

The Skills Show 2016 Evaluation Summary Report

External Use

May 2017



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Glossary of terms

Follow up activities: activities conducted after The Skills Show by visitors and stakeholders, which include young people speaking to teachers or parents about technical and vocational careers, doing further research on technical and vocational careers, researching and registering for an apprenticeship, connecting with employers, conducting research on volunteering opportunities, looking for a job and etc.

LEPs: acronym which stands for Local Enterprise Partnerships; set up by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (was Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) in 2011, LEPs are voluntary partnerships in England between local authorities and businesses to help determine economic priorities, lead on job creation and promote economic growth within the local area.

SEND: acronym which stands for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Skills Champions: former competitors who have reached national levels in skills competitions and who are now part of a UK wide network of inspiring peer role models to young people in education and training.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Overview

The Skills Show, organised by WorldSkills UK, runs annually for three days in November at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. It aims to promote and inform young people about technical and vocational education. Particularly, it increases and deepens their understanding of these options via the interactive stands, talks and activities and experiential careers advice. For those young people making decisions about their future, it provides credible information and advice to prepare them for the next stage; highlighting in particular the range of opportunities that technical and vocational education and careers can offer, including apprenticeships. Wider than just helping to inform young people, The Skills Show also enables educators and parents to gain a better understanding of technical and vocational pathways, so that they are able to advise young people in turn, and to feel informed when offering advice on pursuing a particular technical and vocational pathway.

The National Finals for the WorldSkills UK Skills Competitions takes place at the show, giving competitors the opportunity to compete against others within their field and further develop their skills and experience; at the same time, the National Finals showcase the competitors' technical abilities and skills to those who visit the show.

WorldSkills UK commissioned Kantar Public to evaluate The Skills Show and the WorldSkills UK Skills Competition Finals. The aims of the research were to draw learnings from the visitor experiences and explore the extent to which WorldSkills UK has delivered an outstanding careers event that inspired, enabled and influenced young people, competitors, parents/carers, educators, amongst others. Moreover, the research aimed to evaluate the impacts of the show, specifically whether young people were aware of and understood the options available to them, and whether the positive effects were sustained post show; as well as to ensure that influencers of young people have the knowledge and tools to advise them, and put the knowledge gained into practice beyond the show.

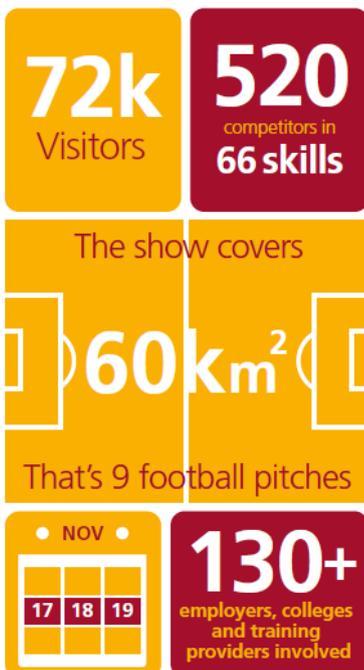


Fig. 1 2016 show statistics

2. Stakeholder group key findings

2.1 Young people

Summary

The research with young people aimed to understand the impact attending the show had on their knowledge of technical and vocational education and careers, their enjoyment of the show and their plans and attitudes after the show.

Three quantitative surveys were carried out with young people, two of these were conducted at the show and a subsequent online survey was emailed later to those who had agreed to be re-contacted and to parents who had attended the show, inviting the young person they attended with to complete the survey.

- **Quantitative research:** 5 minute face-to-face interview with 341 young people on entry to The Skills Show
- **Quantitative research:** 10 minute face-to-face interview with 331 young people who had been at The Skills Show for two – three hours
- **Quantitative research:** 5 minute online survey three months after the show with 238 young people

Key findings

- Young people's knowledge of technical and vocational education and careers improved between entering the show and exiting (27% to 46%), similar to 2015 (30% to 48%). This increased level of knowledge is still seen three months after the show (58%), however, in 2015, the level of knowledge dropped three months after the show to 32%.
- Overall young people were very positive about the experience with 93% enjoying the show, similar to previous years (2015; 92%) and 90% saying that they would recommend the show to others, also similar to last year (86%).
- The majority of young people engaged with an activity at the show (88%), with the most popular activity being 'Have a Go' activities (44%).
- The main reason given by young people for attending was to learn about jobs they were interested in (45%).
- A fifth of young people (20%) attended the show in order to learn about or register for apprenticeships, however on exiting the show, two thirds (66%) were



