

# Headline Report



## CITB NI Employer Research 2019 – NI Employers

Prepared for: Construction Industry  
Training Board NI

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**Prepared for: Construction Industry Training Board NI**

**Prepared by: June Wiseman, Director and Emma Osborne, Associate Director, BMG Research**

**Date: November 2019**

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Project: 1734

Registered in England No. 2841970

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## 1 Overview

The 2019 Employer Research was commissioned by CITB NI to examine skills issues in the construction industry within Northern Ireland and to understand how employers view the service provided by CITB NI.

This report shows headline findings from 102 interviews with employers in Northern Ireland. Where possible, comparisons are made to previous annual results from the Employer Research and Employer Tracker Survey (2014 - 2018 and back to 2010 in one instance). Survey findings are unweighted.

Certain percentages used in this report may not add up to precisely 100% due to the impact of rounding.

## 2 NI Employers: Headline Results

### 2.1 Profile of NI employers interviewed

The tables below show the profile of the employers interviewed.

**Table 2.1: Profile of employers interviewed in 2019 survey**

Size	Interviews achieved	% of all interviews
Micro (2-9)	91	89
Small (10-49)	9	9
Medium (50-249)	2	2
Large (250+)	0	0
No levy return	0	0
Total	102	100

Grant Status	Interviews achieved	% of all interviews
Grant	15	15
Non-grant	87	85
Total	102	102

Levy status	Interviews achieved	% of all interviews
Levy payers	46	45
Non-levy payers	56	55
Blank	0	0
Total	102	100



## 2.2 General awareness and understanding

Employers were asked about the services they think CITB NI provides. Their responses are summarised in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Services that employers think CITB NI provides (spontaneous)**

% of all	2019	2018	2017
Health & safety information and training	32	36	17
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	21	12	11
Tier 3 specialist training courses e.g. scaffolding, mobile training unit, training in virtual environment (vet360)	17	8	11
Other training courses	16	52	37
Offering apprenticeships	12	10	-
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	11	12	4
Tier 2 training delivered in partnership with industry bodies / federations that is supported by CITB NI funding	8	1	-
Generic training advice e.g. Publications, phone, website, events	4	8	15
Generic grants	3	8	-
Standards and qualifications influencing and development	3	2	-
Annual return/levy	2	4	-
Skills competitions (e.g. Skillbuild)	1	1	-
Other	7	7	-
None	30	20	-
Bases	102	103	100

Employers were then asked if they have used any services that CITB NI provides in the last 12 months. This is summarised in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3: CITB NI services that employers have used in the last 12 months (prompted)**

% of all	2019	2018	2017
Health & safety information and training	5	13	4
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	5	2	5
Other training courses	4	6	4
Apprenticeships e.g. promoting, grants, developments of	2	-	-
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	0	2	-
Tier 3 specialist training courses e.g. scaffolding, mobile training unit, training in virtual environment (vet360)	0	1	2
Standards and qualifications influencing and development	0	0	-
Generic training advice e.g. Publications, phone, website, events	0	0	3
Conducting research into industry training needs	0	0	-
Promotion of careers in construction	0	0	-
Skills competitions (e.g. Skillbuild)	0	0	-
Tier 2 training delivered in partnership with industry bodies / federations that is supported by CITB NI funding	0	0	-
Delivery of projects where funding has been secured from external sources	0	0	-
Business improvement seminars covering CITB NI products and services and relevant business topics	0	0	-
Bases	102	103	100

Those that have used each product or service were asked how satisfied they were with it, rating it on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely dissatisfied and 5 is very satisfied.

**Table 2.4: Employer satisfaction with CITB NI products and services used in the last 12 months**

% of used	2019	2018	2017
	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)
Health & safety information and training	80 (5)	85 (13)	75 (4)
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	100 (1)	100 (2)	-
Other training courses	100 (4)	83 (6)	100 (4)
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	60 (5)	100 (2)	80 (5)
Apprenticeships e.g. promoting, grants, development of apprenticeship frameworks	50 (2)	-	-

*Bases in parentheses*

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.5: Employer satisfaction with CITB NI products and services used in the last 12 months (mean score ratings)**

Mean score rating (5-point scale), user of:	2019	2018	2017
Health & safety information and training	4.0	4.2	4.7
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	4.0	4.0	-
Other training courses	4.8	4.6	4.5
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	4.0	4.5	4.2
Apprenticeships e.g. promoting, grants, development of apprenticeship frameworks	3.5	-	-

Those that have used each product or service were then asked how important the service that they have used was to their business. They were asked to rate it on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely unimportant and 5 is very important.

