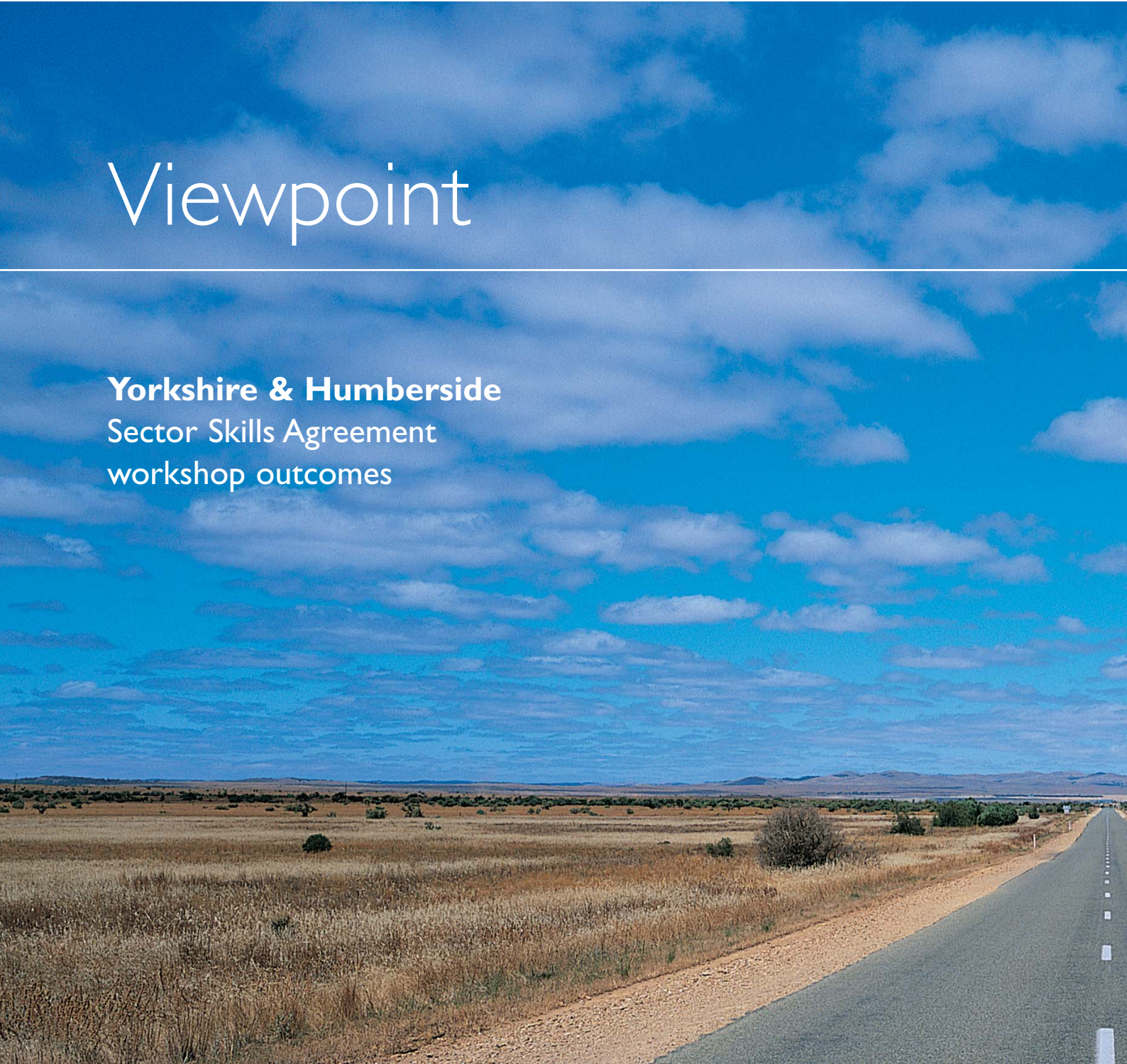


Viewpoint

Yorkshire & Humberside Sector Skills Agreement workshop outcomes



Business & workforce development

This is a 'work in progress' document. The solutions listed throughout these pages were suggested by delegates at the Horizon workshop in Leeds and will contribute to the Sector Skills Agreement for Yorkshire & Humberside.