- planning to think about or register for an apprenticeship.
- Nearly all young people (96%) reported that they planned to take part in a follow up activity on exiting the show, an increase on last year (90%), and three months later 82% had taken part in at least one follow up activity, similar to last year (86%). 90% still planned to take part in further activities.
- The follow up activity most commonly reported by young people on exiting the show as something they would be likely to do was talking to an employer about work experience opportunities/ placements (83%).
- Overall 70% of young people were already likely to consider technical and vocational education and careers on entering the show and this remained high on exit (69%).
- 75% agreed they were better able to make decisions about their future as a result of the show.

2.2 Educators

Summary

Research was conducted with educators (teachers, careers advisers, trainers, tutors and other education and advice professionals) who had attended the show with young people across two rounds, one immediately after the show, and the second approximately three months after the show. The research aimed to discover the experience of the show from an educator's perspective, including their motivations for attending the show, overall satisfaction, suggested improvements for future shows, and any activities they had undertaken as a result of attending. The first survey was emailed to all educators who had registered to attend, whereas the second follow up survey was emailed to those who had attended the show.

- **Quantitative survey:** 10 minute online survey with 211 educators (from different educational institutions), immediately after the Show
- **Quantitative survey:** 5 minute online survey with 99 educators (from different educational institutions), approximately three months after the Show

Key findings

- Educators were very positive about their experience at The Skills Show, 94% reported that they were satisfied (94% in 2015), and three months after the show the majority of educators (93%) would recommend going to the show to others.
- Attending the show helped to increase educators' knowledge of technical and vocational education, with six in ten (57%) reporting that their knowledge had improved as a result of attending, similar to the levels seen in 2015 (61%).
- Similarly to parents, educators felt 'Have a Go' activities were most beneficial to young people (38%) and that the show helped improve their own knowledge of technical and vocational education and careers (65%). Three months after the show, when educators were asked to select the top three areas that were influential for young people, 'Have a Go' activities still came out on top as being most beneficial to young people (70%).
- Attending the show had encouraged educators to recommend apprenticeships to young people, with half (49%) reporting immediately after the show, said that they would be likely to do so; even more encouragingly when asked three months later, the majority of educators (92%) had encouraged young people to consider apprenticeships.

- Almost all educators (97%) planned to take part in at least one follow up activity, similar to last year (98%), and virtually all (99%) reported that in the three months since the show they have undertaken at least one follow up activity as a result of attending the show.

2.3 Parents¹

Summary

It is well known that parents play an important role in supporting young people when it comes to making decisions about their future. With that in mind, research was conducted with parents who had attended the show with their children or other young people. The aim of the research was to discover parents' experience of The Skills Show, as well as exploring their motivations for attending, overall satisfaction and suggestions for improvements. An online survey was emailed to parents after the show ended on the Saturday.

- **Quantitative research:** 10 minute online survey immediately after the show with 238 parents

Key findings

- Parents were very satisfied with their visit to the show, 82% were very or quite satisfied, an increase compared with the 2015 show (69%).
- Parents felt The Skills Show empowered young people to consider technical and vocational education and careers (87%).
- Have a go experiences (27%) and Exhibition areas (23%) were thought to have the greatest impact on young people.
- The majority (85%) believed The Skills Show improves young people's perceptions of technical and vocational education and careers.
- Six in ten parents (62%) thought their own knowledge of technical and vocational education and careers had improved; an increase from the 2015 Show (50%).
- Two thirds (67%) were more likely to encourage young people to consider technical and vocational education and careers, the same as last year (67%).
- Two thirds (67%) of parents were more likely to encourage young people to consider apprenticeships after attending the show.
- Eight in ten parents (80%) were likely or highly likely to undertake some follow up activity as a result of attending the show.



¹ The term 'parents' is used in this research, which encompasses anyone with responsibility for children and young people that they are looking after.

