

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT PROVISION FOR THE SPORTS, FITNESS AND OUTDOORS SECTOR: YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2007 SkillsActive were commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council for Yorkshire and the Humber (through the European Social Fund) and Sport England to undertake a review of training provision available to the sports, fitness and outdoors sector in the region.

THE VALUE OF SPORTS FITNESS AND THE OUTDOORS IN YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

Previous research offers some insight into the overall value of the sector to the Yorkshire and the Humber economy and the skill needs of employers.

- The sports, fitness and the outdoors (SFO) sector has an output valued at £437.5 million in 2004.
- Output across the whole Active Leisure and Learning sector is expected to grow by 42% between 2004 and 2014. The SFO sector is expected to contribute strongly to this growth.
- There are an estimated 33,700 paid workers in the SFO sector.
- In addition there are around 194,000 volunteers contributing at least one hour a week in sport.

Employer Skill Needs

Vacancies & recruitment difficulties

- Average vacancy rate for the paid workforce is over 16%, compared with 50% amongst volunteers.
- Across paid and volunteer workforces vacancy and hard to fill vacancy rates were highest for sports officials.
- In absolute numbers, the largest number of vacancies are found amongst coaches.
- Hard to fill vacancies are greater amongst paid staff
- Fewer cases of skill shortage vacancies are reported by paid compared with volunteer organisations

The skills challenge

- Around a third of paid and volunteer organisations report at least one skills gap amongst staff working in their organisation. The most commonly identified occupation where skills gaps occur is amongst coaches.
- The main skills identified as lacking amongst those with skills gaps were sport specific technical skills (51% of organisations), communications (38%) and child protection (34%).
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Source: Yorkshire and Humber Regional Audit of Skills Needs: Sports, Fitness and Outdoors

OVERVIEW OF THIS RESEARCH

This research provides a valuable overview of the current range of provision available to the sector. Through new research we have consulted both employers and providers to explore their views on the adequacy of current training provision and the barriers and limitations that prevent them from undertaking and providing more qualifications, training and development.

As part of this project primary research was undertaken in the form of:

- Survey of employers/organisations in the SFO sector
- Survey of providers delivering courses relevant to the SFO sector
- Depth interviews (telephone) with employers/organisations
- Focus group sessions and depth interviews (telephone) with providers.

This report is supported by a directory of current training available to the sector, which outlines courses by sub-sector, provider type and provider.

RESPONDING SFO EMPLOYERS

Overall 130 employers / SFO organisations responded to the employer survey.

- 69% of organisations were micro businesses, employing up to 10 employees.
- Around 49% of all organisations had no members of paid staff.
- Around 52% of organisations were classified as charitable/not-for-profit organisations. 21% were private sector organisations and 17% public sector.
- Around 53% of respondents could be identified as a sports club.
- 92% of organisations served the sport and recreation sub-sector, 22% offer services to the health and fitness sub-sector and 18% to the outdoors sub-sector.

DEMAND SIDE EVIDENCE

Overall around 87% of organisations had undertaken some form of training. Nevertheless, the level of involvement varied across organisational types. Structured learning is more apparent in private and public sector organisations, whilst for sports clubs and smaller charitable organisations, training is more impromptu.

Areas of training

- 91% of organisations undertake some training relating to coaching skills.
- 85% of organisations identify training for child protection and 78% in first aid/lifesaving
- Around three quarters (74%) of organisations also identify health and safety

External Training

- 69% of organisation had arranged external training for their workforce.
- Health and Fitness organisations were most inclined to have undertaken training of this type. Increased professionalisation (such as the Register of Exercise professionals) was thought to have supported this.
- External training undertaken by sports clubs is mainly to ensure compliance with statutory requirements or to enhance coaching ability.
- The most commonly used providers were the National Governing Bodies (80% of organisations undertaking external training), private training providers (38%) and local authorities (36%).
- Around 46% of organisations had accessed funding to support it

Barriers and Limitations

- Around 47% of organisations identified the **financial cost** of courses as a barrier to participation. Particular barriers included restricted resources of clubs and the onus on the individual to pay for the qualification themselves.
- Around 47% of organisations identified that the **availability of courses locally** as a barrier.
- A **lack of time to undertake training** was identified by 44% of organisations as a barrier to training and **time** of day that courses are delivered was identified by 38%. Qualitative research also reveals that the availability of time to commit to learning overall is a significant barrier.
- The relevance of training was also highlighted as an issue. In particular employers highlight gaps in suitable training (e.g. commercial training and middle management training), problems with the transferability of training and difficulties getting staff and volunteers to see the benefits of training.
- Many employers do not feel confident that they were fully aware of the range of provision available to them.

