



Workforce Development Research

Final Report for Bradford and District Learning Partnership

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Introduction

Bradford is an industrial town with a long and proud history of industrial achievement and innovation, a heritage of skilled workers developing goods for the world. It is the wish of all those who work with local companies to continue this tradition and assist employers in remaining competitive and creating wealth and job opportunities for the City and its people.

It is the belief of the authors of this report that workforce development (WFD) should predominantly be around support to *existing* employees and their improvement in skills and that by upskilling the workforce we create opportunities for expansion for recruitment of new staff. In the current “tight” labour market with virtually full employment it is essential for employers to invest in their current workforce as the combination of skill shortages and low unemployment mean the true cost of recruitment – with the added costs of retraining, lesser productivity for new staff and potentially overtime for existing employees in the interregnum to cover staffing shortages – are much higher than the cost of upskilling existing, trusted employees.

Furthermore we would contend that WFD as such is, therefore, the “learning arm” of business support and should be linked directly to the tactical and strategic business requirements of the beneficent company.

Whilst we acknowledge that the training of young people to enable them to enter the labour market and assist companies to grow is important to the continuing health of the local economy we would argue that this is a less important business support intervention than the WFD actions needed to enable the company to expand and create the wealth and employment opportunities to recruit these new labour market entrants.

This report will consider the WFD support available to local companies looking at both the supply and demand of WFD – learning providers and local employers. It will consider current provision, expectations of demand and develop an action plan to assist Bradford Learning Partnership and its partners in developing and delivering sustainable solutions to enable providers to maximise the opportunities for firms to develop the skills of their employees.

Background Analysis

LSC West Yorkshire Skills Survey 2003

The Learning and Skills Council for West Yorkshire (LSCWY) commissioned Geconsulting to carry out a Skills Survey of Employers in the West Yorkshire area in order to effectively 'inform the planning of the LSCWY and its partners, through analysis of the trends and practices of local employers, particularly with regard to recruitment, skills and training'.

The overall intention of the research was to identify:

- Current skills shortages, recruitment difficulties and training practices
- Occupational growth areas and the present and future skills required within these areas
- The changing human resource needs and future business training requirements for employers
- Training issues that are present within local employers
- Levels of employer engagement in learning linked to the national skills survey
- The equal opportunities policies held by West Yorkshire employers.

In total 1950 telephone interviews were carried out and 50 face-to-face meetings were held with local employers all of whom had been selected by LAD's, by the number of employees and by their industrial sector.

The research demonstrated that 40% of employers in Bradford felt that there was no need for improving the skills of their workforce and that they were least likely to have engaged with any form of training in the last 12 months compared with other LAD's in West Yorkshire. Those who were most likely to have carried out training in the workplace were from the energy sector and the public services sectors, representing 100% and 84% respectively. Additionally, it emerged that the larger the organisation the more likely they were to have undertaken some form of training in the previous 12 months.

The research identified that the main motivation for employers in Bradford to carry out staff training was primarily to train new recruits (28%), followed by personal development

(22%) and to maintain the same level of work quality (15%) and those organisations who did not carry out staff training stated that their main reasons for not doing so included that their workforce already had the skills they need (78%), employees did not request training (7%) and no time for training (6%). Moreover, Bradford employers were more likely than employers in other LAD's in West Yorkshire to highlight that cost was a barrier to training; however, the majority (44%) stated that they encountered no barriers when it came to training their workforce.

When asked what subject areas employees had been trained in the most popular focus of training within companies across all the LAD's was ICT and Health & Safety and the preferred method of delivering the training was in-house followed by the appointment of an external training provider.

Bradford and District Household Survey 2002

Bradford Learning Partnership and the LSCWY commissioned the Household Survey in order to:

- Examine progress made towards the Learning Targets for Adults
- Levels of ICT usage
- Basic Skills and Further Education
- Training aspirations amongst the employed workforce
- Recent training experiences
- Type and level of training individuals are seeking for

The results of the survey highlighted that in the previous 12 months to the research, 45% of the respondents who were in employment had taken part in some form of training or education, and that the likelihood of training taking place was reduced if the employees were working for a small business (29%), had caring responsibilities (32%), had a disability (35%), were aged over 50 (36%) or were ethnic minority workers (37%). Of those who had taken part in some type of training 20% took part in a course associated with computer skills, 16% enrolled on an academic course, 7% on a key skills course and only 1% on a basic skills course. Additionally, the research demonstrated that over a

third of employers did not provide any form of support to those who had expressed an interest in further education or training.

In total, 49% of respondents stated that they would be interested in taking part in additional education or training. The groups who expressed the highest levels of interest included ethnic minorities (61%), lone parents (59%), high-income earners (57%) and young employees (56%).

Employment & Training Survey

Bradford Trident NDC

MORI Social Research Institute carried out a qualitative investigation on behalf of Bradford Trident in order to establish the training and employment needs of residents of the most deprived ward in Bradford (Little Horton) with the overall aim of generating a 'training and skills package and other initiatives aimed at helping people into work'.

