

Provision: Viewpoint

North 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 Manchester and will contribute to the Sector Skills Agreement for the North West. The recommendation numbers relate to the ACP report.

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:

- Is SummitSkills going to actively participate in the vocational qualifications reform programme? What progress is there to date?
- Employers are willing to fund credit accumulation units that are business relevant
- Manufacturers would need to present a case to the awarding body that the training meets a required standard
- Good idea in theory. This would give employers an idea of what specifically the employee had been trained on
- How and who will map these to the existing qualifications?
- Increase/improve on the continuing professional development model of manufacturers providing training related to their products, including new technologies
- Unit-based approach for underlying principles/knowledge but not for specific manufacturers' products e.g. ACS approach – yes; specific boiler – no.

Employer willingness to pay for training

40% 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:

- Partners are already very aware of training benefits – need to demonstrate the availability of training
- For emerging technologies there needs to be a market for employers to access to allow viable provision to be developed. If the government wants trained staff before the market it will have to be heavily subsidised! Better to subsidise the market!
- Encourage more college employer interchange
- Ensure that by employers encouraging their staff to become ambassadors, the employers will benefit from staff who learn better communication skills and understanding of their profession
- Publicly funded providers need to step outside parameters of the funding and work with employers on provision of solutions (customised etc)

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:

- Need to consider how finite government funding is and better influence employers. Consider a shared apprentice scheme
- Pre-apprentice programme – full time training reduces on the job training once employed.
- Need to also look at the 'employee's contribution' and how this is sold and promoted
- Why is this an issue? There has always been significant investment by an employer and always will...
- Need to recognise that there are limits to government funding available and therefore employers need to recognise value of investing in the future
- Could the funding saved on NEVS be directed to other training?
- Reassure employers that by providing training they will not lose valued staff once they have finished their training

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:

- Employer feedback is vital to ensure that we tackle the skills/training issues effectively
- Build around modules to allow flexibility
- Need to build link with providers to demonstrate the market demand
- How do we keep up with provision of modern practice?
- Constant review and appraisal of qualifications and vocational qualifications
- There will always be some needs not met due to the diversity and number of employers. Is short full cost programmes not the solution?
- Better use of the internet for employer/training provider/employee to monitor the employee's course progress and commitment
- Interview all employers when student completes NVQ2 & 3

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:

- Employers will be the valued customers of providers in future (Leitch etc). If needs are not being met they can go elsewhere
- Need a database of approved quality providers that is easily accessible so that employers, individuals and careers advisers know where to go to source suitable provision
- Endorsing quality standards as the only providers employers should use will encourage better service
- As more and more student records are stored electronically can they not be accessed directly by the employer?
- Increase the role of employers by encouraging their staff to become ambassadors into schools/colleges/universities and with more work experience/holiday placements
- Current customer service from colleges is poor
- Potential for a National Skills Academy? Or similar national endorsement of provider quality beyond the achievement of the 'New Standard'
- Interview all employers when student completes NVQ2 & 3

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:

- Colleges tend not to offer qualifications that are not funded
- Who else looks at the Learning Aims Database apart from colleges and is this an issue?
- Training young people for hands-on experience in the sector with progression later in life to HE and building on their earlier experiences
- Develop a strategy by which employers can retain staff who they have trained as apprentices

- It is common sense to remove this unused provision
- Need flexibility to remove curriculum but also to quickly develop and accredit new provision when it becomes relevant
- Need clear pathways recognised by industry and individuals
- Employee or would-be employee is also confused!
- Improve information, advice and guidance

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:

