



2003 Generic Skills Survey

Results for Flintshire

Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

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The Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey looks at the skill needs of employers in Wales and the skills offered by the people living in Wales as well as the demands for learning and training amongst employers and people in Wales.. It comprises of an Employer's Survey and a Household Survey. Both surveys focus on generic skills, which are skills that are transferable across occupational groups.

The Employer Survey: 6,020 establishments with a minimum of two employees were interviewed between February and April 2003. The sample was drawn from the Yellow Pages Business Database and stratified by the unitary authority (UA) and within each authority by employee size and industry. This data has been weighted by the UA level, the number of employees and SIC using 2001 Annual Business Inquiry data.

The Household Survey: 6,025 households were interviewed face-to-face, across Wales, between February and July 2003. The interviews were constructed in such a way as to be representative of the total Welsh population using ONS (Office for National Statistics) 1996 mid-year estimates for gender and age of the population at UA (Unitary Authority) level.

Survey Totals for Flintshire

	Number of respondents (before weighting)
The Employer Survey	291
The Household Survey	295

KEY FACTS

- Employers in Flintshire rated the ability to follow instructions and understanding customer needs as the generic skills most in demand at a high or advanced level.
- 22% of employers who had HTFV believed the main cause was due to a lack of people willing to work for market rate.
- 39% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills possessed by a school or college leaver and those expected by the employer. Of these 42% found communication skills to be lacking.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Employer Survey:

- 87% of employers were private sector, compared with 82% nationally.
- 38% of employers in Flintshire had fewer than 5 employees, and 77% had fewer than 10, similar to the national pattern.

Household Survey:

- 23% reported having a health problem or long-term disability.
- 51% of respondents were educated to NVQ 3 equivalent or higher, compared with 42% nationally. 14% had no qualifications at all, compared with 21% nationally.
- The number of Welsh language speakers was low, with 75% stating that they had no ability at all, and only 6% having anything above basic ability.
- 41% of respondents stated that they had some ability in the Welsh language, however only 7% were fluent speakers. 3% stated that Welsh was their first language at home.

Flintshire

Employer Survey

FUTURE SKILLS

- Employers were asked about which generic skills they required at the time of the survey (on a scale of 1=not required to 5=advanced), and what they felt the requirement would be for the same skills in the future (3 years from the time of the survey).
- Employers believed that for each of the individual skills listed, there would be a higher level required in the future. The most significant increases were for Information Technology skills, with 49% saying high or advanced IT skills will be required in the future, compared with 34% at the time of the survey, and organising own learning and development, with 53% requiring high or advanced skills in the future, compared with 40% at the time of the survey.
- The six skills with the greatest requirement at the time of the survey (in terms of percentage of employers requiring them at high or advanced level) were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (81%)
 - 2) Understanding customer needs (80%)
 - 3) Communication skills (75%)
 - 4) Team working skills (75%)
 - 5) Adaptability/flexibility (72%)
 - 6) Ability to learn (72%).
- The skills employers expected to need most at high or advanced level in the future were identical:
 - 1) Understanding customer needs (84%)
 - 2) Ability to follow instructions (81%)
 - 3) Ability to learn (79%)
 - 4) Communication skills (79%)
 - 5) Team working skills (78%)
 - 6) Adaptability/flexibility (77%).

SKILL GAPS

- 18% of employers surveyed reported that a skills gap exists amongst their employees, that is, between the types of skills their employees possessed at the time of the survey and those required to meet their business objectives.

Occupations and skills gaps:

- Of those reporting a skills gap, 30% of employers believed that a gap in sales and customer service occupations has had the most significant impact on their business, with 24% regarding managers and senior officials as having the most significant gap.

Main measures taken to tackle the skills gap:

Of those reporting a skills gap:

- 56% said they had provided further training
- 25% increased their level of apprentice/trainee programmes provided
- 7% of the employers said they had done nothing preferring to leave it to the market
- 6% increased their recruitment activity
- 3% changed their working practices and
- 3% had more supervision.

Employers' attitudes towards skills:

- 50% of employers surveyed strongly agreed that their employees had sufficient skills to meet business needs, whilst 40% tended to agree
- 42% strongly agreed that investment in skills had brought business benefits with 37% tending to agree
- 76% of employers strongly agreed that having a skilled workforce was crucial to the success of their business, whilst 20% tended to agree with this statement.

