

CIPD



Survey report  
June 2023

# Learning at work 2023

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## Survey report

# Learning at work 2023

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# 1 Introduction

The CIPD *Learning at work 2023* survey report explores how learning professionals are responding to the changing world of work.

This study was first conducted in February 2020 and then repeated in 2021, when learning professionals were continuing to reel from the overnight shift to digital, remote working caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The continual uncertainties of how and when business could be conducted was taking hold on both workers and organisations.

This new study, carried out predominantly within the UK, follows another tumultuous year where external factors are influencing the way that individuals, teams and organisations work, learn and thrive together. The war in Ukraine, the impact of energy uncertainty, inflation, the cost-of-living crisis and political uncertainty have once again shaken and shaped both work and workers.

Digital innovation has continued to challenge at an unprecedented pace. ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool, is the fastest growing consumer application in history, reaching its first 100 million users globally in the space of two months since its launch in December 2022.<sup>1</sup> AI is already promising to fundamentally disrupt and radically shift the way that organisations currently work.<sup>2</sup>

The debate about where we work and how we work has not died down. We have seen conversations about the 'great resignation', the 'great reshuffle' and 'quiet quitting' wax and wane throughout the year. And in response, the focus on talent and the search for skills (reskilling, right-skilling, upskilling and cross-skilling) continues.

Individually, each of these factors creates both tremendous opportunity and pressure for those with learning responsibilities. Together, they provide an avalanche of change in the path of the modern learning professional looking to do a great job. This report aims to understand how those responsible for learning in their organisation are responding and operating in the current work climate and how they can increase the value that they bring.

## Research questions

This report considers six key questions:

- 1 How has workplace context and culture changed? ([Section 2](#))
- 2 What resources, priorities and challenges are shaping workplace learning? ([Section 3](#))
- 3 What methods and media are in our L&D kitbag? ([Section 4](#))
- 4 How can we deliver more impact to our organisation? ([Section 5](#))
- 5 How can we work with others to co-create value? ([Section 6](#))
- 6 How equipped are L&D professionals to contribute value? ([Section 7](#))

### Details on the findings of this report

- The survey was conducted in January and February 2023, with 91% of respondents being UK-based.
- We received 1,108 complete responses from individuals who have a responsibility for supporting learning at work. These came from a range of sectors and company sizes and included roles with different levels of responsibility and accountability.
- We use the term 'learning practitioners' throughout this report, which refers to a large number of learning-related roles.
- We also compare perspectives from those who agree that leaders in their organisation recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational performance and those who disagree with this statement.

Full details of the sample demographics, the research methods and how the data was analysed are included in the [Methodology](#) section.

## 2 How has workplace context and culture changed?

### At a glance

- More than one in five respondents said their organisation is prioritising growth, efficiency, productivity, talent retention and wellbeing.
- Compared with two years ago, L&D strategy is less aligned with organisational and people priorities (67% agree in 2023 versus 77% in 2021) and leaders are less likely to recognise the impact that L&D has on those priorities (67% versus 81%).
- Few learning practitioners agree they work in organisations that provide environments conducive to learning: only 41% agree their organisations develop and maintain a climate of trust.

### In detail

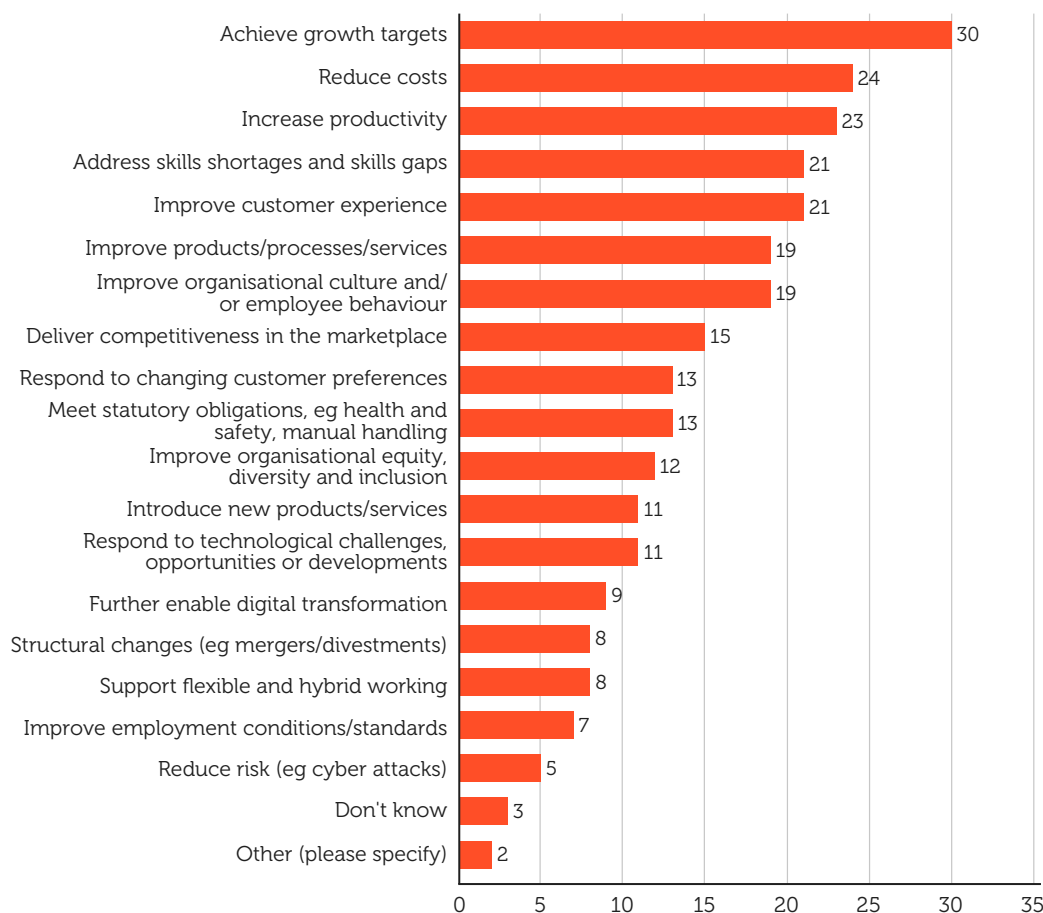
Global challenges over the past 24 months have created an uncertain and changing environment for workplaces and the people who work in them. The CIPD's *Effective workforce reporting* report flagged that the biggest challenge for leaders currently is skills and labour shortages, that the most important non-financial metrics include employee retention, and that the biggest opportunity for improving organisational performance is recruiting and retaining people with the right skills.

### Organisational and people priorities

A recent [YouGov survey](#) of line managers said that L&D has a significant contribution to make in improving organisational performance, transformation, innovation and growth. The study also flagged that managers felt that the L&D role should make a significant contribution to improving customer satisfaction and reducing operational costs.<sup>3</sup> Forty-four per cent of workers' current skills are expected to be disrupted in the next five years and learning is one of the most common workforce strategies that companies plan to adopt to deliver organisational goals.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1 shows learning practitioners' perceptions of their organisation's top three priorities – these are starting to align with business leaders' organisational goals. The top priority for organisations is growth, which is in line with pre-pandemic data. The second and third most common priority areas are reducing costs and improving productivity, both growing slightly since 2020. However, there is an increased focus on addressing skills gaps in the workforce, with 21% identifying this as a top three priority in 2023 compared with 15% in 2021. This shift highlights the increased importance of the skills agenda for learning practitioners.

**Figure 1: Growth, cost reduction and increasing productivity are the top three priorities for organisations**  
*The most common organisational priorities (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108. Top five priorities: achieve growth targets: n=330; reduce costs: n=261; increase productivity: n=251; improve customer experience: n=236; address skills shortages and skills gaps: n=229.

Question: What are the top three priorities for your organisation in the next 12 months? Please choose up to three priorities.



As you would expect, we found some considerable differences in organisational priorities across sectors (see Table 1). Interestingly, respondents from the public sector were significantly more likely to cite addressing skills gaps as a key priority area (33% versus 17% in the private sector).

**Table 1: Public sector respondents are significantly more likely to prioritise their focus on skills shortages and gaps**

*The top three organisational priorities for private and public sector businesses (% of respondents)*

Private sector priorities	Public sector priorities
Achieve growth targets (37%)	Address skills shortages and gaps (33%)
Increase productivity (26%)	Improve organisational culture and/or employee behaviour (27%)
Reduce cost (24%)	Reduce cost (25%)

Base: private: n=792; public: n=209. Voluntary sector not included due to small sample size (see Methodology).

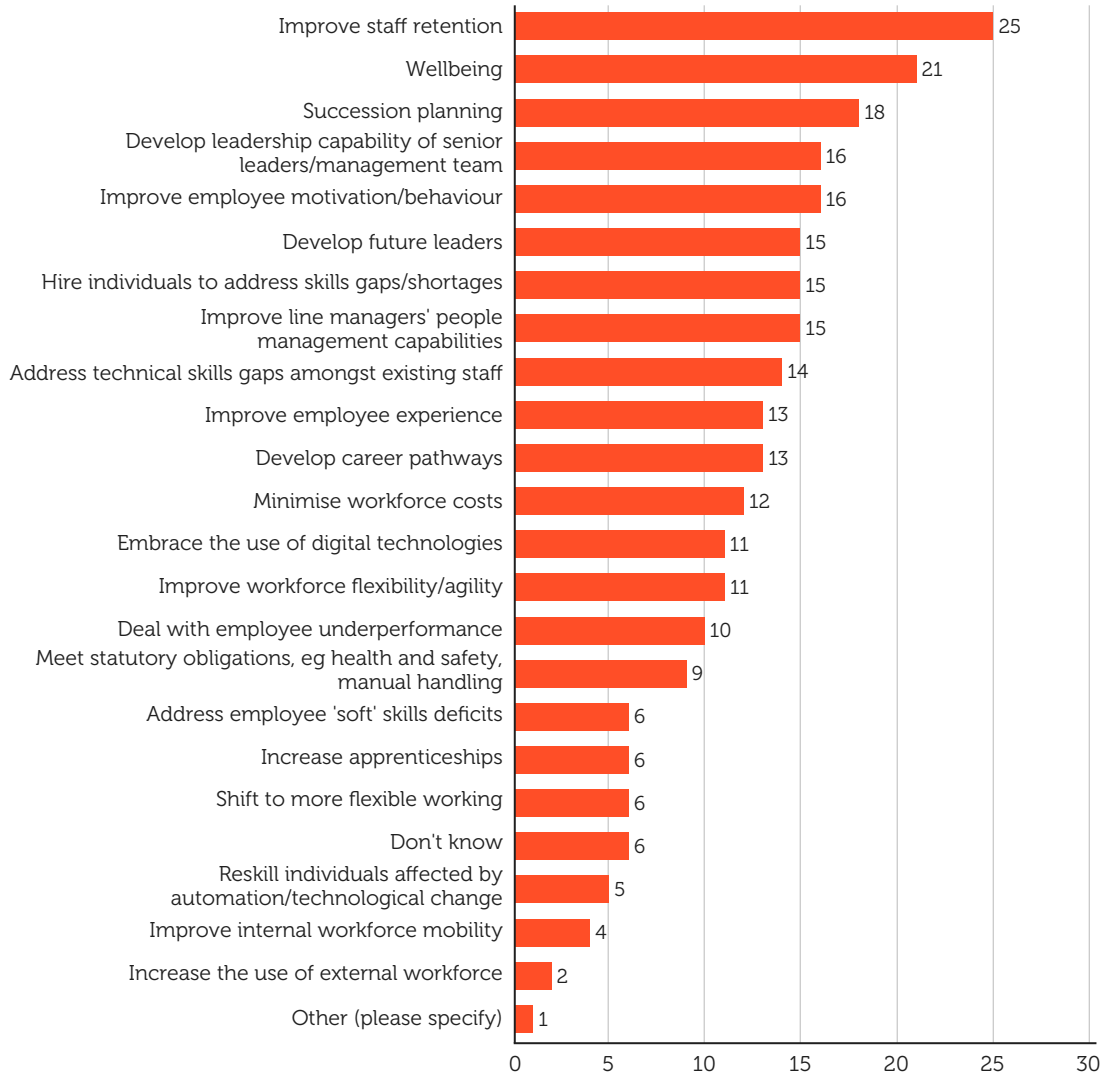
Question: What are the top three priorities for your organisation in the next 12 months? Please choose up to three priorities.

We also note some other significant differences between public and private sector organisations and their organisational priorities.

Private sector respondents were more likely to say their organisation is prioritising growth (37%, versus 7% in the public sector) and labour market competitiveness (19%, versus 2% in the public sector). On the other hand, as well as the focus on addressing skills shortages and gaps, public sector respondents also said their organisations are focusing on improving organisational equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) (21%, versus 10% in the private sector). Later in this report, we explore how learning interventions can be designed to foster EDI.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of people priorities over the next year (Figure 2), learning practitioners were most likely to cite staff retention as a key focus area, which echoes other CIPD [research](#) that found recruitment, mobility and turnover to be top workforce priorities. Additionally, the proportion of respondents who cited this as a top priority has almost doubled since 2021. Succession planning was also cited as a top people focus area, suggesting that developing the right skills and talent for future business needs is top of the agenda. Learning practitioners have an opportunity to work with those in the wider people profession to create programmes to support career progression and job transition as current skills become obsolete and new roles emerge.

**Figure 2: Staff retention is the top people priority, according to L&D professionals**  
**The top people priorities according to L&D professionals (% of respondents)**



Base: n=1,108. Top five priorities: improve staff retention: n=277; wellbeing: n=227; succession planning: n=204; improve employee motivation/behaviour n=181; develop leadership capability of senior leaders/management team: n=177.

Question: What are the top three 'people' priorities for your organisation in the next 12 months? Please choose up to three priorities.

From a people perspective, the focus on wellbeing across sectors is encouraging. Around a fifth of private and public sector organisations recognise wellbeing as a key priority.

We note that fewer practitioners said their organisations are prioritising other people areas which could help businesses attract potential talent, and retain and engage their current workforce, for example shifting to more flexible working. Other [CIPD research](#) has found that work–life balance and job satisfaction are key reasons for people leaving their current roles.

### Learning culture and climate

For learning to be impactful, we need to consider the environment in which the learning is taking place.



Peter Senge originally defined a learning organisation as one where:

“... people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.”<sup>6</sup>

This requires an environment where individuals and teams have the permission and space to learn. So, to what extent do our organisations foster an environment that is conducive to learning?

**Figure 3: Two-fifths of organisations believe they have a learning environment which fosters trust**  
**Perceptions of the learning environment within organisations (% of respondents)**



Base: n=1,108.

Question: Which of the following statements reflect the wider learning environment in your organisation?

AND Which of the following statements, if any, describe the prevalent characteristics of your organisation? Select all that apply.

Figure 3 highlights that the majority of learning practitioners don't feel they work in organisations that foster a climate of genuine psychological safety, where teams are encouraged to take risks, raise issues, learn from mistakes and embrace unique skills.<sup>7</sup>

The public sector, perhaps due to a more compliance-focused work environment, was less likely to agree that their organisation encourages curiosity and enquiry (only 30% agreed).