The research activity involved 3 focus groups with local residents of working age and face-to-face interviews with 525 individuals in the NDC area.

The findings of the research demonstrated that the residents rated local centres as the ideal location for the provision of training and employment schemes due to the non-threatening surroundings and the relaxing environment. The employed participants expressed a desire to train however highlighted their concern and criticism as to the levels of support they received. Additionally, those who wanted to work and to take part in training programmes stated that they wanted to see bespoke training courses to reflect the jobs available in their local area.

The main conclusions of the research highlighted that both employed and unemployed residents were keen to engage with learning however there are still a large number of barriers to overcome and there remains a demand for increased levels of support.

Framework for Employment and Skills Action

Yorkshire and Humber

The Department of Trade and Industry, the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions have introduced a 'single point action plan to match skilled people to good quality jobs'.

The framework has developed 9 key objectives in order to address the employment and skills issues that Yorkshire and Humber face.

1) Create a culture in which education, learning and skills are highly valued by individuals and businesses. This will be achieved by;

- Annual marketing campaign
- Make job opportunity and learning information easier for people to access
- Increase ICT skills

2) Increase productivity through workforce development activity by:

- New routes for higher level management and leadership skills
- Centres of Vocational Excellence and new Technology Institutes
- Graduate retention campaign

3) Develop Entrepreneurial and business skills with:

- Projects to boost entrepreneurial and business skills
- Regional Mentor Bank

4) Capitalise on public investment in the NHS, Education, Housing and Transport with:

- Training and jobs in expanding public services
- Construction Skills Action Plan

5) Improve educational attainment and vocational skills amongst labour market entrants through the:

- Implementing local education plans
- Modern Apprenticeships
- Basic skills initiatives

6) Raise the skills and flexibility of the region's workforce, so it can more effectively adapt to change and respond to economic opportunities with:

- Cluster skills projects
- Workforce development plans
- Workplace learning representatives

7) Increase the quality, flexibility and responsiveness of education, learning and skills provision through;

- A common approach to the collection of intelligence about business needs
- Audits of post-16 learning
- On-line learning
- Rapid response plan for redundancies and new opportunities

8) Connect those at most disadvantages to labour market opportunity, through learning and skills acquisition with;

- New routes for young people to access jobs
- Local participation in Higher Education
- Mainstream Childcare

9) Tackle barriers to labour market mobility with a;

- Labour mobility study and pilot projects

Airedale Employment & Skills Survey 2003

The Employment and Skills Survey has been compiled in order to establish a greater awareness of the present and future trends within the Airedale labour market. To achieve an understanding the following objectives have been agreed:

- Identify current skills shortages and recruitment difficulties;
- Establish present training practices/arrangements, including supplier details and current unmet needs;
- Identify occupational growth areas and present and future skills required within these areas;
- Establish the changing human resource needs and the future business training requirements of employers; and
- Highlight training issues that are present with local employers.

The research involved desk based research, face-to-face interviews with 30 employers, face-to-face interviews with local learning providers, face-to-face interviews with 7 business support organisations, telephone interviews with recruitment agencies and telephone interviews with 683 local employers.

From the employer's sample used for the purpose of the research 90% of the respondents stated that they had not encountered a significant skills shortage however, 1 in 5 employers expressed that they had experienced difficulty in recruiting staff. It was highlighted that one of the major gaps in provision was in the catering sector and a significant level of concern was expressed as to the lack of ESOL provision available to residents in Airedale.

In total, 9% of employers stated that they required 'other types or improved' learning provision in Airedale, nonetheless it was noted that the employers had a lack of knowledge of what learning was available. Employers were in agreement that the Airedale workforce would benefit from an increase in the provision of ICT, numeracy and transferable social skills.

The recommendations presented by the research included the appointment of an Airedale Training Broker, job opportunities with P 4 sites, the need to acknowledge the higher skills needs of digital industries and to ensure 'comprehensive coverage of Broadband to all residents, training providers and community venues and businesses in Airedale'.

Learning Providers

The aim of the interviews with providers was to establish:

- What courses/learning they provided
- How they respond to local employer's needs
- Their perception of the gaps in and needs for WFD in Bradford

We interviewed 20 providers, 3 had national coverage, 1 was regional, 6 West Yorkshire, 2 Bradford and other parts of the County, 8 Bradford only.

Only 2 of the providers had been trading for less than 5 years, with 11 trading for 10 years or more

Provision of Learning

Bradford is well served by its providers in WFD activity; we found a panoply of learning offered that could be classed as "WFD" in over 50 subject areas/vocations.

The learning offered was at a range of levels from basic skills and FMA/AMA through to NVQ5. Courses ranged in length from a day to four years depending on the level and the topic. Of the 20 Learning Providers interviewed for this research 15 of the providers offered only accredited courses with 5 also delivering non-accredited learning. The shorter 1-day courses tended to be the courses that were not accredited and had been designed specifically to meet the training requirements of the employer/company.

