

Doncaster Chamber

The Business and Skills Survey: What Doncaster businesses really do want from education and what should be done about it

Summary Version

Introduction

Doncaster Chamber, with the support of key partners Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and the Learning and Skills Council, has undertaken a significant research project into skills demand in Doncaster. In this report Doncaster businesses identify the inability to recruit and retain the right calibre of staff as their biggest barrier to growth and, as such, have made the skills agenda their top policy priority for the Chamber and other partner organisations in the borough. Based on each business taking 15 minutes to complete the survey and the interviews taking some 30 minutes each it is estimated that the private sector in Doncaster has contributed 14,040 minutes of its time to this consultation, the equivalent of just over 29 working days.

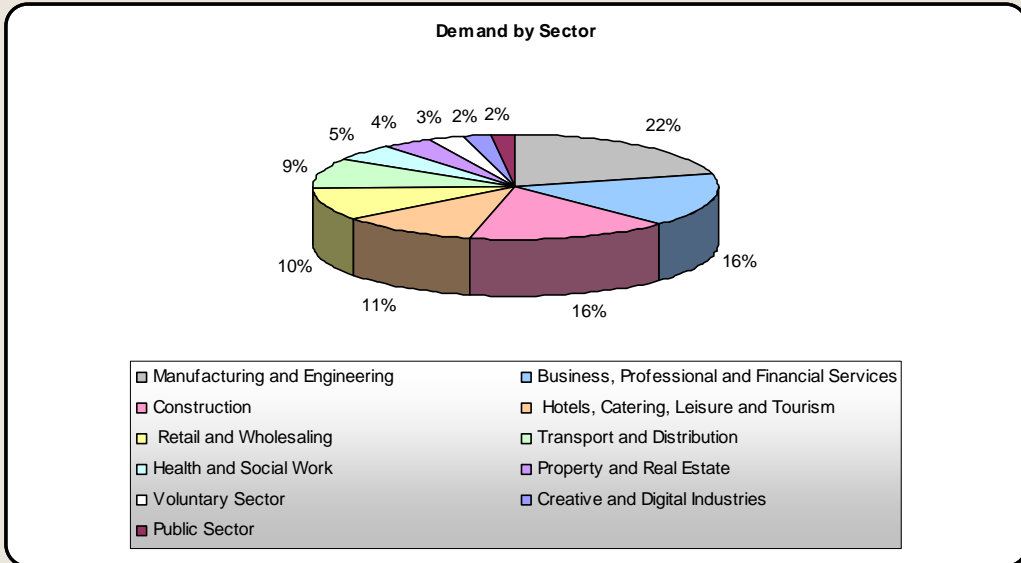
Business Perceptions

Respondents to the survey were given ten statements regarding the skills agenda and asked to indicate if they agreed, disagreed or were unsure about the statement. The below table summarises the overall balance of opinion for all sectors and identifies the top three sectors that agree/disagree with a statement.

Statement	Sectors Mostly Disagreeing	Sectors Mostly Agreeing	Balance
<i>"Providing training and development improves profitability."</i>	Voluntary Transport Construction	Property Public BPFS	+89%
<i>"Providing training and development improves staff retention."</i>	Manufacturing Construction Transport	Health & Social BPFS Property	+80%
<i>"We value experience over qualifications."</i>	Health & Social Manufacturing Construction	Tourism Voluntary Transport	+64%
<i>"Our business recruits staff on attitude more so than experience or qualifications."</i>	Public Property Manufacturing	Tourism Voluntary Transport	+17%
<i>"A lack of staff with the right level of skills is currently holding our business back."</i>	Voluntary Public Retail	Property Construction	-18%
<i>"Our business would employ someone who had been out of work for a long period of time, i.e. over six months."</i>	Property BPFS Health & Social	Public Voluntary Retail	+62%
<i>"Doncaster is a town with a talented workforce."</i>	BPFS Property CDI	Public Transport Construction	+31%
<i>"We have to look beyond Doncaster to find the right staff for our business."</i>	Retail Transport Construction	BPFS Manufacturing CDI	-7%
<i>"Our business would prefer to employ local people if they had the right skills."</i>	Public Property Transport	Health & Social CDI Retail	+92%
<i>"The training and education provision necessary for the future development of our staff/business is readily available in Doncaster."</i>	Health & Social BPFS Property	Transport Tourism Manufacturing	+16%