Building skill, shifting behaviours, developing leaders and creating successors require more than a course; they require an environment where people feel comfortable to practise, learn and fail. Our findings clearly show that this is not an option available to all.

### The L&D challenge

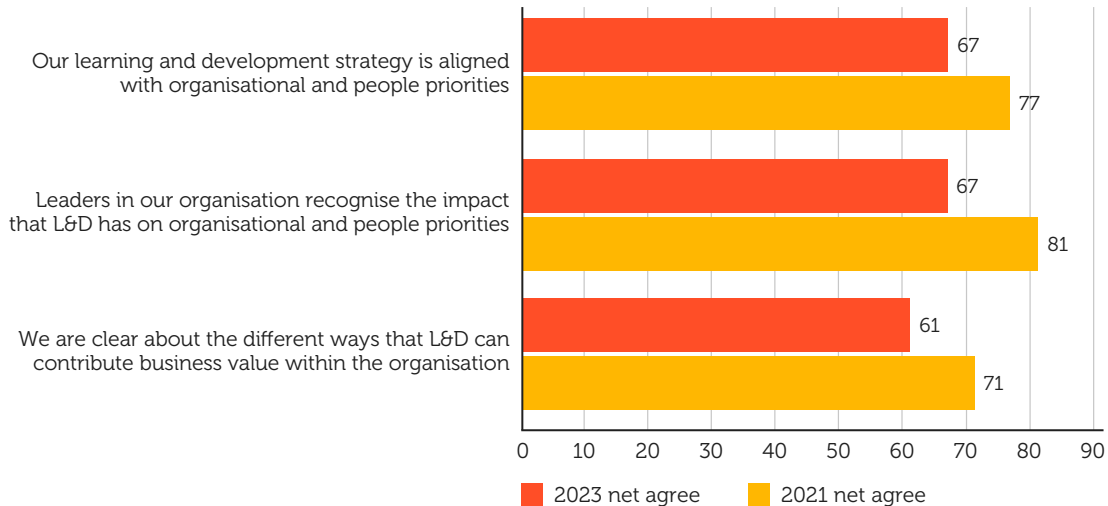
At the time of our 2021 survey, leaders, managers, individuals and learning practitioners had a unique opportunity to work together to address a common cause, with learning playing a significant role in keeping people engaged during a time of great uncertainty.

But today, our responsiveness to business change has decreased. This year, only 59% of respondents agreed that they are able to respond agilely to the changing skills needs of the organisation (versus 69% in 2021).

Despite leaders having an increased focus on people metrics, Figure 4 shows that learning professionals feel that their alignment to organisational goals has diminished.

**Figure 4: Proportionally fewer respondents agree that L&D teams are aligned to organisational goals than two years ago**

*Alignment of the L&D function to organisational goals (% of net scores)*



Base: n=1,108.

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation's learning and development strategy and programmes? (Net agree scores combine respondents who strongly agreed and agreed).

Our findings suggest a small difference between respondents from public and private sector organisations and their ability to respond to the skills needs within their organisation. Fifty-five per cent of learning practitioners in the public sector agreed they can be agile, compared with 60% of private sector respondents.

### Implications

Aligning learning activity to organisational and people priorities continues to be a challenge for learning practitioners, and the current workplace environment is not always conducive to learning and individual development. The position from which learning practitioners operate within the business may also influence how they are resourced and where they direct their resources.

This will be the focus of the next two sections of this report.

# 3

## What resources, priorities and challenges are shaping workforce learning?

### At a glance

- L&D is under pressure: while L&D resources have rebounded and increased over the past 12 months, 53% of those working in L&D functions agreed their overall team workload has also increased.
- Addressing the skills gap is the number one priority for 29% of L&D professionals, but they are prioritising inputs (for example, increasing self-directed learning) over outputs (for example, speeding up the transfer of learning).
- L&D professionals are battling with a lack of capacity, a lack of priority from the business and a lack of insight about what is needed and what has worked.

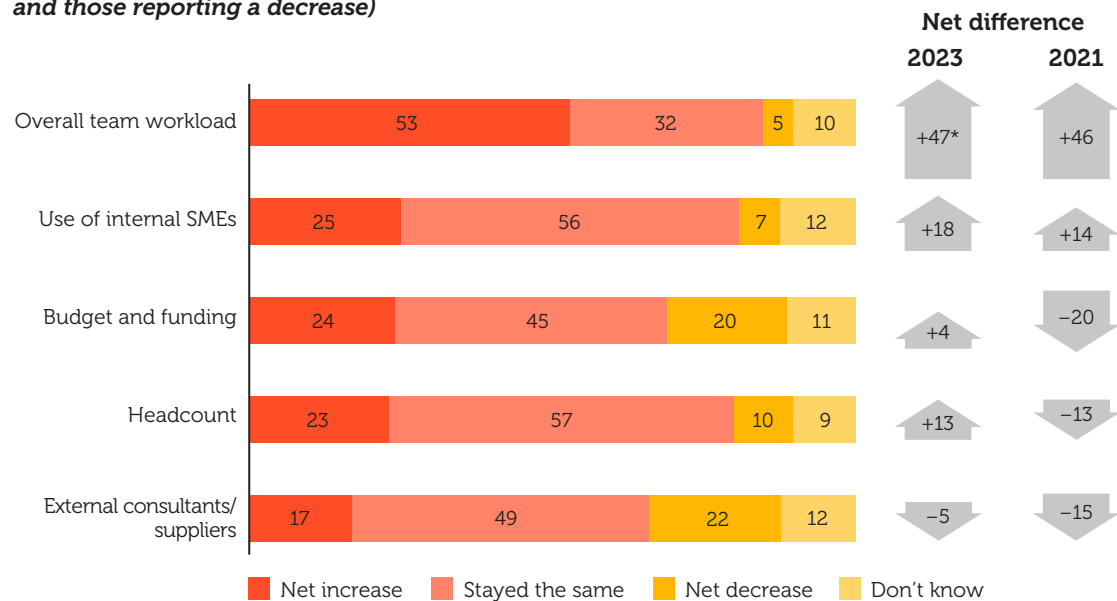
### In detail

#### Resources: Delivering more with more

Our organisations may be under pressure but, following a significant hit in 2021, respondents have reported a net *improvement* to both headcount and budget this year (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Respondents report a net increase in both headcount and budget, but also a net increase in workload**

**L&D resourcing and workload** (% of respondents working in specific L&D functions)  
(Net differences measure the difference between the proportion reporting an overall increase and those reporting a decrease)



Base: n=627 (learning practitioners working in specific L&D functions).

Question: Thinking about your organisation's L&D function, in the past 12 months, has your L&D function's workload, budget, use of internal subject-matter specialists, use of external associates/consultants/suppliers and overall team workload: greatly increased, somewhat increased, somewhat decreased, greatly decreased or stayed the same? Net increased/decreased scores include greatly increased/decreased and somewhat increased/decreased responses.

\* data is rounded to two decimal places

Compared with 2021, more L&D practitioners have increased headcount and budget (see net difference scores). In 2023, nearly a quarter of respondents working in L&D functions said their budget and headcount have increased over the past year. However, the majority feel that their workload has also increased (53%), a similar proportion to 2021.

However, it is clear that access to resources come with a price, as:

- more practitioners report a decrease in the use of external suppliers (albeit proportionally less than in 2021)
- a quarter of practitioners say their reliance on in-house expertise has increased
- proportionally, more public sector practitioners say their workload has increased (59%, versus 49% in the private sector).

This increased workload and reliance on in-house specialists puts additional pressures on our L&D functions, and potentially other parts of the business. This is concerning given that previous [CIPD research](#) found that three in 10 people professionals said that their mental and physical wellbeing is negatively impacted by work (31% and 29%).

### **Box 1: Getting to grips with the budget**

Budgets, and who owns them, vary greatly (see [Methodology](#)), but it appears that as a function, 46% of L&D professionals still do not have a handle on how much they spend per employee in the organisation.

The sample providing this information on budget was split between learning leaders, business partners (HR and L&D), practitioners (designers, trainers, administrators) and those non-L&D professionals running learning within their own team (again, see [Methodology](#) for sample sizes).

It is understandable that the latter three may not have full exposure to budgets, but surprisingly, 21% of those with learning leadership responsibilities did not have insight into the budget available.

With organisations focusing on retaining talent and facilitating growth, learning practitioners have an opportunity, the resources and an expectation to contribute. The challenge becomes not to deliver more with fewer resources – but to deliver even more, with even more resources.

With workloads continuing to increase, where are learning practitioners prioritising their efforts?

### **L&D priorities**

Currently, addressing the skills gap is a top three priority for L&D practitioners (Figure 6). This is aligned directly to the organisational and people priorities outlined in [Section 2](#).

However, given the wider organisational focus on both staff retention and the skills agenda, it is surprising that only 8% are prioritising speeding up the transfer of learning back into the workplace or creating a more inclusive learning offering for all. Perhaps giving more of an emphasis to the application of learning science to our work would influence what we prioritise and what we don't. We explore this more in [Section 5](#).

**Figure 6: Addressing skills gaps is the top L&D priority for practitioners**  
**Top L&D priorities in 2023 (% of respondents)**



Base: n=1,108.

Question: What are the top three current learning and development priorities for your organisation? Please select three.

Surprisingly, respondents from SMEs are more likely to focus on identifying changing skills requirements (18% versus 13% for large organisations). For respondents in large organisations, linking learning to performance management and organisational development were top L&D priorities. Respondents from the public sector are likely to focus on improving the quality and impact of learning content.

Interestingly, 18% of the respondents answered 'don't know' to this question, rising to 20% of respondents in large or public sector organisations. This may be an indicator of the number of learning practitioners who are working reactively in 'response mode' to meet increasing demands placed on the function.

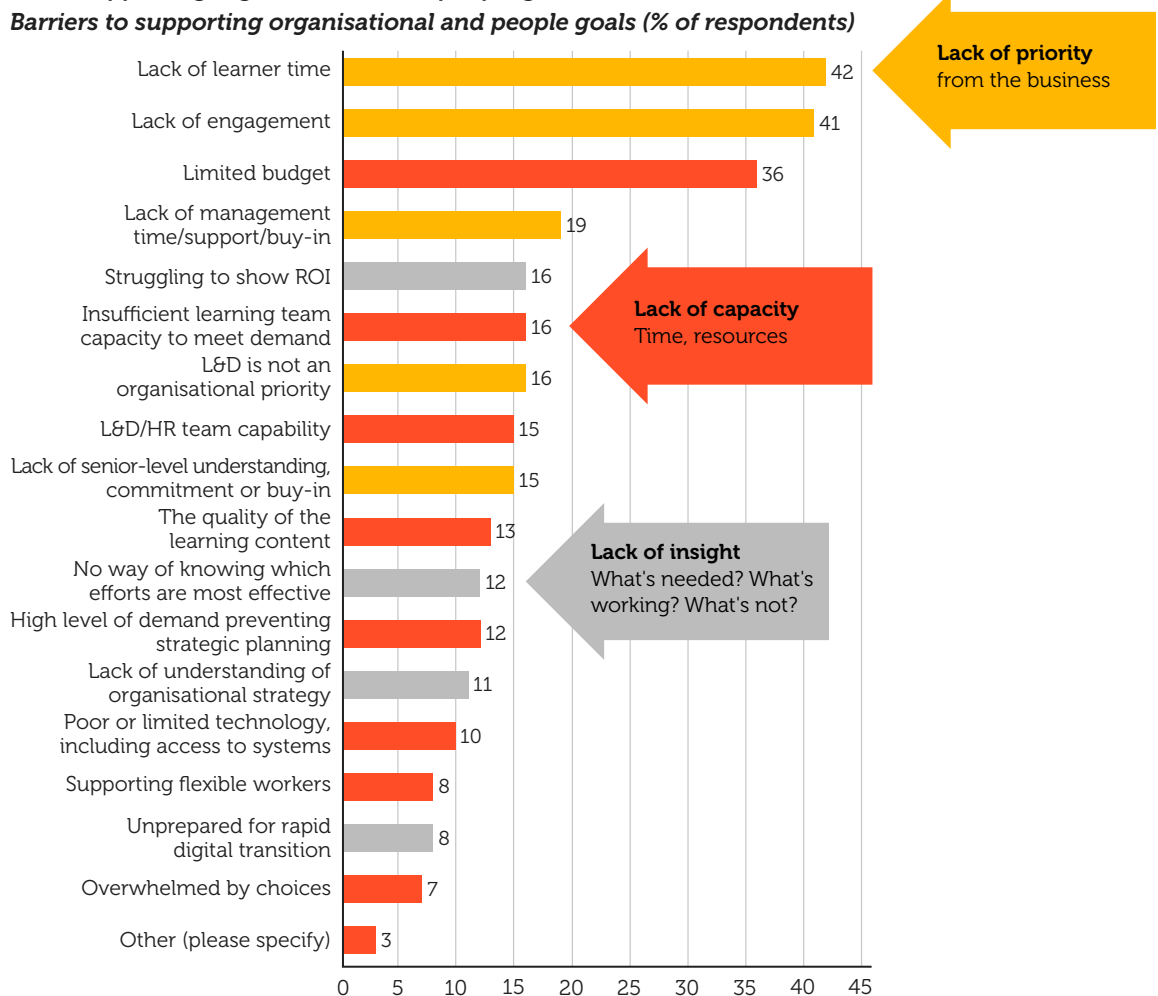
Despite a drive by organisations to retain talent and the focus on personalisation, self-directed learning, content and technology, only 8% are prioritising how these elements can be used to create a more inclusive learning offering across the organisation.

### L&D challenges

In 2021, organisation leaders and learning practitioners shared a common challenge – the pandemic. Today, in 2023, business leaders flagged two challenges that they have with learning: a lack of strategic influence by L&D to support business transformation and a short-term focus versus a longer-term vision.<sup>8</sup>

But what are the current challenges reported by learning practitioners? As shown in Figure 7, across all sectors and organisation sizes, learner time, engagement and budget were top of the list, suggesting a lack of priority from the business.

**Figure 7: Lack of learner time, engagement and budget are seen as the main barriers for L&D when supporting organisational and people goals**



Base: n=1,108.

Question: Which, if any, of the following are barriers for L&D when supporting organisational and people goals? Please select all that apply.

The challenges reported fell into three main categories:

- 1 Lack of priority:** Those working in a specialist L&D function within HR were most likely to struggle with a lack of line management support (24%); those L&D practitioners working within generalist HR were least likely to find this a barrier (14%).
- 2 Lack of capacity** (skill, resources, and opportunity to deliver): Those in focused L&D teams were most likely to report both a lack of L&D capacity to meet demand and L&D capability as barriers (23% reported these challenges). Those in the public sector were most likely to report limited budget (50%) and high levels of demand preventing strategic planning (18%).
- 3 Lack of insight** about what is needed and what is working: A lack of understanding of organisational strategy and knowing which methods are effective was common across the board. Those working in large organisations and those working in specialist L&D functions were most likely to struggle to show return on investment (both 20%). Those working in the public sector were most likely to report that they were unprepared for rapid digital transitions (13%).

A further 10% said that they did not have any challenges. These were mainly those working outside of traditional L&D (the HR generalists and line managers working on learning).

### Implications

Given the complexity of the skills agenda and the list of L&D priorities in 2023, it is unsurprising that many learning practitioners are having to work harder than before. The question becomes, are we working on the right things? Moving forward, is it time to work *smarter*?