Entry Requirements

When asked if there were any entry restrictions to the courses on offer only 1 provider responded that it had “no barriers to entry” for its courses.

The most common barrier was age. 9 of the companies stated that the courses had to be completed by the time the student reached 25 due to funding restrictions, therefore indicating that their target group was primarily school-leavers, especially for the AMA's.

5 learning providers emphasised the need to be in full-time employment followed by a minimum requirement of level D in Maths or English.

4 learning providers highlighted that they were bound by this entry requirement.

Additionally it was noted that 3 learning providers required the potential learners to take part and pass an initial assessment and 1 learning provider stated that the applicant had to have been in full-time employment for a minimum of 2 years.

Needs of Local Employers

The findings of the interviews indicated that the providers were used to adapting provision to meet the needs of the local employers as 16 of the providers stated they altered or had the facility to alter the content or the length of the courses to suit the needs of the business.

However, the syllabi restrictions of government-funded courses limit their flexibility to respond yet it was highlighted that it was still possible to alter certain areas of the course. The main priority of the learning providers is that their student is equipped with the knowledge and skill to successfully take part in the end of course assessments and as long as this is achieved then the content can be adapted slightly.

Those companies who were not solely restricted by the conditions of government funded courses (14) are able to provide companies with bespoke courses in order to meet the

needs of the local labour market, however, tailor made packages tended to come at a cost the companies.

In total, 12 providers stated that the courses they offer are based upon the needs of local employers however, when asked, “how long have you offered these courses” it was not uncommon for the range of courses to have remained unchanged for over 5 years (in one case the selection of courses had remained unchanged for 23 years) this would suggest that the learning on offer in the Bradford area may not be as up to date as originally thought, therefore evoking concern as to the provision of training to those in the emerging or rapidly changing industries – such as new media.

Levels of commitment of local employers to WFD

Providers were asked about the commitment of local employers to WFD:

- 14 stated they did not think employers demonstrated enough of a commitment
- 4 thought employers did demonstrate commitment
- 10 providers stated (lack of) employer funding of WFD as the major barrier to participation
- 4 providers stated (lack of) time to conduct WFD as the major barrier to participation

Through the interviews we gained the impression that encouraging employer participation was a challenge. One learning provider stated that:

“In some cases it is a huge struggle to convince people of the benefits of WFD – often it depends on the management of the organisation and very often it is a financial one as well”

And another highlighted that:

“It’s a struggle to encourage local employers because we can’t offer them any financial gain – the main problem is cash as they expect to get something for training”

However ...

Providers are getting demands for (free) training for older (25+) members of staff that they cannot meet.

Additionally they are encountering problems with young trainees predicated upon poverty – and the implications of their employability-suitability-economic efficiency-value to an employer and whether this is helping or hindering cogent, strategic WFD activity. This is a societal problem and the responsibility for this cannot be allocated to learning providers alone.

Yet providers are involved in training young people for the world of work and entry level positions in the labour market and as such are critically placed to ensure that the next generation of workers have the skills and aptitudes necessary for local employers to support wealth and employment creation. They cannot fulfil this task alone and be expected to overcome the failures of other aspects of “the system” through a 4-week or even 52-week induction course. Their interventions, however professional and laudable, will struggle when confronted by the reality of participants with 3rd generation unemployment and low-level numeracy and literacy competence.

If learning providers are being asked to perform social inclusion interventions then they should be funded *through these bodies* to provide this or, not unreasonably, ask the social inclusion agencies to support the “hardest to help” participants *before* they commence learning. This is then further reinforced when we are in a competitive marketplace where the provider has to ensure that they meet their contract outputs in order to trade.

Otherwise there is a danger of these individuals being further marginalised through an “organisational merry go round” where no one agency takes responsibility for their needs and it ends up ultimately with an inappropriate, unproductive worker being placed into a local firm which damages the reputation of the learning provider and the belief of the employer in recruiting local young people – regardless of how much money is offered to “incentivise” the placement – no wage support grant makes up for a lost customer or a bad batch.

Summary

Suffice to say that with the possible exception of super-specialisms (which are not found in the local labour market in any noticeable numbers – e.g. bio-tech) that providers generally offer **or can offer** courses that serve and reflect the local labour market and have the capacity to respond to local employers’ needs as and when required.

However providers are also responding to the demands of not just employers but to the twin realities of the impact of poverty and its effects on the skills of placements and that of a funder-commissioner marketplace. The implications of both of which can never be underestimated.

Employers

Employer Survey

ERC sent out 872 postal questionnaires (Appendix D) in early December 2003 to all the members registered on the database of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce. The questionnaires were addressed to either the Director of the company or to the owner if the companies and included a pre-paid self-addressed envelope. In total 64 completed questionnaires were returned equating to a 7% rate of return, making the findings statistically significant, and analysable.

Profile of Respondents

Of the 64 respondents:

- 34 had operated in Bradford for 20 years or more,
- 10 for 11-20 years,
- 14 for 3-10 years
- 6 for less than 2 years

30 stated that Bradford was their only trading location.