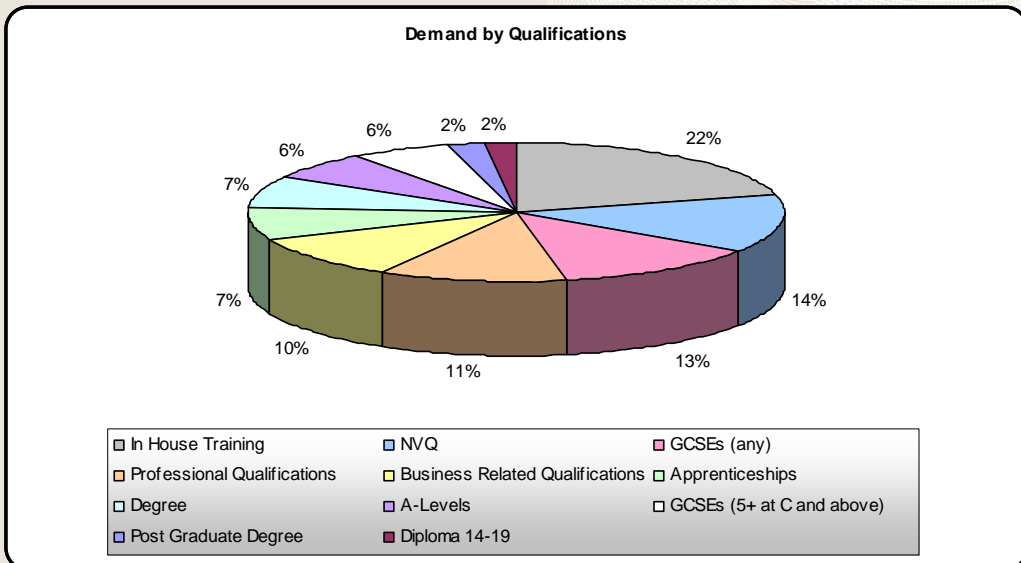
Demand by Sector

Respondents were asked which sector they will be recruiting staff in over the next four years and to indicate how many staff they will be taking on (or losing). The number of respondents by sector has been multiplied by the number of job creations per sector to produce the below results which demonstrate the share of recruitment by industry.



Demand by Qualifications

Businesses were asked to identify what type of qualifications they are most likely to require from new recruits going forwards.



