

MIDLANDS

SKILLS SURVEY





Introduction

“ There has never been a better time for employers to establish a base in the Midlands – or for employees to progress their career here.

Mary Mullin
Collins McNicholas,
Midlands Regional Manager

A cluster of dynamic and growing multinationals as well as pockets of smaller, indigenous companies are offering competitive salaries and exciting career progression within a region that is so easily accessed by the entire country.

The reason Collins McNicholas carried out the Midlands Skills Survey was to give employers – and potential employers – in the region a full understanding of the types of skills available in the Midlands, as well as an understanding of the employment landscape.

Our survey provides an insight into the types of commuting patterns that are undertaken in the region, the age profile of those working here, their education and experience level and the types of industries in which they are employed.

It also provided us with an insight into their outlook for the future, which we are delighted, yet not surprised, to see is extremely positive.

It was also to show those who are considering locating, or progressing their career, in the Midlands the vast range of companies that are based here and the diversity of roles and career progression available.

Within 25 minutes of Athlone, there is an extensive supply of talent currently working in various sectors including medtech, pharma and biopharma, ICT and shared services – with our survey showing that 72% of respondents have four years or more industry experience.

As well as having experience, our survey shows that these workers are also highly educated. Almost three quarters of all those who responded hold an honours degree or above while almost 90% are qualified to ordinary degree level or above.

With Athlone Institute of Technology a strong influence on the region, working closely with industry to provide the skills needed, it was no surprise that 88% of respondents said they were confident that the Midlands would offer opportunities for graduates to take up employment in the future.

There are 42 IDA-supported companies across the Midlands region, including KCI, NPD, Neuda Technologies, Teleflex and Renew Health.

One of the strong assets in the Midlands is our multilingual talent, which has helped us attract many of these multinationals to locate in the region. Our survey reflects that; a sample of the languages spoken by respondents include Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Russian, Polish and Italian.

Through this survey, we also wanted to gain an insight into the lives of the professionals working in the Midlands. The survey showed that some 70% of respondents received an increase in salary within the last 12 months and an impressive 93% of respondents would recommend working in the Midlands.

The overall results from the survey show clearly the availability of highly-educated and deeply experienced talent within the Midlands region to service the growing companies who are actively recruiting within the region.

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IDA Ireland’s remit is to win Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for Ireland and to support the retention, development and growth of the existing client base.

Ken Whitelaw

Regional Manager, Midlands, IDA

For its part, the Midlands region has been successful over a number of years in mobilising FDI, with employment levels in IDA client companies increasing every year since 2011; there are now 42 IDA-supported companies in the Midlands, employing 5,720 people at the end of 2018. This figure represents a 14% increase on 2017.

The enterprise base in the region is thriving, dynamic and innovative, with an impressive range of companies across all industry sectors. Particular strengths lie in life sciences, technology, global business services, international financial services and engineering. Significant ‘new name’ investments in recent years include Aerie Pharmaceutical, Neueda Technologies (both based in Athlone), SkOUT Secure Intelligence and Greenfield Global in Portlaoise and Red Seal Cups in Longford. The largest new name project has been Centre Parcs, which is a €233m development in Ballymahon, Co. Longford that will see 1,000 people employed when fully operational.

The existing FDI base of companies continues to perform well in terms of their operational sustainability, job retention and ongoing transformation. Companies benefit from the deep pool of talent in the area, but many have an ongoing need for suitably qualified and experienced staff. It is known that a significant number of people commute out of the region for work each day; it is therefore hoped that this skills survey will help companies recognise that the talent exists in their region, and demonstrate for job seekers that there are many exciting opportunities available in the Midlands.







Ciaran Corcoran

Site Director, Abbott, Longford

I am a Dubliner, living in Leitrim and working in Longford – and I wouldn't have it any other way. After attaining my PhD in Chemistry from Maynooth University, I started my career with a multinational company based in Blanchardstown, Dublin. Shortly after, a career opportunity came up with Abbott, so my wife and I decided to make the move from Dublin to the North West.

We bought a house in Leitrim village, and I happily commuted the 50 minutes to Sligo for eight years. At this point, the role of Operations Manager was advertised in our diagnostics division, in Longford and I was immediately interested. It was a great opportunity for a career advancement with the added benefit of a shorter commute.