**Table 2.6: Perceived importance of CITB NI products and services used in the last 12 months**

% of used	2019	2018	2017
	% important (score of 4, 5)	% important (score of 4, 5)	% important (score of 4, 5)
Health & safety information and training	80 (5)	77 (13)	50 (4)
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	100 (1)	50 (2)	-
Other training courses	75 (4)	67 (6)	25 (4)
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	60 (5)	100 (2)	40 (5)
Apprenticeships e.g. promoting, grants, development of apprenticeship frameworks	50 (2)	-	-

*Bases in parentheses*

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.7.

**Table 2.7: Perceived importance of CITB NI products and services used in the last 12 months (mean score ratings)**

Mean score rating (5-point scale), user of:	2019	2018	2017
Health & safety information and training	4.0	4.5	4.0
Management training courses e.g. Leader in construction, site supervisors course, undergraduate development programme	4.0	4.0	-
Other training courses	4.3	4.2	3.0
Tier 1 grants to employers for training (i.e. obtained grant via the grants form or online grants system)	3.8	4.5	3.2
Apprenticeships e.g. promoting, grants, development of apprenticeship frameworks	3.0	-	-

## 2.3 Communications and marketing

Employers were asked if they have heard or seen anything about CITB NI over the last 12 months.

**Table 2.8: Whether employers have heard or seen anything about CITB NI over the last 12 months**

% of all	Bases	Yes	No
2019	102	63	37
2018	103	57	43
2017	100	58	42

They were asked where they had seen or heard something about CITB NI.

**Table 2.9: Where heard or seen something about CITB NI (spontaneous)**

% of those that have heard or seen anything	2019	2018	2017
Email	52	37	38
Via post/flyers/letters	16	26	9
Via a text message from CITB NI	19	13	17
Via internet / a website	1	5	1
Telephone call from CITB NI	4	5	4
Via local press	2	1	-
Events / seminars delivered by CITB NI	1	1	1
Other	6	3	-
Not seen or heard anything	37	30	44
Bases	102	103	100

Employers were asked if they have received any written correspondence by post or email from CITB NI in the last 12 months.

**Table 2.10: Whether employers have received any written correspondence either by post or email from CITB NI in the last 12 months**

% of all	Bases	Yes	No	Don't know
2019	102	85	15	0
2018	103	86	11	3
2017	100	83	17	-

Those that have received written correspondence from CITB NI were asked to rate it on various aspects, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good.

**Table 2.11: Employer ratings of correspondence received**

<b>% received</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
	<b>% good (score of 4, 5)</b>	<b>% good (score of 4, 5)</b>	<b>% good (score of 4, 5)</b>
Having a recognisable style and design	62	65	59
Being clear and easy to understand	63	65	72
Providing the right amount of information and detail	59	66	63
It explaining clearly how to get in contact with CITB NI / what to do next	69	75	72
And overall how would you rate CITB NI communications on products and services	63	58	64
Bases	87	89	83

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.12.

**Table 2.12: Employer ratings of correspondence received (mean score ratings)**

<b>Mean score rating (5-point scale), user of:</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
Having a recognisable style and design	3.8	4.0	3.7
Being clear and easy to understand	3.8	3.9	3.8
Providing the right amount of information and detail	3.6	3.8	3.7
It explaining clearly how to get in contact with CITB NI / what to do next	4.0	4.2	4.0
And overall how would you rate CITB NI communications on products and services	3.7	3.6	3.6

<sup>1</sup> rating of CITB NI's communications (rather than correspondence)

Employers were asked if they have visited CITB NI's website in the last 12 months.

**Table 2.13: Whether employers have visited CITB NI's website (citbni.org.uk) CITB NI in the last 12 months**

% of all	Bases	Yes	No
2019	102	42	56
2018	103	39	61
2017	100	36	64

Those that have visited CITB NI's website were asked to rate it on various aspects, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is very good.

**Table 2.14: Employer ratings of CITB NI's website**

% received	2019 % good (score of 4, 5)	2018 % good (score of 4, 5)	2017 % good (score of 4, 5)
Having the information you wanted	61	65	53
Having information that was clear	63	63	72
Navigation / how easy it was to find what you were looking for	58	68	66
Visual appeal	70	58	64
Having up-to-date content	72	63	71
Overall	67	63	67
Bases	43	40	36

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.15.

