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Skill and Training Requirements in the Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Industry in West Yorkshire

Report for Local FE Colleges and Training Providers On Recent Survey Findings

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Introduction

In June-July 2004 the Sector Skills Development Agency commissioned a telephone survey of local employers in selected regions and industries in order to learn more about the skills and training needs of those employers and the extent to which their skill upgrading needs were being met by local FE colleges and commercial training providers.

This report presents the main survey results for textiles, clothing and footwear establishments in West Yorkshire and also, by way of comparison, shows results for another region of England, namely Leicestershire.

The employers were asked about:

- the main skills upgrading requirements for the occupation groups which they deemed to be most 'critical' to their future performance
- the extent to which they relied – or plan to rely – on FE colleges and other external training providers to help meet these skills upgrading needs
- the main factors which influence them in deciding whether or not to make use of training and related services supplied by local colleges and other external training providers
- the effectiveness of any previous involvements which these firms had had with local colleges and training providers
- the extent of any contacts and enquiries initiated by local colleges and training providers which had been received by these firms

Results

Table 1 shows the distribution by size group and region of the 60 textiles, clothing and footwear employers in West Yorkshire who were interviewed for the survey. Some 61% of these establishments employed between 5-24 people. Another 26% had between 25-99 employees, while the remainder employed between 100-249 people.

Employers with ten or more employees were asked to identify their ‘core group’ of employees, defined as “the group of employees at this establishment - *excluding managers* - whose skills and knowledge you feel make the greatest contribution to the success of your business”. The bulk of survey questions were then asked about these core groups of employees. However, establishments with less than ten employees answered questions about core groups on behalf of all their employees.

The occupational groups most commonly cited as ‘core groups’ in West Yorkshire were process operators, assembly workers, other shopfloor workers and textile and garment trades workers (Table 2).

Some 33% of establishments in West Yorkshire said that the technical and practical skills of their core group employees needed improving or upgrading, much the same as in Leicestershire (Table 3). Other types of skills mentioned as in need of upgrading included ‘generic’ skills such as problem-solving skills, customer handling skills, teamworking skills, communication skills and leadership and supervisory skills. Table 4 shows that some 28% of the West Yorkshire establishments referred solely to generic skill improvement needs while another similar proportion actually wanted combinations of *both* technical and generic skills to be upgraded. Only 27% of the West Yorkshire establishments said that no skills needed improvement among their core group, significantly fewer than the 44% so reporting in Leicestershire.

This survey was able to gather information on the specific types of skills that need improving in more detail than most such surveys. Table 5 groups these detailed responses under several different headings.¹ For example, the technical skill requirements strongly emphasise the need to keep up to date with new machinery. The IT skill requirements include use of standard programmes and adaptation to new software. Communication skills need to be upgraded in order to improve employees’ ability to deal with both customers and work colleagues. The survey responses also identify a need for employees in different occupations to develop leadership skills that would equip more of them to be promoted to supervisory positions.

A large proportion of establishments intend to rely heavily on their own resources in order to meet these skill improvement needs. Only about one in five West Yorkshire establishments said that they intend to call on equipment suppliers for on- or off-site training (Table 6) while only 15% said they were ‘very likely’ or ‘quite likely’ to make use of commercial training providers to meet their training needs. The proportions saying they might call on the services of FE colleges were even smaller: about 3% ‘very likely’ and another 8% ‘quite likely’ (Table 6). Thus as many as 85% of West Yorkshire establishments in these industries were unlikely to use commercial training providers and 88% were unlikely to use FE colleges.

Table 7 shows the detailed reasons that were given why these employers would or would not use commercial training providers. The positive reasons cited for using these organisations are few and far between. Conversely, the list of reasons for not using commercial training providers is lengthy, with emphasis given to an apparent lack of relevant courses and a preference for relying on in-house training resources. Similar reasons are put forward for not making use of FE colleges (Table 8).