Investment in skills - areas of benefit:

Of those employers who believed that investment in skills had brought benefits to their business:

- 38% reported competing on customer service as a benefit
- 29% found that investment in skills had increased productivity
- 21% felt it had accelerated business growth, with 19% reporting an increase in profits
- 15% saw competing on quality as a benefit
- 12% reported introducing new products or processes and
- 7% had better trained staff as a result of investment.

SKILL SHORTAGES

Hard-to-fill vacancies (HTFV):

- 20% of employers surveyed reported having one or more vacancies
- Of these employers, 69% reported that some or all of these vacancies were hard-to-fill
- The net effect of this is that 14% of all employers surveyed reported currently having HTFV.

Causes of HTFV:

Employers with HTFV believed the main cause of them to be:

	Percent
Lack of applicants/people willing to work for market rate /interested working in this area	22%
Applicants lack the relevant skills we require	16%
Applicants lack the qualifications we want	13%
Applicants lack motivation/right attitude	10%
Applicants lack the relevant experience	9%
Remote location/poor public transport	7%
Too much competition from other employers	6%
Poor career progression / lack of prospects	4%
Job entails shift work/unsociable hours	4%
Company/industry unable to pay market rate	1%
Bad economic climate	1%

Consequences of HTFV:

Of those employers reporting HTFV:

- 12% reported there had been no impact on their business due to HTFV
- 18% reported a loss of efficiency/increased wastage
- 14% reported a loss of quality in service
- 13% reported delays in developing new products/services
- 13% reported that their employer cannot expand the business and meet growth needs and
- 12% reported a loss of business to competitors.

Measures taken to tackle HTFV:

- 40% of all employers reporting HTFV had expanded their recruitment channels (as opposed to geography) to tackle the problem of HTFV
- 20% reported recruiting from different geographical areas
- 11% had reported that they increased the use of agency or temporary staff and
- 10% had reported that they had increased training and development within the workforce.

SCHOOL LEAVERS, COLLEGE LEAVERS AND GRADUATE RECRUITS

Recruitment of school leavers, college leavers and graduates:

- 37% of employers surveyed stated they recruited school leavers
- 33% recruited college leavers
- 32% recruited graduates
- 47% recruited none of the above.

Skills lacking in schools and college leavers:

- 39% of employers who recruit school or college leavers reported a significant gap between the skills the leavers have and those that are expected of them when first recruited.

Of those reporting a gap:

- 42% reported a lack of communication skills
- 25% reported that school and college leavers lacked numeracy skills
- 22% reported a lack of ability to show initiative
- 16% reported a lack of literacy skills and
- 15% reported a lack of skills in understanding customer needs.

Skills lacking in graduates:

29% of employers who recruit graduates reported a significant gap between the skills the graduates have and those that are expected of them when first recruited.

TRAINING

Employers were asked about provision of off-the-job training, that is training that takes place away from the immediate work position:

- 47% of all employers had arranged off-the-job training for their employees over the previous 12 months when surveyed
- 93% of employers who had arranged training said that they had had no problems in finding an appropriate training provider.

Employers who had arranged training did so for the following occupations:

- 54% for managers and senior officials
- 28% for administrative and secretarial occupations
- 25% for sales and customer service occupations
- 24% for professional occupations
- 24% for skilled trade occupations.

Barriers to training provision:

- 27% of employers questioned stated that there were no barriers to the amount of training they provided.

Of those reporting barriers three factors dominated as being the most important barriers to training provision:

- 37% of employers couldn't afford to have time off for training
- 29% found the cost of training in the local area to be prohibitive and
- 8% reported that the time of day courses were run was inconvenient.

Household Survey

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS:

Employment/training: Status of respondent	Percent
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	47%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	22%
At home/not seeking work	13%
Long-term sick or disabled	7%
Full-time education	5%
Retired	4%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	2%

- 37% of people who were not working would like to be in full or part time paid work of some sort at the moment.
- 31% of respondents that were not in full time or part time paid work said it was because health or disability prevented them. 16% were responsible for looking after children and family/household members and 11% of those not in work said there was no particular reason for not working, and 10% said they did not want a job. 9% said there was no childcare available, whilst 8% were in full-time education.
- Of those not employed, 14% were in some form of work 1 year ago, and 20% 2 years ago:

Activity status of respondents compared over time	2 years ago	1 year ago
At home/not seeking work	40%	44%
Long-term sick or disabled	22%	20%
Retired	8%	12%
Full-time work (31 hours or more a week)	15%	8%
Full-time education	7%	8%
Part-time work (less than 31 hours a week)	5%	7%
Registered unemployed/signing on for JSA	5%	6%

- 23% of all respondents reported having a health problem or disability that they expected to last for more than a year. Of these, 64% said it affected the kind of paid work they were able to do, and 63% said it affected the amount of paid work they were able to do.
- 15% of respondents were involved with local organisations on a voluntary basis.