**Table 2.15: Employer ratings of CITB NI's website (mean score ratings)**

Mean score rating (5-point scale), user of:	2019	2018	2017
Having the information you wanted	3.6	3.7	3.5
Having information that was clear	3.7	3.6	3.7
Navigation / how easy it was to find what you were looking for	3.5	3.7	3.7
Visual appeal	3.9	3.8	3.8
Having up-to-date content	3.9	3.9	4.0
Overall	3.8	3.8	3.8

## 2.4 CITB NI levy and grant services

Employers were asked which of a list of CITB NI levy and grant services their organisation has used. These are summarised in the table below.

**Table 2.16: Employer use of CITB NI levy and grant services**

% of all	2019	2018	2017
Online levy return facility	40	44	35
Online levy guidance notes	34	36	25
Grant scheme information	28	29	20
Online grant applications	25	21	15
BACS payments	25	24	9
Bases	102	103	100

Employers were asked about their level of satisfaction with each levy and grant service used.

**Table 2.17: Employer satisfaction with CITB NI levy and grant services used in the last 12 months**

% of used	2019	2018	2017
	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)	% satisfied (score of 4, 5)
Online levy return facility	76 (41)	84 (45)	74 (35)
Online levy guidance notes	66 (35)	84 (37)	88 (25)
Grant scheme information	72 (29)	77 (30)	75 (20)
Online grant applications	72 (25)	82 (22)	80 (15)
BACS payments	72 (25)	84 (25)	89 (9)

*Bases in parentheses*

## 2.5 Contacting CITB NI staff

Employers were asked if they have contacted CITB NI staff in the last 12 months.

**Table 2.18: Whether employers have contacted CITB NI staff in the last 12 months**

% of all	Bases	Yes	No	Don't know
2019	102	43	55	2
2018	103	39	61	0
2017	100	29	67	4

They were then asked what they had contacted CITB NI about.



**Table 2.19: Subject of the most recent query/contact**

<b>% of those contacted staff</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Levy	39	40
Grants	27	18
Generic Training Advice	9	5
Booking a course/event	7	25
Other	18	15
Bases	44	40

And then how they had most recently contacted CITB NI.

**Table 2.20: Mode of the most recent query/contact**

<b>% of those contacted staff</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
By phone	80	88
By email	14	13
By post	5	-
Bases	44	40

Those who had contacted CITB NI were asked how helpful they thought the staff had been in relation to their most recent query.

**Table 2.21: Helpfulness of response received to most recent query**

% of those contacted staff	Bases	Not at all helpful	Not very helpful	Neither/nor	Fairly helpful	Very helpful	Don't know	Summary: helpful
2019	44	11	2	14	9	64	0	73
2018	40	13	3	15	15	53	3	68
2017	29	10	0	7	17	66	-	83

## 2.6 Grants

Employers were asked if they were aware of each of the Tiers of the multi-tiered grants scheme provided by CITB NI.

**Table 2.22: Awareness of elements of the multi-tiered grants scheme**

% of all	2019	2018	2017
Tier 1 – grants to employers for a range of training at a fixed rate and claimed using a grants form or online form	56	46	46
Tier 2 - supporting training delivered in partnership with industry and claimed through the federation or association	48	36	37
Tier 3 – delivering specialist training courses available at a subsidised rate when booking e.g. MTU, scaffolding, UDP	47	41	50
Bases	102	103	100

Those aware of the different Tiers were asked if they had looked at information on each on the CITB NI website.

**Table 2.23: Whether employers have looked at the information available to employers on the CITB NI Tiers within the Grants Scheme which is available on the website**

% of all	Bases	2019	Bases	2018	Bases	2017
Tier 1	57	30	47	34	46	24
Tier 2	49	33	37	35	37	19
Tier 3	48	33	42	31	50	18

Specifically, with regard to Tier 1, employers that had looked at information available on the website were asked if they had claimed a Tier 1 Grant as a result.

**Table 2.24: Whether employers claimed a CITB NI Tier 1 Grant for training undertaken as a result of looking at information available on the website**

% of those that have looked	Bases	Yes	No	Don't know
2019	57	28	70	2
2018	47	30	68	2
2017	46	20	80	-

Those that had looked at information available on Tier 1 on the website but not claimed for the grant were asked why they had not done so.

