

**Future Skills Wales –
Generic Skills Survey 2003**

Skills for Care

**Arolwg o Gyflogwyr Sgiliau
Generig Sgiliau Dyfodol Cymru
2003**

Sgiliau Gofal a Datblygu SSC

Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey of Employers: Skills for Care and Development SSC

Section 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Future Skills Wales survey

Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey is a study comprising an Employer Survey and Household Survey, auditing the skill needs of employers in Wales and the skills offered by the people who live there.

MORI and Experian Business Strategies undertook the Employer Survey on behalf of the Future Skills Wales Partnership. The Partnership includes representatives from key policy makers in Wales including the Skills for Business Network.

The purpose of the Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey is to assist the Partnership in developing policy and planning service delivery provision. The Employer Survey and Household Survey identify skill needs as well as the demands for learning and training amongst employers and the working age population in Wales. Information on attitudes and perceptions will help agencies to remove barriers to training and to encourage people to upskill to take on emerging job opportunities. The findings will also inform business and individuals in their recruitment and employment decisions.

The surveys focus on generic skills, those skills that are transferable across occupational groups and sectors. Skills that are job specific, in that they are peculiar to the role and sector in which an individual is engaged, are not dealt with in the Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003, but this is a key area where the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) can and do enhance knowledge of skill needs in their sector.

This brief report provides an overview of the results from the Employer Survey for the Skills for Care and Development, shortened to 'Skills for Care' for the purposes of this report. It is thus an important output in that it informs of the particular generic skill needs and deficiencies of the sector within Wales and enables comparison to the situation in Wales as a whole.

1.2 Survey methodology

6,020 establishments were interviewed between February and April 2003 and a total of 209 interviews were conducted with establishments in the Skills for Care sector.

All sectors in the economy were included and establishments with at least one person in employment were included (i.e. where there were at least two people working in an establishment).

The sample was drawn from the Yellow Pages Business Database. The total target number of achieved interviews was 6,000. This was distributed proportionately by establishments¹, across the 22 Welsh Unitary Authorities (UAs). A minimum target of 200 interviews was set for each UA. Within UA the sample was drawn proportionately by employee size bands (2-10; 11-24; 25-99; and 100+) and industry sector (15 SIC Sections) based on unit data from the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) 2001. The valid response rate was 51%.

The data have been weighted by UA, number of employees and SIC using 2001 Annual Business Inquiry data. Two weighting options have been applied:

- *Number of business units*
- *Number of employees*

It should be noted that the data have not been sampled or weighted to SSCs definitions and so the results, especially where there are fewer interviews should be treated with some caution. No results are presented in this report where the base number of interviews on which the data is based falls below 50.

1.3 Defining the Sector Skills Council

As the data was coded to 4-digit SIC code, it is possible to analyse the data as it fits to SSCs. The Skills for Care SSC covers employers in the care industries and the 'best fit' of SIC codes to this sector (SIC 85.3) has been used to analyse the data presented within this report.

1.4 Sample Size for the sector

A total of 209 interviews were conducted with establishments in the Skills for Care SSC.

1.5 Reporting Conventions

It is worth noting at this stage that the report contains many tables and standard reporting conventions have been used:

- all percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. This may mean on occasion that percentages do not sum to 100 per cent; and
- a '*' indicates that the value is less than 0.5 per cent;

¹ Based on profile data (number of units) from the Annual Business Inquiry 2001.

- only data with unweighted bases of more than 50 are reported. Where unweighted base sizes are between 50 and 100 the text is italicised and these findings should be treated with caution as indicative only.

1.6 Report outline

The following section of the report considers the current and likely future skills needed by employers (section 2). Section 3 considers recruitment difficulties and skill shortage vacancies, and section 4 examines internal skill deficiencies in establishments in the sector. Section 5 explores what the survey tells us about training activity and barriers to training experienced by employers and section 6 concludes with a summary of the key issues.

Section 2 Skill Needs

2.1 Skills required now and in the next three years

The survey asks employers to consider the type of skills required now in their establishment and the level at which that skill is required. The results for the Skills for Care sector are shown in the table below. As the table illustrates, employers in the sector require communication, team working and understanding customer need skills at the highest levels.