1. Benchmarking

THE ISSUE:

Lack of formalised benchmarking makes the sector blind to competition.

The majority of companies choose not to access formal benchmarking systems that are available. Does benchmarking need to be more formalised through management and supervisor training? Or are there other solutions?

TOP SOLUTIONS:

- Identify what is already going on both formally & informally.
- Training groups/business clubs to share information. More social/softer than formal methods to help grow trust.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Training on skills that could help improve benchmarking awareness.
- Create a clear definition of benchmarking – sharing, giving and receiving.
- Manufacturers at groups to give demos – they sponsor the session – make it social in addition to formal.
- Encourage the use of BSRIA key performance indicators.

2. Skills Requirements

THE ISSUE:

Skills requirements are changing more than the industry realises.

This applies to existing workers. Finding qualified craft operatives is increasingly difficult. Employers require greater awareness of changing skills needs to meet technological changes.

TOP SOLUTIONS (IN ORDER OF VOTES):

- Training needs to meet industry requirements, not vice versa. Need flexibility in qualifications.
- More funding – a levy?

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Communication between all parties and more of it.
- Regular reviews of NVQs – every two years.
- Government bodies to be more in tune with industry requirements.
- More mentoring within companies from top to bottom.
- Short courses from manufacturers etc.
- Look at the entry levels of qualifications as well as the content.
- Employers to speak to education system to say what they need, not driven by league tables or university.
- Employers in schools to tell kids what is expected. But support is needed for liaison.

3. Retirement

THE ISSUE:

Too few employers plan to replace staff before they retire or leave.

The majority of firms do not plan to replace staff retiring with key skills. And changes in the population profile (e.g. fewer younger people) may affect traditional recruitment streams.

SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Need long term planning of training at front end to replace people at back end rather than peaks and troughs.
- Incentives to train e.g. levy.
- Share training across a whole training group to take burden from individual companies.
- Legislation for firms to be part of a trade association or training forum.
- Give those due to retire a training contract to pass on skills for a few years before leaving.
- Consider the stress factor – some people don't want promotion to fill retirement places due to responsibility.

4. Research and Development

THE ISSUE:

Too few industry members conduct research to share commercial knowledge.

Only 36% of regional companies do any kind of research and development (R&D) of their own. Companies know of little R&D conducted by trade associations and professional institutions, including higher education institutions. Who should be doing and sharing more? Knowledge is power.

TOP SOLUTION:

- Use local institute facilities – discuss how they can work better for us. 6pm seminars with refreshments.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Decide on what is to be shared and how to do it – don't be scared.
- Links with universities.
- Providers – talk to employers. Be flexible and be prepared to change and react quickly.
- Government to react more quickly to change.
- Ban competitive tendering – set rates e.g. NHS Procure 21.
- National training structure agreed by all.
- Use industry journals as a point of reference for research eg. BSJ, H&V News.
- Annual conference on training.
- Improve use of industry bodies to help share information and networking – cross flow of information.
- A standard pay rate would stop poaching.
- Training levy will help to remove barriers to sharing info.

The four issues on the right were not discussed by the delegates. We would like your views on:

- Q: How important are these issues to business?
- Q: What are the most effective ways of dealing with them?
- Q: Are there solutions already in place that meet the needs identified?
- Q: Can existing solutions be adjusted or developed?

5. Rivalry

THE ISSUE:

Companies need to think more positively about partnering because competition isn't always good.

Skills shortages lead to rivalry to poach and secure trained staff. Rivalry extends to extreme competitive tendering. Extended contracts and partnering arrangements are becoming more common in the public sector, encouraging cooperation rather than competition.

6. Bargaining Power

THE ISSUE:

Clients and companies must see bargaining power as something beyond price.

Price is seen by a majority of employers as their major bargaining factor. Supply chain management was not recognised by regional companies as a bargaining element. Would more efficiency be achieved through training in supply chain management techniques? And what else?

7. Information Technology

THE ISSUE:

Information technology could be more effectively used to improve productivity.

Almost all regional companies use IT daily. But more training is needed to ensure IT is used effectively. IT training tailored to sector needs could improve performance and cost efficiencies. How can people be helped to get the most out of IT?

8. Enterprise

THE ISSUE:

The sector aspires to be entrepreneurial but needs to develop these new skills.