- Need to balance future needs, progression and likelihood of employment
- Don't dismiss the use of technical certificates out of hand – there is a need to ensure the relevant use of technical certificates is increased
- Ensure all those young persons being enrolled into colleges have good/excellent opportunity for work placement and apprenticeship
- Improve advice and guidance being given to those looking to enter industry to that they are clear on the level/standard of training required
- Need to look at what can be done about private providers who make false claims about the benefits of these courses and employment prospects
- Remove technical certificates from FE provision unless effective measures of progression can be proven – moderation needed
- What about students that do a technical certificate and progress in ancillary industries through the qualification e.g. installing water chillers, trade wholesalers
- Review technical certificate content – ensure employers are part of review for relevance
- Integrate technical certificate level 2 for level 3 competencies
- What about the government's policy of 16–18 year olds being in employment or training?
- Revised clearer mapping that will allow 'standalone' technical certificates to be part of NVQ, as they have a value
- Improve information, advice and guidance
- Information to individuals about framework apprenticeship/NVQs
- Only one college delivering recruitment from the technical certificate – can this become an exemplar?
- Still need funding for technical certificate in order to prepare young people for employment
- Technical certificates alone have produced an oversubscribed, under qualified sector
- Technical certificates alone frowned on by industry
- Young women and men need time and training to prepare them for industry – most of all for one-man-band employers

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:

- Need to build relations between providers and employers to ensure recruitment practices promote opportunities for under-represented groups having a career in the sector
- Can employers within the sector be flexible enough to accommodate the needs of a diverse workforce and make their vacancies attractive and accessible?
- How will the sector encourage minority groups to take up these opportunities?
- Apprenticeship for older women is a good move.
- Need funded pathway for adult apprentices to improve diversity
- Improve information, advice and guidance at start of learning process – so that progression routes for all are understood
- How do you encourage minority groups into an industry if they don't want to?
- Make better use of the internet to enable women who leave the sector to raise families to keep in touch with their skills and development

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 qualifications alongside their work.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Develop a sustainable network of providers offering degree and sub-degree courses within all regions.

VIEWS FROM THE GROUP:

- Improve information, advice and guidance
- Need to research need for HE for the workforce i.e. delivery, content and utilise Higher Level Skills Pathways (Construction) to develop solutions and content
- Look at the HE pathways – different approach for 16–21-year olds as for 28–35-year olds
- Use of distance learning for management skill development
- Provision needs to be made available after a break from apprentice training
- HE should seem a 'seamless' progression from FE – it does not appear to be at the moment
- Make better/more use of the internet to maintain lifelong learning with the potential of more staff moving to HE later in life
- Funding is an issue when providing additional training if initial training programme is not completed.
- Identify needs, work with HE to develop provision which can be delivered flexibly – much of what is required may already be available but in a different format

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:

- Create system of 'capping' colleges given funding for full time provision on past record of NVQs and jobs
- Funded pathway for adult apprentices needed to improve diversity
- Only fund economically valuable skills
- Should large contracts include requirements to train 16–18 year olds from the area. This ideal was floated when the Skills Academies were launched e.g. Olympics
- Make better/more use of the internet to reduce costs associated with running regular classes
- Make better/more use of the internet to increase learning opportunities
- Improve intelligence and its dissemination – how robust is the sector in saying what it needs? Then use to determine cap on funding of qualifications.
- Need to review destinations from full time provision – young people could be progressing onto full frameworks
- Employers need funding and it is essential to improve the efficiency of this process

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:

- Look at how the endorsement of providers through 'Quality Marks' reflects their outcomes (in terms of employment) as well as relevance and quality of course and facilities
- Quality marks need to apply to all providers in the sector and details of approved providers must be made available
- Providers to work with SSCs and employers together to determine requirements of the sector (providers achieving new standard will demonstrate this)
- Publicity campaign to raise awareness of the 'new standard' marks