## 4 What methods and media are in our L&D kitbag?

### At a glance

- Face-to-face learning continues to decline and digital learning continues to rise, with 48% reporting an increase in use.
- Organisations are using more conferences, workshops, programmes, events and mentoring, but these are no longer at pre-pandemic levels.
- Technologies that enable collaboration have seen the biggest rise year-on-year, with usage of webinars, podcasts and social learning all higher than pre-pandemic times.



- Those using a broad range of technologies are more likely to report strategic alignment with organisational outcomes, a more holistic learning process, opportunities to continuously improve and openness to experiment.

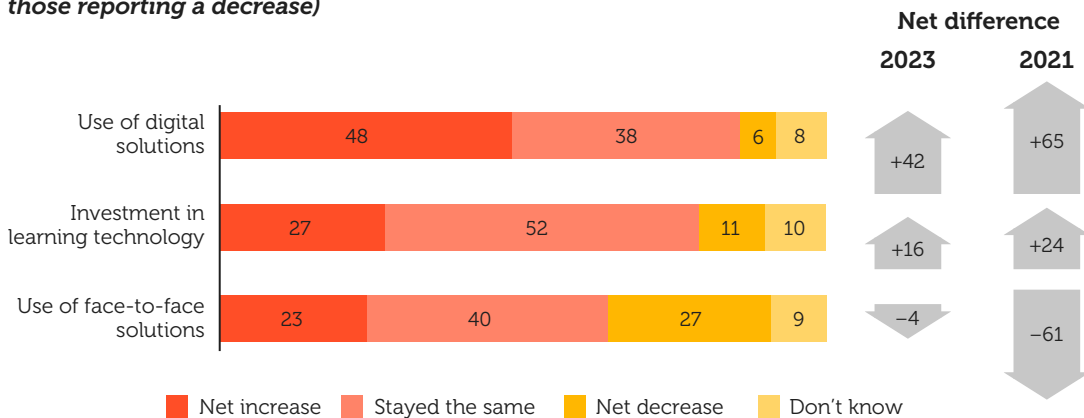
**In detail**

Modern workplace learning is no longer just about courses and programmes, face-to-face or digital learning. This section takes a more nuanced look at the methods and media currently in use.

**Shifting blends**

As more workplaces have embraced hybrid working, what’s happened to learning delivery? The use of face-to-face learning solutions has continued to decline, while use of, and investment in, digital learning has continued to grow, albeit at slower rates than in 2021 (see net difference scores in Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Use of digital learning continues to increase while face-to-face learning declines**  
*Use of learning solutions and investment (% of respondents working in specific L&D functions)*  
*(Net differences measure the difference between the proportion reporting an overall increase and those reporting a decrease)*



Base: n=627 (learning practitioners working in specific L&D functions).

Question: Thinking about your organisation's learning and development function, in the last 12 months, has your L&D function's use of face-to-face solutions/use of digital or online solutions/investment in learning technology: greatly increased, somewhat increased, somewhat decreased, greatly decreased or stayed the same. Net increased/decreased scores include greatly increased/decreased and somewhat increased/decreased responses.

Some key differences emerge when we look at the change in usage and investment by size:

- SMEs are more likely to report that their use of face-to-face solutions (55%), digital solutions (52%) and investment in learning technology (61%) has remained the same.
- Large organisations are more likely to report an increase in the use of digital solutions (53%) and investment in learning technology (31%). This compares with just 19% and 37% of SMEs.

Although there are still more respondents reporting a decrease than an increase in use of face-to-face learning, and more reporting an increase in the use of digital learning than a decrease, it’s important to note that for around 40%, usage of both has stayed the same and for half (52%) investment in learning technology has remained stable.

Looking to the future, while 22% of respondents think face-to-face learning will increase in the next 12 months, 18% think its use will decrease. This suggests that any overall change in the use of face-to-face learning solutions will be minimal.

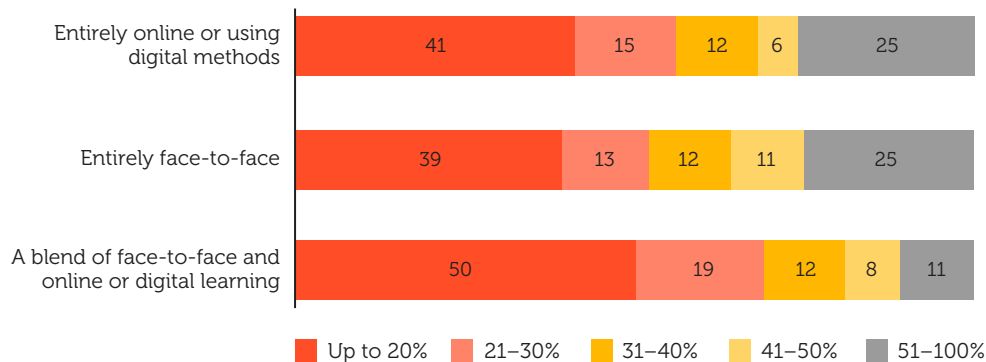
Does the trend in digital learning look set to continue? It appears so: 38% of respondents expect the use of digital or online solutions to increase in the next 12 months and 29% expect investment to increase (with just 5% and 10% respectively expecting a decrease).

As Figure 9 shows, there is no longer a dominant delivery model for learning.

In 2020, we saw that face-to-face delivery contributed to the majority of learning delivered in 44% of organisations. Now, just 25% report this and an identical proportion report that theirs is delivered entirely via online or digital methods. This suggests that more organisations are now more flexible in their learning offerings, facilitating accessible, personalised learning through the use of digital technologies. However, the use of blended learning is still limited, delivering less than 20% of learning in half of all organisations.

**Figure 9: Organisations are now more flexible in their L&D delivery offers, embracing a mix of digital, face-to-face and blended approaches**

*Proportion of L&D activity delivered entirely digitally, entirely face-to-face and through a blended approach (% of respondents working in specific L&D functions)*



Base: n=528.

Question: What percentage of the learning and development delivered in your organisation is in each of the following categories: entirely face-to-face; entirely online or using digital methods; a blend of face-to-face and digital? Please provide your best estimate and ensure the column adds to 100%.

The reliance on face-to-face delivery is more pronounced in SMEs, where it accounts for the majority of learning delivered for almost a third of organisations. This compares with just 21% of large organisations.

Digital learning transformation remains most common in large organisations, and these are more likely to rely on entirely online or digital methods for the majority of their learning delivery (28%, compared with 19% of SMEs).

### L&D methods

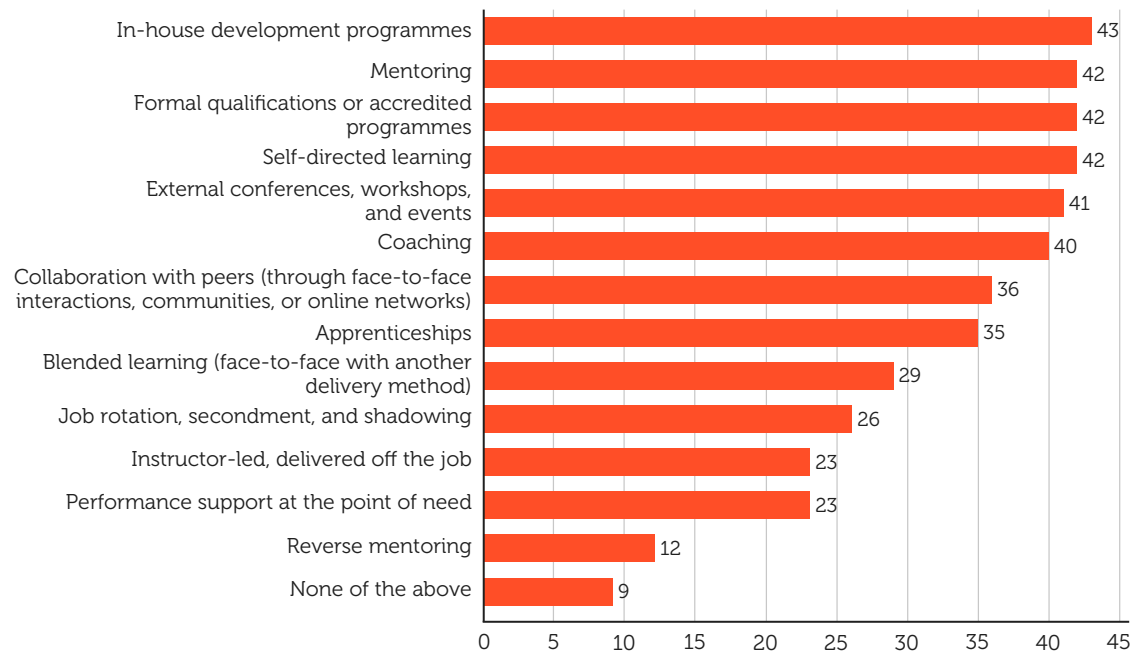
In terms of blended learning, practitioners are now taking advantage of a wider range of interventions and methods than in 2021. Organisations have maintained a focus on in-house development programmes, mentoring and

coaching, but there has been a renewed focus since 2021 on more formal and traditional forms of learning interventions (Figure 10). There has been an upward shift in the use of:

- external conferences, workshops and events (from 27% in 2021 to 41% in 2023)
- job rotation, secondment and shadowing (from 16% to 26%)
- formal qualification or accredited programmes (from 36% to 42%)
- collaboration with peers (from 30% to 36%)
- apprenticeships (from 30% to 35%).

**Figure 10: There has been a renewed focus in 2023 on more formal and traditional forms of learning interventions**

**L&D methods used in the past two years (% of respondents)**



Base: n=1,108.

Question: Which, if any, of the following learning and development methods has your organisation facilitated or funded for employees in the past two years? Select all that apply.

The use of all types of L&D methods is more prevalent among larger organisations compared with SMEs, but the differences in use are particularly pronounced when comparing:

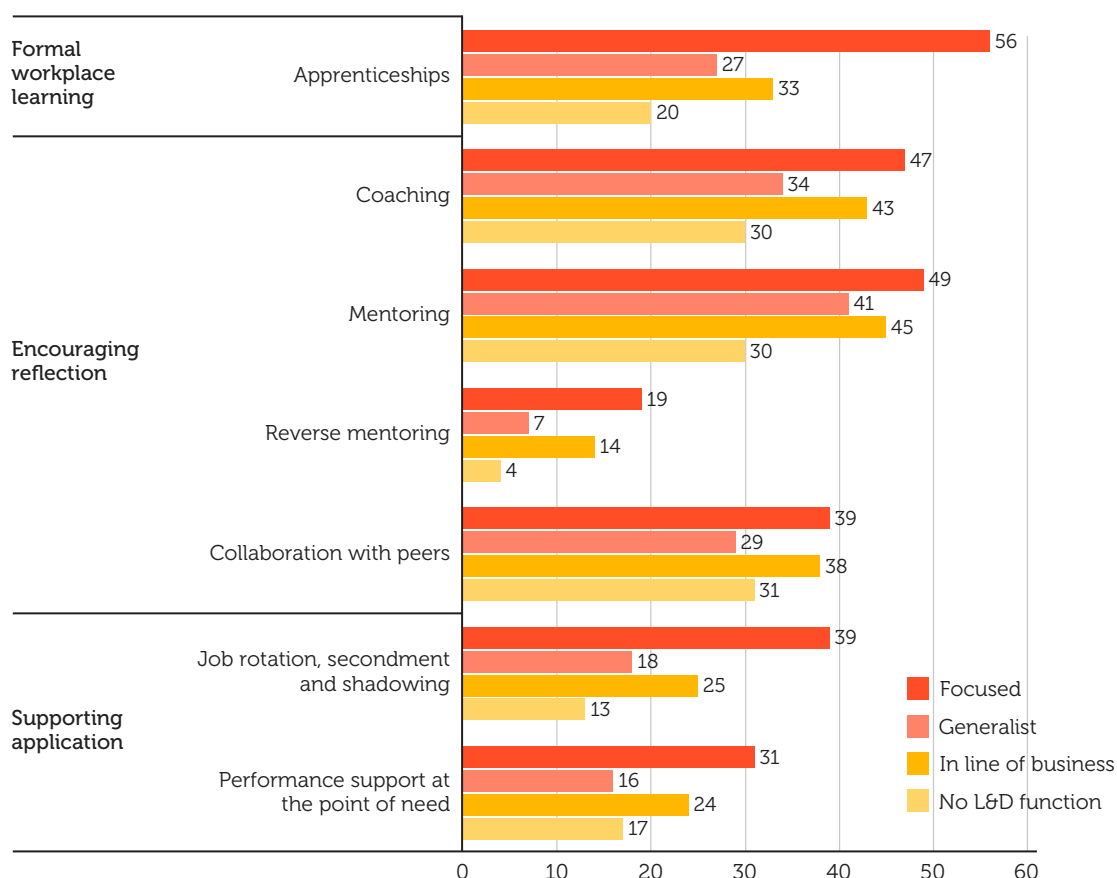
- apprenticeships: these are used by almost half (46%) of large organisations compared with 20% of SMEs
- in-house development programmes: these are delivered by over half (51%) of large organisations compared with 30% of SMEs
- blended learning: this has been used by 37% of large organisations compared with only 16% of SMEs.

The methods most commonly used by SMEs, perhaps due to more limited access to internal resources, are self-directed learning (39%) and external conferences and events (34%).

The methods used also vary according to where the responsibility for L&D sits within the organisation. Those that do not have specific L&D expertise (generalists and managers operating with no L&D function) are more likely to lean into traditional training inputs: self-directed learning, external programmes or qualifications, supplemented with coaching and mentoring.

Figure 11 shows that dedicated L&D functions – focused within HR or situated in the line of business – are more likely to embrace methods that go beyond the course to support the application of new knowledge back into the workplace. Those with focused L&D departments within HR are the most likely to be working with apprenticeships and encouraging activities such as job rotation, secondment and shadowing. They are also more likely to have used funded performance support at the point of need and mentoring and coaching programmes in the past two years.

**Figure 11: Focused L&D functions are more likely to be working with apprenticeships and encouraging job rotation, secondments and shadowing**  
**A comparison of L&D methods used to support learning 'beyond the course', by L&D function type (% of respondents)**



Base: focused L&D: n=216; generalist HR: n= 170; L&D in line of business: n=217; no L&D function: n=250. See Methodology for demographic splits.

Question: Which, if any, of the following learning and development methods has your organisation facilitated or funded for employees in the past two years?