Employers see this as important. Many are even asking for training. People at all levels in our sector from craft to management need to come to grips with the skills it takes to be a good entrepreneur.

External influences

1. Globalisation

THE ISSUE:

Globalisation presents new opportunities and potential threats.

76% of regional employers don't think the market will be affected by foreign competition. Foreign competition is unfamiliar currently but Europe and Asia are potential threats. Open tendering is an opportunity for foreign traders to access the Yorkshire & Humberside market.

TOP SOLUTION:

- Develop trainees to be top class – given them "drive".

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- We need to train – manufacturers, college (supply chain) etc. to ensure they are keeping up to date.
- Training needs to be cost effective. Needs more government support to help – can't afford £300 + per delegate.
- Find out: what is our competitive advantage compared to abroad? We have local sales and aftercare for example.
- Challenge perceptions – is it actually cheaper to employ foreign labour?

2. Technology/Environment

THE ISSUE:

The sector is not aiming far enough ahead in new and environmental technology.

Most recognise this as a major issue but have no plan to address it. Employers' environmental skills tend to be driven by legislation; the sector reacts to change rather than plans for it. Technology is changing faster and planning future skills well ahead will become more important.

TOP SOLUTION:

- Identify flexible NVQ units. Small flexible units with a pick and mix approach.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Employers – research environmental technologies. Target certain employees for training and specialise in certain areas.
- Specialised NVQ module.
- New framework for environmental qualifications.
- Stand-alone short courses.
- Government-funded European-wide qualification (or can we find German qualifications to do them over here?). UK to have same as abroad to put us in a good position to compete.
- Government – listen to employers and change plans to suit. Need understanding on what it requires from legislation.
- Benchmarking – looking at what we can benefit from.

3. Government

THE ISSUE:

Government regulation is placing burden on the sector that needs more support.

Legislation and building regulations are seen to have increased business costs and red tape. The skills card regime is felt to be implemented piecemeal and insufficiently inspected. The good guys feel penalised. What can skills and training do to help?

TOP SOLUTION:

- Sort issues around access to funding and flexibility of funding. Need it in the right place. Challenge funding vs. legislation contradictions.

SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Spell out "what's in it for me"? Highlight benefits and reason of why we do skill cards in the first place – back to basics.
- Promote the schemes and implications of not doing it.
- Look at how legislation transfers to learning. It takes too long to change things. Need flexibility and speed of change.
- More consultations at right time with right people when developing legislation.
- Management training – both of self and others.
- Skills cards need to cover all of the sector e.g. consultants.
- Just one card scheme.

New entrants

1. Basic Skills

THE ISSUE:

Lack of basic skills is a rising issue for our sector.

40% of the region's employers are alarmed at low level literacy and numeracy, as well as poor attitudinal skills of new entrants. Young people with lack of basic skills are attracted to this sector, and their basic skills will be more stretched in the future by IT demands. How must the SSA address this?

TOP SOLUTIONS (IN ORDER OF VOTES):

- Employers – promote the industry in schools (at an early age). Parents, teachers as well as students. Promote industry and careers pathways – not just craft disciplines and also what is required of them.
- On the job placement to improve understanding of job/industry. Provide work experience or summer school type placements with employers or training centres.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Providers – help new entrants understand what industry is about.
- Eliminate stereotyping in schools.
- Move away from specialist schools – don't channel kids into certain areas e.g. drama and music academy.

2. Diversity

THE ISSUE:

The region is performing well in diversity but how can this best practice be extended to firms that aren't diverse?

45% of regional firms employ women in technical roles. Women are also interested in joining the sector later in life. 45% of regional businesses employ people from ethnic minority groups. How can this good practice be supported and developed?

TOP SOLUTIONS (IN ORDER OF VOTES):

- Raise profile and lift the image of industry – promote benefits of a career and why employers should recruit from those groups.
- Equality & diversity action plans for employers.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Employers – make opportunities for women and ethnic minorities to get into the industry – not just office jobs.
- Features in local press to promote diversity initiatives.
- Positive action programmes – targeting girls in schools.
- Special funding for initiatives.
- Funding for adult training.
- Case studies and taster sessions,

3. Migrant Workers

THE ISSUE:

Migrant workers are a hot topic...