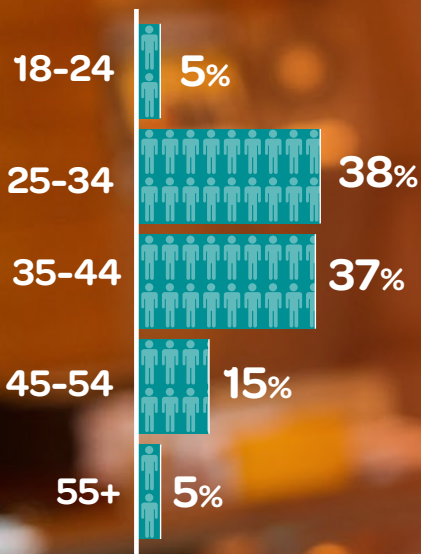
Abbott is committed to nurturing and developing talent, and in 2011, I was fortunate to be given the chance to assume a Site Director role at one of our UK locations. My wife and I, along with our then young children, made the move to Kent, and lived there for about three and a half years. Personally, it was a fantastic experience and provided me with an opportunity to lead a site and develop new skills on my career journey.

When the role of Site Director arose back at our site in Longford, I was determined to get the role and move back home. I was delighted to learn that I had got the job and so my family and I made one final move back to our Leitrim house in 2015. It was great to be back and to get involved in all the local sports and activities that we missed while away. I love Ireland and working again in the Midlands.

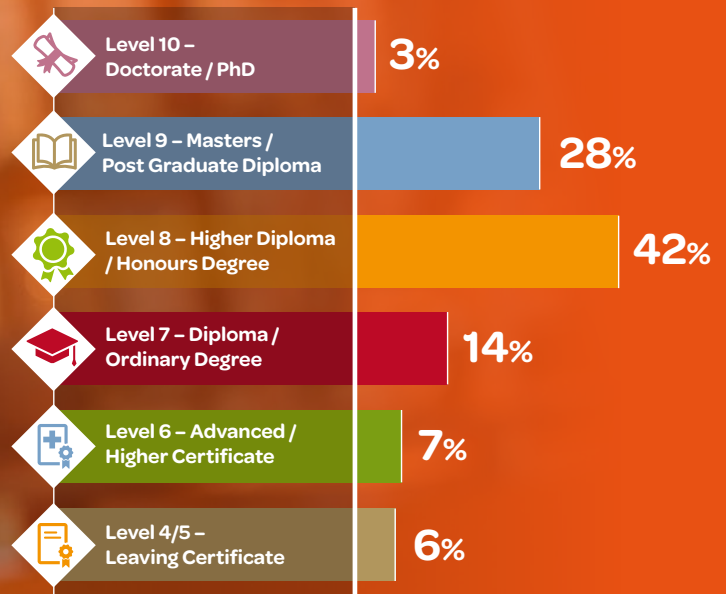
Many people are not aware that Abbott has such a deep presence in Ireland, with operations based here for more than 70 years and employing nearly 4,000 people across nine sites, six of which are manufacturing sites. Our operations make significant contributions to the health and economy of the country and we are one of only a few companies in Ireland that are spread across the four provinces. We are extremely proud to have three of our Abbott sites in Ireland attain the globally-recognised Shingo prize for performance excellence.



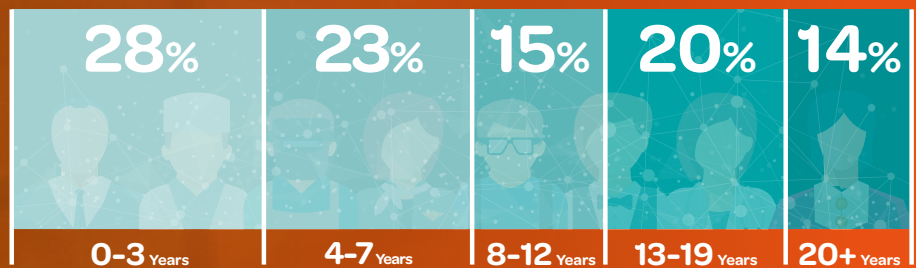
Age of respondents



Their level of education



The amount of experience they have in their current sector of employment



Furthermore, in 2017, we achieved zero waste to landfill status across all our manufacturing sites.

