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# Understanding Skills Needs in England

## Privacy Notice for Employers and Training Providers

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### 1 Why are we collecting this data?

Skills England (an executive agency of the Department for Education (DfE)) has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Acumen Fieldwork to conduct a piece of research to explore skills mismatches in England. The research involves conducting focus groups and interviews with employers, training providers and local stakeholders in four areas of England. The research is taking place between January and March 2026.

This privacy notice covers the focus groups and interviews for this project. Further information about the research can be found on the project web page [here](#).

For the purposes of data protection legislation, Skills England is the data controller and will make decisions about how and what personal data about school staff is used for the research. NFER is the data processor and will follow Skills England's instructions about how data should be handled. Acumen is a sub-processor working to NFER's instructions. If you would like to understand more about how the Department for Education (DfE) processes personal data, you can refer to the relevant DfE privacy notices including; [Privacy information: stakeholders - GOV.UK](#), and [Privacy information: education providers' workforce, including teachers - GOV.UK](#).

### 2 What is the legal basis for processing activities?

To process this personal data, our legal reason for collecting or processing this data is:

*Article 6 (1) (e): it is necessary to perform a public task (to carry out a public function or exercise powers set out in law, or to perform a specific task in the public interest that is set out in law).*

The processing supports Skills England to perform a public task as part of its function as a department of government.

### 3 How will personal data be obtained?

Acumen, on behalf of NFER, will contact staff within employers who have an overview of strategic workforce planning and/or hiring within their organisation overall, or hiring for specific roles, to engage them in the focus groups. They will also contact staff within training providers (further education colleges, higher education institutions and independent training providers) who have direct engagement with employers such as employer engagement leads and apprenticeship and training/skills leads. Once they have agreed to participate in the research, Acumen will pass on the contact details of these individuals to NFER.

NFER will contact key local stakeholders (e.g. local authority staff and staff from employer representative bodies such as Chambers of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses) in the four case-study areas to invite them to participate in individual interviews.

Participation in the focus groups and interviews is entirely voluntary. Participants will be fully briefed on the purposes of the research and how the information they provide will be used before consenting to take part. Contact details will only be used for the purposes of the research.

## **4 What personal data is being collected for this project?**

The following personal data will be collected from participating employers, training providers and key local stakeholders:

- Name
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Job role/title
- Organisation
- Organisation type (e.g. employer, FE college, training provider, local authority, business/sector representative body)
- Organisation location
- Organisation sector
- Organisation size.

In facilitating the focus groups and interviews, NFER will also process participating individuals' views and opinions on skills mismatches in their area/sector.

## **5 Who will personal data be shared with?**

Data needed to set up the focus groups will be shared between Acumen and NFER. This will not include the data NFER collects during the focus groups.

NFER will not share the data collected in setting up and undertaking interviews.

NFER will produce a publishable report for Skills England. Data collected during the study will be anonymised and no individual or organisation will be identifiable in this report unless permission has been explicitly given by the data subject.

Microsoft Teams (a video conferencing and online meeting application) will be used to conduct focus groups and interviews. Microsoft Teams privacy information can be found [here](#).

## 6 Is personal data being transferred outside of the UK?

NFER only stores and processes personal data in the UK.

When our sub-processors transfer information outside the UK we or they will impose contractual obligations on the recipients of that data to protect your information to the standard required in the EEA.

## 7 How long will personal data be retained?

NFER and Acumen will delete any personal data within three months of publication of the final report, which is scheduled for April 2026. At the latest, all personal data will be deleted by July 2026.

## 8 Can I stop my personal data being used?

Personal data will be handled in accordance with the rights given to individuals under data protection legislation. Under certain circumstances data subjects have the right:

- to request access to information that is held about them (a data subject access request).
- to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete.
- to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.
- to restrict processing of personal data (for example, permitting its storage but no further processing).
- to object to processing
- to data portability (allows data subjects to obtain and reuse their personal data across different services)
- not to be subject to decisions based purely on automated processing where it produces a legal or similarly significant effect.

To exercise any of these rights, please raise your concern with [DfE via this link](#) and quote Skills England qualitative research on skills mismatches as a reference.

If you want to contact the Data Protection Officer (DPO), please contact [DfE](#) and mark it 'for the attention of the DPO'. They may need to request specific information from you to help them confirm your identity and ensure your right to access the information (or to exercise any of your other rights). This helps ensure that personal information is not disclosed to any person who has no right to receive it.

Although we value your participation you can withdraw from the research at any time. Unless otherwise instructed, we will use any data we have collected up to that point in our analysis. Please note that withdrawing your data will not be possible once analysis has commenced (this will be the day after the completion of the focus groups and interviews).

## 9 Who can I contact about this project?

For any queries about the day-to-day management of the data processing outlined in this privacy notice, please contact Suzanne Straw at NFER at [s.straw@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:s.straw@nfer.ac.uk) or NFER's Compliance Officer at [compliance@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:compliance@nfer.ac.uk)

If you have a concern about the way this project processes personal data, we request that you raise your concern with DfE or us in the first instance (see details above). If you remain dissatisfied, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office, the body responsible for enforcing data protection legislation in the UK, at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

## 10 Updates

We keep this privacy notice under review to make sure it is up to date and accurate. Any changes will be noted. The date when this privacy notice was last updated is shown in the footer at the bottom of this document.