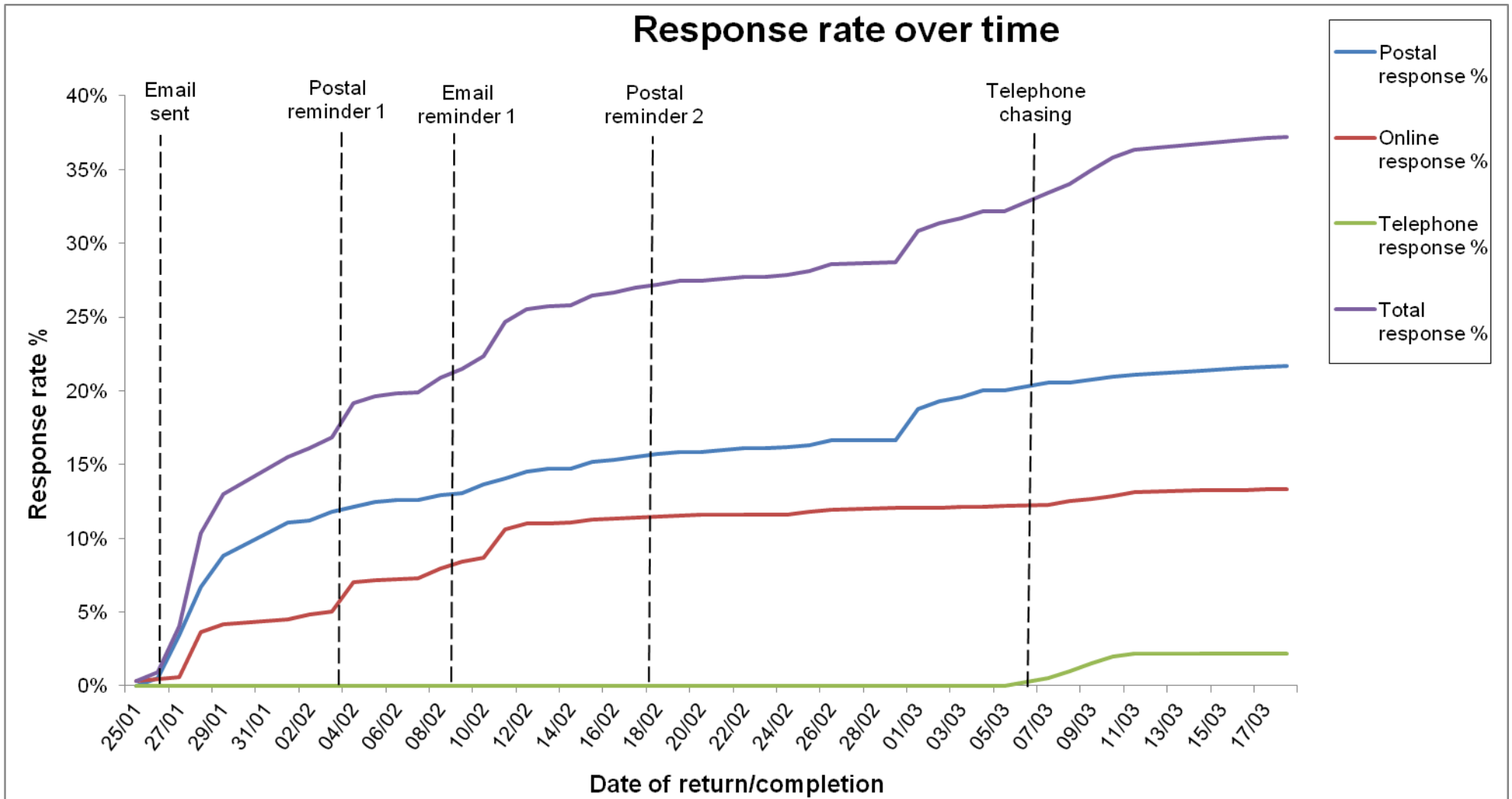
The following presents the conclusions from both the survey and case study element of this research.

- As in 2010, the main reason for delegates attending the Acas training is to improve their knowledge of the subject covered by the course;
- The case studies demonstrate that in some cases participants were recommended the training by a manager in their organisation, whereas others sought out the training themselves;
- Nearly all delegates are satisfied to some extent with the training (95 per cent cf. 93 per cent in 2010), with a large proportion likely to attend further Acas training in the future;
- Case study participants speak highly of the Acas tutor; holding the opinion that they were knowledgeable and engaging;
- The training has increased personal benefits across various aspects; particularly confidence in doing their job. The case studies highlighted that since taking part in the training participants feel confident that they are taking the right approach with regards to policies and procedures;
- As in 2010, as a result of taking part in the training, the majority of delegates have made some sort of change related to policies and practices in their organisation and these changes tend to be directly related to the content of the course;
- The survey findings show that more than a third of delegates believe it is unlikely they would have been able to make/plan changes to policies and practices if they had not attended the Acas training;
- The survey findings show that the majority of delegates feel the changes made have improved communication in the organisation to some extent (60 per cent). This is significantly higher than in 2010 which concluded that 30 per cent felt the changes made have improved communication in the organisation. This benefit was also emphasized when carrying out the case study work this year;
- The survey found that just under half of delegates have taken actions as a result of attending the Acas training that they feel have improved the performance of their organisation;
- The case studies found that although in most cases it is difficult to directly relate this improved performance to productivity, it has resulted in improved management and employee relations; which has subsequently increased staff morale.

The overarching conclusions from the multi-variate analysis are as follows:

- It helps to have a policy on a particular activity, in order to be able to note an improvement in the activity;
- The extent to which an improvement or impact can be attributed to Acas is likely to be associated with the role of the delegate and his/her pre-knowledge of the subject. It may also be associated with the pre-disposition of the organisation, in terms of desire to change, starting point of change and other background variables;
- Whether the organisation has a HR function is also important, but the data among those without an HR function is more ambiguous.

**APPENDIX 1: RESPONSE RATES OVER TIME**



## **APPENDIX 2: STATEMENT OF TERMS**

### **Compliance with International Standards**

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management ISO 27001:2013.

### **Interpretation and publication of results**

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

### **Ethical practice**

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.