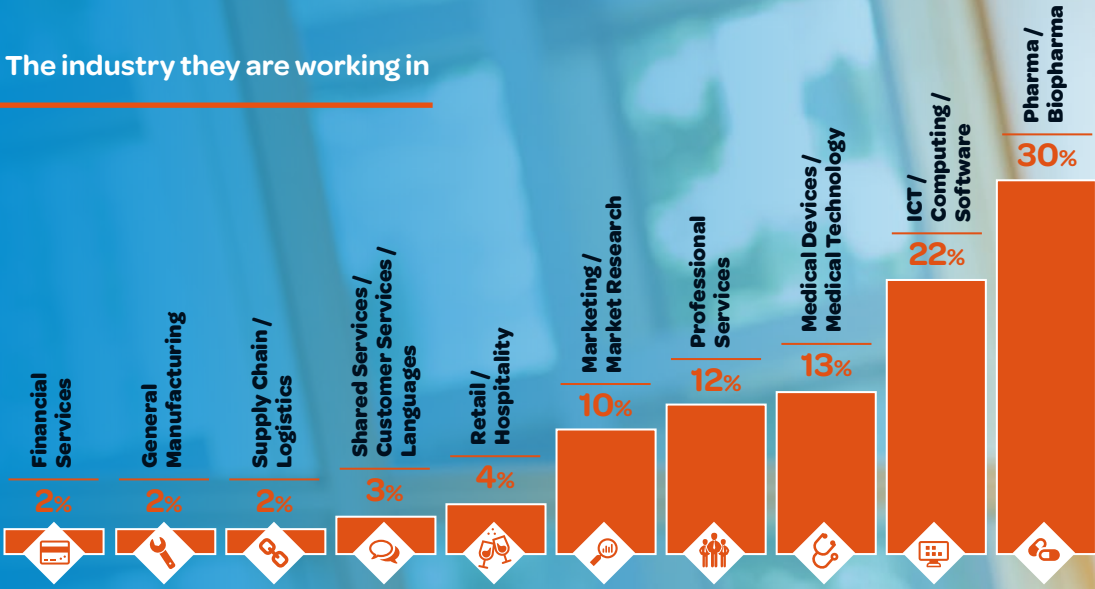
Specifically, in the Midlands the diagnostics facility in Longford has been operating since 2004 and now employs approximately 700 employees and we continue to grow our team. This growth provides fantastic opportunities to our employees to develop their careers in Longford and the larger Abbott network.

At Abbott, we realise our full potential by helping others realise theirs. This idea is at the core of our business, and our approach to making positive contributions to our communities. Abbott has

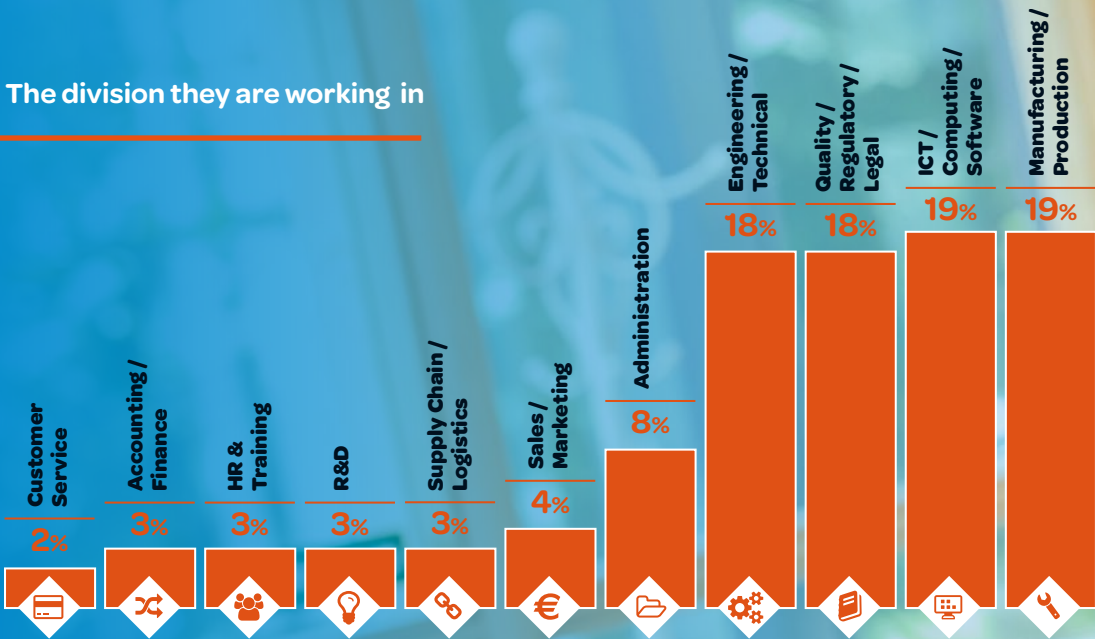
high-tech, science and manufacturing jobs delivering life-changing technology to people across the world and we are doing this via job creation in rural communities across the country. This can only be achieved if we attract and retain strong talent across all areas of our business such as engineering, quality and technical roles.