**Table 2.25: Reasons for not claiming a CITB NI Tier 1 Grant for any training**

% of those not claiming	2019	2018
Did not undertake any training	37	18
Not appropriate for me	27	24
Did not think we were eligible	12	3
Too time consuming	10	15
Not eligible/annual levy return form not submitted on time	7	9
Too confusing/complicated	5	3
Did not understand the information	2	6
Currently in the process	2	6
Other	10	30
Don't know	5	6
Bases	41	33

Employers that had looked for information on Tiers 2 and 3 on the website were asked if they were encouraged to contact CITB NI about these grants as a result.

**Table 2.26: Whether employers were encouraged to contact CITB NI for more information after looking at the information on Tiers 2 and 3 on the website**

% of those that have looked at each	Bases	2019	Bases	2018	Bases	2017
Tier 2	16	56	13	23	19	57
Tier 3	16	56	13	23	18	56

They were then asked how they would be encouraged to apply for these grants.

**Table 2.27: How employers feel they would be encouraged to make a Tier 2 or Tier 3 application**

% of those that have looked at information	2019	2018
If there was a need/requirement	31	29
If it was relevant to our field of work	13	21
If there was more information available	13	-
If the application process was simplified	13	-
If the information available was clear and easy to understand	6	-
Other	25	14
Nothing	6	14
Don't know	-	21
Bases	16	14

## 2.7 Employer views on the service CITB NI provides the industry as a whole

Employers were asked if they agree or disagree with a series of statements about CITB NI. They were asked if they strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree or strongly disagree. Their responses are summarised in Table 2.28.

**Table 2.28: Level of agreement with statements about CITB NI**

% of all	2019 % agree (score of 4, 5)	2018 % agree (score of 4, 5)	2017 % agree (score of 4, 5)
CITB NI is seen as the hub for all training carried out by the construction sector	39	44	36
CITB NI is at the cutting edge of training needs within the industry in Northern Ireland	39	37	38
CITB NI delivers the highest quality in all its endeavours	41	38	51
CITB NI is more commercially minded and identifies ways to develop income streams other than levy	28	34	38
CITB NI builds strong strategic partnerships to develop and enhance its activities	35	35	39
Bases	102	103	100

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.29.

**Table 2.29: Employer satisfaction with CITB products and services used in the last 12 months (mean score ratings)**

Mean score rating (5-point scale), all that provided a response:	2019	2018	2017
CITB NI is seen as the hub for all training carried out by the construction sector	2.9	3.1	3.1
CITB NI is at the cutting edge of training needs within the industry in Northern Ireland	2.9	2.9	3.0
CITB NI delivers the highest quality in all its endeavours	3.1	3.0	3.3
CITB NI is more commercially minded and identifies ways to develop income streams other than levy	3.0	3.0	3.1
CITB NI builds strong strategic partnerships to develop and enhance its activities	3.0	3.0	3.1

*Bases in parentheses*

Table 2.30 shows the employer satisfaction with the service CITB NI provides the industry as a whole. Again, employers were asked to rate on a scale of one to five (one being very dissatisfied and five being very satisfied).

**Table 2.30: Employer satisfaction with the service CITB NI provides for the industry as a whole**

Satisfaction rating	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Very satisfied	24	22	20
Satisfied	17	19	20
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	18	29
Dissatisfied	11	12	13
Very dissatisfied	25	23	19
Don't know	1	6	-
Bases	102	103	100
Mean score	3.0	3.1	3.1

Employers who are dissatisfied with the service CITB NI provides for the industry as a whole were asked why they are dissatisfied

**Table 2.31: Reasons for dissatisfaction with the overall service CITB NI provides for the industry as a whole**

<b>% of those not satisfied</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
They offer no benefit/help/support	47	22
Only interested in levy collection	28	22
Haven't needed their services	19	14
Lack of relevance/shouldn't have to pay the levy	17	25
Lack of support for small businesses/too much emphasis on larger companies	17	25
Lack of communication	14	14
Not cost effective for the levy paid/too expensive	8	33
Other	11	6
Bases	36	36

## **2.8 Employer views on their interactions with CITB NI in the last 12 months**

Employers were asked about their level of satisfaction with aspects of CITB NI's performance during their interactions with CITB NI in the last 12 months.

