

Air Travel & Transport

Workforce Development Action Plan 2002-2005



Introduction

This action plan has been developed with our partner organisations and follows initial research and consultation with employers in the sector. This action plan is one of 12 sector action plans and four generic issue action plans.

Sussex Learning and Skills Council is focused on delivering its **overarching objectives** for Sussex employers, people and communities, namely:

- A step change in the number of level 3 qualifications obtained by the under 30 year old population
- A step change in the reduction of adults who lack basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- A step change in the skills of the workforce and the ways in which employers access training

This action plan is an important tool in achieving these objectives.

"Learning brings major benefits to everyone in the community and has been proven to provide the basis for a successful economy."

Henry Ball, Executive Director, Sussex LSC

The research findings and outcome of the consultation with employers are set out on pages 2 and 3. A detailed action plan is outlined on page 4.

The Strategy

As set out in our Local Strategic Plan 2002-2005, the **demand for learning** needs to be considered in three ways:

- Economic Demand – the current and projected employer skills needs
- Individual Demand – the projected number of learners, their choices, goals and aspirations
- Community Demand – promote social inclusion and support local regeneration activities

This action plan has been developed on these **three drivers of demand**.

The Sector

- Transport via railways
 - Other land transport
 - Transport via pipelines
 - Sea and coastal water transport
 - Inland water transport
 - Scheduled air transport
 - Non-scheduled air transport
 - Space transport
 - Cargo handling and storage
 - Other supporting transport activities
 - Activities of travel agencies, etc
 - Activities of other transport agencies
- Employment in the sector in Sussex is 28,700
 - Air transport accounts directly for more than half of Sussex employment in the sector
 - All sub-industries that will be directly implicated by the future of Gatwick Airport account for around 21,000 jobs
 - There is a greater share of female full-time employment in the sector in Sussex (33%) than in GB (21%) due to different jobs provided by the airport
 - Employment is highly concentrated in Sussex Learning & Skills Council Planning Area C (North Sussex)



> Occupations & Qualifications

- The sector employs a wide spread of occupations, skills levels and shift patterns, offering opportunities to the whole community
- The largest occupational groups are drivers and mobile machine operators (28% of sector employment) and elementary administrative and service occupations (12%)
- There is also strong employment in corporate managers and administrators and clerical occupations (each 11%)
- This structure means that the majority of jobs are 'low skill, low value added'. 59% of workers are qualified to NVQ equivalent level 2 or below (compared with 45% in Sussex as a whole)
- 15% of jobs are 'high skill, high value added' compared to 41% in the Sussex economy as a whole
- 41% of employers report skills gaps in customer service. Across the South East only 21% of reported skills shortage vacancies are in this area
- Future demand for low skill jobs will remain high, but will decrease slightly to 54% of annual demand. However there will be a continued need for basic skills training
- Demand for managerial positions will increase. Poor managerial skills have been cited as a major barrier to increased productivity in the UK

> Training Supply

Civil engineering – 40 students in 2000/01

17 of these students dropped out before finishing the course. If retention can be improved the numbers would be broadly sufficient to meet need. However, employer evidence suggests there are too few studying at levels 2 and 3.

Mechanical engineers – 1,717 students

The numbers studying seem adequate for the needs of the sector. Potential employees do not appear to find this sector appealing compared with engineering jobs in other sectors and not enough enter the sector.

Marine technology and transport – 996 students

The numbers studying seem adequate for the needs of the sector. Therefore, recruitment and retention should be the key focus in this area.

Retailing/distribution – 537 students

Provision of study places could be increased by 300 across Sussex and by 100 in Brighton & Hove alone. If drop-out rates (32%) are reduced the numbers studying will be adequate for the needs of the sector.

Hospitality and catering – 1,422 students

Despite high drop-out rates (39%), provision in this area should be sufficient, although it could rise by 200 annually in Brighton & Hove to meet demand.

Travel – 474 students

This figure under-represents training as many staff are trained 'in house'. A large increase in provision would be needed if an NVQ were made compulsory, as it has been in the care industry. Provision could be raised by 150 to address out-commuting.