### **L&D media**

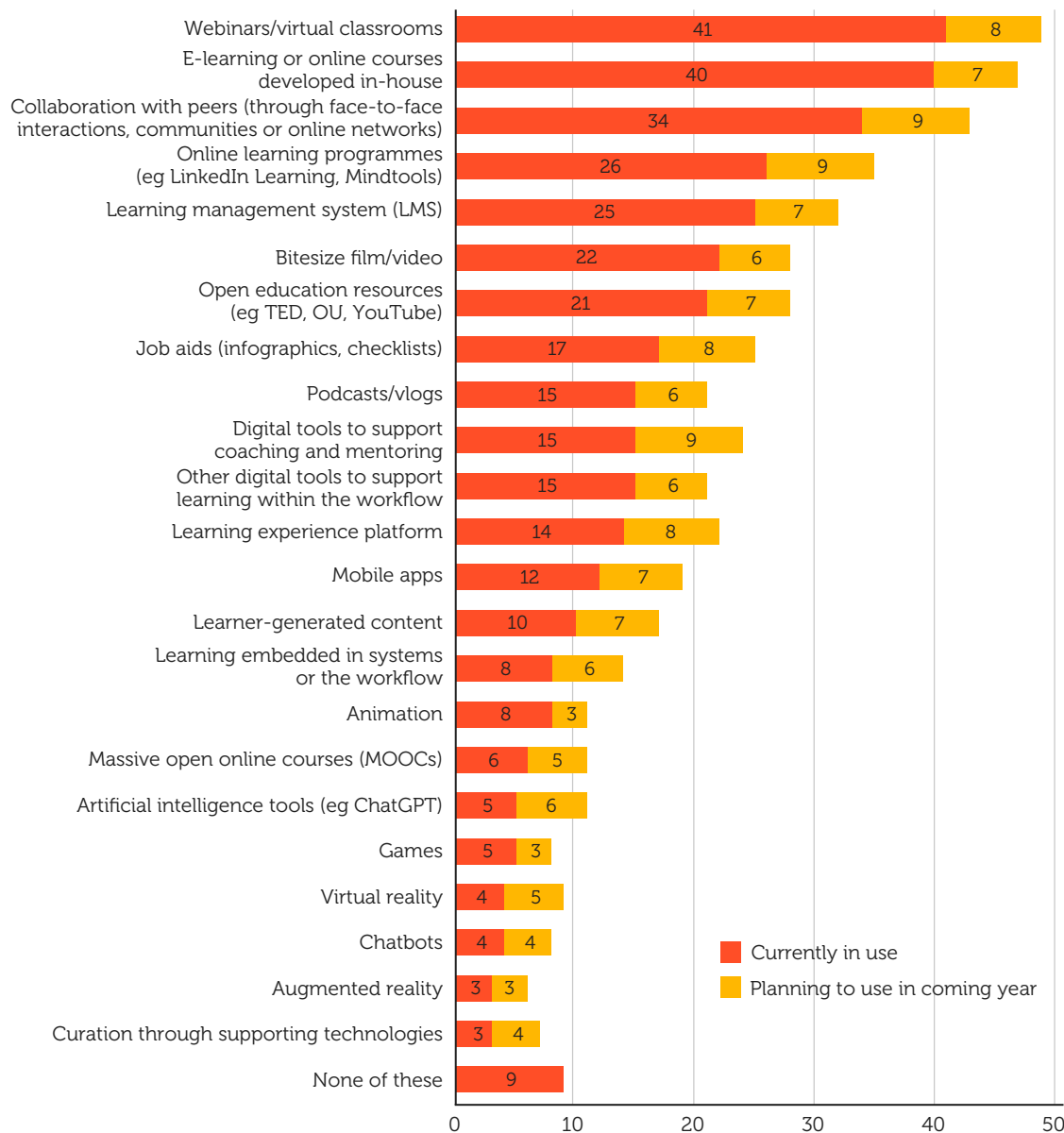
If our methods are how we approach learning opportunities at work, media looks at the digital tools we use to support our priorities. There has continued to be a drop in the proportion of organisations that are not using any form of technology, from 15% in 2021 to 9% in 2023.

Currently, there are no standout tools in use across the majority of respondents, but webinars remain the most popular form of media used (although usage has dropped slightly since 2021 from 51% to 41%), followed by e-learning. However, use of all other media has remained largely unchanged, including the use of more engaging technologies which can enable learning anytime and anywhere. This includes learner-generated content (10% in 2023; 11% in 2021), mobile apps (12% in 2023; 13% in 2021), virtual reality (4% in 2023; 3% in 2021), augmented reality (3% in 2023; 2% in 2021) and games (5% in 2023; 3% in 2021). While these tools are not essential for providing practice and encouraging ongoing reflection, their limited adoption over the past two years may represent a missed opportunity to support these activities, which are essential for building skill and changing behaviour.

This confirms the findings of previous post-pandemic studies<sup>9</sup> that, overall, the surge into digital media has not been maintained. Compared with 2021, usage across the board has generally remained static, with one exception – the use of collaboration with peers – which has been increasing steadily since 2020 and is up 6% again this year (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: The vast majority of organisations are embracing digital technology to support L&D, but uptake of emergent technologies remains minimal**

*Digital technologies used to support L&D now and planned use for the coming year (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108.

Question: What, if any, of the following digital technologies are currently used by your organisation to support L&D content delivery and collaboration within your workforce?

Base: n=896.

Question: While you are not using these technologies now, which, if any, of the following are you planning to use in the coming year?

Respondents are expecting a similar pattern of technology use for L&D in the next 12 months. However, one of the areas expecting the most growth (9%) in the next 12 months is digital tools to support coaching and mentoring. Given the fact that coaching is the only method that hasn't increased in the past two years, it may be that technology will provide a surge in opportunity. It is important to note that planned adoption does not always result in action but provides an indication of intention that can be revisited.

### Types of digital adopters

In 2021, we looked at three types of technology adopters to explore how their use of media differed. In 2023, we have revisited the differences.

First, we define the three different types of digital adopters as follows:

- 1 Minimalists:** those using fewer than two online content creation and administration tools.
- 2 Content advocates:** those using primarily content tools and basic administration tools.
- 3 Broad range:** more sophisticated adopters mixing content, administration and additional tools to support the workplace application of learning (for example, collaborative tools, job aids, chatbots).

More detail about the definitions and characteristics of these groups can be found in the [Methodology](#) section.<sup>10</sup>

Compared with content advocates and minimalist adopters, the broad range adopters are more likely to report that:

- there has been increased investment in learning in their organisations (49%, versus 34% of content advocates and 26% of minimalists)
- there has been increased use of digital learning solutions in the past two years (68%, compared with 57% of content advocates and 45% of minimalists)
- online learning will increase in their organisation in the next year (63%, versus 46% of content advocates and 35% of minimalists).

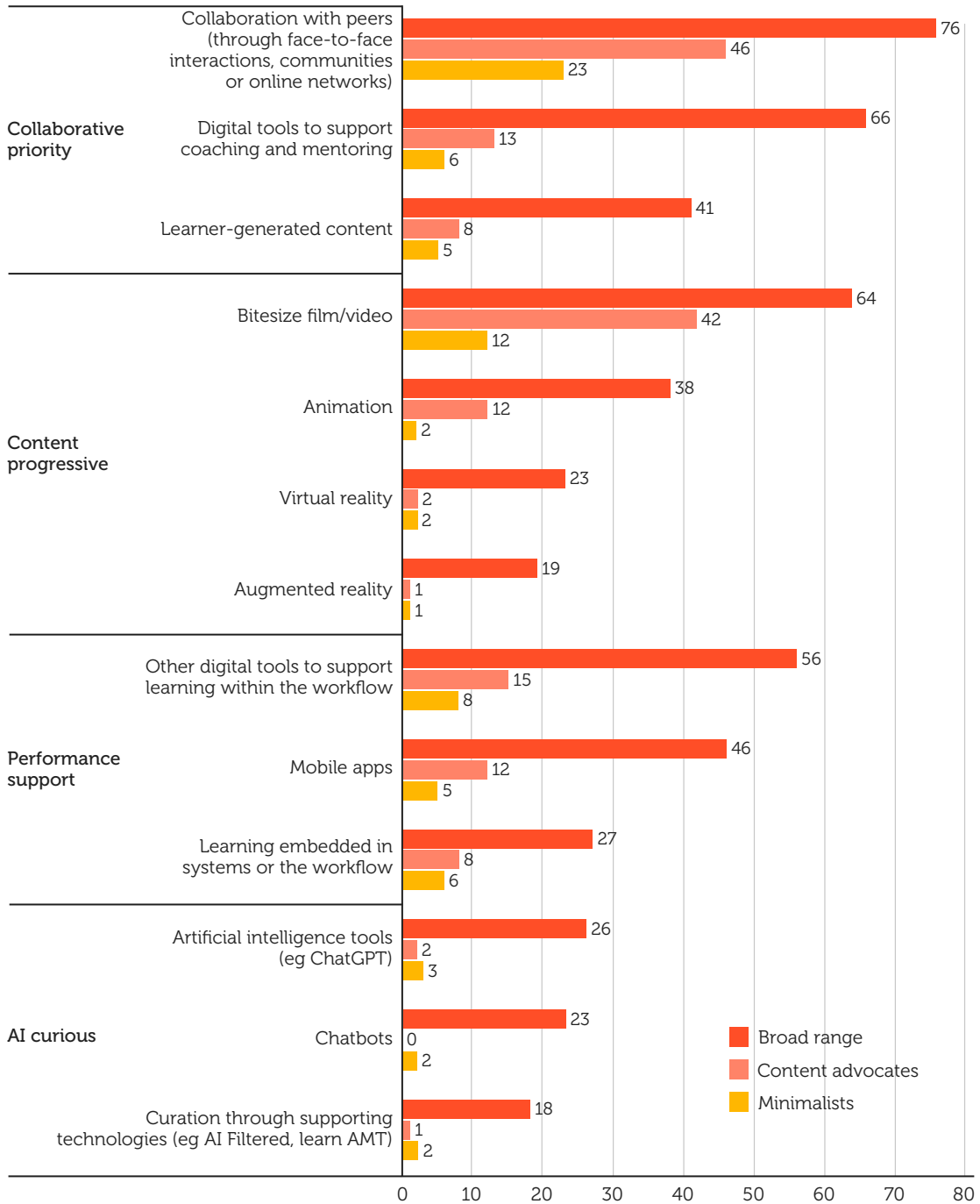
Broad range adopters, by definition, demonstrate different applications of education technologies beyond content delivery and management (Figure 13).

They are more likely to prioritise tools that support collaboration and that help individuals connect and learn from each other. They are more likely to be working progressively with immersive content and engaging with tools that support learning within the workflow, and are more curious about the role that AI may play in learning (see [Box 2: L&D and generative AI](#)).



**Figure 13: Broad range adopters are pushing the content boundaries**

*Digital technologies currently used to support L&D content delivery and collaboration within organisations (% of respondents)*



Base: broad range: n=119; content advocates: n=284; minimalists: n=380.

Question: What, if any, of the following digital technologies are currently used by your organisation to support L&D content delivery and collaboration within your workforce?

## Box 2: L&D and generative AI

Our survey was conducted just weeks after the launch of ChatGPT, the fastest adopted technology to date,<sup>11</sup> and one with potentially profound implications for how:

- workplace learners are supported, coached, mentored and exposed to new opportunities
- workplace learning is designed, tracked, delivered and analysed.<sup>12</sup>

At the time of our survey at the end of February 2023, only 5% of respondents were using it and a further 6% were planning to.

Twenty-six per cent of broad range adopters were potentially one step ahead and were already using tools like ChatGPT in their work, with a further 13% planning to use it (versus only 4% of content advocates and minimalists).

With their propensity to experiment and learn from exploring, it will be interesting to see how their practice changes over the coming year.

However, what sets the groups of digital adopters apart isn't just their different focus on technology; it is their perspective on their role and purpose and how they support the holistic learning process.

### *Vision and purpose*

Broad range adopters were more likely to agree that their organisation has a clear vision and strategy for learning and development and that their learning strategy is aligned with organisational goals, compared with content advocates and minimalists (Figure 14). They also felt that their organisations encouraged curiosity from all employees.

**Figure 14: Broad range adopters felt their organisations had a clear L&D strategy that was aligned with organisational goals**

*Perceptions of wider organisational learning environment by digital adopter type (% of learning leaders)*



Base: broad range: n=119; content advocates: n=284; minimalists: n=369 (L&D leaders responsible for learning teams).

Question: Which of the following statements reflect the wider learning environment in your organisation or the primary organisation that you work with? Please select all that apply.

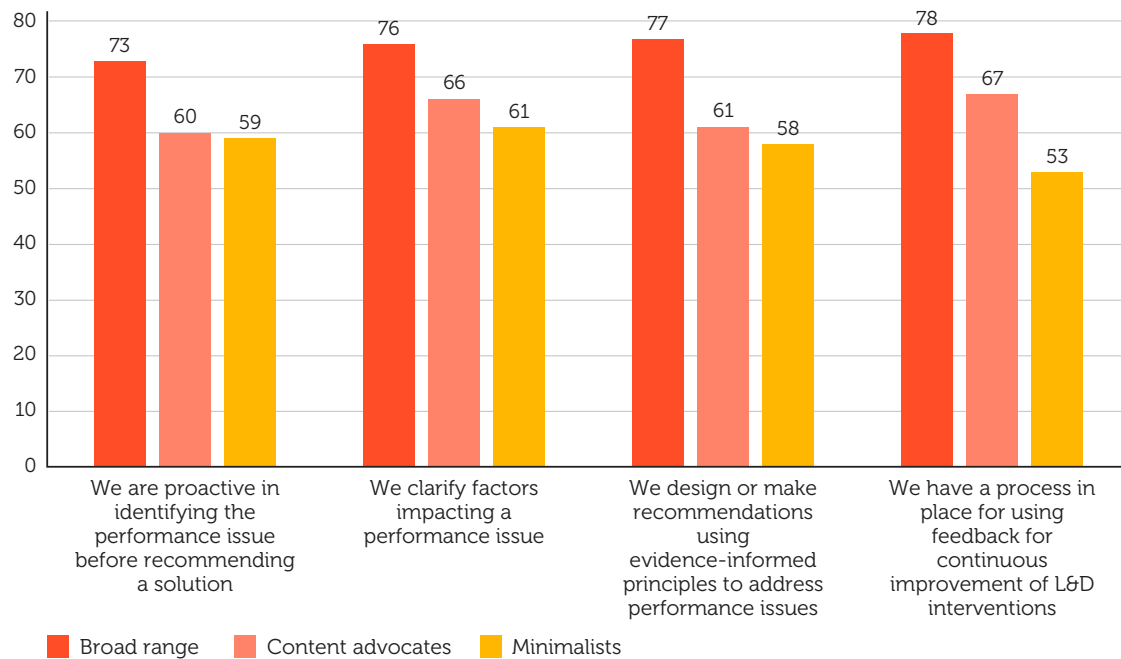
**Contribution to the wider context of learning**

Compared with both the content advocates and the minimalists, broad range adopters of technology in this survey are more likely to agree that:

- they are proactive in identifying performance issues before recommending solutions *and* in clarifying the factors that impact a performance issue
- they design or make recommendations using evidence-informed principles to address performance issues
- they have a process in place for using feedback for continuous improvement of L&D interventions (Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Broad range adopters of technology feel they are the most proactive in identifying performance issues, recommending evidence-based solutions for L&D performance issues and using feedback to improve interventions**

*Perceptions of organisational L&D strategy and programmes by digital adopter type (% of respondents)*



Base: broad range: n=120; content advocates: n=284; minimalists: n=378.