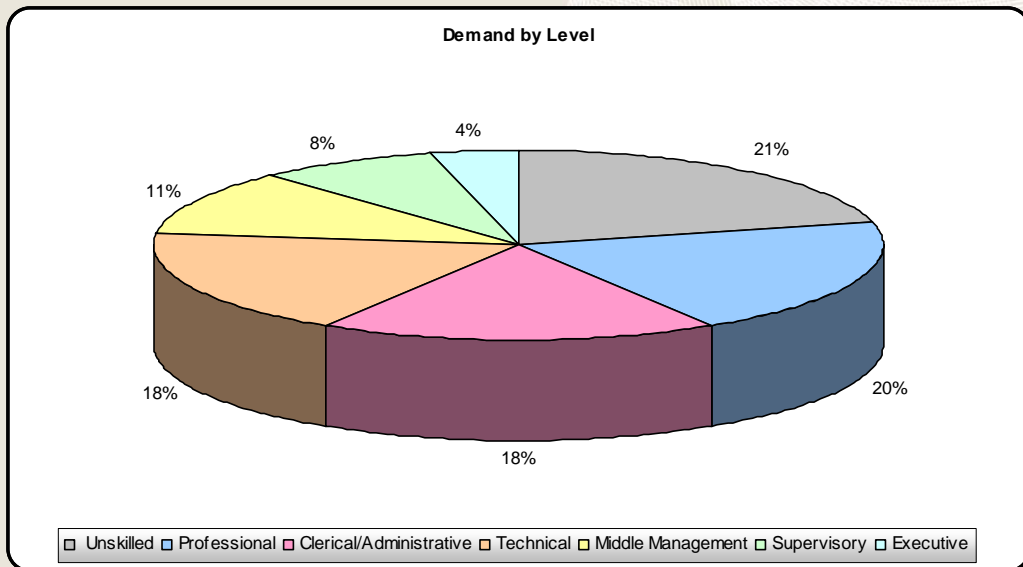
Demand by Type

Businesses were asked to identify what type of skills they are looking for in their staff and at what level, i.e. Levels 1 or 2, Levels 3 or 4, or Level 5. The below table indicates, in order, the most in demand type of skills and the level businesses are most likely to require that skill at.

Type of Skills	Level
Customer Service Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Communication, Literacy, Numeracy Skills	Levels 3 & 4
IT Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Business Administration Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Team Working Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Problem Solving Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Technical Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Marketing Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Management Skills	Levels 3 & 4
Driving Skills	Levels 1 & 2
Foreign Language Skills	Levels 1 & 2

Demand by Level

Respondents were asked to indicate at what levels of their business they are expecting to recruit staff over the next four years.



Working with Education

It is evident that business needs to work closely with education and training providers, and other partners in the public sector, if the issues raised in this report are to be resolved. Overall only 11% of all businesses are currently engaged in any kind of business and education partnership. Providing work experience for school children is a popular and well established method of working with education and similarly young enterprise activities are popular with businesses. There are also a small number of businesses working with partners to influence education provision in the borough through mechanisms such as the Chamber's Focus Groups, DE4L and the Doncaster College Business Club. However, overall though there comparatively few businesses working with education and training providers in the borough.

The below table indicates the percentage of businesses currently supporting a given type of activity.

Type of Activity	Currently Involved (% of all businesses)
Work Experience for School Children	31%
Young Enterprise Activities in Schools	14%
Working with Partners to Influence Education	12%
School/College Governorships	8%
Shaping Diplomas/Foundation Degrees	7%
Supporting Teacher Placements in Industry	7%
Supporting Aspirations Activity	7%
Gap Year Placements for Undergraduates	%
Supporting Technology Challenge	5%

Recommendations

The recommendations from this report are summarised below:

1. Consideration should be given to reviewing the sector priorities of Doncaster's Economic Strategy in tandem with those sectors that are more likely to opportunities to long term unemployed persons including construction and retail but particularly manufacturing.
2. In the broadest sense, the findings of this survey now need to be used by partners in training and education to map provision over the forthcoming years to meet business needs.
3. Manufacturing has been identified as the top sector in terms of recruitment and much more must be done to support manufacturing businesses at all levels of the education system. This includes working with schools to better promote manufacturing as an attractive career option to younger people and investing in manufacturing and engineering tuition in schools and further education providers. Further steps should also be taken to link Doncaster manufacturers up to Higher Education providers in South Yorkshire, including the Sheffield universities, and also to the Advanced Manufacturing Park in Rotherham. A mechanism also needs to be found that helps smaller manufacturers access appropriate funding and support in relation to training and staff development.
4. The reputation of the town needs to be enhanced internally and externally in order to attract/retain a better quality of candidate and also to support inward investment.
5. The message that Doncaster businesses would prefer to recruit locally is an important one. Doncaster Chamber is developing a quarterly policy newsletter that will go into

schools (among other places) including updates on the local economy, good news stories, and other issues relevant to local employment, helping to promote the town and the career opportunities that are available in the borough. This needs to be developed and resourced. The Chamber is also developing *Student Chamber* to support all students with a DN postcode in Further or Higher Education with key skills such as networking, CV writing, being interviewed and so forth and to link them to temporary and permanent job opportunities in the borough and assist with graduate retention.