2.4 Exhibitors

Summary

The exhibitors were employers, colleges and training providers. Immediately after the show, all exhibitors were invited to take part in the feedback survey by WorldSkills UK. This was a chance for them to reflect on the show and express how they found the experience of interacting with the visitors and the extent to which they met their objectives. Some exhibitors ran 'Have a Go' or other activities in addition to exhibiting and many had interactive elements to their stand.

- **Quantitative survey:** online survey with 61 exhibitors

Key findings

- Top reasons cited for attending the show were to engage with young people and raise interest in the organisations present at the show (73%), access a high number of young people, educators and parents (61%) and to increase brand awareness of organisations (54%).
- Exhibitors predominantly talked to visitors about the work of their organisation and encouraged young people, parents and educators to find out more about opportunities with them. 64% of the exhibitors surveyed had encouraged young people to sign up to their apprenticeship programme.
- Nearly all exhibitors (93% agreed or strongly agreed) said that they had positive interactions with young people at the show and 90% confirmed they were able to demonstrate their organisation's work through the activities they offered at their stand/zone.
- 67% said they will make new links with colleges or schools and 39% said they would monitor traffic to their websites, as well as 35% reviewing the level of apprenticeship applications after the show.



2.5 Competitors

Summary

The National Finals of the WorldSkills UK Competitions were hosted at The Skills Show. These aim to help raise standards, employability skills and levels of expertise in further education, apprenticeships and skills.

To explore the impact on competitors' experiences, the research sought to understand the benefits of participation on competitors' skills and experiences, their motivations and expectations of competing and overall satisfaction with the experience. Two rounds of research were conducted, one immediately after the National Finals held at The Skills Show and the second round, three months after the finals were held. In both instances, competitors were invited via email to complete the surveys and in total the following number of competitors responded to each wave of research:

- **Immediately following the finals:** 184 competitors completed a 10 minute online survey
- **Three months after the finals:** 89 competitors completed a 5 minute online survey

Key findings

- The WorldSkills UK Competitions had a positive impact on those who competed: competitors not only enjoyed (93%) and recommended the experience (95%) but they also gained the technical and personal skills that help in the world of work.



- This level of enjoyment and willingness to recommend the experience of competing was maintained three months after the finals (96%). These are the same as levels of enjoyment and recommendations by competitors seen following the 2015 finals.
 - Competitors were encouraged to compete and received very useful support, advice and guidance from their college or training provider. Although this was seen to be the most useful training/support received, the wider training and support received by competitors was commonly rated as very useful and helpful.
 - Most competitors reported facing some barriers within the competition process, including: finding time off to train, the stress of competing and balancing the needs of competing with other learning priorities.
 - Despite some facing barriers, competitors enjoyed the process. Two thirds (66%) reported that they found the competition difficult.
- Although competitors were generally positive about their experience, they did suggest some improvements for future years. These centred around the competing environment at the show, interaction with visitors at the show, feedback about performance at the finals and the medal ceremonies.

- Competitors reported that they were already seeing the benefits of competing immediately after the finals not just in technical skill development, but wider personal skill development and in employment prospects.
- Within three months of the finals, competitors continued to see benefits, one in ten (10%) had applied for or started a new job, which is a decrease on the level seen in 2015 (24%) and one in ten (9%) had been promoted at work as a direct result of the competitions, the same as in 2015 (9%).
- Competitors reported that they started to encourage others to begin the competition journey, two thirds (63%) having done so three months after the competition finals, which is an increase from 2015 where 44% had encouraged others to compete within two months of the finals.
- Although competitors have already started to see some benefits of competing they are still planning further activities, as a result of competing, in the next 12 months, including undertaking further training or qualifications (87%), becoming a Skills Champion (55%) and applying for a job (52%).

2.6 Skills Champions

Summary

Skills Champions are those who have reached national level in skills competitions and who are now part of a UK wide network of inspiring peer role models to young people in education and training. Skills Champions were invited to complete a survey about their experiences through a link within the Skills Champion newsletter and via the Skills Champion social media channels. The survey focused on their experience of being a Skills Champion whereas in 2015, as the Skills Champion network was much newer, the questions centred on their experience of competing; as such there are limited opportunities to compare findings between the years.