21% of regional firms claim to employ migrant workers. Retirement and people leaving the sector will need more migrant workers to replace them. Skills training needs to be planned to accommodate this trend. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is among many skills that will be required...

SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Screening workers before coming into country for quality assurance. A site card system (relationships with other countries' agencies also to be part of this interface).
- Technical language training provision.
- National decision on what skills we need. Create an Australian type system – only take what we need.
- Help migrant workers to get to a level that we need in order to help us – don't just give them what we don't want to do.
- Upskill employers to help them understand the liabilities, legalities and regulations around foreign workers.
- ESOL needs funding.

4. Employer Requirements vs. Government Funding

THE ISSUE:

Employers see Level 3 qualification as the minimum standard for a fully trained craft operative.

64% of employers need their craft workforce trained to Level 3 but see Learning & Skills Council funding driven by Level 2 targets. Regionally there are concerns at the quality of training provision. Yorkshire and Humberside also shows an inadequate amount of management and supervisory staff.

TOP SOLUTION:

- Employers to identify training needs at different levels, but need support. Lobby in order to get the training they need and help towards it – have a voice.

OTHER SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUP:

- Providers – hands are tied by LSC but ensure training is of best quality and is up to date.
- Government to be flexible – see that some sectors do need higher than level 3.
- Sector to help Regional Development Agency to develop regional economic strategy.
- More local provision for higher level qualifications.

The 'quick win' and 'long haul' solutions are the views and suggestions of the delegates at the Horizon workshop in Leeds.

TOP QUICKWIN SOLUTIONS FOR THE SSA –

Easy to do, but important

(suggestions have been grouped into similar topics for ease of viewing/assessment)

QUALIFICATIONS STRUCTURE

- Develop flexibility in NVQs/frameworks. This will be the first step in an increasingly changing technical environment.
- Invite manufacturers to qualification meetings to ensure the qualifications are up to date.
- An NVQ qualification encompassing the latest relevant training – to keep pace with developments in technology.

TRAINING PROVISION

- Improve training. Get what the industry requires – apprenticeships.
- Match current training to industry needs.
- Look at more funding for Level 2.
- Train to match employer needs.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

- Open employers' eyes to the need of upskilling staff to new technologies. To keep ahead of the game.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- Involve employers more in decision making. They are the trainers.
- Listen to industry and employers on what they want – flexibility.
- Identify the needs of employers.
- Research with hard to reach employers previously not engaged in any consultation or provision.
- Listen to the industry and give it what it needs, not what you think it needs.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Publish an overview in industry journals and discuss forum and feedback paths (internet).

BASIC SKILLS

- Bring basic skills standards to the fore at school.

SCHOOL/INDUSTRY LIAISON

- Staff to visit employer, get involved with day to day requirements of industry and employer/employee needs.

TOP LONG HAUL SOLUTIONS FOR THE SSA –

Difficult, far off, but important

(suggestions have been grouped into similar topics for ease of viewing/assessment)

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- Get hard data in terms of numbers for training to strengthen SummitSkills/employers' discussions and negotiations for funding.

LABOUR AGENCIES

- How to bring labour agencies into line re: their training responsibility.

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

- Work with young people/school – the future of the sector is in their hands.
- Work with school to train children for their future. Engaging with kids promoting industry.
- Enhance reputation of industry with schools and young people. To bring better quality entrant into the industry.
- Influence school curriculum.

PARTNERSHIP AMONGST INDUSTRY

- Support and network between employers/institutes/manufacturers/trainers needs for change. One common goal.
- Listen to the industry and be flexible enough to allow it to grow. Give it what it wants/needs not what you think it needs.
- Encourage employers to train.
- Listen to industry and employers on what they want – flexibility.

QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

- Work with LSC to align qualifications with industry needs – to ensure it meets employer needs.
- Ensure education meets the requirements of industry and training is for needs.
- Identify core units for NVQs with flexible, optional units which can be achieved.
- Regular reviews of training qualifications to keep pace with technology.
- Flexible training schemes without assessment.
- Be more open to industry needs with regard to flexible frameworks.

FUNDING

- Get funding to NVQ Level 3. This may encourage more people to train.
- Endeavour to locate more funding for employers.



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