Our employees realise the benefits of having an excellent work-life balance whilst not having to sacrifice their career development. Until recently, these opportunities did not exist in the region and I am proud to see large multinational companies like Abbott continuing to have success in the Midlands.

The industry they are working in



The division they are working in



Typical Roles we see in the Midlands

Full Stack Developer ♦ Project Engineer ♦ Data Analyst ♦ Process Engineer
 Production Supervisor ♦ Regulatory Affairs Manager ♦ Project Quality Engineer
 Environmental Health and Safety Specialist ♦ Software Developer
 QA Specialist ♦ Production Supervisor ♦ Scientist ♦ Automation Engineer
 Facilities & Utilities Engineer ♦ Validation Engineer ♦ Finance & IS Manager
 Compliance Manager ♦ Human Resources Officer ♦ HR Program Manager
 Talent Acquisition Specialist ♦ Accounts Technician ♦ Marketing Executive
 Customer Service Representative ♦ Manager Operational Excellence
 Supply Chain Coordinator ♦ IT Support/IT Manager ♦ Lead UI Developer
 Commercial Analyst ♦ Head of Marketing and Communications ♦ Scrum Master
 Logistics Specialist ♦ Manufacturing Associate ♦ Engineering Manager
 Manufacturing Technologist ♦ Tech Services Specialist



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Ursula Gilleran

HR Director, NPD Group Ireland, Athlone

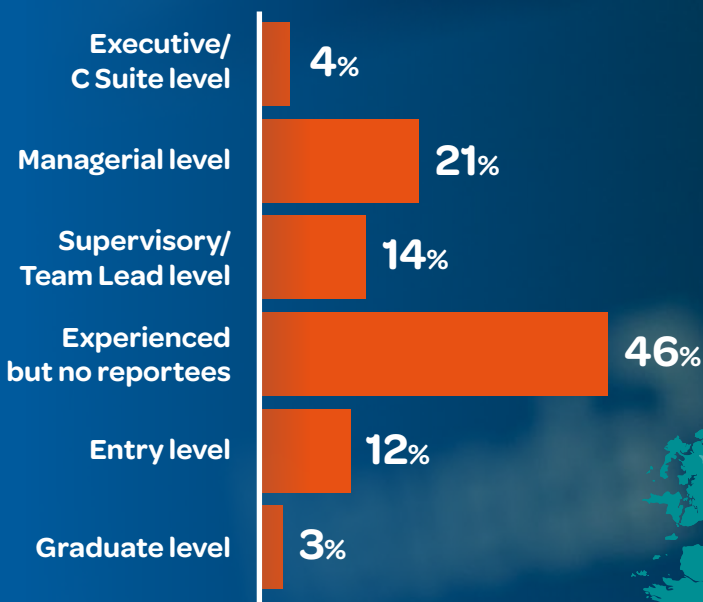
There were several reasons that Athlone was chosen when the NPD Group set up in Ireland in early 2010. These included the deep talent pool of well-educated people and multilingual skills in the Midlands region, in addition to having Athlone IT on our doorstep and the assistance of the IDA.

The NPD Group is a global market information company, headquartered in Port Washington, New York. The NPD Group combines data, industry expertise, and prescriptive analytics to help us grow our client businesses while addressing the consumers' needs. We started in Athlone with just six people and data classification as our core function. We now have 150 employees and multiple functions such as retailer engagement, data collection, data quality management, process control and areas of IT.