- **Quantitative survey:** 5 minute online survey with 50 Skills Champions in February 2017² three months after the show. It should be noted that a sample size of 50 Skills Champions is a low base and findings should be treated as indicative

Key findings

- Skills Champions are predominately aged over 18 (94%) and are currently in some form of employment (72%). Of the Skills Champions surveyed in 2015, 95% were in employment or on an apprenticeship.
- Those who responded are relatively new to their role as a Skills Champion, with a third (26%) having been a Skills Champion for less than three months, and two thirds (64%) having been a Skills Champion for less than a year.
- Skills Champions were most commonly referred to this role either through talking to a member of staff at WorldSkills UK (36%) or through their college, training provider or university (26%).
- Since becoming Skills Champions, they have undertaken a number of activities with the most common being: encouraging others to get involved in WorldSkills UK competitions

² The timing of the survey allowed us to include new Skills Champions in the research; who had joined the Skills Champion network following the 2016 finals.

(54%); being a part of Squad UK (30%); supporting the competitions (30%) and speaking in school/colleges about WorldSkills UK competitions (28%)

- Although Skills Champions were very positive about their experiences so far, they have faced barriers along their journey, most notably finding enough spare time (44%), taking time off work for Skills Champion activities (42%) and loss of income due to Skills Champion commitments (30%).
- Suggestions for improvements centre on expanding current elements of the programme such as increasing professional networking opportunities with employers (40%), providing more opportunities to meet other Skills Champions (40%) and increasing the number of projects they can get involved with (30%).



more opportunities to meet other Skills Champions (40%) and increasing the number of projects they can get involved with (30%).

- Skills Champions have begun already to see the positive benefits of being part of the Skills Champion community, with increased confidence (96%), better ability to work with others (90%) and improved communication skills (92%).

- In 2015, most of the questions for the Skills Champions centred on their experience of competing, and they said that competing had

increased their confidence (95%), improved ability to work with others (88%) and improved communication skills (90%). These were similar levels of the skills gained to this year's results, where the positive benefits are attributed to being in the network of Champions and having competed.

2.7 Volunteers

Summary

Volunteers at The Skills Show were an integral part of ensuring that the show was successful and ran smoothly. Over 450 volunteers were involved across the three days of the 2016 show. To explore the impact of volunteering, the research sought to understand the benefits of volunteering as well as the overall experience, including any areas that could be improved for future years. Immediately following The Skills Show all volunteers were invited via email to complete an online survey about their experiences. The research consisted of the following:

- **Quantitative Survey:** Online survey with 96 volunteers

Key findings

- Volunteers had very positive experiences prior to the show, with a quarter being returning volunteers and others being put forward by their college, school or employer. Volunteers found the event guide particularly useful prior to volunteering at the show.

- Volunteers were overwhelming positive about their experience, with the majority (90%) agreeing that they enjoyed the overall experience, the same as seen in 2015 (95%).
- Volunteers were positive about the future actions they plan to undertake as a result of volunteering at the show, with seven in ten planning to take at least one follow up activity, with exploring further volunteering opportunities being the most commonly selected (41%)
- Volunteers enjoyed and found the training, in regards of the World Host qualification, to be enjoyable and useful.
- Volunteers enjoyed learning about the European Social Fund (ESF), and four in ten promoted the ESF to visitors at the show.



3. Marketing and media report

Media

- Total Media Reach 9.6 million.
- Full page in The Sun and Sun Online ahead of The Skills Show featuring case studies of past visitors who secured apprenticeships at the Show in previous years and visitor information.
- Targeted regional and trade campaign promoting WorldSkills UK National Finalists and exhibitors at the show.
- Media partnership with Schools Week and FE Week.

Digital

- #SkillsShow16 trended on Twitter as the fifth most popular topic in the UK during The Skills Show.
- 364,932 page views on the WorldSkills UK website between October and December 2016.

Marketing

- Comprehensive radio advertising and live streaming via Heart FM.
- Targeted direct mail to parents.
- National schools recruitment campaign including bursaries.
- Worked closely with local communities including youth groups and LEPs to access parents and hard to reach audiences.