Staffing Size

- 12 companies had fewer than 5 employees **in Bradford and District**,
- 29 had 5-49 employees,
- 20 had 50-249
- 3 employed 250 or more employees.

Turnover

Only 3 respondents had a turnover below £50000, with the majority in the £500K-£1M range. 12 firms had a turnover in excess of £1M with 9 respondents declining to answer. 35 respondents noted that their companies had increased sales turnover in the past 2 years and 41 companies expected it to continue to rise in the following 2 years.

Sector

Respondents were from across the whole range of industries. The 4 largest sectors for respondents were manufacturing (15), wholesale and retail (11), education (9), other business activities (7) – which was predominantly engineering.¹

23% of those who replied to the employers survey were from manufacturing companies in Bradford and the surrounding area, and 40% of those in the manufacturing trade employed 5-19 employees, 27% employed 20-49 employees, 20% employed 50 – 249 employees and 13% employed 1 – 4 members of staff.

Wholesale & retail companies accounted for 17% of the returned questionnaires and 18% employed 1 – 4 employees, 27% employed between 5 and 19 members of staff, 45% had 50 – 249 employees and 10% (but only 1 company!) employed in excess of 250 people.

Education represented 14% of returned questionnaires. 22% employed 1 – 4 members of staff, 11% had 5 – 9 employees, 11% had 20 – 49 employees, 45% employed 50 – 249 and 11% employed 250 people.

Thus we can see a picture of the respondents being broadly established and growing companies, many from the local area, who employ significant numbers of people. These firms are all members of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce and therefore should be at the very least sensitised to good practice business support “messages” – including workforce development – even if they are not wholly sympathetic or adopting of them in practice.

¹ The industrial classifications were chosen to reflect the 2003 Airedale Survey classifications

Quality Standards

When companies were asked about what quality standards they had in place “No answer” was the preferred response, with 21 and 14 firms responding that they did not have any standards in place. It is not unreasonable to infer that of the 21 no replies the majority did not have any of the standards listed in the range of responses; this would imply that around half of respondent firms had no quality standards. This potentially has a concomitant impact upon workforce development as the majority of quality standards have either overt or implied commitments to lifelong learning within the workplace.

Of those that had standards:²

- 16 companies had IIP
- 11 had ISO 9001
- 5 had PQASSO
- 4 had “other”
- 2 had ISO 14001

Generally, the larger the company the more likely they were to hold a quality standard, of those who answered 2.0 and employed 20 or more members of staff only 3 companies stated that they did not hold a quality standard compared to only 6 companies who employ 19 or fewer holding a quality standard.

The majority of those from the education sector (7 companies out of 9) held at least 1 quality standard certificate whereas those who had been categorised under ‘other business activity’ held the least number of quality standards with 2 companies out of 7.

² Some firms had a variety of standards in place and as such the total figure is above the total number of respondents

Current Skills Levels

Of the companies questioned only 27 answered this question, 37 made no reply.

However, of those who did: ³

- 5 identified staff trained to Level 1
- 10 identified staff trained to Level 2
- 9 identified staff trained to Level 3
- 9 identified staff trained to Level 4
- 11 identified staff trained to Level 5

Those companies who were categorised in the education sector provided the most information to this question and as would be expected they had the highest number of staff trained at each level, especially level 4 and 5. 3 companies from the manufacturing sector identified that they had staff qualified up to level 5. 6 companies in the Wholesale and Retail sector identified that they had staff qualified up to level 3.

Modern Apprenticeships

11 companies had staff working towards FMA or AMA, 49 did not, 4 made no reply. This is higher than the “1 in 10” figure quoted for Airedale. However, Airedale identified that these MAs were predominantly in a skilled trade, we could find minimal evidence to support this in Bradford.

³ The 27 respondents gave multiple answers – so again adding up to more than 27

What drives training?⁴

- Need for new skills - 28 firms
- Upskilling - 28 firms
- Needs for replacement skills (staff turnover) – 15 firms
- Needs for additional skills (more staff) – 15 firms
- No answer given – 12 firms

The training drivers would appear to be led by additional needs for *existing* staff and then supplemented by recruitment and staff turnover issues.

Company training preferences

Bearing in mind the size and turnover of many of our respondents it is unsurprising to find that 18 of them had their own “training division within the company”⁵ this correlates closely to the 16 respondents who had IIP accreditation. In addition 44 firms did not identify a training function and 2 made no reply.

The preferred methods of training were:

	Frequency ⁶
1 In-house by staff without training qualifications	31
2 In-house by staff with training qualifications	21
3 Externally (day-release)	21
4 Externally (block-release)	5
5 In-house using external trainer	19
6 Externally (using evening tuition)	2
7 Seminars/Conferences	17
8 Distance learning (computer based)	10
9 Distance learning (non-computer based)	2
10 Other	1
11 No answer	9

Although both larger and smaller companies favoured in-house training by unqualified staff, the larger companies were more likely to have stated a preference towards the

⁴ Multiple responses entered by the 50 respondents so answers above “100%”

⁵ This was left as a self-defined but self-explanatory term for the respondent to interpret

⁶ Multiple responses entered by the 53 respondents so answers above “100%”

more expensive forms of training too, like in-house training by external trainers, seminars or conferences and training carried out externally on a day-release basis.