As a global company multilingual skills are valued. However, having a second language is not essential to securing a role in NPD today. While some roles will have specific requirements, our main focus is on the individual and the attitude they bring to the work environment. All our roles require solid IT skills, but with capacity and willingness to learn we can support the individual to be successful in their role.

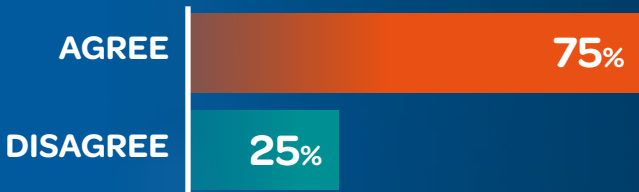
Our teams are collaborative, innovative, flexible and hold themselves accountable for their contribution. Our colleagues want to succeed and to help others learn and succeed. We have a great multicultural team with employees commuting from Galway, Dublin, Tullamore, Longford, Roscommon, Meath and Cavan. Some colleagues have successfully transitioned to roles in their home country while continuing to work for NPD. We promote from within, so there is opportunity to progress your career in NPD Athlone, and across our 27 other offices. NPD continues to grow organically as the organisation expands globally so we are always on the lookout for great talent.

Level of their current position

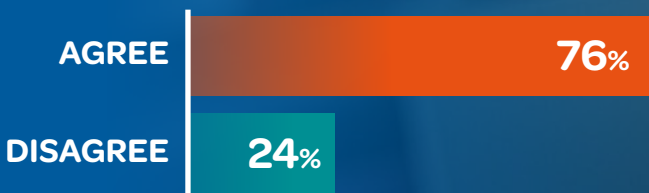


The level of confidence in the Midlands

I feel I can progress my career into a more senior role in the future with my current employer.



I feel the Midlands can offer me the opportunities to fulfill my career aspirations in the future.



I feel the Midlands will offer opportunities for graduates to take up employment in the future.





Paul Madden

**Managing Director,
Neueda Technologies Ireland, Athlone**

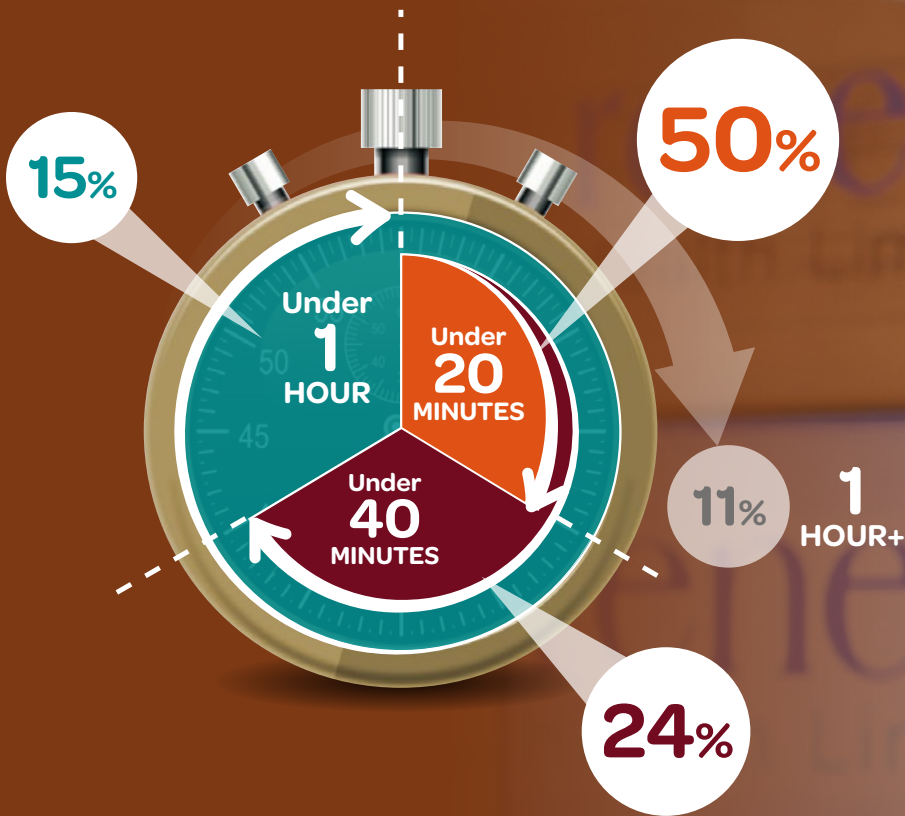
Neueda is at the cutting edge of software solutions. At our base in Athlone, we are developing high-level software projects for clients around the world. This advanced work is a significant draw when attracting top talent.

