

Provision: Viewpoint

Northern Ireland

assessment of current provision
workshop outcomes



Sector Involvement in Training

This is a 'work in progress' document. The views listed throughout these pages were suggested by delegates at the ACP meeting in Belfast and will contribute to the Sector Skills Agreement for Northern Ireland.

Use of training providers

Areas such as manufacturer training do not add to the formal qualification base of the sector. If formal mechanisms can be developed to recognise this kind of valuable training, skills development of this type can officially contribute to the sector's skills base.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Capture manufacturing training as part of a wider sector qualification and develop quality assurance for manufacturers and non-qualification based courses from private providers.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Develop lifelong learning strategy for industry
- Develop credit system
- Strengthen employer engagement
- Share course material and syllabus with all parties

Employer willingness to pay for training

37% of businesses would be willing to pay more for their training. The sector will need some convincing to fund more than they currently do.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Get the curriculum and training structure right so that employers can see the benefit and value in training.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Encourage lecturers into companies to address training needs
- Owners and managers need to be good learning role models – promote exemplars

Employer spend on apprentice training

Considerable amounts of money (in this case via an employee's time) is spent on in-house mentoring throughout the course of the training programme. There are many hidden costs associated with training staff and employers are already making a significant contribution.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Develop cost models further to assess the total costs of training on employers and achieve a sensible balance between employer and government training contributions

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Develop employers perception of training relating to selection, which will in turn relate to better productivity and cost effectiveness
- More funding
- Look at apprentices worth – more than the estimated £3850 per annum

Views on content of provision

Qualification content in particular is seen as being in some cases out of date or not suitable enough for the needs of the sector.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Continually update existing qualifications in line with the sector's requirements.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Training should meet local needs, tailored with employers communication
- Establish a steering group where employers might steer curriculum content and have confidence in employing apprentices – possible model of 'software professional course'

Views on quality of provision

Generally there is more dissatisfaction with the quality of service and teaching provided by further education than for private training providers. Issues revolve around communication, the quality of teaching, resources and general curriculum planning.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Work with partners to improve providers' service: administration, teaching and communication

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Give employers ownership of training
- Consider the demands and requirements of the client and end user of services
- Improve parental engagement in career and job selection

Headlines

Delegates were asked to discuss four issues of how to help employers feel like valued customers of providers (and vice versa) and provide constructive, practical suggestions as short 'headlines'

1. WHAT ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO HELP PROVIDERS FEEL MORE VALUED?

- Closer liaison
- More time and contact
- Improve communication
- Course content
- Feedback from employers
- Face to face overview by providers to raise issues
- What does 'valued' mean? – it is a relative term
- Survey feedback not representative of the full FE provision
- Encourage partnerships
- Providers need to have more value in community
- An award ceremony for good provision based on employer feedback?
- The experience between government and provider is 'cool' – providers get inspected and then not much comes back to encourage i.e. very much a 'tick box' exercise
- Better involvement from all parties

2. WHAT ACTIONS COULD BE TAKEN TO HELP EMPLOYERS AND LEARNERS FEEL MORE VALUED?

- Encourage more employer participation in events like this
- Communication and more information from colleges – do employers go into colleges?
- Ownership
- Pay proper rates
- Take an interest in apprentices and what they're doing as an employer. Employers need to take more interest – the role of employers is important
- Improve communication
- Employer and learner need more time to communicate their training needs
- Effective trustworthy career guidance
- Employer should know why his apprentice is doing what they're doing
- Build on employer support
- Create a list of recognized providers and 'good players'
- Students are the key players
- Ask the learners. More value if employers and colleges talked to each other. Employers need to make a conscious decision to see training as valuable and encourage employers to get more involved in experience of learners. Some employers see it as a 'nuisance', particularly smaller employers
- Student body could be represented at events like this
- Apprentices and parents are concerned that if they do raise issues this will affect the completion of their apprenticeship

3. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED IN THE CONTENT OF TRAINING?

- Carry training through to HND/degree with a funded pathway up to a higher level
- Awarding bodies produce paperwork but are led by national employers
- Awarding bodies sit outside the system – there is no involvement or feedback from them. They have to be involved
- 18 months to get through the framework rather than two years?
- Training should be training not assessment based – train them to be a 'plumber' not just to pass exams
- More emphasis on technical skills and directed practical structure and provide a pathway to L4/degree. There is too much emphasis on NVQs/assessment at the expense of a training programme – technical certificates is about the technical skills to get them through
- L3 modern apprentice training does not link easily to HND – needs a bridge to link them

4. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPROVED IN THE WAY COURSES ARE DELIVERED?