Employers' views of learning providers

51 of the companies felt their current WFD provision met their requirements as an employer. 7 were not satisfied – when probed as to why answers were inconclusive, but reasons included lack of current industry knowledge from the trainer; 6 made no reply.

However, when we asked a later question with regards to the views of employers as to their opinion of their current learning provider only 19 rated their provider “good” or “very good” with a further 26 “satisfactory.” It could be inferred from this that employers are basically satisfied with the learning they receive from providers but it is hardly a ringing endorsement of local workforce development provision.

	Frequency
1 Very poor	3
2 Poor	8
3 Satisfactory	26
4 Good	16
5 Very good	3
6 No answer	8

We also asked the companies to rank quality of provision, reputation of provider, location-convenience, cost and past usage-habit on a 1-5 importance scale⁷. Different respondents, with some entering all “1s” and others 1-5, completed this section in different ways. However, despite this there is a pattern that can be observed.

- 38 companies ranked quality of provision as No.1 (most important)
- 16 ranked cost as No.1
- 7 ranked location-convenience as No. 1
- 7 ranked reputation as No. 1
- 3 ranked past usage-habit as No. 1

⁷ This list and the 1-5 scale were replications of the Airedale 2003 survey to enable comparability.

The average ranking identified in Bradford is therefore, roughly, Quality, Cost, Location, Reputation and Past Usage. This compares with Airedale, which found Quality, Reputation, Location, Cost and then Past Usage as “1-5.”

Workforce Development activity over past 12 months

Courses the companies have undertaken included:

	Frequency⁸
1 Health & Safety	44
2 Lifting and Handling	25
3 Customer Service	20
4 Administration Training	19
5 Management/Professional development	32
6 Other	13
7 No answer	11

Forthcoming Workforce Development activity

Companies were asked what WFD they intended to carry out over the coming 12 months. **Only 23 companies stated they intend to carry out workforce development in the next 12 months.** ICT was the most likely course they intended to pursue – but with only 4 respondents identifying this it cannot be said to be statistically significant.

The reasons given by the 23 for this training were varied, but included – (changing) legislation, to improve working standards, to meet the needs of business and IIP. However, no one answer assumed any prominence sufficiently over the others to enable further analysis.

31 companies said they would not be training staff in the next 12 months

⁸ Multiple responses entered by the 53 respondents so answers above “100%”

Training for new employees

However despite the figure above of only 31 companies planning to train staff in the next 12 months, 60 of the companies responding offered induction training to new employees, with 3 offering no training and 1 none response. All of the 60 companies provided new recruits with some form of induction programme or on the job training and 90% of them provided Health & Safety training. 20% of the companies who answered provided 'other' types of training for new recruits, this included, ECDL, Capacity Building, IT, Trade Operations and mentoring.

The research carried out for the Airedale Employment & Skills Survey (2003) highlighted that '*a majority of the larger firms interviewed offer an induction programme, covering basic skills necessary to undertake the job and frequently health and safety issues*'. In Bradford the picture was similar as the 3 companies who stated that they did not offer an induction for new recruits employed 19 or fewer employees. Furthermore all companies who employed 20 or more employees provided on the job training/familiarisation for new recruits.

	Frequency⁹
1 On the job training/familiarisation	58
2 Health & Safety	52
3 Basic Skills/comprehensive assessment	27
4 Food hygiene	6
5 First aid	18
6 Other	12

⁹ Multiple responses possible so figures will be above "100%"

Skills Shortages

38 companies (59%) reported that they had encountered a skills shortage, 25 said “no” with 1 no reply. The Airedale Employment & Skills Survey stated that *‘in excess of 90% of respondents to the telephone survey had not encountered any significant skills shortage.’*

Companies who employed 19 people or fewer were less likely to state that they had encountered a skills shortage 50% compared to 59% average. However, it would seem that the larger the company the greater the likelihood that the company would report a skills shortage. 73% of companies who employed 20 – 49 employees reported a skills shortage, as did 60% of those employing between 50 and 249 employees and 100% of those who employed 250 or more employees (only 3 companies fall into this category).

The skill shortages were across all industries with the exception of transport and show a similar “yes” and “no” variance in all sectors.

	Yes frequency	Yes %	No Frequency	No %
Manufacturing	6	46	7	54
Wholesale & Retail	6	54	5	45
Education	6	67	3	33
Other Business Activities	4	57	3	43
Construction	5	100	0	0
Hotels & Restaurants	3	100	0	0
Transport	0	0	2	100
Computers	1	50	1	50
Other Community	2	100	0	0
Real Estate	1	100	0	0
Research & Development	1	100	0	0
Electric, Gas, Water	1	100	0	0
Health & Social Care	1	100	0	0
Unknown	0	0	4	100

Of those who answered, “yes” to skills shortages, they were further asked how this had affected their business.