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"> ● How to regulate training providers ● Working practice/how to keep training during gaps in employment ● Meeting every employer's needs. Restrictions imposed by curriculum ● Ensure career path ● Ensure job at end ● Who comes in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – numbers – diversity ● Change image <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Population – Employers – Providers ● Step outside govt funded provision ● Lack of knowledge/understanding (careers advisors) re. careers in sector ● Getting decision makers round table to take forward/get buy-in/roll-out to all colleges ● Time ● By agreeing to the recommendations this could effectively close some providers' businesses ● 'Jungle' – lots available, hard to discern ● Not all individuals seek advice ● Returning staff (at the moment) come in as unqualified even though better skilled than just out of college ● Recruitment still too narrow ● Sector image. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality mark as only recognition ● Use web more ● More events like this to assess how to work in partnership ● Everyone work together ● Capping on number of standalone technical certificates ● Pre apprenticeship programme – can even save money. Start almost 1/3 of way into apprenticeship ● Work with principals to get right people on courses ● Work with employers – highly qualified workforce ● Ditto! There is a world out there which can be developed. Work together for wider provision which is funded ● Better understanding of different pathways/opportunities ● Getting employers together in region to articulate their needs to providers ● Level 3 pledge by employers ● Peer group pressure/disseminate good practice through Heads of Curriculum meetings ● Regular consultation with all parties/agreement to sign up is needed first ● Extend portfolio to meet demand-led provision. ● Use accreditation to marginalise those whose provision is not helpful to the sector ● Ambassadors promoting opportunities/all different elements of sector ● Clearly indicate what employers need and should use ● Simplify information on sector ● Clear route for returners ● CIBSE system would allow to control and monitor industry through built-in accreditation ● Employer led research on diversity

Great Future Provision...

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

Training	Qualification	Empowerment
Available	Seamless	Local
Relevant	Quality	Demand -led
Quality	Up to date	Funded
Portable	Valued	Paid for
Quality	Relevant	Fit-for-purpose
Quality	Excellence	Word class
Raising standards	Fit-for-purpose	Demand-led
Effective	Responsive	Efficient
Flexible	Suitable	Quality
Challenge	Climate -	Change
Flexible	Relevant	Quality

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

The most PRACTICAL idea worth doing

- Ensuring SSC only promotes providers who have the new standard to ensure employers only use quality and drive others out of the market
- Create a system that continues to fund colleges that are committed, and have a proven track record. To be able to continue to deliver pre-apprenticeship programmes.
- Withdrawing pure technical certificate only delivery as a funded option from centres/colleges who cannot demonstrate progression into apprenticeships beyond a minimal threshold (suggest 60%+).
- Remove 'redundant' qualifications from the Learning Aims Database
- Improving content of technical certificate so skills and knowledge learnt is relevant, up to date and valued by prospective employers
- Set up a working party between employers, providers, funders and SSC.
- Ensuring progression routes from FE to HE for students who started their post school career in a trade
- Increase the use of the internet for training provision at all levels and to overcome the many obstacles those being trained may experience: time allocation, learning disabilities, time of life experiences (starting family for women), career changes, etc. Also for monitoring progress and commitment by the training providers and employers.
- Develop a clear qualification framework that is relevant and up to date and then identify a network of quality assured providers to deliver. This way the £22m of public funding could be targeted more effectively.
- Introduce a single standard that all training providers must achieve. Hopefully this will provide a benchmark or standard.
- Formulate clear industry pathways with recommended qualifications etc, so that entrants/re-entrants can easily identify where they fit and where to go next.

The most CHALLENGING idea worth doing

- Gain a workforce representative of the UK:
 - through flexible working arrangements
 - effective recruitment practices
 - recognition of transferable skills
- Increase the number of 'one man band' companies to latch on and help train apprentices
- Adjust funding to support adult apprenticeships – specifically to address the diversity of the sector
- Getting providers to work together and share best practice, reduce inappropriate levels of provision and forge stronger relationships with local and regional employers e.g. BSE NW employer/provider network
- Getting providers and SSCs to work more closely with employers to turn round the negative perception of employing apprentices – need employer buy-in across the sector
- Ensure all providers (college and private) follow a standard quality process which includes customer services
- Provide the flexibility and suitability of programmes to meet all employers' needs.
- Ensure that the sector is prepared for the challenges presented by climate change.
- Change the perception of the industry to encourage a more diverse workforce. Will also need to challenge the perceptions and habits of employers in the sector to make this happen.
- Complete mapping and crossover of existing qualified and non-qualified but skilled workforce.
- Linking public procurement/contracts to firms who train/invest in training

SummitSkills

Vega House, Opal Drive,
Fox Milne, Milton Keynes MK15 0DF

T: 01908 303960

F: 01908 303989

www.horizon-ssa.org.uk

email.enquiries@summitskills.org.uk



EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

skills
FOR BUSINESS