To what extent are these comments made on the basis of past experience of using commercial training providers and colleges? Only 17% of textiles, clothing and footwear establishments in West Yorkshire have used commercial training providers for technical or practical skills training in the last 2-3 years and even fewer (8%) have used colleges (Table 9). The proportions of establishments which have used external training providers for generic skills training are smaller still.

When asked about the effectiveness of the training providers they have used for technical/practical skills training in the last 2-3 years, the responses are generally positive for both commercial organisations (Table 10) and FE colleges (Table 11). However, the numbers of establishments in a position to respond to these questions are too small for any firm conclusions to be drawn about the quality of training provision.

¹ Note that the bullet-points under each sub-heading in Table 5 refer to different establishments in each case. Repetition occurs when responses from different establishments were identical. The same applies to Tables 7-8 below.

Table 12 suggests that establishments in West Yorkshire are more likely than their Leicestershire counterparts to have received information about training courses offered by local colleges and training providers. However, a sizeable number of West Yorkshire establishments have not received any such information.

In summary, the evidence in this report shows that there are opportunities in West Yorkshire for colleges and training providers to approach textiles, clothing and footwear employers, discuss their skill upgrading requirements and to demonstrate how external providers might be helpful in meeting those training needs. However, considerable efforts will be needed to ensure that the training services on offer match those required by local employers.

Table 1: Textiles establishments, analysed by size-group

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
	<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
5-9	21	23	22
10 - 24	51	38	43
25 - 49	13	18	16
50 - 99	10	8	9
100 - 199	5	7	6
200 - 249	0	5	3
Total	100	100	100
<i>n=</i>	39	60	99

Note:
Regional differences are not statistically significant.

Table 2: ‘Core groups’ of employees nominated by establishments with 10 or more employees

		Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
SOC code		<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
112	Production managers	7	0	3
113	Functional Managers	0	4	3
311	Science and engineering technicians	3	0	1
342	Design associate professionals	0	7	4
354	Sales and related associated professionals	0	2	1
412	Administrative occupations: Finance	7	0	3
522	Metal machining, fitting and instrument making trades	7	0	3
531	Construction trades	0	2	1
532	Building trades	3	0	1
541	Textiles and garment trades	0	11	7
549	Skilled trades nec	0	2	1
711	Sales assistants and retail cashiers	7	2	4
721	Customer service occupations	0	2	1
811	Process operatives	7	29	20
812	Plant and machine operatives	3	2	3
813	Assemblers and routine operatives	45	22	31
822	Mobile machine drivers and operatives	0	2	1
913	Elementary process plant occupations	10	11	11
	Total	100	100	100
	<i>n</i> =	<i>29</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>74</i>

Notes:

(a) Establishments with fewer than 10 employees responded to questions about ‘core groups’ of employees on behalf of all employees. A small number of establishments selected ‘Managers’ as their core groups.

(b) Regional differences are statistically significant at the 3% level.

Table 3: Types of skill that need improving among core groups of employees

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
	<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
General IT or computing user skills	13	20	17
IT or computing professional skills	0	5	3
Communication skills	15**	35	27
Customer handling skills	10	18	15
Team working skills	31	37	34
Foreign language skills	0	3	2
Problem solving skills	13	22	18
Leadership or supervisory skills	15**	33	26
Numeracy skills	5*	18	13
Literacy skills	3*	13	9
Technical or practical skills	31	33	32
None	44*	27	33
Other skills	3	0	1
<i>n</i> =	39	60	69

Notes:

- (a) Refers to ‘All employees’ in the case of establishments with less than ten employees
- (b) Respondents could cite more than one type of skill in need of improvement
- (c) Regional differences are not statistically significant except for ** at the 5% level and * at 10%.

Table 4: Combinations of types of skill that need improving among core groups of employees

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
	<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
Technical/practical, generic & IT skills	0	10	6
Technical/practical and generic skills	22	18	19
Technical/practical & IT skills	0	0	0
Generic & IT skills	8	5	6
Technical/practical skills only	10	5	7
Generic skills only	10	27	20
IT skills only	5	8	7
No skills need improvement	44	27	34
Total	100	100	100
<i>n</i> =	39	60	99

Notes:

- (a) Refers to ‘All employees’ in the case of establishments with less than ten employees
- (b) Regional differences are statistically significant at 8%.

