

Provision: In Focus

An assessment of current training provision in the **West Midlands**

Facilitated by
Summit SKILLS
The Sector Skills Council
for Building Services Engineering

HORIZON

the sector skills agreement
for building services engineering

Sector Involvement In Training

Please refer to the full *Assessment of Current Provision* report for the detail behind these summaries and recommendations.

1. Employer views on use of training providers

- Of the total training carried out, 36% is done through FE colleges, 34% private training providers, 21% manufacturers and 9% Universities. Most employers use more than one provider.
- This however, is largely needs-driven rather than part of a qualification framework. 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:

SummitSkills needs to work with partners to develop credit-accumulation transfer (for instance where attendance at manufacturer courses count towards a wider qualification) and quality assurance for manufacturers and non-qualification-based courses from private training providers.

2. Employers willing to pay for training

- The Leitch report places emphasis on employers being responsible to contribute to any training over Level 2.
- In SummitSkills' Sector Needs Analysis, the majority of employers across the UK see Level 3 as the standard for the sector.
- Only 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.
- Concerns about the quality of training providers may fuel this reluctance.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is vital to get the curriculum and training structure right so that employers can see the benefit and value in training. SummitSkills will work closely with partners and the training provider network to develop this area.

3. Employer spend on apprenticeship training

- SummitSkills has created a 'work-in-progress' model that looks at the cost of funding an apprentice, excluding course fees, time allocated to mentoring and in-house training spend.

- 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:

SummitSkills will develop these models further to assess the total costs of training on employers and use this information to work with the Government to achieve a sensible balance between employer and government contribution to training.

4. Employer perspective on quality of training provision

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

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills and partners will work with providers to improve the quality of both the administration and teaching of those courses, to address issues of poor service from providers.

5. Employer views on content of training 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. There is a need for maintaining and updating qualifications regularly.
- Technician curriculum seems satisfactory, although there is concern that some of the material taught is too specialised and out of date. The general nature of HNC/D courses is detracting from the specialist requirements of employers.
- Degrees are believed by some employers in the region to have elements within them that are not wholly relevant to life in the 'real world'.
- SummitSkills has already begun to address some of these issues as part of the Sector Qualifications Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills will work with the bodies responsible for qualifications to update existing qualifications in line with the sector's requirements, to address the issue of unsuitable curriculum content. This would also include the development of new content to meet needs in areas such as environmental technologies.

The Provision Itself

6. Rationalising the number of courses and qualifications

- There are training courses and qualifications currently in the system that have not been funded (and therefore we assume have not been run) 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.
- By reducing the number of qualifications and courses that are surplus to employers' requirements, we can concentrate on those that truly meet the sector's needs.

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills recommends identified curriculum is removed from the Learning Aims Database, where the provision has not received funding in the last three academic years.

7. Funding for technical certificates which do not meet employer needs

- 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.
- Technical certificates are seen by employers as non-economically valuable skills and not meeting their business needs.
- Resources currently spent on stand-alone technical certificate training can be re-directed to develop provision in areas such as environmental technologies, business development and apprenticeships for adults.

RECOMMENDATION:

Technical certificates should only be funded as part of a full framework apprenticeship or as part of a National Vocational Qualification. All funding for technical certificates as a stand-alone qualification should be discontinued.

8. Higher Education Training Provision

- There are a low number of higher education establishments offering building services engineering courses. This low number is spread unevenly around the UK and there are some English regions with no provision at all.

- Currently the West Midlands has no higher education provision.
- This is becoming an acute problem for individuals who need to gain a professional qualification alongside their work.

RECOMMENDATION:

There is a need to develop a sustainable network of providers offering degree and sub-degree courses within regions.

9. Expenditure on training provision

- A considerable amount of current training provision spend is leading to non-economically valuable skills (NEVS) – and therefore not relevant to the sector. Where this is the case, SummitSkills has calculated where money can be redistributed to other more relevant training and qualifications.
- Based on an analysis of current funding for non-economically valuable skills, there is potentially around £22 million nationally 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:

SummitSkills will work with regional and national partners and stakeholders to seek a more effective use of funding to increase productivity performance and skills levels in the sector.

10. Quality Marks/Awards of Providers

- Private training providers do not seek or obtain quality marks to the same extent that Further Education colleges do. Six FE colleges have CoVE status in the region.
- Aside from CoVE status, there are a variety of quality marks used by providers such as Charter Mark, ISO9000 and Investors in People.
- Whilst there is a good level of take up in this area, there is still scope for more providers to achieve quality marks.

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills will work with providers to increase achievement of quality marks. Essentially if more providers achieve these standards then it should raise the overall quality baseline of the sector's provision.

Profile Of Learners

11. Diversity

- Access to the sector is still dominated by white males. This situation is exacerbated in relation to ethnic minorities on work-based learning courses where there are 20% fewer people from minority groups on work-based learning courses than on technical certificates/ FE-funded.
- Despite various initiatives and mechanisms being introduced to encourage under-represented groups to join the sector, there seems to have been little impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to increase the engagement of women and ethnic minorities within the industry.

12. Mode of delivery and age of participants in sector courses

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

RECOMMENDATION:

SummitSkills wants to work with partners to reduce the plethora of NEV courses and instead develop sustainable entry routes into the sector for a reduced number of non-employed status learners.



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