**Table 2.32: Employer satisfaction with their interactions with CITB NI and CITB NI's performance in the last 12 months**

<b>% of all</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
	<b>% satisfied (score of 4, 5)</b>	<b>% satisfied (score of 4, 5)</b>	<b>% satisfied (score of 4, 5)</b>
Being knowledgeable, and providing expertise and reliable information	44	39	44
Being fair and accessible in meeting the needs of a wide range of customers	37	39	45
Listening to customers and reflecting this in their products and services	38	34	39
Bases	102	103	100

Mean scores (which exclude 'don't knows' and should be used with caution) are shown in Table 2.33.

**Table 2.33: Employer satisfaction with their interactions with CITB NI and CITB NI's performance in the last 12 months (mean score ratings)**

Mean score rating (5-point scale), all that provided a response:	2019	2018	2017
Being knowledgeable, and providing expertise and reliable information	3.2	3.2	3.1
Being fair and accessible in meeting the needs of a wide range of customers	3.1	3.2	3.1
Listening to customers and reflecting this in their products and services	3.1	3.1	3.1

Table 2.34 shows the employer satisfaction with the service CITB NI provides their company in the last 12 months. Again, employers were asked to rate on a scale of one to five (one being very dissatisfied and five being very satisfied).

**Table 2.34: Employer satisfaction with the service CITB NI provides for their company**

Satisfaction rating	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Very satisfied	24	17	25
Satisfied	13	17	23
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	17	20
Dissatisfied	9	7	6
Very dissatisfied	27	28	25
Don't know	5	14	-
Bases	102	103	100
Mean score	3.0	2.9	3.2

Employers who are dissatisfied with the service CITB NI provides for their company were asked why they are dissatisfied

**Table 2.35: Reasons for dissatisfaction with the overall service CITB NI provides for their company**

% of those not satisfied	2019	2018
They offer no benefit/help/support	56	22
Only interested in levy collection	25	6
Haven't needed their services	22	19
Lack of communication	14	22
Not cost effective for the levy paid/too expensive	14	8
Lack of relevance/shouldn't have to pay the levy	8	28
Lack of support for small businesses/too much emphasis on larger companies	6	11
Other	11	17
Bases	36	36

## 2.9 Support for the levy

Employers were asked how important they feel the levy and range of services including the grant system is in maintaining the level and quality of training within their own firm and across the construction industry as a whole.

**Table 2.36: Importance of levy and grant system...**

Importance rating	...within their firm			...across the industry		
	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %	2019 %	2018 %	2017 %
Very important	28	24	15	28	30	33
Quite important	15	17	22	23	19	21
Neither important nor unimportant	12	15	15	18	19	26
Unimportant	11	8	14	7	4	8
Completely unimportant	34	33	35	21	17	13
Don't know	1	4	-	4	10	-

They were asked about the impact they thought there would be on the industry as a whole if there were no statutory training body such as the CITB NI to collect levies and pay grants for training.



**Table 2.37: Perceived impact on specified issues if there were no statutory training body such as CITB NI to collect levy and pay grants for training**

<b>% of all</b>		<b>Improve</b>	<b>Worsen</b>	<b>Remain the same</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Training within the industry	2019	19	33	45	3
	2018	11	41	44	5
	2017	14	27		
Image and recruitment of new staff	2019	19	23	55	4
	2018	5	28	57	10
	2017	7	20		
Progress towards a qualified workforce	2019	19	28	51	2
	2018	6	35	53	6
	2017	19	23		
Availability of skilled labour	2019	21	26	49	5
	2018	8	34	53	5
	2017	14	24		

Employers were asked if they thought statutory levy and CITB NI's provision of services and grants should continue.

**Table 2.38: Whether employers think that the statutory levy and CITB NI's provision of services and grants should continue**

% of all	Bases	Yes	No	Don't know
2019	102	55	42	3
2018	103	57	38	5
2017	100	51		

Those that do not think that the statutory levy and CITB NI's provision of services and grants should continue were asked to give their reasons why.

**Table 2.39: Reasons for not thinking that the statutory levy and CITB NI's provision of services and grants should not continue**

% of those that think it should not continue	2019	2018
It has no real benefit for us	72	64
It's an unnecessary expense/additional tax	49	64
The system is inconsistent	16	5
They don't provide the training/staff that our industry needs	16	36
It favours larger companies	14	13
It's better to train in-house/on-site	12	8
Other	7	18
Don't know	5	3
Bases	43	39

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