Table 5: Types of skill that need improving among employees in selected occupations, verbatim responses, establishments in West Yorkshire only

<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CORPORATE MANAGERS' (SOC 11)</u>
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email and Excel
Leadership and supervision skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People handling
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORTS OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 34)</u>
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and creative skills on the computer.
Communication skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation with customers • Communicating with each other as a team might need improving on
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'TEXTILES, PRINTING AND OTHER TRADES' (SOC 54)</u>
Technical and practical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As ideas develop in regards to sewing and as new projects arise • Being up to date with technical equipment. • Reaching targets • Latest machinery developments
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use the control computers for email etc
Communication skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication within the team
Leadership and supervisory skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing development of supervisory skills

<u>CORE GROUP IS 'PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVES' (SOC 81)</u>
Technical and practical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just general skills of this nature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn more machinery skills, we are getting new machines in and they need training on that, more technique based
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends but it is in regards to sewing for example if the machines are changed
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer skill basics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European driving skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General computer skills
Communication skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communication with colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face supervisory skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal communication between staff
Leadership and supervisory skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to lower levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with new manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial training and leadership skills needed for running several departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I am on holiday and someone needs to take over
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to be able to take control of new recruits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New machinery that is coming in
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'ELEMENTARY TRADES, PLANT AND STORAGE RELATED OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 91)</u>
Technical and practical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colour discrimination
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All round skills

Communication skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of new processes • Learning language • Face to face
Leadership and supervisory skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General
<u>CORE GROUP IS ALL EMPLOYEES (ESTABLISHMENTS WITH FEWER THAN 10 EMPLOYEES)</u>
Technical and practical skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level sewing machine skills, as part of a continuous programme of employee skills improvement. Sewing skills • Just basic machine operation skills, and improved time management generally • Unsure what new products will be required for • Job specific IT skills
IT skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New software • New system put in so have to trained using the new system • Computer skills
Communication skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None really. It's just communication within the team. • The problem we have is a lack of communication between employees and the management • One to one with the customers • General
Leadership and supervisory skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General upgrading • More effective supervision amongst each other, there's a general lack of leadership amongst non-managerial staff • Self motivation • General

Table 6: Likelihood of using different kinds of external training supplier to meet skill improvement needs of core groups of employees

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
<i>Percentage of establishments</i>			
Equipment suppliers: on-site training			
Very likely	3	5	4
Quite likely	9	16	13
Not likely	88	78	82
Equipment suppliers: off-site training			
Very likely	0	4	2
Quite likely	12	15	13
Not likely	89	82	84
Commercial organisations*			
Very likely	0	7	4
Quite likely	0	8	5
Not likely	100	85	91
Non-profit making organisations			
Very likely	0	3	2
Quite likely	5	12	9
Not likely	95	85	89
FE colleges			
Very likely	3	3	3
Quite likely	3	8	6
Not likely	95	88	91
Universities or other Higher Education institutions			
Very likely	0	3	2
Quite likely	5	2	3
Not very likely	95	95	95
Total	100	100	100
<i>n =</i>	39	60	99

Note:
No regional differences are statistically significant except * at 9%.

Table 7: Reasons for using or not using commercial training suppliers to meet skill improvement needs among employees in selected occupations, verbatim responses, establishments in West Yorkshire only

<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CORPORATE MANAGERS' (SOC 11)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is none applicable to our needs • We don't need it - our own people provide the training
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORTS OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 34)</u>
Reasons why employers would consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They give you outside experience, different angles; you can be a bit blinkered
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decline in the industry with factories closing down left right and centre and lack of finance
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'TEXTILES, PRINTING AND OTHER TRADES' (SOC 54)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There aren't any for machinists • Not aware that there are any within the industry • Not required • It is a specialized industry and few people are able to help us. • Unique training the only people that can train are the blind makers themselves • They don't have the specialist training we need
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'SALES OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 71)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No training available; we know more than they do