	Frequency¹⁰
1 Higher staffing costs	23
2 Quality of the work	15
3 Increase in overtime	8
4 Unable to fill certain positions	29
5 Losses of existing customers	2
6 Unable to bid for contracts	7
7 Other	1
8 No answer	21

Skills Shortages

The areas, which companies identified as needing skilled staff in, were across 30 disciplines but the most responses were in:

- Management (5)
- Customer Service (4)
- ICT (4)
- Sales Skills (4)
- Marketing (3)

The full list is set out below.

52 companies stated their workforce demonstrated a desire to develop their skills

¹⁰ Multiple responses from certain respondents takes this figure above “100%”

Summary of responses to the question “What areas do you think are in greatest need of skills improvement in your company?”

Marketing	3
Finance	2
Fundraising	1
Sales skills	4
Personal development	1
Admin support	2
Gas/corgi fitting	1
General maintenance	1
Stats/forecasting	1
ICT/IT and advanced IT	4
Basic Food Hygiene	1
Health & Safety	2
First Aid	1
Foundry Practice	1
Customer service	4
Languages	1
Quantity surveying	1
Tendering (design)	1
Management	5
Supervision	2
Presentations	1
Basic skills	1
CAD	1
Professional development	1
Production engineering	1
Machine setters	1
Team leaders	1
Practice site workers	1
Communication skills	1
Job related skills	1

Areas identified as in need of skills improvement according to their sector:

Manufacturing

Machine setters	1
Team leaders	1
Management	1
Customer service	1
IT	2
Health & Safety	1
Foundry Practice	1
Administration	1
Languages	1

Wholesale & Retail

Management	1
Production Engineering	1
Sales	1
Customer Service	2
Health & safety	1
IT	1

Education

IT/Advanced IT	2
Basic communication skills	1
Professional skills	1
Sales	2
Personal development	1
Marketing	1
Fundraising	1

Is there any training you would like to undertake but are unable to do so? If so why?

The findings of the survey highlighted that companies would like to carry out a wide range of training courses, however, there are a number of barriers that are preventing them doing so. The 2 main reasons why they are unable to do the training they would like is because of the cost of running the courses and the time commitment involved. Half of those who answered this question indicated that the cost was too much and that that was the main reason why they did not undertake the training. A further 7 businesses stated that time constraints was the main reason why they did not or could not carry out the training they preferred. The remaining companies highlighted that a lack of knowledge of the funding system was a reason why they did not carry out the training and also that the quality of the training was preventing them from undertaking any.

Summary

It would appear that we have a situation where we have the majority of companies identifying that they have experienced skills shortages, across all sectors and in all occupational disciplines, and acknowledging that these have had a deleterious effect upon company performance. This is combined with a situation where we have more companies with staff who are ready and willing to train than companies expecting to deliver workforce development over the next 12 months. These would appear to be divergent and it could be argued illogical conclusions, which militate against the best interests of the firms.

Findings

1. Employers and learning providers are aware, capable and sanguine about the need to train
2. Employers have a patchy appreciation of the intrinsic value of work-based learning but are nonetheless sensitised (rather than aware) to the opportunities present
3. Employers and learning providers both agree that one of the key constraints to improving WFD provision and take-up is the financial system that underpins remuneration for qualification-based programmes
4. The employers in our survey are, on the whole, large, growing employers – creating wealth for the City – and connected with a variety of support structures and advice (such as Bradford Chamber). However, less than half plan on training in the next 12 months – despite envisaging increasing sales turnover and staff who want to train.
5. Cost therefore would not appear to be the only, or key, driver of WFD
6. For WFD to take place it needs to do so within a business context and the company needs to understand the strategic benefit to it – up to and including the return on investment. This should arguably be the role of the company. However learning providers have a role to play in presenting and demonstrating the value of learning within this commercial context
7. It must never be forgotten by all parties that learning providers are themselves commercial operations and as such are mindful of their own cost and profit drivers
8. These can potentially conflict
9. As such one needs to consider the funding options and how a learning provider “makes a living” and its correlation to the demands of industry

10. It would appear that much of the demand from companies is for learning at 25+ targeted to short interventions related to particular short-term skills deficiencies. However, funding is predominantly targeted at long-term qualification based interventions for under 25s

11. Companies are then potentially faced with two contradictory propositions from WFD providers, where they are offered free training for an unproven or less productive employee yet full cost recovery training for activity they believe they need and want

12. If WFD *per se* is the priority then this circle needs to be squared. This is the responsibility of funding agencies

Recommendations

- **Consideration should be given to the targeting of discretionary WFD funding into over 25 interventions**
- **Funds that can be used to “prop up” FMA, AMA and other programmes through additional support should instead be redirected to WFD if this is to be the priority of the Learning Partnership**
- **It should be the responsibility of both social inclusion agencies (for harder to help groups) and learning providers to prepare under 25 learners effectively for employers before they are placed so they are able to contribute materially to the bottom line of the business. This will increase FMA and AMA opportunities. This should be done through existing funding streams and wherever possible in a less complex manner. The mindset should be “how can we help this company to grow and continue to create wealth?” and not “how many NVQs and FMAs can this firm offer?”**
- **In all this WFD activity, concentration should be on business support not qualification accrual and/or placement opportunities**

Action Plan

Set out below is a suggested approach to implementing the recommendations outlined above. For the recommendations to carry weight we believe that as a precursor to any definitive activity there needs to be a discussion as to the “philosophy” of workforce development as outlined in this report and a decision taken as to whether this is the path that Bradford LP and its members/ partners wish to follow. Unless this takes place the LP is in danger of committing itself to a course of action that would not be based upon the support and co-operation of local actors and as such would have the potential to be less effective an intervention.