- If an employer has a particular need marry the workload with employer need and be more flexible
- More offsite visits in cooperation with employers
- More emphasis on technical training with essential skills embedded
- Key/essential skills were previously bolted on and these are difficult to combine as they are so different
- Essential/key skills are too school-like
- If not technical enough or too school-like learners will leave
- Learn from the past
- Encourage frequent employer/lecturer updates
- Promote lecturers going into industry for e.g. 6 weeks to learn new skills
- Employers need to keep colleges up to date on new technology

The provision itself

Rationalising the number of courses and qualifications

There are training courses and qualifications currently in the system within England and Wales that have not been funded (and therefore we assume have not been run) for a considerable amount of time. Using the English and Welsh data work with DEL to more accurately identify the situation in Northern Ireland.

RECOMMENDATION 1A:

Once the identification exercise described above has taken place, remove curriculum that has been unfunded in the past three years.

RECOMMENDATION 1B:

Review future changes to sector curriculum to ensure it is fit for purpose.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Increase employer involvement
- Develop and maintain a specific programme for each trade and keep it relevant and informed
- Stop the 'bits and pieces' formula to training
- Remove suspicion between employer and FE. Encourage openness, understanding and common aims
- Formalise ownership of job ready programme
- Include all stakeholders – union, industry, learner, college, funder
- Make sure SummitSkills works with ConstructionSkills to leverage improvements
- Relevant training content – yes this is needed – again a centralised body i.e. ETT and PMST only vehicles to provide communication
- Greater communication, overviews and feedback

Develop a 'Training for Success' job-ready provision which provides real opportunities

There is a need to develop a 'job ready' strand that is based on a general VRQ (Vocational Related Qualification) in order to equip learners with the required transferable skills to enter employment within the sector other occupations.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Only fund technical certificates as part of a full-framework apprenticeship or as part of an NVQ.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Keep the technical certificate as part of the job ready and 'roll out' the NVQ to these young people on job ready
- Increase the minimum entry requirements
- Give them the skills which are really valued by employers
- Develop general skills which open up potential career options

Profile of learners

Access to the sector is still dominated by white males. Despite various initiatives and mechanisms being introduced to encourage under-represented groups to join the sector, there seems to have been little impact.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Work with partners to encourage under-represented groups to join the sector and develop innovative and sustainable entry and progression routes into the sector for a reduced number of non-employed status learners.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- BME and ethnic group representatives
- Raise the profile of female role models – find the 'Posh' of plumbing or engineering
- Increase awareness beyond local to include regional, national and world standards and perspectives

Higher education

There are a low number of higher education establishments offering building services engineering courses. This poses a problem for individuals who need to gain a professional qualification alongside their work.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Develop a sustainable network of providers offering degree and sub-degree courses within Northern Ireland.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Competency and attitude = performance
- Ignore England and Wales – specify for local needs
- Additional funding to employers is essential but based on ETT control of employers results with training success

Expenditure on provision

From data available it was not possible to identify current spend on training provision that produces non economically valuable skills. However, funding could be redistributed to much needed training provision elsewhere in the sector such as environmental technologies (solar panels, photovoltaic panels for example), business management, benchmarking, supply chain management and apprenticeships for adults.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Work with partners to identify curriculum spend and seek, if necessary, a more effective use of funding to improve sector productivity performance and skills levels.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Encourage participation of employees who have the capability to start education to further their employability early in their chosen career
- Include bridging course

Provider quality marks and awards

Whilst there is take up of quality marks in the region, there is still scope for more providers to achieve quality marks. Essentially if more providers achieve these standards then it should raise the overall quality baseline of the sector's provision.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Work with providers to increase the achievement of quality marks.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Strive for excellence of intake – this is not a second class career – break down industry perceptions
- Industry recognised award status should be clearly marketed and given appropriate value
- Develop 'industry-recognised' centres of excellence in 'niche' training provision areas

Headlines

Delegates were asked to discuss four issues relating to 'job ready' provision and provide constructive, practical suggestions as short 'headlines'

1. IDEALLY WHAT WOULD 'JOB READY' PROVISION BE LIKE TO BEST SERVE OUR SECTOR?

- Vocational – emphasis should be practical/hands-on, varied in content.
- Valued in outcome by parents, young people and employers.
- Encourage job sampling – e.g. plumbing
- Emphasis on technical skills as the end product
- Programme should be vocational with key competencies
- Work ready skills including: essential skills at apprentice level, health & safety, employee rights and responsibilities, work ready skills, personal development programme, job search, work based training
- Job ready emphasis
- Minimum level should be raised
- Key skills should be at an appropriate level
- More time on practical skills (or bridge year to address the lack of skills) before apprenticeship

2. WHAT TRANSFERABLE SKILLS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE DEVELOPED THAT OUR SECTOR'S EMPLOYERS WILL FIND MOST USEFUL?