Neueda is a global company and established a base in Athlone at end of 2017. I am from Mayo originally but was working with Ericsson in Athlone since 1996. I joined Neueda when they opened their office in Athlone. Athlone’s business community is very supportive and was extremely helpful to us when setting up. Connections with Athlone IT are also very important; they come to talk to us to see if what they are doing is meeting industry needs. Also, Athlone has the second highest density of software developers in Europe so the critical mass has been established here.

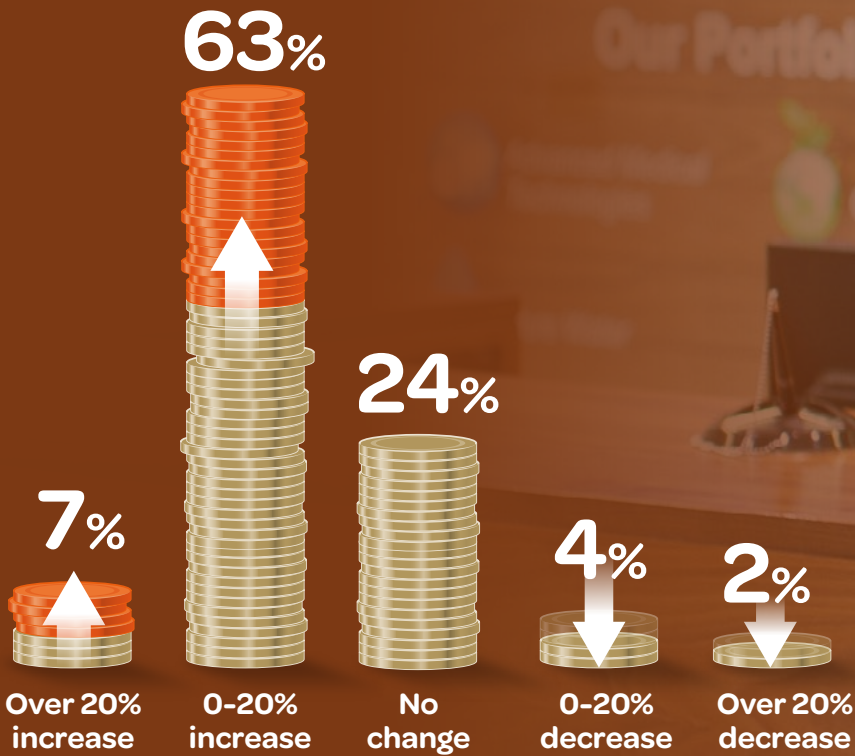
During year one, 2018, we grew to 100 people so it was really hectic in terms of recruitment. We hired staff locally, from across Ireland, the EU and the world. We were a new company and not a huge multinational so it was harder to attract staff. It was a tough year, but in the end, even as a smaller company, we were able to find the talent in the Midlands, with the right set of skills and attitudes to fit with our company. We are involved in hardcore R&D and using a lot of new technology that is only just coming onto market. A significant lure to attract new talent is that our software developers are working with advanced technology and using the most up-to-date skills. There are two main boxes that people want ticked – the workplace culture and finding the right place to raise their families. In this industry, you can quickly fall behind in your skills so working at such a high level ticks that box for them.

But they also want to know where they are moving to. The cost of living, education and housing and the multicultural lifestyle here in the Midlands is important to them. Before they relocate, we show them what to expect in terms of work and their lifestyle. For instance, we have 20 people who relocated from Brazil and that’s not a decision they took lightly. They want stability and the guarantee of good career progression. They won’t uproot their families without knowing they can settle here so they do a lot of research and for many the Midlands ticks all the boxes.

Length of commute time
in their current role



Their change in salary
in the last 12 months



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Declan Cassells

**Managing Director,
Renew Health Limited, Athlone**

Renew Health opened in the Midlands in 2014 with four people and a grand plan to build a healthcare company with a difference. Backed by two serial entrepreneurs and philanthropists, the business was keen to establish itself in Ireland. Since 2014, the business has grown to now have 41 people on site in Athlone, managing a further 67 staff internationally, with plans to double in size again by 2022, with over 10 products in our portfolio.

