

Manufacturing

Sector demand landscape

- Manufacturing is one of the UK's largest sectors by employment, [2.6 million people \(6.9% of the UK workforce\)](#). It accounts for £220 billion, or 9% of the economy.
- As of 2025 there were around [47,000 vacancies, costing £4 billion if unfilled](#).
- [Skills shortages, amidst developments in technology such as automation, are in large part responsible for the crisis](#).

The business case for Manufacturing engagement in careers education

Employers in the Manufacturing sector showed a higher level of achievement in several Standards compared to other sectors, in particular:

- Standard 6:** Raise awareness of pathways into work (+10%pts vs other sectors)
- Standard 1:** Provide meaningful opportunities (+6%pts vs other sectors)

Engagement in these Standards is crucial to address the workforce challenges employers in the sector face, however, employers in the sector were less likely to achieve against

- Standard 5:** Prepare young people for application processes (-13%pts vs other sectors)
- Standard 4:** Build essential skills and explain their relevance (-7%pts vs other sectors)

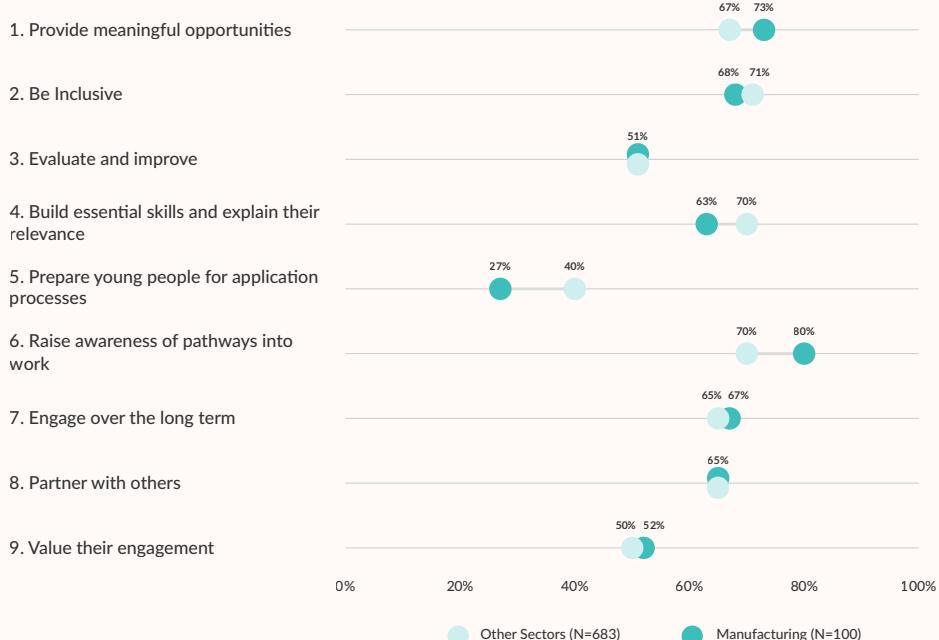
Amidst growing skills shortages and capacity challenges, this strong engagement in careers education with schools and colleges helped most employers in the sector to:

- encourage young people to apply for jobs in the sector** (88% reported this benefit)
- develop new talent pipelines** (87% reported this benefit)

Crucially, working with schools helped most employers in the sector to **bring apprentices into the organisation** (81% reported this benefit)

Fig 1: Employers in the Manufacturing sector were most likely to achieve Standards 1 and 6

% of Employers achieving or exceeding each standard in the Manufacturing sector compared to employers in other sectors



Source: Employer Standards data, end of September 2025 (N=783, Manufacturing, N=100)

Young people's interest in the industry and confidence in their Essential Skills

The Manufacturing sector is complex and encompasses many fields but overall **7% of Year 11 students expressing a desire to work in the sector** (this compares to 11% who express a desire to work in construction).

The most popular roles are:

- engineer (72%)
- design (24%)
- factory/machinery worker (23%)

Notably, there is a marked gender disparity: boys are far more likely to be interested in this sector (12%, vs 2% for girls).

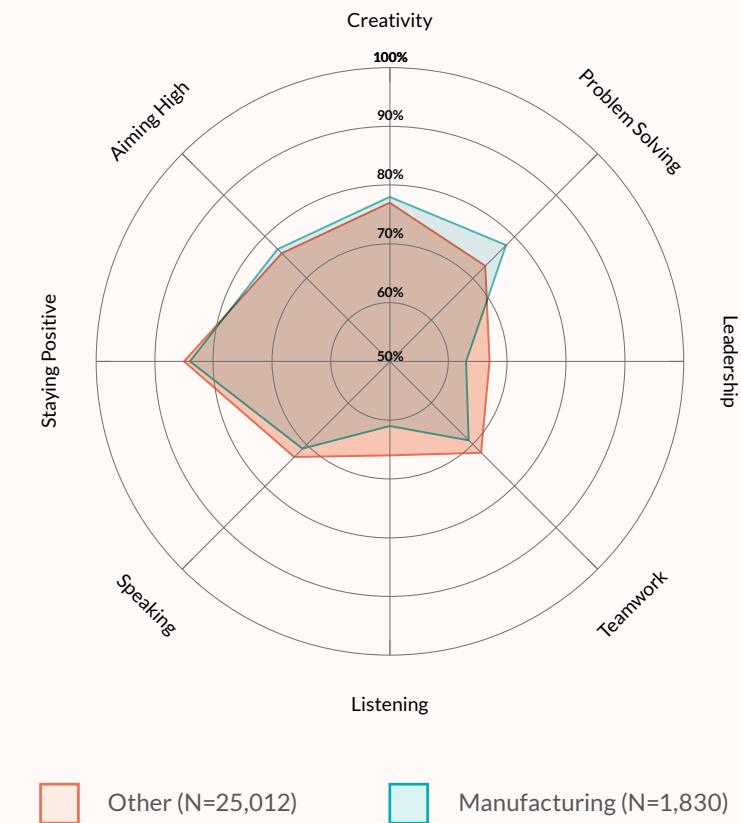
Overall, employers who help young people practise and progress essential skills in workplace experiences are 72% more likely to say that that young people's employability skills are improving as a result of their engagement.

According to Future Skills Questionnaire data, young people in year 11 who are interested in Manufacturing are more often confident than their peers in **Problem Solving** (+5%pts), but less confident in **Leadership** (-5%pts) and **Listening** (-5%pts).

[To see the full insights, including other industry snapshots, click here](#)

Fig 2: Young people interested in the sector are more likely than their peers to be confident in Problem Solving

% of Year 11 young people saying they are confident in each Essential Skill



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire data, end of July 2025 (Year 11 responding to the industry/career question, N=26,842)