Table 2.1 Current levels of skills required

| | Current levels of skill needs | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Level (% of establishments) | | | | | |
| | Not required (0) | Basic (1) | Intermediate (2) | High (3) | Advanced (4) | Don't Know |
| Numeracy | 7 | 28 | 31 | 32 | 1 | 0 |
| Literacy | 0 | 20 | 27 | 45 | 8 | 0 |
| Welsh language | 41 | 27 | 20 | 10 | 3 | 0 |
| Foreign language | 79 | 13 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Problem solving | 9 | 14 | 23 | 39 | 14 | 0 |
| Communication | 3 | 8 | 17 | 50 | 22 | 0 |
| Ability to follow instructions | 3 | 12 | 22 | 50 | 13 | 1 |
| IT skills | 30 | 19 | 32 | 15 | 5 | 0 |
| Ability to learn | 3 | 11 | 28 | 49 | 8 | 0 |
| Showing initiative | 1 | 13 | 24 | 51 | 11 | 0 |
| Leadership skills | 7 | 13 | 26 | 42 | 12 | 0 |
| Management skills | 23 | 14 | 21 | 30 | 12 | 1 |
| Organising own learning and development | 11 | 20 | 24 | 38 | 6 | 2 |
| Team working | 4 | 5 | 23 | 55 | 14 | 0 |
| Understanding customer needs | 0 | 5 | 17 | 51 | 27 | 0 |
| Entrepreneurial skills | 30 | 24 | 23 | 13 | 7 | 2 |
| Adaptability/flexibility | 0 | 12 | 21 | 48 | 19 | 0 |
| Weighted base = 209 (all establishments) | | | | | | |
| <i>Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey</i> | | | | | | |

Looking to the future, employers in the sector in Wales expect to need slightly higher levels of leadership, team working and adaptability/flexibility skill needs in 3 years time. They also expect an increase, from a relatively low base, in the need for IT skills.

Table 2.2 Expected levels of skill needs in three years

| Expected levels of skill needs in three years | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------|
| | Level (% of establishments) | | | | | Don't Know |
| | Not required (0) | Basic (1) | Intermediate (2) | High (3) | Advanced (4) | |
| Numeracy | 6 | 22 | 31 | 35 | 5 | 0 |
| Literacy | 0 | 15 | 28 | 46 | 12 | 0 |
| Welsh language | 34 | 21 | 25 | 15 | 4 | 2 |
| Foreign language | 72 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Problem solving | 8 | 13 | 22 | 40 | 18 | 0 |
| Communication | 3 | 8 | 14 | 50 | 26 | 0 |
| Ability to follow instructions | 3 | 10 | 19 | 50 | 17 | 1 |
| IT skills | 19 | 14 | 21 | 35 | 8 | 2 |
| Ability to learn | 3 | 7 | 25 | 49 | 15 | 0 |
| Showing initiative | 1 | 6 | 23 | 51 | 18 | 0 |
| Leadership skills | 7 | 11 | 23 | 44 | 16 | 0 |
| Management skills | 22 | 8 | 23 | 28 | 18 | 1 |
| Organising own learning and development | 10 | 12 | 24 | 42 | 12 | 1 |
| Team working | 4 | 3 | 17 | 55 | 22 | 0 |
| Understanding customer needs | 0 | 3 | 15 | 46 | 36 | 0 |
| Entrepreneurial skills | 29 | 18 | 26 | 13 | 11 | 4 |
| Adaptability/flexibility | 0 | 6 | 21 | 50 | 22 | 0 |
| Weighted base = 209 (all establishments) | | | | | | |
| <i>Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey</i> | | | | | | |

Section 3

Recruitment Difficulties and Skill Shortage Vacancies

In the survey, there are two measures of recruitment problems:

- Hard-to-fill vacancies – vacancies that establishments understand to be ‘hard-to-fill’.
- Skills shortage vacancies – vacancies that establishments believe are difficult to fill for skills related reasons. Specifically defined in this survey as being hard-to-fill because ‘applicants lack the qualifications employers want’, ‘applicants lack the relevant experience’, and ‘applicants lack the relevant skills we require’.

3.1 Extent of Vacancies, hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortage vacancies

Almost a third (30 per cent) of establishments in the Skills for Care SSC sector reported at least one vacancy at the time of the survey, 16 per cent of establishments reported hard-to-fill vacancies and four per cent reported skill shortage vacancies, that is, vacancies that were hard-to-fill for skill related reasons.

The proportion of establishments reporting vacancies and hard-to-fill vacancies is higher in the Skills for Care sector than in Wales as a whole (where the figures are 22 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

When considered as a proportion of employment, vacancies in the Skills for Care SSC represent five per cent of employment, compared to two per cent in Wales as a whole. Similarly, hard-to-fill vacancies represent 1.3 per cent of employment in the sector compared to 1.1 per cent in Wales as a whole. The sector seems to suffer more acutely from recruitment difficulties when compared to Wales as a whole. Similar data for skill shortage vacancies are not available due to low base sizes.