The decision to locate in the Midlands goes back to 2013. One of the reasons we established here was because of the strong pharma and medtech heritage in the Midlands. There was a strong pool of talent in the region, given the number of companies operating here. I was recruited – through Collins McNicholas, in fact – shortly afterwards and, with three other senior team members, we set up the facility in Garrycastle. The four of us, all of which are still with the business, started to build our footprint in the Midlands and haven't looked back since.

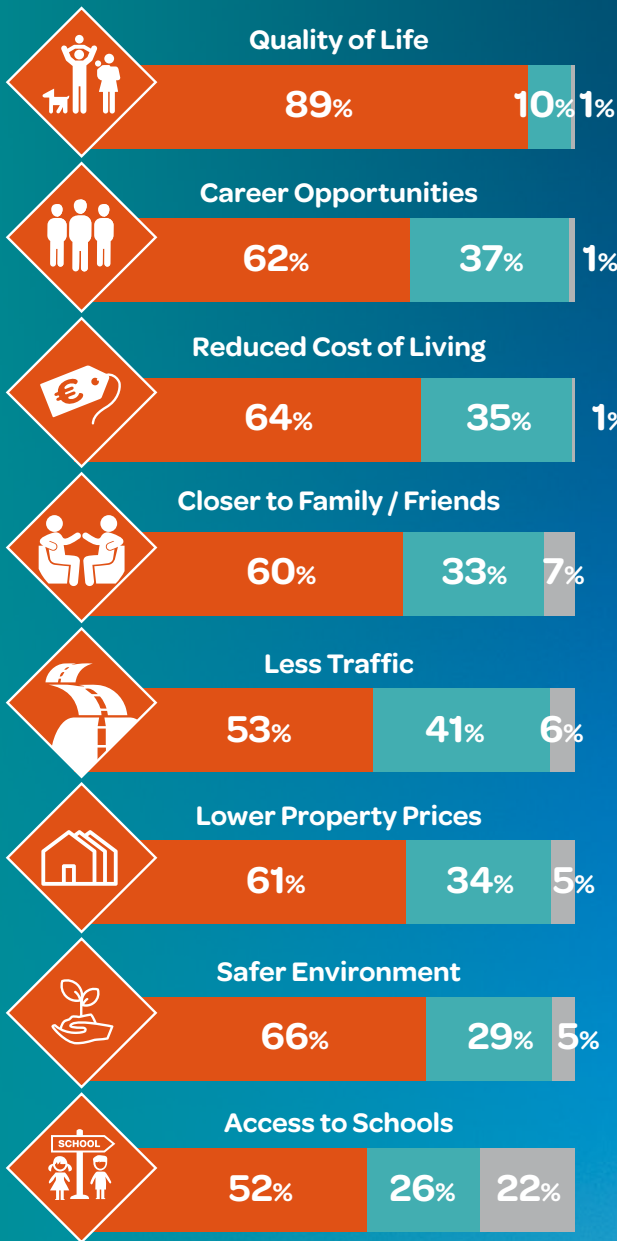
We started mainly as a shared services facility and hired people with engineering, manufacturing, finance, supply chain and quality expertise and then as we expanded, we added such functions as marketing, legal, HR and MIS. We are now ramping up further manufacturing in Athlone, have bought a large adjacent facility for this purpose and are actively recruiting roles in engineering, regulation, validation and quality.

To recruit the almost 80 additional staff we will require over the next while, we hope to tap into those tired of commuting into the traffic-heavy centres of Dublin and Galway, as well as graduates from local and regional colleges and universities.

Our new staff will work for a global company, become part of a dynamic and enthusiastic team that has ambitions to become a big name in healthcare. Staff will enjoy competitive pay and benefits and the chance to progress their career and broaden their skills across multiple roles in a new and exciting business.



Benefits of living in the Midlands



■ Extremely important
■ Moderately important
■ Not important at all

Would they recommend working in the Midlands?





**THE
MIDLANDS**

SLIGO

GALWAY

DUBLIN

LIMERICK

WATERFORD

CORK

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