Sources of careers advice:

- 36% of individuals interviewed said they had sought careers advice in the 2 years leading up to the survey.

Respondents, who had sought careers advice, had used a variety of sources:

- 15% used JobCentre/JobCentre Plus
- 12% relied on family, friends and colleagues for advice
- 11% used web-sites to seek careers advice
- 8% attended jobs/careers fairs
- 7% used Careers (Wales) advisers
- 7% used recruitment agencies
- 6% stated that course tutors/teachers
- 6 had sought advice from School/college careers advice and/or teacher/lecturers
- 5% used their line managers and/or their personnel departments.

SUPPLY OF SKILLS

- Respondents (both working and not working) were asked what level of generic skills they already had and what level of skills they felt were required for their current job (those working), or for the job they want (those not working) on a scale of not required to advanced.
- Those in work reported that their skill levels were sufficient for, and in most cases well above, their employer's need for all skills at basic, intermediate and high level. There were some perceived gaps at advanced level, particularly in understanding customer needs (52% reported requiring this skills, 43% reported possessing this skill), and showing initiative (36% required, 32% possessing this skill).
- The six skills with the highest percentage of respondents in work rating themselves as high or advanced were:
 - 1) Ability to follow instructions (89%)
 - 2) Showing Initiative (84%)
 - 3) Team working skills (84%)
 - 4 Understanding customer needs (83%)
 - 5) Adaptability/flexibility (82%)
 - 6) Communication skills (82%).

Types of training individuals would like to be involved in:

- 71% of all individuals interviewed would like to be involved in training.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 35% of individuals felt that they would like to be involved in taught courses designed to help them develop the skills that they might use in a job
- 34% would like to participate in taught courses that lead to qualifications
- 24% stated that they would like time to keep up to date with the developments in the area that they work in
- 15% want to be involved in any other taught course, instruction or tuition
- 14% would like to be involved in achieving credits or a step towards qualifications
- 13% would like to receive supervised training whilst doing their job
- 12% would like to study for qualifications without participating in a taught course
- 7% would participate in any other non-taught course or training
- 29% would not like to be involved in any of these options.

Types of training or learning actually carried out in the past 12 months:

- 62% of all respondents had undertaken training in the 12 months leading up to the survey.

All individuals were asked about any training they had been involved in, in the 12 months leading up to the survey:

- 34% of respondents had been on taught courses designed to help them develop skills that they might use in a job
- 30% had spent time keeping up-to-date with developments in the type of work that they did, e.g. reading books, manuals or attending seminars
- 20% had been on taught courses that were meant to lead to qualifications
- 17% had been on another taught course, instruction or tuition and
- 7% had been on other non-taught courses or training.

Of those who had done any of the above, the most common outcomes of the training or learning were:

- 50% reported an increase in their confidence in their own abilities
- 44% learned new skills for the job they were doing at the time
- 43% said they were able to their jobs better
- 23% got more satisfaction out of the work they were doing at the time
- 10% developed personal interests unrelated to work.

Barriers to learning or studying new things in the coming year:

- 61% of all individuals interviewed stated that they experienced barriers to learning or studying new things.

Of all individuals interviewed:

- 28% of individuals felt that they will not have enough time to learn or study in the coming year, whilst 19% specified that family and child care commitments were too great
- 13% said that work pressures and their hours of work prevented them from learning or studying
- 8% said it was too expensive
- 2% said a lack of transport prohibited them in learning or studying and 1% said that it was too far for them to travel.

Preferred learning styles:

All respondents were asked to comment on their preferred learning styles:

- 43% preferred to learn in a group being instructed by a teacher or tutor
- 37% preferred to learn alone or by self-study
- 34% preferred to learn by doing practical things.

Preferred learning methods:

All respondents were asked to comment on their preferred methods of learning:

- 65% of individuals would like to use books or written materials for learning something new
- 44% reported lectures as a preferred learning method
- 34% reported CD-ROM/computer software packages as a preferred learning method
- 33% reported the Internet as a preferred learning method and
- 31% reported videos as a preferred learning method.