Action 1 – Strategic re-appraisal of workforce development interventions

Work with all stakeholders – both employers and agencies – to develop a shared understanding and commitment to interventions based upon support to enable businesses to survive and expand, targeted predominantly at existing employees, so creating further employment opportunities.

Timescale: 3-6 months

Lead: Bradford LP

Action 2 – Development of this into a funding support framework

We would see the funding framework as having 2 basic elements

Element 1

75% of LP discretionary funding allocated to WFD intervention at 25+, non-qualification focussed, free or low-cost at point of delivery.

This could have 2 potential loci –

The first being the development of a “WFD Fund” to enable business support advisers to assist companies in meeting their WFD needs and providing them with assistance with the costs of training, or wage replacement costs to free the employee to train.

The second being funding to learning providers to meet the funding gap between the charge they make to the company for WFD and the cost of implementing this training at an agreed profit margin.

In both of these the emphasis of the intervention is to enable flexible responses to the needs of the companies and target the WFD activity directly at the needs of the business enabling it to survive, prosper, recruit further staff and generate wealth.

Element 2

25% of the funds should be targeted at pre-learning activity. This should be work with the “hardest to help” groups suffering multiple disadvantage in the most deprived areas of Bradford. Much of this work will be “unlearning” the socialisation behaviours necessary to survive in poverty and unemployment and overcome issues of non-attendance in mainstream education. This activity should be led by locally based social inclusion agencies – both voluntary and statutory – to enable learning providers to utilise their skills to ensure that these people can become skilled and valuable employees to local firms and not have to extend valuable resources in pre pre pre-vocational activity.

Timescale: 1 month

Lead: Bradford LP/LSC West Yorkshire

Action 3 – Consultation on the WFD Funding Framework

All potential stakeholders and/or project deliverers should have the chance to contribute their views to the funding framework before it is finalised.

Timescale: 1 month

Lead: Bradford LP

Action 4 – Secure funding for WFD Framework

Funding should then be secured based upon this consulted framework from local agencies including the LSC, Local Authority, LSP and Yorkshire Forward.

Action 5 – WFD Tender Specification Framework

This WFD framework should then be broken down into tender specifications, the number depending upon the level of funding available. Ideally the tenders should be of a period of at least 18 months to provide stability of funding arrangements to providers.

Lead: Bradford LP/LSC West Yorkshire

Action 6 – Contract Commissioning and Delivery

The tenders should be let and commissioned according to the rules of the LP.

Action 7 – Evaluation and Review

Fundamental to the effectiveness of this process will be the gauging of employers' and providers' views as to the effectiveness of the revised WFD approach so as to enable "tuning" of the process prior to the next funding/commissioning round. This should be a combination of external evaluation and internal review.

Appendices

Appendix A - Methodology

The overall objectives of the research are:

- To map the current WFD provision
- To assess existing provisions and to carry out a gap analysis
- To identify skills needs through Employer Survey analysis
- To develop these into an action plan

This therefore took the form of:

- Desk based secondary research
- Telephone interviews with learning providers
- Postal questionnaire distributed to local employers.

Secondary Analysis

Key local and regional skills “intelligence” materials were reviewed in order to establish a greater understanding of WFD in Bradford, this included:

- Bradford NDC Skills Survey
- FRESA
- LSCWY Skills Survey

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews with local learning providers were designed to investigate the types of courses that were on offer to businesses in Bradford, the ability of learning providers to accommodate the needs of local employers and their views on the future development of Workforce Development in Bradford.

In total 20 Learning Providers were interviewed (Appendix A). These were identified from a list of approved learning providers by the LSCWY and had been agreed by the Learning Partnership. A topic guide (appendix B) had been composed by ERC and approved by the Learning Partnership in order to ensure that all areas necessary to the

research had been included. The interviews took approximately 20 –30 minutes each and were recorded and transcribed.

Postal questionnaire

The companies were identified through the Bradford Chamber of Commerce database of members. This included businesses from a wide range of sectors and industries and represented both large employers with over 250 employees and those with fewer than 4 employees.

872 postal questionnaires were distributed to local businesses in the Bradford area in December 2003. All questionnaires were addressed to the named Chamber of Commerce contact, normally the Managing Director or company owner, and included a pre-paid self-addressed envelope.