CORE GROUP IS 'PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVES' (SOC 81)

Reasons why employers would consider using commercial training providers

- They used it and it worked
- Trade body offers specific training that's linked to colleges

Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers

- They don't have the services we need.
- Because the operatives are already fully equipped to their job
- Not applicable
- Won't have the skills required
- Too busy and no real need because they've been in the trade for 30 years
- They do not require any additional training
- Do not have the need to use them
- Not relevant to our company
- Waste of time; they don't understand the principles of manufacturing.
- We do on and off training, but location often a problem
- They don't have suitable courses
- We feel we can do it better ourselves
- We have a good system for training in house
- Not important for our industry
- In house
- According to their needs and they don't need it in the foreseeable future but definitely consider if need be
- I do training myself; it's a factory so not appropriate to industry; lots of self teaching
- Not necessary
- No training for what they do (hat manufacture)

CORE GROUP IS 'ELEMENTARY TRADES, PLANT AND STORAGE OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 91)

Reasons why employers would consider using commercial training providers

- That's where the training comes from

Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers

- Basically because it's a simple job
- Needs not arisen - not the sort of job they'd do off job training in
- Do not need to improve skills they have been doing it years
- Don't understand your needs

<u>CORE GROUP IS ALL EMPLOYEES (ESTABLISHMENTS WITH FEWER THAN 10 EMPLOYEES)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using commercial training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not the need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't have what we need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have no course to suit your organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They don't cater for our needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses are not available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and finances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money and the owner doesn't think there's a need for it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need their services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There wouldn't be anyone that can provide training relevant to us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our employees are practical people; they know the best way to do their job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company is too small and training is for a wider scale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and money

Table 8: Reasons for using or not using FE colleges to meet skill improvement needs among employees in selected occupations, verbatim responses, establishments in West Yorkshire only

<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CORPORATE MANAGERS' (SOC 11)</u>
Reasons why employers would consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical skills
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't need it
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORTS OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 34)</u>
Reasons why employers would consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra experience might be gained, and improved qualifications
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited staff numbers due to redundancies and we cannot afford the time off for the staff.
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'TEXTILES, PRINTING AND OTHER TRADES' (SOC 54)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No training for machinists • Not aware that relevant course exist • Time and money • They don't have what we need • Training is unique and we do it on the job as they are no courses for it • They don't have the training we need
<u>CORE GROUP IS 'SALES OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 71)</u>
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No training available, we know more than they do

CORE GROUP IS 'PROCESS, PLANT AND MACHINE OPERATIVES' (SOC 81)

Reasons why employers would consider using FE colleges

- So we can be more efficient
- Recognised qualifications

Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges

- Already fully equipped for the job so don't need FE education for their job
- Course are not applicable for the workforce
- Don't have required skills
- Never get told what's going on and people won't want to do a manual job if they go to FE and they are qualified enough
- Not needed
- Not relevant to our company
- The training isn't sufficient; they don't teach the basics
- They do not do relevant textile courses.
- They don't have appropriate courses, no need to approach them
- We feel we can do it better ourselves
- We have a good system in house
- They employ older and experienced people so no need or colleges
- They've never used them
- In house
- Because they have no one to put forward for training; they are not doing any training at the moment
- Self training not appropriate to the industry i.e. Its a factory
- No call for that
- Don't offer the training they want
- The training they receive from existing providers is adequate so no need to go

CORE GROUP IS 'ELEMENTARY TRADES, PLANT AND STORAGE OCCUPATIONS' (SOC 91)

Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges

- Basically it's a simple job here, training's not necessary
- Don't provide fork lift training
- Needs not arisen - don't think they do relevant courses
- Have enough skills
- Don't understand their needs