4. Key recommendations

Across the stakeholder groups, some key themes arose on recommendations for future years of The Skills Show, including there being a wider variety of exhibitors on offer, as not all sectors were represented, and for there to be more interactive or 'Have a Go' activities as these were seen to be the most beneficial. That being said when parents and educators, who had visited the show previously, were asked what made the 2016 show better than previous years they mentioned the increased range of exhibitors and interactive elements. Other improvements suggested were for there to be better maps and signposting so that it is easier to navigate the event due to its scale. Again, by contrast, the repeat visitors commented that the signposting was better this year than 2015. Several educators also mentioned there needing to be better provisions for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) groups attending the show.

Other than suggestions made by stakeholders for improvements to future shows, a number of areas were identified for individual stakeholders which may offer further consideration for future years, as outlined below.

Young People

Engagement with content at the show varied by age, with those under 16 more likely to say 'Have a Go' activities were most interesting and those over 16 more likely to say that the exhibitions (i.e. exhibitor stands) were the most interesting. This suggests that further tailoring of show content and stands to the various age groups could enhance young people's experience of the show. One of the ways to achieve this could be supporting the exhibitors to tailor their stand to accommodate both under or over 16 year olds and any other target audiences, such as parents and teachers.

Educators

As reported earlier, many of the educators who have previously visited the show commented on the improved layout and signposting of the 2016 show. However, there are others who felt more could be done to improve the signposting. A number of SEND teachers have asked for extra support for their students as they visit the show. One way to achieve this is by having a designated time slot dedicated to SEND students (e.g. early opening or an afternoon slot) for those with special education needs and disabilities. Some teachers have also recommended more interactive stands, as a result of their observation on the popularity of 'Have a Go' activities.

Parents

In 2016, there was low participation from parents using the Staff Room, however those who did, found it useful, therefore it could be beneficial to increase the advertisement of the Staff Room ahead of the show, and make it clearer that this can be used by all adults. In terms of introducing

an entrance fee to the Saturday, only 38% of the parents surveyed³ said they are willing to pay; and of those, nearly all have indicated they are willing to consider a price point of £10 or under.

Exhibitors

Exhibitors have a good formula when it comes to engagement with young people but expressed they need more opportunities to engage with adults and educators. At the same time, being able to raise their brand profile was high on their agenda. The majority of the exhibitors said they have achieved their objectives of attending the show. They would like WorldSkills UK to share visitor feedback to enhance their own business case of attending future shows. A few exhibitors have suggested improving cross promotions ahead of the show and that sharing of images or video content produced at the show would be welcomed. It has also been highlighted that tailored support could be given to those with a specific aim of recruiting apprentices.

Competitors

Competitors found the training and support they received prior to the finals useful, although only a third received time off from their college, training provider or work. Competitors were also more likely to have been put forward by a college or training provider than by an employer, therefore, further engagement with employers to advocate the benefits of competing is still required, so that they would release staff to train and compete, which in turn would reduce competitors' barriers to participate. Competitors also highlighted the layout and location of competition areas next to particularly busy stands as something that could be improved.

Skills Champions

Skills Champions reported that they have gained much from their experience of being a Skills Champion so far, however they have faced some barriers, most notably finding time to take part in activities. Unsurprisingly there is a trade-off to be had between the time the Champions can afford and the number of activities they wish to engage. WorldSkills UK could look at balancing the range of activities with the length of time these activities would take, where possible, and make clear of the time commitment required to the Champions. Furthermore, they could support the Champions by outlining to their employers and colleges the benefits to the Champions and their own organisations in taking part; such as fulfilling any potential corporate social responsibility objectives of the organisation, and building well-rounded individuals that could be seen as ambassadors to the organisation they represent. Skills Champions also commented that further guidance on their role and creating more networking opportunities with other Champions and employers are also important and beneficial.

Volunteers

Volunteers were very happy with their experience, and many were repeat volunteers suggesting that the experience at previous shows had encouraged them to return. Volunteers did offer limited suggestions for improvements but these tended to be around understanding of their role, exposure to the show itself, and support and direction from leaders.

³ Immediately post show survey

KANTAR PUBLIC=

Kantar Public, an independent social research company, was appointed by WorldSkills UK to conduct the evaluation of The Skills Show 2016. The research took place at The Skills Show with young people across 17 to 19 November 2016 and online surveys were conducted with stakeholders outlined in this report, immediately after the show and three months post show.



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