

Go, go GoSkills! Going the extra mile in basic skills provision

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11 March 2008 Passenger transport sector employers are becoming more aware of basic skills issues and the impact on their business, according to new research undertaken by ORC International on behalf of GoSkills, the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Passenger Transport.

The research shows that slightly less than a quarter of passenger transport employees lack basic skills, with English companies being more likely to report a lack of basic skills among staff compared to their Scottish and Welsh counterparts.

These findings are based on responses of over 1,000 individuals who shared their knowledge about basic skills issues within their organisation. ORC International undertook this large-scale research project to provide GoSkills with greater insight into the skills gaps that exist across England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. We were also keen to investigate any significant differences at a regional level, across various industries and company sizes.

The research shows that the perceived importance of basic skills varies by role. Even though drivers and mechanics/technical staff are seen to be most lacking basic skills, a large number of respondents feel that management and administrative staff are in greater need of basic skills, particularly IT knowledge.

A third of respondents confirm that they do not train in numeracy, literacy, basic IT or communication skills and a fifth say that they do not have any basic skills needs. For the rest, in-house training is the most common way of addressing problems, followed by external accredited training courses leading to qualifications and lastly external non-accredited training courses.

A large proportion of employers believe that the basic skills gap will inevitably increase in the next five to ten years. Respondents feel that the main barriers to training in basic skills are the lack of time and funding. Early detection of this growing problem is vital if potential pitfalls are to be avoided.

The research has provided GoSkills with an accurate and detailed measurement of basic skills needs to help passenger transport employers and operators improve their business performance by developing staff skills.

Peter Huntington, GoSkills's™ Chief Executive, said:

“This research shows that many employers are aware of the issues, and understand how individual performance is affected and the repercussions for their businesses. But more needs to be done if the new Leitch targets* are to be met. The good news is that the sector is waking up to the basic skills agenda, and this provides a good foundation for meeting the new challenge.”

“It is very encouraging that so many employers are positive about training. It is also interesting that some see a lack of funding as a barrier because this is not the case, as there are many ways to achieve free training for basic skills. We clearly have more work to do to get across the message of free tuition for literacy and numeracy.”

* In 2004, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Education and Skills commissioned Lord Sandy Leitch to lead an independent review to consider the skills base that the UK should aim to achieve in 2020 to maximise growth, productivity and social justice and to consider the policy implications of achieving the level of change required. Published in December 2006, the Leitch Review of Skills can be obtained from <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/leitch>