> Main Skills Issues

- Customer service skills are in the greatest demand throughout the sector, and therefore the industry suffers disproportionately from this skills shortage. Most customer service training happens 'in house'
- Many low-skilled service jobs, especially at the airport, offer little or no prospect of training or promotion
- The Rail Industry Training Council has identified a critical skills shortage in the number of engineers and other high-level technicians joining the rail industry. There is also a deficiency in the number of maintenance workers
- Gatwick employers believe that providers could be more proactive in approaching employers with training solutions that meet their needs
- Providers feel that employers are not aware of the degree to which qualifications can be tailored to their specific needs, consequently many employers conduct their own in-house training that is not accredited
- Retention of staff in air transport is a concern as there are high levels of turnover in many companies and this discourages training. Many service companies at the airport have responded by conducting their own in-house training
- All occupations will have to increase their use of IT-based technologies, which will generate a demand for basic IT training

> Key Issues and Priorities

- Gatwick is a key driver for the sector and for the Sussex economy as a whole
- Passenger numbers at Gatwick reduced after September 11th 2001 and, whilst the numbers are increasing, they have not yet reached pre-September 11th levels. Initial indications were that employment at the airport was expected to reduce by around 3,000-4,000, although this is likely to be a little pessimistic
- September 11th has acted as a catalyst to a process of rationalisation within the airline industry. As yet it is unclear as to the extent of the effect on employment, though it is certain to reduce as a result
- It is likely that increasing numbers of business travellers, and leisure travellers not buying a package, will choose to book direct. This, coupled with a growth in internet bookings, is likely to reduce the demand for traditional travel agency services
- Recruitment at the airport is made difficult by the relatively high economic activity rates in and around Crawley. More flexible working patterns may be required to remove some of the barriers faced by students, the early retired and the unemployed
- A second runway would cause a huge increase in demand for labour that it would be difficult to meet without accompanying housing and other infrastructure developments
- Most public funding is targeted at the under-25s, and specifically at the under-18s. However, the insurance and regulatory environment in some occupations (like drivers) does not permit employment before the age of 21 and high insurance costs can discourage employment of the under-25s
- Recruitment of young people is especially problematic where career ladders are ill-defined or do not start until 21
- Establishment of a partnership scheme between Sussex Learning and Skills Council and employers, combining work and training for the 16-21 age range. This could improve recruitment and skills levels
- Improvement of key skills among the workforce, a need identified by NTOs and employers representing industries in the sector
- Employees undertaking unaccredited in-house training could instead be trained as part of an NVQ tailored specifically to employers' needs. This would make a significant contribution to SLSC targets for level 2 and 3 achievement
- Employers' awareness of the relevant accredited training available to them is limited. An event could be held to bring providers and employers together to improve understanding and provide an opportunity for networking
- There is a need for increased customer service training, as it is likely that future demand will be highest in the areas of personal services, sales and clerical



> Contact Us

We welcome your views and reactions to this action plan. We are especially looking for information about:

- Skills gaps and skills needs
- Hard to fill vacancies
- Future trends and challenges facing your industry

Call the Learning Pays Hotline

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Objective	Actions	Timescale	Working With...
Creating a demand-led system	Facilitate an event for training providers and employers to raise employers' awareness of the flexibility of training provision and NVQ accreditation, in order to encourage employers to gain accreditation for in-house training programmes (especially customer services)	By July 2003	Training providers, employers, Unions
	Work with employers and unions to generate a demand for basic skills training among 'elementary occupations' to enable action to be taken to reduce the number of employees lacking these skills	Start May 2003	Employers, Unions, FE Colleges, training providers
	Work with schools and FE Colleges to promote the air travel & transport sector, with particular emphasis on certain professions e.g. mechanical engineering	Ongoing	FE Colleges, schools
Improving supply and capacity	Establish a network of training providers and employers to strengthen contacts and devise flexible training and development solutions that meet the business need	By December 2003	Training providers, FE Colleges, employers, Unions
	Work with providers and employers to develop a training and development programme for 16-21 year olds, in order to attract (and retain) young people into careers at Gatwick	Start March 2003	FE Colleges, training providers, employers
	Research reasons behind drop-out rates in civil engineering, retail & distribution, and hospitality & catering programmes, and work with providers to improve retention rates to ensure sufficient numbers are qualified	Start November 2003	Consultants, FE Colleges, training providers
	Increase the provision of retail & distribution programmes to reduce the numbers of students commuting out of Sussex	By July 2003	FE Colleges, training providers
	Make funds available for networks to access generic skills development, especially customer services	Start January 2003	learnirect Sussex, FE Colleges, training providers
	Research the viability of a learning centre at Gatwick Airport to provide flexible learning provision in basic skills, basic IT and languages, using e-learning as a vehicle	Start January 2003	

Developing the Sussex workforce



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