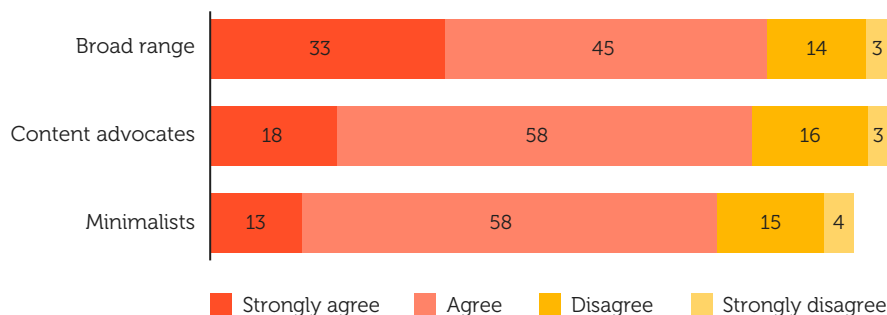
Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation’s learning and development strategy and programmes?

**Recognised contribution**

Broad range digital adopters were also twice as likely to strongly agree that their business leaders recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities than minimalists (Figure 16). We will expand further on this in [Section 5](#).

**Figure 16: Broad range digital adopters are twice as likely to strongly agree that leaders in their organisation recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities compared with minimalists**

*Perceptions of the impact L&D has on organisational and people priorities (% of respondents who strongly agree)*



Base: broad range: n=119; content advocates: n=283; minimalists: n=380. Excluded data for 'don't knows'.

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation's learning and development strategy and programmes: Leaders in our organisation recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities?

### Implications

With a wide range of methods and media available today, learning practitioners are faced with more options than ever before and an exponential shift in digital disruption due to tools such as generative AI. The broad range digital adopters hint that success may lie in the application of new tools and technologies to improve business impact.

To make sense of the options before us, we need to take a step back. The goal of L&D practitioners is to be purpose-driven, evidence-informed and outcomes-driven. Our purpose is to support organisational and people priorities, and Section 5 considers some of the principles behind our practice that can help improve impact.

## 5

# How can we deliver more impact to our organisation?

### At a glance

- There has been an increase in the number of L&D professionals who are proactive in understanding a performance issue before recommending a solution (57% in 2023, versus 32% in 2021), but that leaves a significant number potentially working on activities that do not contribute to improving performance.
- A significant number do not feel skilled at designing and delivering learning, and only 55% have a process in place for using feedback to continually improve interventions.

- Learning practitioners who feel valued by their leaders are more likely to agree that they design and make recommendations using evidence-informed principles to address performance issues (70%), that they have processes in place for assessing impact (63%), and that they are skilled at effective learner engagement, transfer and impact (28%).

### In detail

The range of methods and media in the learning practitioner's kitbag has clearly widened since the pandemic, so it is important to understand:

- what practices are making a difference to the way that we address learning
- how we can use that information to work *smarter* rather than *harder*.

Effective learning design is underpinned by understanding the actual science of how people learn. Today, learning practitioners have more access to sources of evidence than ever before to help inform the way that we design and deliver learning interventions.<sup>13</sup>

But to what extent are learning practitioners following the basics of effective learning design to create inclusive learning opportunities that support both organisation and people priorities?

In this section, we explore a range of areas relating to L&D practice. To understand the proportion of practitioners that agree with these statements with consistent intent, we have, in some cases, focused on the 'strongly agree' responses. However, all responses are included in the figures to give a full picture of current L&D practices.

### Understanding context and clarifying needs

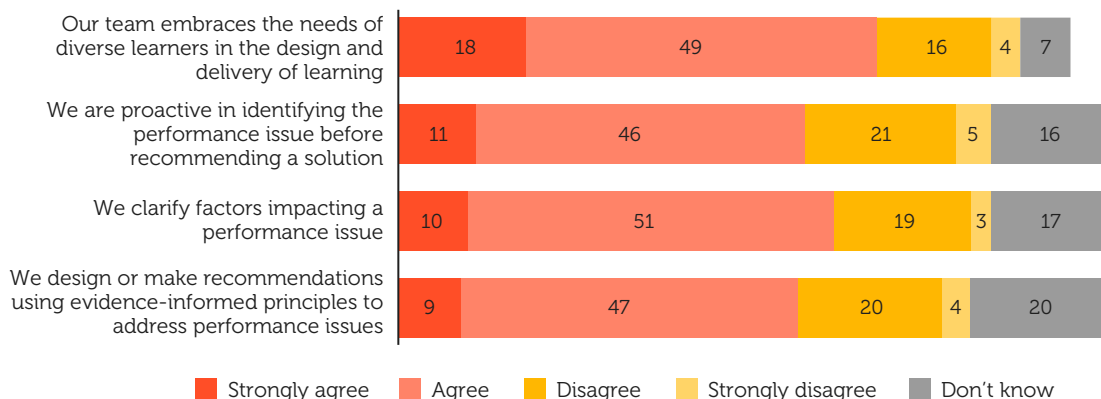
'Working smarter' involves working on the right priorities for the right people in the right way. With so many options in the kitbag and an increased workload, it is easy to jump to solutions before understanding the problem. Encouragingly, there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents who agree that they are proactive in identifying performance issues before recommending a suitable solution (57% net agree, compared with 32% in 2021).

We can see from Figure 17 that, proportionally, more learning practitioners are now using evidence-informed principles to make recommendations when addressing performance issues (56% net agree, compared with 26% in 2021). However, less than one in 10 strongly agree, which suggests that only a small minority are adopting these principles with intent. Our findings indicate that those supporting learning but with no L&D function are the least likely to use evidence-informed principles, while L&D functions operating in the line of business are most likely to be using them.

Two-thirds of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that their teams are also looking to embrace the needs of diverse learners in the design and delivery of learning.

**Figure 17: Two-thirds of respondents agreed that their teams embrace the needs of diverse learners when designing and delivering learning**

*Perceptions of L&D teams' approach to strategy and programmes (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108.

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation's learning and development strategy and programmes?

Base: n=374.

Question: Thinking about the general knowledge of your team, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following [randomised] statements: My team takes action based on...

### Designing and delivering learning

Evidence<sup>14</sup> suggests that establishing clear business goals ahead of learning design – and designing to the specific needs of the audience – improves the outcomes of the learning intervention.

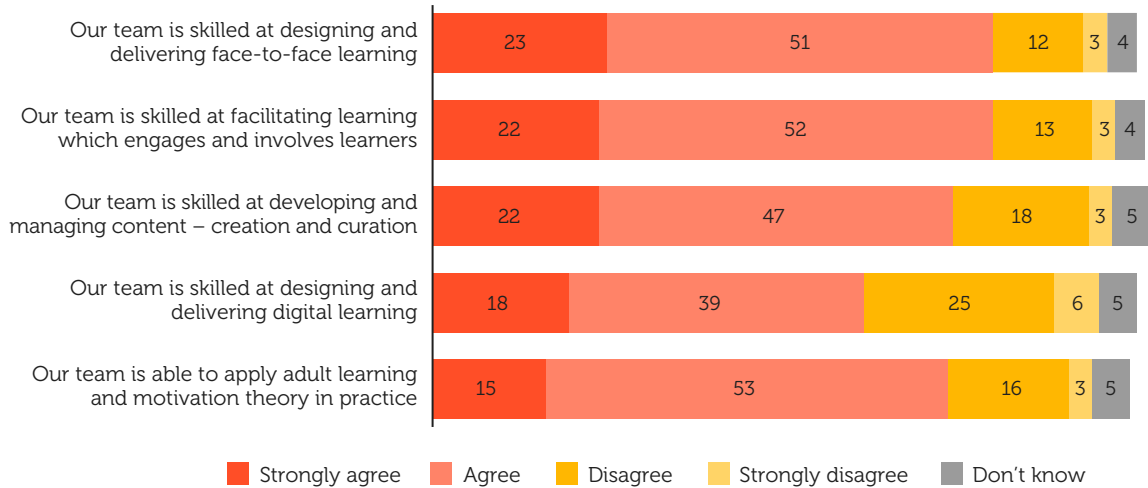
For most L&D teams, designing and delivering solutions is at the core of their business. However, less than a quarter strongly believe that they are skilled at this, and a third disagree that they are skilled at designing and delivering digital learning. Unsurprisingly, those working as HR generalists and in the line of business are most likely to lack the digital skills necessary.

With the range of content options available to organisations today, it is important not to overload individuals with choice. Those familiar with learning theory understand that minimising the cognitive load of individuals, ensuring relevance to the task in hand, and creating opportunity for practice is essential for learning. This explains why the 'Netflix of learning' – where individuals are presented with a wide range of learning content options available at any time and any place – is just not working today.<sup>15</sup>

Given the reliance on content solutions, over two-thirds (69%) said that they are skilled in creating and curating content (see Figure 18). However, only 3% are currently harnessing tools to support curation. It may be that more focus should be applied to curation versus creation of content in the design and delivery process to target the right interventions to the right individuals at the right time.

**Figure 18: Less than a quarter of respondents felt their teams were skilled at designing and delivering learning**

*Perceptions of respondents on their team's skills for designing and delivering learning (% of respondents)*



Base: n=374.

Question: Thinking about the specialist knowledge and skills of your team, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following [randomised] statements?

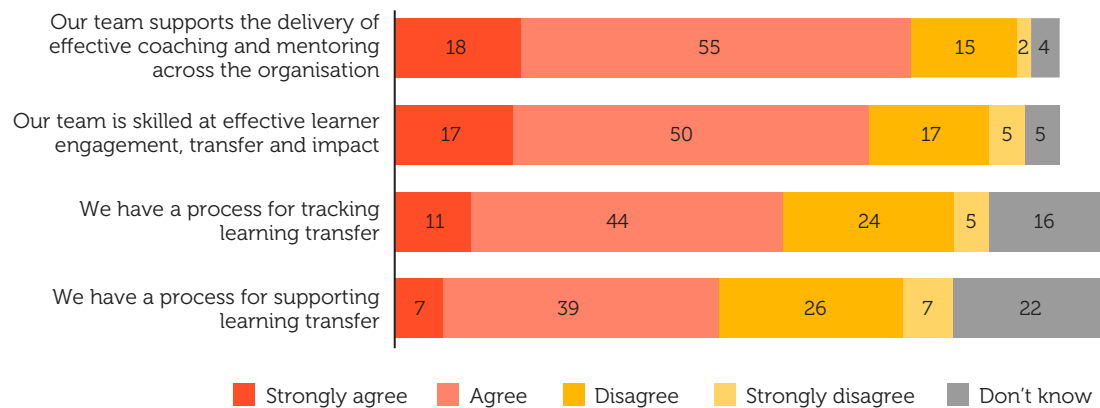
### Supporting learning transfer

How we help individuals confidently perform their job is critical. Our strategies for ensuring effective learning transfer are becoming increasingly important.

While more respondents are likely to agree that they have a process for supporting and tracking learning transfer than two years ago (18% in 2021), very few set up processes to do this with intent (see the 'strongly agree' responses in Figure 19).

**Figure 19: Only 7% of respondents strongly agree they have a process for supporting learning transfer**

*Perceptions of L&D teams' focus on learning transfer and impact (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108.

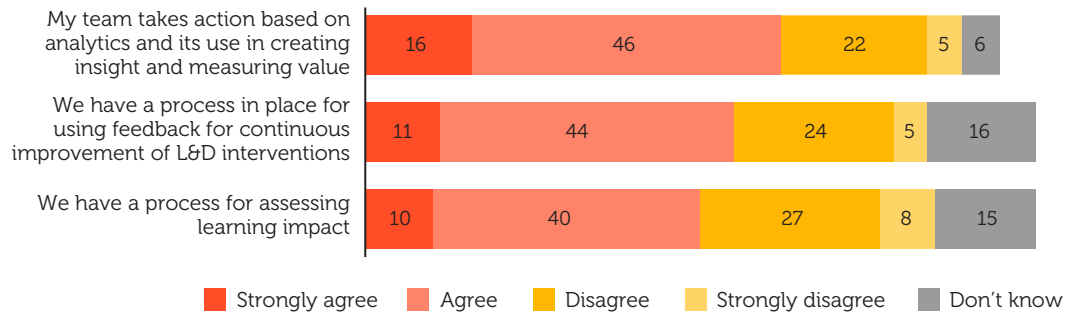
Question: Thinking about the specialist knowledge and skills of your team: My team... Base: n=374 AND To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation's learning and development strategy and programmes?



## Revisiting impact

To work smarter, we need to understand what is working and what isn't. However, only 50% of respondents agreed they had a process in place for assessing learning impact, and only 55% had a process for using feedback to continually improve interventions (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Only half the respondents agreed they had a process in place for assessing learning impact**  
**Perceptions of assessing impact (% of respondents)**



Base: n=374.

Question: Thinking about the general knowledge of your team: My team takes action based on analytics and its use in creating insight and measuring value.

Base: n= 1,108.

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on the key aspects of your organisation's learning and development strategy and programmes?

In the spirit of being outcomes-driven, throughout this section we compare how practices differ between respondents who believe that business leaders recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities, with those who don't.

To do this, we take the net agree (respondents who agree or strongly agree) and net disagree scores (respondents who disagree or strongly disagree) and compare these groups on various aspects of L&D practices. These have been labelled as either 'Valued by leaders' or 'Not valued by leaders'. (See the [Methodology](#) section for further details on these definitions.)

Without claiming causation or correlation, we found the following.

The learning practitioners who are valued by leaders are more likely to agree that:

- they design or make recommendations using evidence-informed principles to address performance issues (70%, versus 41% of respondents who are not valued by leaders)
- they are proactive in identifying the performance issue before recommending a solution (73% versus 34%)
- they apply adult learning and motivation theory in practice (28% versus 16%)
- they are skilled at effective learner engagement, transfer and impact (28% versus 16%)
- they have a process in place for using feedback for continuous improvement of L&D interventions (68% versus 41%)

- they have a process for assessing learning impact (63% versus 33%)
- their team takes action based on analytics and uses this to create insight and measure value (25% versus 17%).

### Implications

The process of learning something new and building skill extends beyond course, content and curricula. Learning transfer, application and ultimate impact takes place beyond the L&D domain. The next section explores how learning practitioners currently work with others to co-create value.

## 6

# How can we work with others to co-create value?

### At a glance

- Sixty-three per cent of L&D practitioners agree that they work in collaboration with other functions to deliver business-critical priorities.
- Fifty-one per cent say that line managers encourage participation in learning and development, but only 39% believe that individuals are given time away from their day-to-day role to take part in learning.
- Learning practitioners who feel valued by leaders are more likely to agree that their organisations create a climate of trust and have processes in place for workers to capture and share ideas, and that managers facilitate continuous learning.

### In detail

Two years ago, it was all hands on deck. Leaders, individuals and L&D teams worked with a common cause and shared interest, applying all of their different skills, attitudes and attributes across different business silos to tackle the consequences of the pandemic.

Today, 63% of our respondents agree or strongly agree that they work in collaboration with other functions to deliver business-critical priorities. This section explores how L&D is working with – and within – the organisation to support learning.