Table 3.1 Extent of Vacancies, hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortage vacancies

| | Wales | | Skills for Care SSC | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| | % of establishments reporting | % of employment | % of establishments reporting | % of employment |
| All vacancies | 22 | 2.0 | 30 | 5.0 |
| Hard-to-fill vacancies | 14 | 1.1 | 16 | 1.3 |
| Skill shortage vacancies | 7 | 0.5 | 4 | N/A |
| Unweighted base | 6,020 | 6,020 | 209 | 209 |

Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

Base: All establishments

3.2 Causes of hard-to-fill vacancies

Employers in the sector were most likely to cite a lack of applicants, either generally; that are willing to work for the market rate or interested in this type of work, as a cause of their hard-to-fill vacancies. 18 per cent of establishments in the sector cited this as a main cause – the same as in Wales as a whole.

However, due to the small base size on which the data is based, this data should be treated with caution.

Table 3.2 Main causes of hard-to-fill vacancies

| | Skills for Care | Wales |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Multiple response</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Applicants lack motivation/right attitude | 6 | 9 |
| Applicants lack the qualifications we want | 8 | 7 |
| Applicants lack the relevant experience | 11 | 13 |
| Applicants lack the relevant skills we require | 7 | 20 |
| Company/industry unable to pay the market rate | 14 | 3 |
| Job entails shift work/unsociable hours | 14 | 8 |
| Lack of applicants/people willing to work for market rate/interested in this type of work | 18 | 18 |
| Poor career progressions/lack of prospects | 0 | 1 |
| Lack of resources to carry out effective recruitment | 5 | 1 |
| People with required skills don't want to relocate to this area | 4 | 2 |
| Poor image of sector | 3 | 1 |
| Remote location/poor public transport | 3 | 3 |
| Seasonal work | 0 | 0 |
| Too much competition from other employers | 0 | 2 |
| Other | 4 | 5 |
| Don't know | 4 | 6 |
| Unweighted base | 50 | 1019 |

Source: *Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey*

Base: *All establishments who have hard-to-fill vacancies*

Section 4

Internal Skill Gaps

4.1 Incidence and nature of skill gaps

Employers were also asked about the level of skills amongst their current employees to find out whether there was a gap between the types of skills they currently have and those they need to meet the business's objectives.

Whereas vacancies, hard-to-fill vacancies and skill shortage vacancies measure whether there are imbalances in the external labour market, skill gaps measure the imbalances **within** the organisation.

A greater proportion of establishments report skill gaps within the Skills for Care SSC sector than in Wales as a whole. Around a quarter, 24 per cent report such imbalances compared to the national average of 19 per cent. Similarly, employees without the required skills account for a much larger share of employment in the sector than comparable figures for Wales – 12 per cent compared to 5.1 per cent.

Table 4.1 Incidence of skills gaps

| | <i>% of ests reporting skills gap</i> | <i>Skill gaps as percentage of employment</i> | <i>Unwtd base</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Wales | 19 | 5.1 | 6,020 |
| Skills for Care | 24 | 12 | 209 |

Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey

Base: All establishments

Establishments with skills gaps were asked what generic skills were missing amongst their employees. The table below shows the responses to this question. In terms of the specific skills were perceived to be lacking amongst existing staff employers were most likely to cite IT skills (31 per cent of establishments with skills gaps), communication skills (23 per cent) and showing initiative (18 per cent). ***However, due to the small base size on which the data is based, this data should be treated with caution.***

Table 4.2 Nature of skill gaps

| | Skills for Care | Wales |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Multiple response</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Communication skills | 23 | 21 |
| Showing Initiative | 18 | 12 |
| Customer handling skills | 4 | 10 |
| Problem solving skills | 12 | 11 |
| Ability to learn | 1 | 10 |
| Management skills | 12 | 9 |
| Team working skills | 5 | 6 |
| IT skills | 31 | 24 |
| Literacy skills | 7 | 4 |
| Numeracy skills | 12 | 6 |
| Foreign language skills | 0 | 3 |
| Interpersonal skills | 0 | 1 |
| Experience | 7 | 6 |
| Ability to follow instructions | 7 | 9 |
| Welsh language skills | 8 | 5 |
| No particular skills difficulties | 1 | 2 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 |
| Unweighted base | 52 | 1198 |

*Source: Future Skills Wales 2003 Generic Skills Survey
Base: All establishments with a skills gap*

4.2 Impact of skill gaps

The greatest perceived impact of internal skill gaps in the Skills for Care SSC sector was a loss of quality in service delivery, with 22 per cent of establishments with skill gaps citing this impact. Almost a fifth reported a loss of efficiency or increased wastage as a consequence. Less than one per cent said that they experienced no particular problems as a result of their skill gaps, which suggests that both the extent and depth of the problem is severe in this sector. ***Again, due to the small base size on which the data is based, this data should be treated with caution.***