<u>CORE GROUP IS ALL EMPLOYEES (ESTABLISHMENTS WITH FEWER THAN 10 EMPLOYEES)</u>
Reasons why employers would consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They may have what we need
Reasons why employers would NOT consider using FE colleges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't have the courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's above the standard that we require and there's no demand for it from the staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not available for shoe trade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People coming out of 5 year courses don't have practical on the job skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The job doesn't need it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We wouldn't need them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The low skill level of the employees means that they would not need or require
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable in the next 12 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and money

Table 9: Use of external training providers by textiles establishments in the last 2-3 years

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
	<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
A: For technical/practical skills training			
Commercial organisations	5*	17	12
Non-profit making organisations	3	12	8
FE colleges	13	8	10
Universities or other HE	5	5	5
Equipment producers/suppliers	15	25	21
B: For generic skills training			
Commercial organisations	3	5	4
Non-profit making organisations	8**	0	3
FE colleges	3	0	1
Universities or other HE	0	3	2
<i>n=</i>	39	60	99

Note: Regional differences are statistically significant except * at 9% and ** at 3%.

Table 10: Effectiveness of main commercial training providers used for technical/practical skills training in last 2-3 years

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
	<i>Percentage of establishments</i>		
Extent of training providers understanding of companies technical/practical skills needs			
Very good	0	30	25
Quite good	100	70	75
Relevance of training providers provision to companies technical or practical skills needs			
Very relevant	50	50	50
Quite relevant	0	30	25
Not very relevant	0	20	17
Not at all relevant	50	0	8
Flexibility of training provider in adjusting time and mode of technical or practical skills training provision to meet companies needs			
Very flexible	0	50	42
Quite flexible	100	40	50
Not very flexible	0	10	8
Cost effectiveness of training providers technical or practical skills training provision			
Very cost-effective	0	40	33
Quite cost-effective	100	50	58
Not at all cost-effective	0	10	8
Overall effectiveness of training providers technical practical skills training			
Very effective	0	50	42
Quite effective	100	40	50
Not very effective	0	10	8
Total	100	100	100
	<i>n=</i> 2	10	12

Note: Regional differences are not statistically significant.

Table 11: Effectiveness of main FE colleges used for technical/practical skills training in last 2-3 years

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
Extent of college's understanding of companies technical or practical needs			
Very good	20	40	30
Quite good	80	60	70
Relevance of college's provision to companies technical or practical needs			
Very relevant	0	40	20
Quite relevant	80	60	70
Not very relevant	20	0	10
Flexibility of college in adjusting time and mode of technical or practical skills training provision to meet companies needs			
Very flexible	40	60	50
Quite flexible	40	40	40
Not at all flexible	20	0	10
Cost effectiveness of college's technical or practical skills training provision**			
Very cost-effective	0	60	30
Quite cost-effective	100	40	70
Overall effectiveness of college's technical practical skills training			
Very effective	20	40	30
Quite effective	60	60	60
Not at all effective	20	0	10
Total	100	100	100
<i>n</i> =	5	5	10

Note: No regional differences are statistically significant except ** at the 4% level.

Table 12: Contacts with textiles establishments initiated by external training suppliers

	Leicestershire	West Yorkshire	Total
<i>Percentage of establishments</i>			
Course information provided by:			
Local colleges	23	37	31
Local commercial training providers	23*	57	43
National or non-local providers	18	33	27
Asked establishment about courses provided:			
Local colleges	10	5	7
Other local training providers	15	8	11
National or non-local providers	8**	0	3
None of these consult with us	74	82	79
Don' t know	3	5	4
Involved establishment in developing future curriculum:			
Local colleges	5	5	5
Other local training providers	3	7	5
National or non-local providers	3	2	2
None of these consult with us	92	85	88
Don't know	3	5	4
Offered tailor made courses:			
Local colleges	5	7	6
Other local training providers	10	7	8
National or non-local providers	8**	0	3
None of these consult with us	79	85	83
Don't know	8	5	6
<i>n=</i>	39	60	99

Note: No regional differences are statistically significant except * at the 1% level and ** at 3%.