### Working with line managers

To what extent are line managers creating an environment and permission for individuals to learn? We found the following:

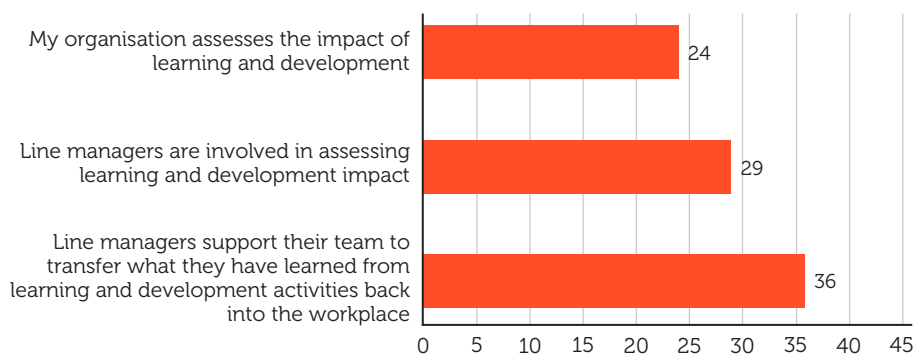
- Fifty-one per cent of learning practitioners said that managers encourage participation in learning and development, but only 39% believe individuals are given time away from their day-to-day role to take part in learning and development activities.

- Thirty-seven per cent said that managers are involved in defining learning and development needs, and the same percentage agree that individuals influence decisions about their learning and development.
- Forty-six per cent said that managers are open to discussing performance needs with learning professionals, but only 27% felt that individuals have clear goals for engaging with learning and development opportunities.

Respondents from the public sector are more likely to agree that line managers are involved in defining needs (42%, versus 35% in the private sector) and encourage participation in learning (58%, versus 47% in the private sector). Those with L&D teams operating in the line of business are more likely to agree that managers are open to discussing performance needs with them (53%) and encourage participation in L&D (59%).

When it comes to formal learning interventions to build skills, line managers play a critical role in creating opportunities for learning transfer. However, in general, perceptions of line manager support in facilitating this and assessing the impact of L&D is low (see Figure 21).

**Figure 21: Perceptions of line manager support of L&D are low**  
*Perceptions of line manager support of L&D (% of respondents who agree)*



Base: n=1,108.

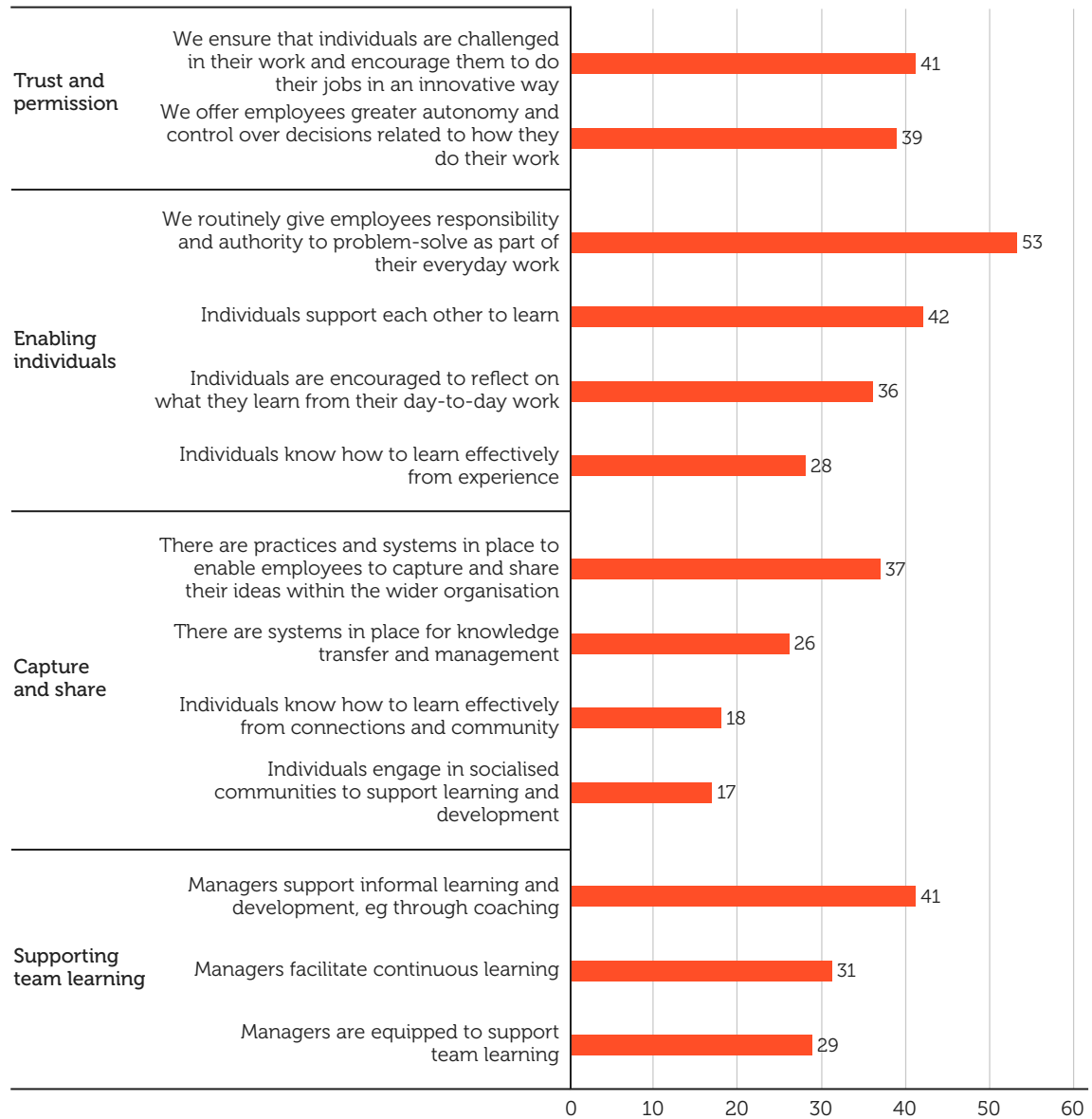
Question: Which of the following statements reflect the wider learning environment in your organisation or the primary organisation that you work with? Please select all that apply. AND Which of the following statements about line managers reflect the wider learning environment in your organisation? Please select all that apply.

### Supporting individuals to learn

A recent LinkedIn Learning study flagged that members' skills required for the same job had shifted by 25% between 2015 and 2020. By 2025, they expect that the skills required for the same job will have changed by 40%.<sup>16</sup> When it comes to skills, individuals can no longer rely on what they have learned in the past to sustain them for the future. More emphasis is already being placed on the individual to take responsibility to keep their skills up to date, but to what extent are our organisations creating environments where employees have permission to learn and grow?

**Figure 22: Organisations are encouraging individuals to take ownership for their learning but are less likely to create an environment that provides permission and opportunity to learn**

*Perceptions about whether our organisations are ready to support learning (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108.

Question: Which of the following statements, if any, describe the prevalent characteristics of your organisation?

The CIPD report *Driving the new learning organisation: How to unlock the potential of L&D* highlighted the value brought when learning professionals work with the business to support and create an environment for learning. However, Figure 22 shows that only a third of our respondents agree that there are systems and processes in place to capture and share their ideas, and only 18% agree that individuals know how to effectively learn from each other. Therefore it may be time for L&D professionals to step up and help organisations learn how to learn.

### **Co-creating value today**

Learning practitioners who feel valued by leaders (see the [Methodology](#) section for information on this sample) are more likely to agree that their organisation:

- ensures that individuals are challenged in their work and encourages them to do their jobs in an innovative way (49% agreed, versus 26% who do not feel valued by leaders)
- develops and maintains an organisational climate of trust (49% versus 29%)
- has practices and systems in place to enable employees to capture and share their ideas within the wider organisation (43% versus 28%)
- has systems in place for knowledge transfer and management (31% versus 18%).

Those who feel valued by their leaders were also more likely to agree that their managers:

- support informal learning and development, for example through coaching (47%, versus 32% of those who do not feel valued)
- facilitate continuous learning (37% versus 17%).

### **Implications**

As a profession, our organisations need us to support growth, and engage and retain talent. The question is, is our profession creating the right opportunities and are we, as individuals, equipped and ready to deliver?

# 7

## How equipped are L&D professionals to contribute value?

### At a glance

- Sixty-five per cent of respondents agree that the L&D profession offers a meaningful career.
- L&D leaders view the profession more favourably than practitioners, particularly in their view of career prospects and the growing impact and influence it has on the organisation.
- Our principles of practice are recognised by most but need to become more intentional. Only 18% strongly agree that they use a commercial mindset to demonstrate drive, and only 24% strongly agree that their team shows courage to speak up and skilfully influence others to gain buy-in.

### In detail

Sixty-five per cent of respondents agreed that the L&D profession offers a meaningful career and, despite a strong focus on cost reduction from an organisational perspective, only 33% thought that the profession was cutting back more than others. L&D is a profession that allows us to give back value to individuals and our organisations.

Our survey shows that learning practitioners whose leaders value their contribution to the organisation's goals perceive the profession more favourably than those whose leaders do not recognise their contribution.

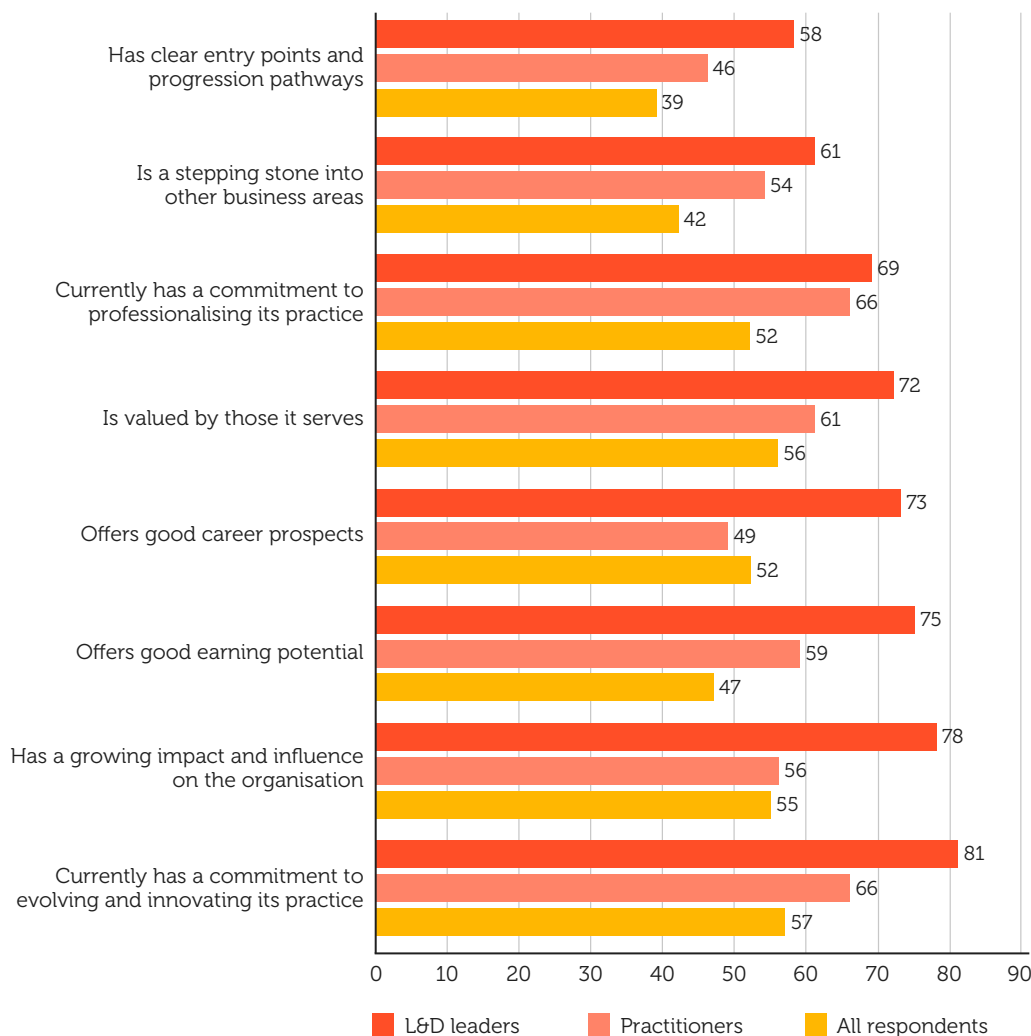
Those valued by leaders are more likely to agree that the profession:

- is valued by those it serves (58%, versus 34% whose leaders do not recognise their contribution)
- currently has a commitment to evolving and innovating its practice (64% versus 48%)
- offers good earning potential (55% versus 34%).

### The vital role of the L&D leader

We took a closer look at the insights from a smaller sample of those specifically working within L&D itself, both in L&D leadership roles (such as chief learning officers, heads of L&D and training managers) and those in L&D practitioner roles (such as designers, technologists and trainers). We compared their responses with the wider sample of respondents, which includes HR generalists and those working in the line of business with no specific L&D remit (Figure 23).

**Figure 23: L&D leaders have a more positive view of the profession than L&D practitioners**  
**Views of the L&D profession (% of respondents who net agree)**



Base: all respondents: n=1,108; L&D leaders: n=153; practitioners: n=71.

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the L&D profession?

Figure shows percentage of respondents who strongly agree or agree with each statement.

What is immediately clear is the vital role of those in L&D leadership. Generally, they have a more positive view of their profession than those in practitioner roles. They definitely have a more positive perspective than the wider sample of respondents (which includes HR generalists and those working in the line of business with no specific L&D remit).

This highlights a number of opportunities for learning leaders looking to grow and retain professional L&D team members:

- 1 L&D leaders, who hold a position of influence and decision-making, agree that the profession has a commitment to evolving and professionalising practice. However, this strength of conviction is not shared to the same extent by practitioners who are doing the work. Is this an opportunity for more experimentation and connection?



- 2 L&D leaders (who potentially have more opportunity to work closer with the line of business) are more likely to agree that the profession is valued by those it serves, but practitioners are less likely to feel that they are valued. Is this an opportunity for improved sharing of leadership feedback and better communication of organisational purpose and goals?
- 3 L&D leaders are more likely to see the profession that has led to their leadership position as offering good career prospects, with clear entry points and good earning potential. Is this an opportunity to provide clearer career pathways and opportunities to learn within teams?