Table 4.3 Impact of skill gaps

| <i>Multiple response</i> | Skills for Care % | Wales % |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Loss of business to competitors | 4 | 15 |
| Loss of quality in the service | 22 | 16 |
| Delays developing new products or services | 1 | 7 |
| Difficulties meeting customer service objectives | 2 | 7 |
| Difficulties in introducing new technology | 6 | 4 |
| Increased staff turnover | * | 3 |
| Restricted business development | 11 | 12 |
| Increased operating costs | 2 | 5 |
| Loss of efficiency/increased wastage | 19 | 15 |
| No particular problems | * | 2 |
| Unweighted base | 52 | 1198 |

Source: Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003

Base: All establishments with a skills gap

4.3 Actions taken by business in response to skill gaps

Employers in the sector were much more likely to respond to skills gaps by providing further training (75 per cent of establishments with skills gaps), when compared to all establishments in Wales (56 per cent). ***Again, due to the small base size on which the data is based, this data should be treated with caution.***

Table 4.4 Actions taken as a result of skill gaps

| | Skills for Care | Wales |
|--|------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Multiple response</i> | | <i>%</i> |
| Provide further training | 75 | 56 |
| Changing working practices | 5 | 6 |
| Increase/expand trainee programmes | 25 | 18 |
| Relocated work elsewhere | 9 | 1 |
| Increased recruitment | 7 | 8 |
| More reviews/team meetings | 2 | 3 |
| No particular action being taken/leave to market | 8 | 11 |
| Don't know | 0 | 4 |
| Unweighted base | 52 | 1198 |

Source: Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003

Base: All establishments with a skills gap

Section 5

Employer Engagement in Developing their Workforce

This section considers the extent of training in the sector and the barriers employers face in providing training.

Eighty per cent of establishments in the Skills for Care SSC sector funded or arranged off-the-job training in the past 12 months, well above the all Wales figure of 53 per cent. Almost a half of establishments have increased the investment in off the job training for employees in the last three years, 49 per cent compared with 32 per cent of all establishments in Wales.

However, employers in the sector appear to face more barriers to providing training. Cost reasons emerge as a particular barrier to training in the Skills for Care sector, with 45 per cent of establishments citing this as a barrier compared to 26 per cent in Wales as a whole.

Table 5.1 Barriers to training

| | Wales | Skills for Care |
|--|--------------|------------------------|
| <i>Multiple response</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Cost of training | 26 | 45 |
| Training not available | 6 | 10 |
| Time of day courses are run | 8 | 9 |
| Cannot afford staff to have time off | 31 | 33 |
| Training not relevant to needs of business | 6 | 3 |
| No barriers | 32 | 20 |
| Unweighted base | 6,020 | 209 |

Source: Future Skills Wales Generic Skills Survey 2003

Base: All establishments

Employers were also asked about their attitude toward skills and skill development in their establishment. In the Skills for Care sector, 86 per cent of establishments agreed (either strongly or tended to agree) that employees have sufficient skills to meet business needs. Eighty-one per cent agreed that investment in skills has yielded business benefits, and 96 per cent that having a skilled workforce is crucial to the success of their business. The picture in the sector is similar to the results in all Wales (where the figures were 88 per cent, 77 per cent and 95 per cent respectively).

Section 6 Conclusion

Social care is a diverse sector and it makes a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of Wales. There are over 5,000 employers and over 70,000 staff engaged in social care.

Putting the research findings from this survey into context, they should be seen in the light of on previous work undertaken by the social care sector, for example the Skills Foresight Plan produced by the Care Council for Wales in 2003. There are links to current work in progress, for example the Consultation Document on the Skills and Employment Action Plan produced by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2004. The findings will also inform and contribute to the social care Sectoral Assessment being undertaken by ELWa in partnership with the Care Council for Wales, and as such, it will contribute to the workforce data available to the sector.

In taking an overview of the research, there is consistency of findings with other studies, for example the commitment to learning and development by employers. There are also similarities in terms of the general skills that staff possess, including ability to learn, flexibility, adaptability, but the need for more IT skills. There are also differences, and of particular note here is the finding about Welsh Language. Other studies and workforce development data and intelligence about the sector identify this as a priority area. The Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board have both publicly noted the importance of bilingual skills in social care delivery.

On the basis of the research findings there seem to be a number of areas where further research activity could be undertaken. These include:

- The nature of on the job training;
- The potential for improved productivity for particular staff groups;
- Greater understanding of the “hard to fill vacancies” and areas of strategic importance on a regional basis, by setting staff group, service user group, and mode of work (full or part time).