



Action⁴skills

The Retail Sector





Action⁴skills

Targeting the sectors
vital to Hertfordshire's
economy



Executive Summary

Key Statistics

	Retail	All Herts
Business base		
No. of business establishments	5,000	49,200
Micro-businesses (<10 employees)	4,200	42,600
% <i>business base</i>	84%	87%
% <i>employment</i>	23%	22%
Workforce		
Total workforce	73,600	549,500
Employees	66,900	487,600
Self-employed as % workforce	9%	13%
Part-time employment	59%	34%
Female employment	65%	50%
Workforce aged under 25	27%	14%
Workforce aged 55 or over	13%	16%
Workforce dynamics		
Employment change 1998-2002	+12,700	-
% <i>Employment change</i>	+13%	-2%
Forecast change 2004-2013	+1,100	-
% <i>Forecast change</i>	+1.5%	+9%
Labour turnover p.a. (approx)	20%	N.A
% workforce in FT education 1yr ago	10%	3%
Workforce skills		
Workforce with no qualifications	13,300	-
	18%	11%
Low skilled workforce (≤ level 1)	22,800	-
	31%	25%
High skilled workforce (level 4+)	8,800	-
	12%	26%
Workforce training in previous 13 wks	14,700	-
	20%	27%
Skill needs		
Employers wt. hard-to-fill vacancies	250	-
% <i>business base</i>	5%	8%
Employers wt. skill gaps in workforce	1,300	-
% <i>business base</i>	27%	23%

Note: For definitions and sources see main report

Key messages

- Retail is an important employment sector in the Hertfordshire economy. The county has significant employment in retail back office activities in addition to customer facing operations.
- Taking into account forecast employment growth and the pattern of workers entering the sector from full-time education, around 8,000 new entrants to the retail workforce are required in Hertfordshire each year.
- However, less than 400 local students are currently on retail specific FE or Work Based Learning Courses. This reflects both a predisposition of many employers for in-house training and a perception of the sector as a temporary 'stop-gap' employment by many young people.

- There is a need both to encourage more young people to consider the sector as a career and to address the negative perceptions of accredited qualifications held by some employers in the sector.
- The sector suffers from a high level of job turnover. Around 20% of the workforce (around 14,700 workers) leaves the sector entirely each year (see Section 4). This represents a significant cost to many employers.
- Although skills gaps among managers were reported relatively infrequently by retail employers in Hertfordshire, research conducted on behalf of DfES found that these skills are felt to be particularly important to SMEs in the sector.
- Almost half of the Hertfordshire retail workforce is employed in sales and customer service occupations. However, sales and customer service employees account for two thirds of all skills gaps in the sector and the main skill gap reported for these occupations is customer handling skills.

Conclusions and recommendations

This paper highlights that local opportunities for workforce development revolve around workplace-based initiatives that exploit the clustering of the retail sector in town centre and retail park developments. Thus the LSC should seek to ensure that new retail developments include 'learning shop' centres that offer on-going customer services skills training for staff during lunch breaks or before or after a shift. Furthermore three workforce development priorities for the retail sector in Hertfordshire are proposed:

1. Attract and retain competent staff

- Work with schools and careers services to raise awareness of the opportunities available for young people in the sector and improve the image of retail as a permanent employer.
- Encourage the take-up of accredited qualifications that are more transferable between employers.
- Investigate whether a scheme similar to the On-site Assessment and Training (OSAT) Construction scheme would be appropriate for the retail sector.

2. Develop management skills for SME managers

- Encourage the take-up of management training in retail SMEs by developing flexible and bite-size provision specifically for businesses at the start-up and pre-start-up stages of business life.
- Ensure management skills training for the sector covers the core competencies of visual merchandising, business planning, management of premises, time management, people management and health and safety.

3. Improve customer service skills for front line staff

- Work with Skillsmart the Sector Skills Council (SSC) to develop more appropriate provision for the sector, addressing and influencing employer perceptions of the qualifications and training on offer.
- Investigate the possibility of getting large firms to open their training centres up to other businesses in the sector, working with Skillsmart to pilot a scheme locally.
- Work with partners to encourage joint recruitment drives for retail clusters and to develop pre-employment training in customer service skills.



1.0 Introduction

This paper is one of a series that outlines the workforce dynamics and skills and training issues in key sectors in the Hertfordshire economy.

The series sets out:

- The demographics of the workforce in each sector
- The skills and qualifications profile of the workforce
- The likely demand for and supply of new skills and workers, now and in the future
- Local business drivers.

Where possible local data has been used for the analysis. However, where local data was unavailable, inferences have been made from regional and national data to provide a best estimate of local workforce dynamics. Unless otherwise indicated figures are for Hertfordshire.

For the purposes of this paper, the retail sector includes the sale of food and drink and new goods in specialised and non-specialised stores, the sale of pharmaceutical goods and second hand goods, and of products not in stores. It also includes the repair of personal and household goods.



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Key drivers of change

The strength of the retail sector is closely linked to the fortunes of the economy overall. Factors such as interest rates, access to credit and consumer confidence all have an influence on future employment and skills needs in the sector.

Changes in technology have led to significant developments in the retail sector in recent years. E-commerce is now widespread with increasing levels of internet access and developments such as interactive digital television (iDTV). It is now possible to purchase almost any item, from books to groceries, over the internet. Tesco, the world's largest internet grocer,¹ has its headquarters in Hertfordshire. The increased take-up of broadband technology in the home is expected to accelerate the rate of internet shopping.