### **Box 3: The consequences of experience**

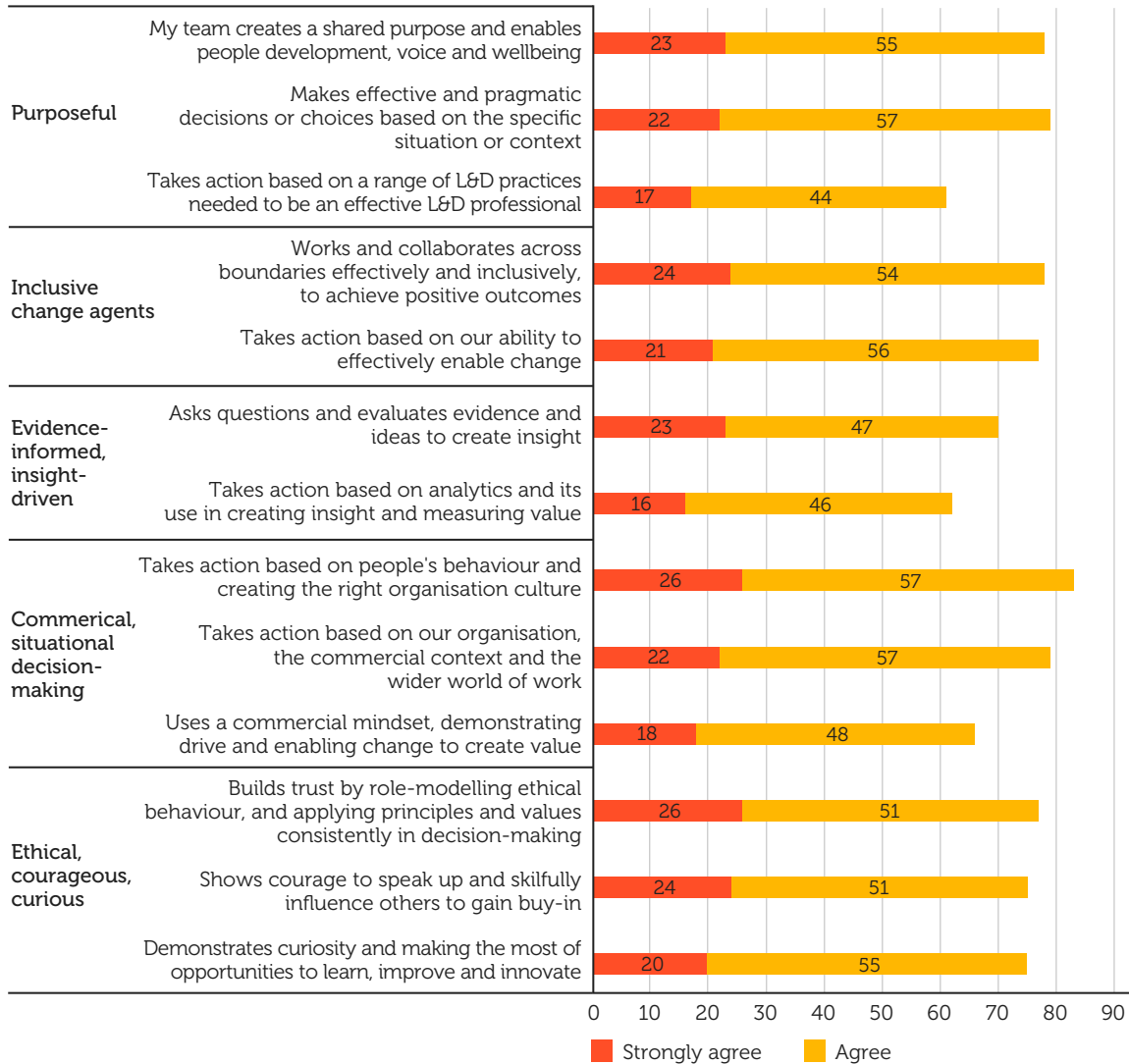
Those who have been in the profession for more than 10 years were less worried about the profession cutting back than their peers who had been in the profession for less than two years. However, they were also a little more jaded and slightly less likely to agree that:

- the profession has a growing impact and influence on the organisation (58% agreed, versus 61% of those in place less than two years)
- the profession has a commitment to professionalising its practice (60% versus 66%)
- the profession is valued by those it serves (57% versus 65%).

The survey also explored the influences on the behaviour and decisions of L&D teams and the extent to which these principles are intentionally followed (indicated by a 'strongly agree' response), which is essential insight for those leading L&D teams.

The data reflects an opportunity for learning professionals to become more intentional in applying their principles of practice (Figure 24).

**Figure 24: Principles of practice are recognised by learning practitioners but need to become more intentional**  
**Guiding principles of today's learning practitioners (% of respondents who agree/strongly agree)**



Base: n=374 (those who identified their main role as in the HR or L&D remit or as a senior manager).

Question: Thinking about the specialist knowledge and skills of your team, my team...

AND, Thinking about the general 'behaviour' of your team, my team...

It was encouraging to see that L&D leaders were more likely to strongly agree that:

- their team created a shared purpose, enabling people development, voice and wellbeing (28% of learning leaders versus 23% of the sample overall)
- their team took action on a range of L&D practices needed to be an effective L&D professional (29%, versus 17% strongly agreeing in the sample overall)
- their team took action based on analytics and its use in creating insight (23%, versus 16% of the sample overall).

Do these principles make a difference to our outputs? While we are not claiming a direct correlation, learning practitioners who identified themselves as being 'valued by leaders' were more likely to agree that their L&D team:

- demonstrates curiosity and makes the most of opportunities to learn, improve and innovate (31%, versus 20% of those who felt they were not valued by leaders)
- uses a commercial mindset, demonstrates drive, and enables change to create value (26% versus 19%)
- takes actions based on their ability to effectively enable change (31% versus 20%).

### Building our skill

We have already seen that those whose leaders recognise their value are more likely to report that their teams are skilled in a range of areas and are more likely to audit their skills. But how have learning practitioners been building skill?

Figure 25 shows that this is a real mix of both on-the-job and self-directed learning.

**Figure 25: Learning practitioners have been building skills predominantly through online webinars, classes and reading**

*L&D undertaken by respondents since January 2022 (% of respondents)*



Base: n=1,108.

Question: Since January 2022, in which, if any, of the following ways have you been keeping your skills up to date? Please tick all that apply.

Earlier we saw that:

- Fifty-six per cent of respondents agreed that they design or make recommendations using evidence-informed principles to address performance issues, but only 29% have engaged with research in the last year to build their skill.

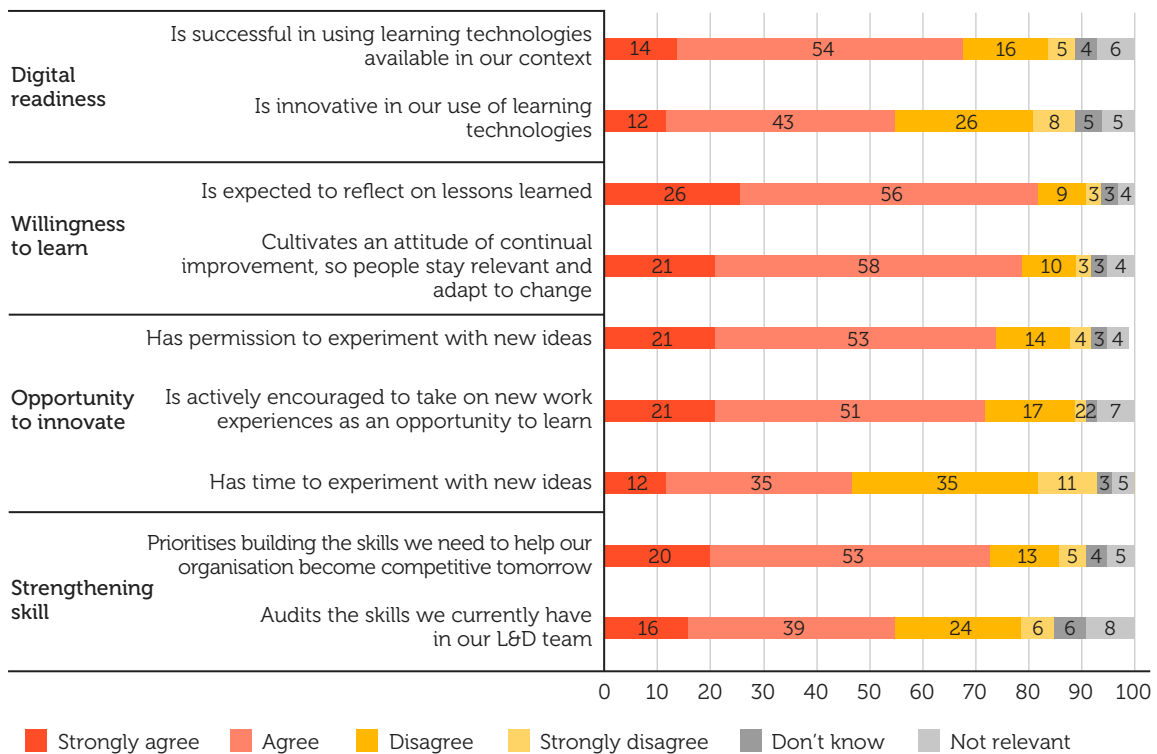
- Seventy-five per cent said they generally agreed that they have permission to experiment and 47% have time to experiment, but only 13% have embraced test and learn as an opportunity to build skill. Learning leaders are more likely to have embraced test and learn (32%) compared with practitioners (21%).

### Preparing for the future

The latest Deloitte study on human capital trends<sup>17</sup> talks about the disruption and discontinuity that is challenging our existing models and assumptions about work. If one of the roles of the L&D professional is to ensure that individuals, teams and organisations are equipped and ready to contribute to good work and working lives in this environment, how are we preparing ourselves?

**Figure 26: Less than 25% of learning leaders strongly agree that they are ready for a changing digital workplace**

*Perceptions of future preparedness (% of learning leaders responsible for learning teams)*



Base: n=374 (L&D leaders responsible for learning teams).

Question: Thinking about the opportunities and plans that your team have to be prepared for the future, my team...

### Digital readiness

As Figure 26 shows, while it's positive to see that over half of our respondents are innovative in their use of learning technologies and two-thirds successfully use the learning technologies available, only 12% strongly agree that they are currently innovative and 14% strongly agree they are successful in using it. How we have applied our digital tools in the past will not always prepare us for the future, and an attitude of continual improvement, review and reflection will become essential, rather than nice to have.

### ***Willingness to learn***

While over three-quarters indicate a willingness to learn, only 21% strongly agree that they are cultivating an attitude of continual improvement and only 26% strongly agree that they are expected to reflect.

### ***Opportunity to innovate***

The Deloitte study flagged the need to think like a researcher, experiment and challenge. However, only 21% strongly agree that they have permission to experiment in learning and less than half feel they have time to do so.

### ***Strengthening skill***

Only one in five strongly agree that they are prioritising the skills that they need to help their organisations in the future, and only just over half agree that they are auditing the skills they have in their team.

It's important to note the considerable proportion of respondents in Figure 26 who either disagreed with each of the above statements, didn't know, or did not think it was relevant to their own successful future.

While looking at future readiness, we see that those who already feel recognised by their leaders as contributing to organisational priorities are more likely to agree that their team:

- audits the skills they currently have in their L&D team (23% of those whose leaders recognise their value agree with this statement, versus 14% of those whose leaders do not recognise value)
- cultivates an attitude of continual improvement and permission to experiment with new ideas (33% versus 20%)
- has time to experiment with new ideas (19% versus 11%)
- is actively encouraged to take on new work experiences as an opportunity to learn (29% versus 19%).

## 8

# Recommendations

This report has unapologetically focused on the contribution that the L&D profession can make to achieving the organisational and people priorities that are at the forefront of business leaders' minds today: growth, efficiency, productivity, retention and wellbeing. We've looked at the methods and media in our expanding kitbag, how we apply them to support organisational learning, and the extent to which we're equipping ourselves to better prepare others for the future of work.

Here are nine recommendations we would like to offer moving forward. We hope that on reading, you will see and share many more.

### **1 Don't let go of lessons learned**

Two years ago, circumstances forced L&D practitioners, business leaders and workers to work together towards achieving common goals. Organisations rushed into adopting hybrid working practices that impacted both L&D

and business leaders. L&D professionals were not prepared, but many successfully contributed recognised value back to the business at that time. Let's not forget the lessons learned. This study highlights both the opportunity to learn from experiments that failed at that time and to dig into those that were successful.

## **2 Work smarter, not harder**

While some sectors have been hit harder than others, overall, L&D access to headcount, budgets and increased engagement with internal subject-matter experts has increased over the past two years. However, the workload has also increased. The L&D profession recognises the opportunity it has to contribute to the business skills agenda, but this survey report highlights the need for L&D professionals to work smarter rather than harder to make a difference. This means leaning into data and relationships that help us better understand business priorities and into evidence-informed practices that help us prioritise where our efforts will be most effective.

## **3 Shift the focus from input to outcomes**

A plethora of methods and media has now opened up to L&D professionals which has the potential to be overwhelming and increase workload even further. Now is the time to be ruthlessly focused on organisational outcomes and only prioritise the activities that will contribute to those outcomes. Learning practitioners who feel valued by leaders show us that they prioritise clarifying outcomes before recommending solutions and dig into evidence-informed learning practices.

## **4 Embrace digital curiosity**

Those using a broad range of learning technologies show us that our toolkit should not just be about methods or media, but both. They lean into exploration and experimentation to combine the two, to uncover new ways of supporting evidence-informed practice to improve learner engagement, transfer and impact. With generative AI emerging, organisations are facing some of the most fundamental and rapid changes to work and working lives. Now is not the time for L&D to be shy of technology – it is the time to become digitally curious and explore opportunities for increasing impact.

## **5 Operate beyond the course**

The survey report highlights that we should prioritise building skill over content to play a proactive role in talent retention. The methods and media currently in use are focused on content and programme creation instead of being harnessed to address the evidence-informed principles of reflection, learning transfer, application learning and facilitating an environment to support continual growth and learning. Sometimes this will mean saying 'no' to traditional methods and embracing informal and collaborative learning and development, such as coaching and mentoring. Always it will mean working smarter with others.

## 6 Work with others to co-create value

Learning practitioners who feel valued by leaders also work more closely with stakeholders in the organisation. Together they focus on understanding performance issues and work on ways of supporting learning transfer, encouraging reflection and assessing impact. Return on learning investment isn't a mad rush at the end of a programme – it becomes the result of working together with stakeholders to co-create value.

## 7 Create space to explore and experiment

With increasing opportunity to contribute to the people and talent agenda comes increasing pressure to respond to demand. Workloads will only decrease in this context if L&D starts to explore new ways of approaching opportunities. The broad range technology adopters, and those who are already reporting that their value is recognised, are starting to carve out space to explore and experiment with new ways of learning. They are giving themselves permission to learn.

## 8 Realise your own potential

Sixty-five per cent of respondents believe that the L&D profession offers a meaningful career, but to release the potential in others, we also need to release the potential in ourselves. Increasing our understanding of evidence-informed principles to improve learning outputs isn't enough; we need to apply them and to challenge others to apply them as well. Agreeing to the principles of our profession requires that we also have the courage to seek the opportunity to build on them.

## 9 L&D leaders – rise up!

L&D leaders – those in a position of influence – agree that the profession has a commitment to evolving and professionalising practice, but they also have a role to play to ensure this happens. What has worked in the past can't be guaranteed to work in the future. It is critical that L&D leaders continue to learn, experiment and lead by example. They need to create opportunities for others to do the same by structuring and building opportunities for those with less experience.

# 9 Methodology

## The survey

The CIPD's *Learning at work 2023* survey report (previously known as the *Learning and skills at work survey report*) examines current practices and trends within learning and development.

The survey consisted of 38 questions, completed through an online questionnaire between 25 January and 15 February 2023. The sample was collected via a YouGov panel, as well as marketed to learning and development professionals through the CIPD's network to provide supplementary insights. In total, 1,108 people responded to the survey; the results data has been weighted by UK business size and sector and is representative.