6. Business has a big concern about the quality of careers advice being given in schools and a number of sectors believe that they are poorly represented to learners and students in the borough (this relates to a number of sectors but is particularly pertinent to construction, manufacturing and retail). A smarter/more effective mechanism to brief Careers Advisors on the opportunities/vocations available in the town should be introduced alongside progressing direct learner/business interaction in Doncaster. This could include a headline project such as a Doncaster Careers Fair.
7. Businesses will train and develop staff because it makes financial sense to do so, not because they are told by the public sector that they should. A Doncaster wide 'training pays' campaign could therefore be developed as an umbrella for promoting training and development in the borough.
8. There is a recurring theme in the qualitative responses to this, and in the anecdotal information held by the Chamber, that businesses want staff entering industry direct from education to have both subject knowledge and business knowledge. The latter of these does not appear to be evident; so, to give an example, someone might be well versed in the subject of say engineering, but they do not know how to apply that knowledge in business and/or understand the importance of using that skill to make a profit. Initiatives such as Young Chamber already provide a vehicle for teaching children enterprise skills; Young Chamber could be adopted by every school in Doncaster to embed business within the curriculum.
9. Customer Service has been identified by Doncaster businesses as their most sought after skill. There is scope for the development of customer service courses by Doncaster College and other providers that are specific to particular industries, i.e. customer service in a retail environment, customer service in professional services and so forth.
10. Those sectors most keenly supporting Doncaster's bid for University Status and/or with a higher than average demand for degree calibre candidates should be regularly engaged by partners in the development of the university bid. Those businesses not supporting the bid should be contacted by partners to identify why not and, wherever possible, have their perceptions changed. It is noted that University Status is unlikely to be a short term priority for Doncaster College but, nonetheless, it is suggested that partners continue to map business demand and develop future bids with due consideration to private sector needs.
11. Diplomas are not widely recognised by businesses in Doncaster but represent a once in a lifetime opportunity for the private sector to influence education provision. There is evident need for a more high profile promotional campaign to local businesses announcing the arrival of diplomas in Doncaster from September 2009. This should be delivered jointly by DMBC and the Chamber.
12. The sectors currently lacking in interaction with education, i.e. Transport, and Logistics, Creative and Digital Industries, Retail and Business and Professional and Financial Services should be prioritised by education when seeking business views. This is particularly urgent as three of the above sectors are currently prioritised under Doncaster's Economic Strategy.
13. There are comparatively low levels of interaction between smaller businesses and education. The barriers to this are evidently a lack of resource and time (from the business perspective) and difficulty to engage (from an education perspective); a

mechanism to overcome this needs to be identified to ensure that education does not become skewed towards big business and overlook the needs of the SMEs who make up the bulk of Doncaster's economy; for example, the need to be multi-skilled for businesses where each employee has multiple job roles.

14. Every secondary school in Doncaster to have a private sector buddy who also sits on the school's board of governors providing a greater degree of business accountability.
15. A simple, easy to understand, menu of business involvement with education to be produced including the appropriate named contacts within partner organisations that can provide simple help and instruction to local businesses. This should cover every initiative/opportunity in the borough and not just be tied to any one scheme. This should be made available to all businesses in Doncaster and refreshed on a regular basis; the menu should be the same regardless of which partner it is accessed through.
16. Business finds it hard to access relevant information. It is suggested that simple guides to training and education, business support, financial assistance and other key subjects be produced and adopted by all key partners as standardised documents that are refreshed on a quarterly basis. This would include what the aims of any project/organisation are (i.e. Success Doncaster, Donbac etc), who is behind it, and what the project/organisation hopes to achieve. If businesses knew all this information and could access it via a trusted source they may be more inclined to access the support available to them.
17. A mechanism needs to be introduced that identifies which training providers are available in Doncaster and what quality standards those trainers have; this would also support the aspiration to 'buy local' wherever possible. This could come in the form of an online training directory with the facility for local businesses to score trainers.
18. The list of businesses answering this survey and stating that they would be prepared to give opportunities to those who had been out of work for six months plus should be passed to DMBC/Job Centre Plus to 'match' opportunities for those currently unemployed in the borough.
19. The businesses currently reporting that they are being held back by a lack of skilled staff (particularly those who strongly agreed with this statement) to be contacted by either the Chamber or another appropriate organisation to identify any available solutions for these companies.
20. This report and Doncaster's Economic and Skills Strategies to be made widely available to the local business community, as one-pagers, as well as local education and training providers, to ensure that they know what is being done to deliver a talented workforce in Doncaster thus helping to retain businesses in Doncaster.

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