Internal Training

- Around 79% of organisations had undertaken some form of internal training.

- The most popular methods of internal training were mentoring and on the job coaching (81% of those undertaking internal training) and induction training (58%).
- The main reasons for providing training in house was due to a belief that expertise were already available in-house (44%), and the need for greater flexibility in terms of delivery (43%).

SUPPLY SIDE EVIDENCE

The directory of training provision identifies that there are around 180 providers delivering at least one course relating to the SFO sector.

- 88% of providers deliver courses for the sport and recreation sub-sector
- 31% provide opportunities for the health and fitness sub-sector
- 25% provide opportunities for the outdoors sub-sector.

In addition, there is likely to be in excess of 1,600 SFO training and development opportunities available in the region.

Around a third of providers responded to the provider survey. The key findings of the survey and qualitative work include:

- 46% of providers identify delivering provision in West Yorkshire (compared with 29%-35% in other sub-regions).
- Provision is largely classroom based and commonly delivered during the day on a weekday.
- Demand for sport and recreation and health and fitness courses is considered to be relatively high. Demand for outdoors courses is slightly more mid-level.
- Although many providers are working towards demand led systems, there are restrictions in their ability to be responsive i.e. funding, planning requirements.
- Levels of employer engagement vary across providers. Some boards/forums exist but there are difficulties associated with getting employers involved.
- 80% of providers identify coaching/instructing as a key skill area. This was followed by activity leadership (55%) and first aid/lifesaving (49%).
- Around 68% of providers identified that training is aimed at those aged 16-24. Whilst 40% target those over 25.
- In terms of occupational groups, around 70% of providers identify that training is offered at assistant coaches/instructors. 43% target Instructors and coaches (including those at senior level).

Issues affecting the responsiveness of training

- **Communication amongst key stakeholders** – Current communication between providers was considered disjointed. Providers felt that there was a need for a more centralised/ coordinated training offer
- **Funding** – Providers felt restricted by current funding guidelines. Stringent systems were not considered to support demand led system (e.g. age).
- **Accessibility** – Providers agreed that there was a need to ensure that training is available at a range of levels locally.
- **Awareness** – Providers felt that employers were not fully aware of the range of provision and did not see the benefit of training overall.
- **Progression routes** – Providers highlighted problems with careers advice and felt that work experience needed to be more realistic.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the level of training currently being undertaken by the sports, fitness and outdoors sector is relatively high (87%), further investigation has revealed that the level of training varies across types of organisations. For smaller organisations in particular training tended to be done on an irregular basis and was frequently done in response to an immediate skill need or the need to comply with regulatory requirements.

Although the sector is relatively well catered for in the range of provision available to them (i.e. over 180 providers and 1,600 courses) concerns were raised with regard to the ability of the sector to respond to employer needs and deliver consistent, transferable and relevant opportunities.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations to be considered by partners:

Improved access to funding

1. **Review the current funding structure to accommodate the needs of the sector**
2. **Explore the potential for developing part funded programmes to enhance priority skills** (*review existing systems and seek to ensure that capacity is in place to deal with demand*)

Ensure availability of relevant and accessible training and development opportunities

1. **Review the flexibility of the training offer**
2. **Develop training solutions for small and voluntary organisations**
3. **Explore the potential for introducing modular/credit based programmes of delivery.**

Encourage increased coordination of provision

1. **Develop a central hub for training information**
2. **Encourage information sharing between providers**

Improve the awareness of the range of provision and develop clearer progression routes

1. **Actively promote the full range of courses available to the sector**
2. **Develop and promote clear progression pathways within the sector**
3. **Encourage employers to become actively engaged in the development of courses and preparing new entrants for work in the sector.**

Ensure transferability of skills and qualifications

1. **Develop an industry approved log of training and development**
2. **Explore measures for approving internal training.**

Seek to address areas of duplication and gaps within current provision

1. **Ensure that future training addresses gaps in provision (e.g. commercial training and middle management)**
2. **Explore ways to reduce duplication of qualifications**

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