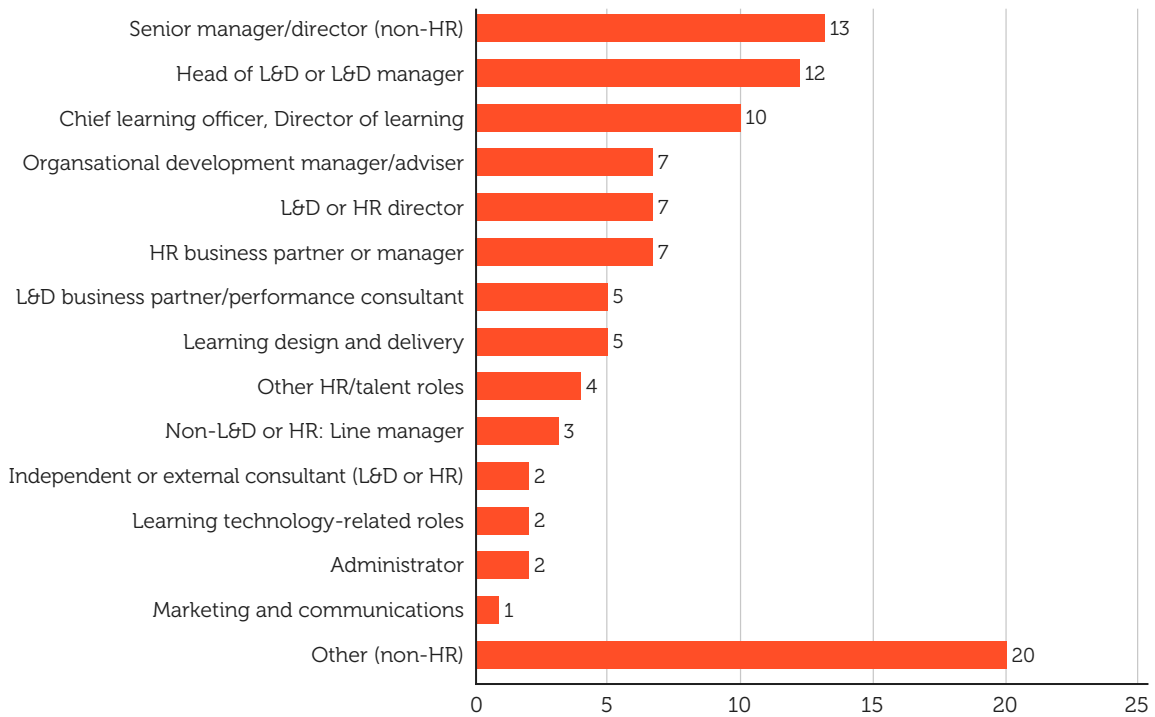
**The sample profile**

The survey was targeted at HR/learning and development professionals and those in senior roles, as the questions required specific knowledge on learning and development practices and policy.

**Job roles and responsibilities**

Just under half of the respondents (48%) stated that they are responsible for, or involved in, determining the learning and development needs of their organisation. Figure 27 shows a broad spectrum of respondents, with two-thirds (61%) coming from either an HR, OD or L&D background and the remainder coming from a non-HR/L&D perspective (senior managers, line managers, and others).

**Figure 27: Job roles of survey respondents (% of respondents)**



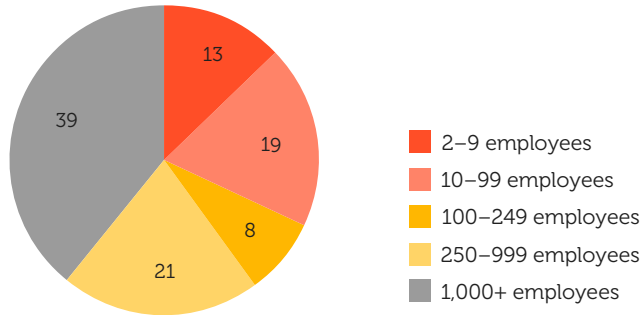
Base: n=1,108.



### Organisation size

The respondents work for organisations of all sizes (Figure 28).

**Figure 28: Organisation size of survey respondents (% of respondents)**

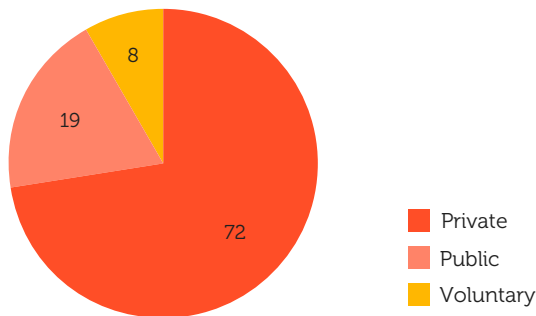


Base: n=1,108.

### Organisation sector

Three-quarters of the respondents work in the private sector, just under a fifth in the public sector (18%), with the remaining 8% working in the voluntary and charitable sector (Figure 29).

**Figure 29: Organisation sector of survey respondents (% of respondents)**

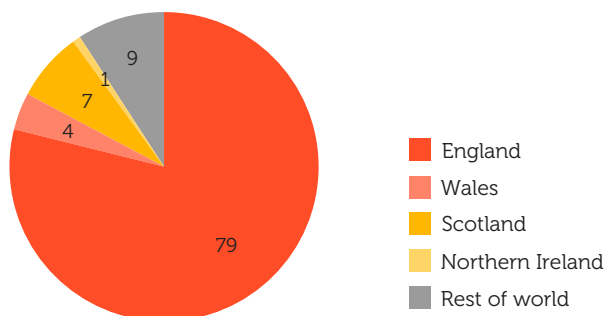


Base: n=1,092 (excluding the 16 respondents working in consulting firms).

### Location

The vast majority of respondents were based in the UK (Figure 30).

**Figure 30: Location of survey respondents (% of respondents)**

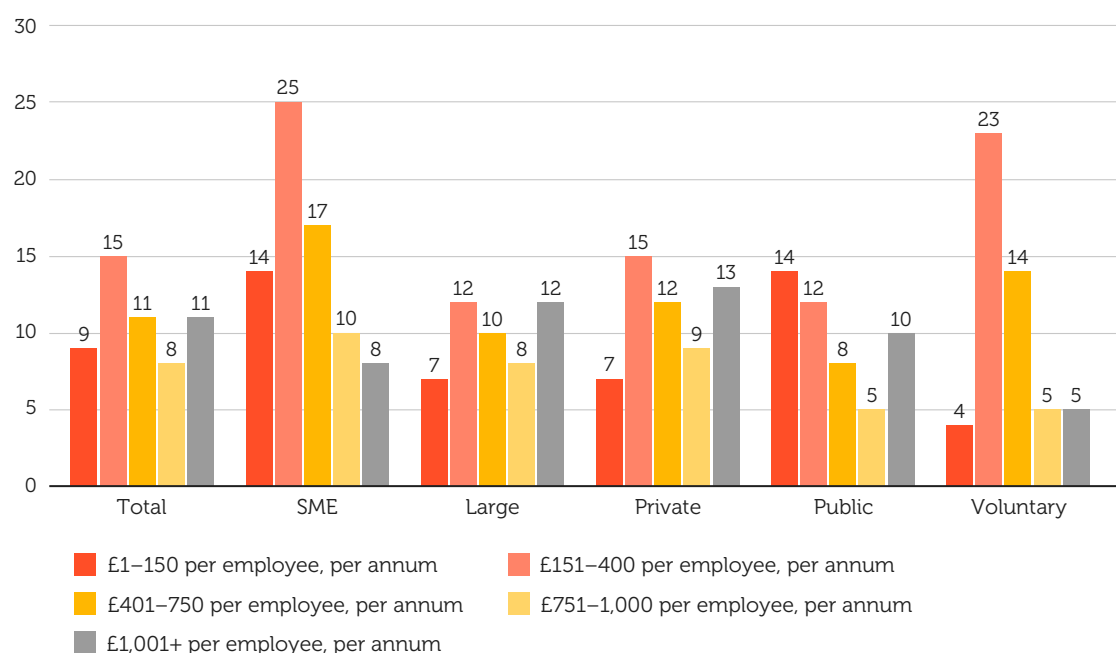


Base: n=1,108.

## Budgets

Most commonly, the L&D budget is £151–400 per employee, per annum, apart from in the public sector, where it is slightly lower (Figure 31).

**Figure 31: L&D budget per employee (excludes 'don't know' responses) (% of respondents)**



Base: n=563.

Question: What does your organisation's current annual L&D budget equate to per employee in the organisation? Please include any budget devolved to line managers and digital investment.

**Table 2: Ownership of learning budgets (% of respondent responses)**

	Total	SME company	Large company	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
L&D function	30	14	34	29	35	23
Wider HR function	22	19	23	23	19	20
Senior directors, eg managing director, CEO, executive management team	31	53	26	33	26	33
The specific organisation function or directorate, eg marketing, sales, finance, operations	7	4	8	6	8	10
Line managers	3	5	2	2	3	5
Other/don't know	7	5	7	6	8	8

Base: n=563 (those who agreed they had a budget).

Question: Who has principal ownership of the learning budget within your organisation?

### Data segmentation

The data was analysed using a number of different segmentations. These were calculated as follows.

**Table 3: Data segmentations used**

Definition	Segmentation
<b>Value indicators</b>	Valued by leaders (n=162) Those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Leaders in our organisation recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities."
	Not valued by leaders (n=212) Those who disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement.
<b>Digital adopters</b>	Minimalist (n=379) Those who use two, or fewer than two, simple content/administration technology tools (for example, online libraries).
	Content advocates (n=284) Those who use three or more simple content/administration technology tools and two advanced technology tools.
	Broad range (n=119) Those who use more non-content-related tools (two or more simple content administration tools and three or more advanced technology tools).
<b>Size</b>	SME (n=563): Organisations with fewer than 250 employees.
	Large (n=545): Organisations with more than 250 employees.
<b>L&amp;D role</b>	L&D leader (n=153) Those with a head of L&D or L&D manager, chief learning officer/director of learning, L&D or HR director responsibilities.
	L&D practitioner (n=71) Those working within an L&D team with design, delivery, learning technology and administrative responsibilities.

# 10

## Appendix: Perspectives from the voluntary sector

Ninety voluntary sector learning practitioners took part in this study. The sample collected was not large enough to show that they are fully representative of the sector. However, the following data provides this group's perspective on the themes of this survey.

(Base: n=90 for each of the following questions unless specified.)

## How has workplace context and culture changed? (Section 2)

**Table 4: Voluntary sector respondent perceptions of their top three organisational and people priorities (% of respondents)**

Top three organisational priorities	Top three people priorities
Customer experience (in the top three for 34%)	Succession planning (29%)
Improved culture (28%)	Wellbeing (27%)
Achieving growth targets (23%)	Developing leadership capability of senior management (22%)

In addition:

- seventeen per cent of this voluntary sector sample said that improving equity, diversity and inclusion is one of their top three priorities
- forty-two per cent agreed that that their organisations embrace mistakes as an opportunity to learn and 45% agreed that their organisation develops and maintains a climate of trust
- seventy-six per cent agreed that their leaders recognise the impact that L&D has on organisational and people priorities
- sixty-three per cent agreed that they can respond agilely to changing business needs.

## What resources, priorities and challenges are shaping workplace learning? (Section 3)

**Table 5: Voluntary sector respondent perceptions of their top three L&D priorities and barriers (% of respondents)**

Top three L&D priorities	Top three L&D barriers
• Addressing skills gaps (29%)	• Lack of learner time (55%)
• Linking learning with organisational development (27%)	• Lack of engagement (51%)
• More use of short, focused delivery methods (22%)	• Limited budget (43%)

In addition, 43% of this voluntary sector sample said that the budget is owned by L&D or HR, 48% said it was owned by managers or in the line of business, and the remainder said 'other' or 'don't know'.

## What methods and media are in our L&D kitbag? (Section 4)

**Table 6: Voluntary sector respondent perceptions of their L&D methods and media usage (% of respondents)**

Top methods in use	Top media in use
• External conferences, workshops and events (60%)	• Webinars/virtual classrooms (53%)
• In-house development programmes (55%)	• E-learning courses (in-house) (46%)
• Self-directed learning (51%)	• Collaboration with peers (44%)
• Formal qualification and accredited programmes (46%)	• Bitesize film and video (28%)
• Mentoring (45%)	• Podcasts/vlogs (24%)
	• Online libraries and resources (24%)

In addition:

- forty-five per cent of programmes in this voluntary sector sample are entirely online, 31% are offered entirely face-to-face and 24% are offered via a blend of both
- twenty-nine per cent offer job rotation and 36% work with apprenticeships
- twenty-nine per cent offer performance support at the point of need
- forty-four per cent work with tools to support collaboration with peers but only 5% use learner-generated content
- two per cent are working with generative AI (in February 2023) and 3% planned to start.

### **How can we deliver more impact to our organisation? (Section 5)**

We found that:

- sixty-one per cent of this voluntary sector sample are proactive in identifying a performance issue before recommending a solution
- thirty-six per cent have a process for supporting learning transfer
- forty-seven per cent have a process in place for using feedback for continuous improvement
- fifty-six per cent agreed that they design or make recommendations using evidence-informed principles.

### **How can we work with others to co-create value? (Section 6)**

We found that:

- sixty-nine per cent of this voluntary sector sample agreed that they work collaboratively with other functions to deliver business-critical priorities
- sixty-eight per cent agreed that managers encourage participation in learning and development, but only 37% agreed that managers support their team to transfer learning
- forty-eight per cent agreed that individuals are encouraged to reflect on what they learn from their day-to-day work
- thirty per cent agreed that individuals know how to learn effectively from connection and community.

## How equipped are L&D professionals to contribute value? (Section 7)

**Table 7: Voluntary sector respondent perceptions of the L&D profession and its skills**  
(% of respondents)

How has this sample kept its skills up to date in the last 12 months?	Perceptions of the L&D profession
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online webinars and events (71%)</li> <li>• Books and reading (61%)</li> <li>• Networking (54%)</li> <li>• Working on projects and reflecting on results (51%)</li> <li>• Self-directed study (49%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree the L&amp;D profession offers a meaningful career (65%)</li> <li>• Agree it is valued by those it serves (63%)</li> <li>• Agree it has a commitment to professionalising practice (54%)</li> <li>• Agree it has clear entry points and progression (32%)</li> </ul>

# 11

## References and endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Hu, K. (2023) ChatGPT sets record for fastest growing user base – analyst note. Reuters. 2 February.
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- <sup>5</sup> Overton, L. (2019) Diversity and inclusion: Why learning is the hidden key to success. London: TrainingZONE in association with the Open University.
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- <sup>9</sup> MindTools for Business. (2022) Is your learning culture keeping pace with rapid digitalization?
- <sup>10</sup> 81 technology users did not fall into these categories, using mainly collaborative tools and no content or administrative tools – this small group has not been included.
- <sup>11</sup> Hu, K. (2023) ChatGPT sets record for fastest growing user base – analyst note. Reuters. 2 February.

- <sup>12</sup> Clark, D. (2020) *Artificial intelligence for learning: How to use AI to support employee development*. London: Kogan Page.
- <sup>13</sup> Additional reading to support evidence-informed learning design includes:
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  - Dirksen, J. (2015) *Design for how people learn*. New York: New Riders.
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- <sup>16</sup> LinkedIn Learning. (2023) *2023 workplace learning report: Building the agile future*. LinkedIn Learning.
- <sup>17</sup> Deloitte Insights. (2023). *2023 global human capital trends*.



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