The questionnaire was originally authored by ERC, however in order to provide a comparison with the research previously carried out in Airedale - the Airedale Employment & Skills Survey - it was adapted to reflect wherever possible the Airedale questionnaires – including areas such as sample definition and specific phrasing. The final version was agreed by the Learning Partnership prior to use.

Appendix B - Learning Providers interviewed.

Babbington Business College – Ms Kath Knott
City Training Services - Barbara Miles
Keighley College - Carol Coulton
The Financial Training Company – Fay Coates
A & R Training Services – Ms Patricia Hague
Airedale NHS Trust – Vivian Navan
Best Ltd – Andrea Cook
Bradford Distributive Training Services – Margaret Hodgeson
General Physics (UK) Ltd – Sue Aliston
Rathbone Training Ltd – Heather Turner
Shipley College – Joy Lynch
Business Training Company – Chris Swindells
Christopher Paul Training – Sue Weston
Orient Gold – Emma Swift
CITB – Rachel
Central Sports – Mike Johnson
N G Bailey – Alison Ashworth-Brown
BMDC Access and Employment Unit – Anne-Marie Taylor
BTAL (UK)
Craven Training Services Ltd – Suzanne Carol

Appendix C

Topic Guide for Learning Providers

Company Name:

Interviewee's Name:.....

Interviewed by:.....

Date of Interview:.....

Bradford & District Learning Partnership has commissioned Ellfin Research and Consulting Ltd to undertake research into the provision of Workforce Development (WFD) in Bradford. The research is designed to produce an Action Plan for partners throughout the district in order to guide WFD provision and action by the Learning Partnership.

We are carrying out interviews with learning providers who deliver WFD in the Bradford area in order to collect a 'snap shot' of existing provision and to provide an assessment of the services that are available to local employers and employees in the city.

It would be appreciated if you could participate in a 30-minute telephone interview.

All information will be treated as confidential.

Questions:

What courses/training do you offer in the field of WFD?

- What levels do you train up to?
- What is the average duration of each course/training event?

How do you offer this?

Possible prompts:

- On the job?
- At a training centre?
- At a college?

Are there any entry restrictions to your courses?

- Age?
- Previous qualifications?

How do you advertise the WFD courses/training?

Are you able to adapt the content of a course to suit the needs of an employer?

Why do you offer this particular set of courses/training programmes?

Where do you offer the courses/training?

- Locations – Bradford/West Yorkshire/Yorkshire etc

How long have you been offering this selection of courses/training programmes?

Do you charge the companies for the courses?

- How do they pay?
- What if they don't complete the course?

Who decides what courses are put on offer?

How do you decide whether to withdraw a course from your services?

What tools/mechanisms do you have in place to assess the WFD needs of local businesses in Bradford?

Are all the courses you offer accredited?

Do you offer any non-accredited courses? (Have you in the past?)

Do you have any tools to evaluate your courses?

- From employees who do the courses?
- From the employers – do they comment on whether they have benefited from the course/training programme?

Do you think that local employers demonstrate enough commitment to WFD?

- Is it a struggle to encourage people that WFD would benefit their business?

Are there any issues, gaps or problems that we should be aware of?

Appendix D – Companies that responded to the survey:

N. Schlumberger & Co (UK) Ltd
Otter Water Sports
Bradford Grammar School
Watson Building Services Ltd
Bradford Community Environment Project
Gesipa Blind Riverting Systems Ltd
Turley Textiles Ltd
The Midland Hotel (Peel Hotels)
Melrose Textile Company
Concept Labelling Solutions Ltd
Seba Developments Ltd
Pudsey Test & Inspection
Specialists Building Factors Ltd
Lassiere Mills Ltd
BBN Fasnet
Bar Products & Services Ltd
Hi-Tech Bradford Ltd
E Dobson & Co (Gaskets) Ltd
Harrison Burley Ltd
Dene Ltd
The Peacemakers
John Ayrey Die-Casts Ltd
A C Sissling Ltd
Wrights Property Management
Leach & Thompson
Craiglands
ISA Trading Ltd
Andante Freight Ltd
Dixons City Technology and Minerva Centre Ltd
Kashir Crown Bakeries
George Green (Keighley) Ltd
John W Pennington Ltd
Johnson Systems International Ltd
Keighley College
Arnold Laver
Bradley Doublelock Ltd
FX Fire Systems
Bradford Community Housing Trust Group
The Business Training Company (Yorkshire) Ltd
Common Purpose
Kent Premier Wool Exports Ltd
Challenge College

Robinson Design Group
Leeds/Bradford International Airport
P & D Pet trade Wholesalers Ltd
Trevor Ives Ltd
Elite Top Guards STRI
City Training Services
Impact Maintenance Company
Careers Bradford Ltd
Don Whitley Scientific
Redcats UK
Parkside Windows
D B Consultancy
Office Xpress Europe Ltd
A I Accident Claims UK Ltd
ACWA Services Ltd
Flender Power Transmissions Ltd

4 companies did not state their contact details

Appendix E – Employers Questionnaire