

Provision: Viewpoint

South West

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 Exeter and will contribute to the Sector Skills Agreement for the South West.

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:

Develop credit-accumulation transfer and quality assurance with manufacturers and private providers.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Use for HE projects/funding for employer training accreditation

Employer willingness to pay for training

50% 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:

- Engage employers in the benefits of training – this will bring more employers to “the party” and then in time aid retention as less employers will poach
- Take “completion” of a qualification to mean training and experience after qualification. Extend training end date to include 1.5 years on the job experience.
- Communication both ways should be frank and honest.
- Fund employer engagement separately/specifically and for both parties.
- Fund the individual regardless of age but appropriate to qualification level and relative demand.

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 achieve a sensible balance between employer and government training contributions

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Costs of an apprentice put a lot of employers off training – instead they wait while others do training and then offer higher wages to transfer and save their money. It's thousands to train an electrician to their full term.
- Introduce a training levy (CITB) to allow employers to claw back monies from taking on an apprentice.
- Make employers aware of progression routes available (Level 4)

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. This also includes the development of new content such as environmental technologies

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- The industry needs local network of training champions from employers linked to local employer groups (Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers). Link this to regional leadership and management agenda
- Service and facilities NVQs – move forward with optional units
- Providers often restricted by qualifications available from awarding bodies/QCA

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:

- Talk to employers regarding the areas they want additional training in and see if others would like that same training. Help them with interviews and what to look out for when recruiting a prospective student
- Level 3 to Level 4 workshops
- Use assessors to communicate with employers direct.
- This is a two-way thing. Providers ↔ employers' links and communication.

The provision itself

Rationalising the number of courses and qualifications

There are training courses and qualifications currently in the system that have not been funded for a considerable amount of time. Because there has been no demand for this curriculum we suggest that it is no longer relevant to the sector.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Remove curriculum that has been unfunded in the past three years to remove the confusion in the system.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Simplification of the routes available – relates to industry needs and the documentation produced and distributed.

Technical certificate funding

There is a significant amount of funding directed at stand-alone technical certificates, which offer a theory-based qualification but no work-related experience. People undertaking a full-time technical certificate are typically not employed in the sector and have little prospect of gaining work-based experience to allow them to gain a National Vocational Qualification.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

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

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Employers can look and select apprentices that have studied for a year
- Programme Led Apprenticeships – a way forward
- Need employers to engage in this issue
- Promote the idea that competency = Level 3 NVQ
- Work with City & Guilds to change curriculum for technical certificates to include work based learning and NVQ links
- Make NVQ progression availability mandatory for all centres
- The provision of quality advice and guidance leads to informed choice
- Need to keep technical certificates but control the number on provision
- Clarify content of technical certificate to employers – technical certificates save employers money!
- Rather than remove funding, develop the technical certificate and have more appropriate additional requirements e.g. work-based practical experience
- Simulated work experience? Educate public/employers as to what technical certificate actually represents
- Employers and general public need to know about apprenticeships and what NVQ means to them so that they make sure their employees are on correct course with correct outcome

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. There are also significant numbers of non-employed learners, both adults and 16–19s, who are on technical certificates that the sector deems to be non-economically valuable (NEV).

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Reduce the large number of NEV courses and instead develop innovative and sustainable entry and progression routes into the sector for a reduced number of non-employed status learners.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Partnership and targeting. Look at drop out rates – reallocate that money to train older persons' apprenticeships and NVQs. Also direct some funding towards employers to help deliver the final product
- Extend funding support for employees who need to upgrade to L3 and above
- Access to relevant training for those outside the current funding regime

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 all regions.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Regional HE network could develop with lifelong learning networks to provide work based learning foundation degree – using existing examples i.e. National Blood Transfusion Service and Tesco
- Local and linked HE provision involving working with employers and manufacturers

Expenditure on provision

Based on an analysis of current funding for non-economically valuable skills, there is potentially around £22 million across England that 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:

Seek a more effective use of funding to improve sector productivity performance and skills levels

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- More funding to use as an incentive for employers to train to L3
- Redirect technical certificate-only funding to mature learners ie. at the start and 19+
- Funding needed for 19+ route for those who have decided they have followed the wrong career

Provider quality marks and awards

Whilst there is some take-up of quality marks and CoVE status 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 provider to increase the achievement of quality marks. Agree criteria of the 'New Standard' in the sector to ensure quality provision is recognised and endorsed.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Quality marks need to be monitored and policed properly

Hurdles and Bridges

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

Hurdles	Bridges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change the fear of new ● Knowledge of qualifications ● Find relevant people ● Link between policy and delivery ends of college providers ● Funding not being used for right department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do by purpose ● Communication of facts ● Spread information ● Open blame free dialogue between partners ● Need to establish national level recognised skill level ● Identify business benefit to open doors ● Link training to profit ● Funding for reward

Great Future Provision...

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

The highlighted words represent those which resonated with delegates following discussions.

Flexibility	QUALITY	Provision
Relevant	Sustainable	Progression
Renewable energy	PARTNERSHIP	Exciting
Current	Appropriate	Relevant
Accessible	Current	Honest
Honesty	Excellent	
Simple	Partnership	
Deliver	Flexibility	Retention

These 'practical' and 'challenging' ideas are also the views and suggestions of the meeting delegates.

The most PRACTICAL idea worth doing

- On a yearly time schedule align the appraisal with their pay review (Partnership).
- Produce, rapidly, a clear outline for employers of the acceptable types and levels of qualifications for employees to work in the sector and communicate this to all employers.
- Looking at diversity of learners across a number of ages to see how funding issues could be addressed and so become more inclusive. (Most liked – extend formal recognised qualification to include 1 or 2 years work post L3 qualification).
- We already list what has been taught on their in house certificates and some individuals are given additional assessments which are certificated.
- Look at ICR data by sector and take out to providers to discuss delivery alongside SSA recommendations i.e. demand and HE agree a transition plan to shift balance of provision.
- Accrediting ad-hoc training including centre devised courses and manufacturers courses.
- Re-introduce a training levy.
- Improvement in communication with all employers re. employee training needs and progress.
- Communicate with all employers as to qualifications required for specific trades. (Not just companies with people who have committed to training and apprenticeships).
- The single message of the needs/requirements for training should be voiced by LSC, FE, employers and Sector Skills Council?
- Encourage training providers to only offer technical certificates to people if it is linked to work based advancement thereby reducing wasted funding for technical certificates only.

The most CHALLENGING idea worth doing

- Create 'employer champion led' sub-regional employer groups as focus for development of leadership and management skills in employers, linked to enhancement of training.
- Change content of qualification in line with new technologies.
- All key stakeholders working together (partnership) to promote the same message to the industry. Most difficult idea is to create culture of continuous learning independent of age then fund quality provision.
- Make higher levels for electrician more accessible.
- Raising awareness with employers especially micros to understand that they need to demand. Involve all partners being on message and having a will to change.
- Ensuring funding and monies generated within a department stay and are investors in that department.
- Much greater engagement between employers and providers.
- Develop appropriate funding for providers and employers that meets the needs of industry. Develop more appropriate qualifications?
- Give employers 'payback' for taking on an apprentice.
- Reduce the financial burden on the employers who do deliver training for their workforce, thereby hopefully engaging more employers who do not currently train.