- Hands-on/technical skills/knowledge
- Key skills – essential skills/communication/numeracy
- Work ready skills – some experience of work and a taste of what it's like to work – some apprentices currently don't know what it's like to be responsible, etc
- Should not be sold as the main issue, it is the technical stuff that is important
- Currently not embedded and these should be inherent and not as bolt on as currently
- Numeracy and literacy – contextualize them within the technical certificate
- Transferable skills need to be employer-led
- Health and safety should be part of it
- Core skills – need the fundamentals to take to next employer
- Work ability
- Employability skills: sell themselves, communication, self belief needed to go into that environment
- Empowerment and giving the young person that confidence/responsibility in a given framework
- Job ready skills would include building confidence
- Reward the young person and give them incentives to be employer-ready e.g. use of Savile and Holdsworth test. This would help with equal opportunities – and if FE go the extra mile, having this test would already help

3. WHAT KIND OF CAREERS GUIDANCE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE OFFERED TO BEST PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR SECTOR?

- Bring forward to schools i.e. at GCSE options stage/14 years old
- CITB trying to access primary schools, getting into schools, giving them ideas surrounding the sector such as salaries and jobs available.
- There are Image issues but the job opportunities are there
- Informing parents earlier in the process – they need careers help too – Mum's ring up more than the students!
- The opportunity to get into FE/High schools/grammars hasn't been universally accepted – they prefer to 'retain for own purposes'. How can we access grammar schools?
- DEL are currently working on a framework to deliver tasters to 14+ students via a Vocational Education Programme
- A lot of teachers are careers advisers too i.e. it's very much an add-on to their main role
- We need a career development programme
- Dedicated careers advisers needed
- There is a streaming of lower achievers towards the sector and not those expecting B/A grades – is there a tactical retaining of these people?
- We do have a marketing/student services department who are effective across a suite of courses including the BSE sector – did find it difficult at first to get into grammar schools but now easier
- The grammar schools have seen what institutions can offer in respect of engineering and if the programmes are good then the parents will support it
- Vocational Enhancement Programme currently running well – effective in 'sampling'

4. HOW SHOULD 'JOB READY' PROVISION EQUIP LEARNERS TO GAIN LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT IN OUR SECTOR?

- Inspire a lifelong learning culture
- Students tend to switch on or switch off – if the young person has had a difficult time with education it needs to be very different from the school experience and more innovative
- Should allow for quick entry and progression through apprenticeship programme
- Meaningful, relevant and specialized
- Dedicate more time to the technical part as they should already have basic skills
- Link job ready to transferable skills
- Promote use of available technology eg. online CVs
- Ownership of job ready programme should include stakeholders and end users – what do they know and how will it affect them?
- Students should also have ownership
- 'Job ready' provision should be student and school centred.
- High quality careers advice needed
- There is a struggle with the sector's image in terms of engaging with schools and careers guidance
- This SSC needs to align with other SSCs in terms of image and careers structure to gain greater benefit

Hurdles and Bridges

These 'hurdles' and 'bridges' to achieving great future provision were suggested by meeting delegates.

Hurdles	Bridges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding ● Communication ● Awareness ● Lack of apprentices ● Lack of standards ● Correct training ● Timeframes for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partnerships – facilitated by SummitSkills ● Genuine commitment ● Consensus ● Careers Guidance ● Consensus ● Funding ● Incentives

Great future provision...

Delegates were asked at the start of the meeting what three words they would use to sum up great future provision.

Quality	Service	Value
Fair	Well Designed	Good Quality
Quality	Open Access	Meeting Needs
Opportunity	Innovation	Quality
Realistic	Sound	Worthwhile
Quality	Value	Fairplay
Focused	Relevant	Partnership
Flexibility	Quality	Fit For Purpose
Quality	Meeting Needs	Value
Joined-	Up-	Provision
Progression	Vision	Excellence
Defined	Targeted	Relevant
Productive	Enriching	Empowering
Enrichment	Worthwhile	Expeditionary
Improvement	Success	Discussion
Integrity	Staff/Employee Training	Quality
Quality	Opportunity	Cooperation
Quality	Value	Meeting Needs
Quality	Flexibility	Value

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