Technological advancements have also affected the way business is done in the sector in other ways, for example with the development of more advanced stock control and payment systems and the introduction of "chip and pin" technology for credit card payments.

The retail sector in general is rapidly changing and workers must have the flexibility and adaptability to cope with changes such as the re-design of shop layouts and the introduction and withdrawal of products in response to seasonal events or changing tastes and fashions.

Recent years have seen an increased desire among consumers for convenience shopping, and the ability to make purchases 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Developments such as longer store opening times, e-commerce and mail order call centres can help them to do this but there is also evidence to suggest that visiting some retail establishments is increasingly seen as a leisure activity. People now often see shopping as part of a day out and combine retail with tourism-type activities such as visiting a historic town centre. This offers a good opportunity for Hertfordshire's market towns but they could face competition if customers chose to travel further.

Out-of-town retail developments are relatively common in Hertfordshire. One example is the Waterfields Retail Park in Watford. The development is located approximately 0.5 miles from Watford town centre and can be accessed from the M1. It includes a Tesco superstore, open 24 hours a day, shops such as Argos, Boots and Next and a number of home furnishings

Figure 1.1

Retail workforce dynamics – SWOT analysis

Strengths

- A large employer in the Hertfordshire economy
- The head offices of several major retailers are located in the county

Weaknesses

- Low take up of accredited training and qualifications
- Poor image, especially among young people and high staff turnover

Opportunities

- Growth of e-commerce and further development of in-store technologies
- Increased emphasis on service quality and/or efficiency
- Growth of retail as a leisure experience
- Proximity to the M25 and North London market

Threats

- Volatility in consumer confidence and spending levels
- Increase dominance of large retailers offering a broad range of products could squeeze out small local providers
- Reliance of office based activities on the location decisions of a small number of major national retailers.

retailers such as Courts and MFI.

However, the growth of out-of-town developments has in general slowed in recent years due to planning restrictions with a move towards more in-town developments. This is illustrated in the Hertfordshire County Council Structure Plan 1999–2010, which states that the preferred location for retail development will be town centre sites. One example of this is the £45 million Riverside Development currently underway in Hemel Hempstead. The development will have Debenhams as its anchor store and opening is scheduled for 2005. Dacorum Borough Council hopes that the project will bring added vitality to Hemel Hempstead town centre and attract more visitors to the borough. However, large in-town developments could represent a potential threat to small local traders as they could lead to a significant increase in local property prices and rental charges.

Food retail is currently dominated by a small number of large supermarket chains and these firms are also branching out into offering other goods and services including clothing and electrical items.

There is evidence to suggest that price competition is still a strong driver in the sector but level of service is also increasingly used as a method of competition, with some establishments concentrating on service quality at higher cost and others focusing on a more efficient "no frills" service².

Workforce development priorities

While recruitment difficulties appear to be less of an issue for retail employers in Hertfordshire than in all industries or in the sector nationally, national level evidence suggests that retention is an important issue. It has been suggested that there is a need to encourage able young people in particular to see the retail sector as a permanent employer³.

Management skills have also been identified as an important issue for the sector. It has also been suggested that the nature of retail management is changing, with structures becoming less hierarchical and managers having greater need for skills in "mentoring" or "coaching" instead of just fulfilling a "policing" or supervisory type of role⁴. Encouraging SME managers in the sector to develop their management and entrepreneurial skills could also be important in helping these businesses to remain in the market alongside larger competitors such as the big supermarket chains.

Customer service skills are vital to the retail sector. It can be difficult for small firms in the sector to compete with larger players in terms of price but they can compete in terms of product knowledge and customer service levels. However, retail faces competition for people with these skills from other sectors such as tourism and hospitality and financial services.

This paper suggests that the most pressing workforce development needs over the next 3–5 years for the Hertfordshire retail sector will be:

1. Attracting and retaining competent staff and reducing labour turnover
2. Improving management skills, especially in SMEs
3. Developing the customer service skills of those in the "frontline" of retail, for example sales assistants

These will be revisited in the Conclusions and Recommendations Section on page 17.

¹ An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002.

² Market Assessment for the UK Retail sector, Skillsmart, 2004.

³ Market Assessment for the UK Retail sector, Skillsmart, 2004.

⁴ An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002.

2.0 Retail in the Hertfordshire economy

This section looks at the relative importance of the retail sector in terms of employment in Hertfordshire and its 10 districts and outlines the nature of the sector's employees.

Key messages

- Retail is an important sector in the Hertfordshire economy, with a workforce of 73,600 (66,900 employees and 6,700 self-employed workers).
- Within Hertfordshire, there is a particularly high concentration of retail employment in Broxbourne, where 20% of all jobs are in this sector.
- Employment in micro-businesses in the retail sector in Hertfordshire is in line with the average for all industries in the county but below the regional and national averages for the sector.
- Large businesses with more than 200 employees account for only 1% of all retail establishments in Hertfordshire but account for 42% of all retail employment.
- The relative strength of office based retail employment in Hertfordshire is reliant on a small number of large national chain stores.

The Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) suggests that there are nearly 5,000 retail establishments in Hertfordshire, employing around 66,900 employees. The retail sector accounts for 14% of employment in the county, more than the proportion employed in the sector nationally (12%). Hertfordshire is home to the head offices of a number of major national retail chains, including Dixons, Mothercare and Tesco.

It should be noted that the ABI (and many other labour market information data sources) do not include self-employed people. The Labour Force Survey (LFS), which does include these workers, suggests that there are around 6,700 self-employed people working in retail within Hertfordshire (9% of the retail workforce).

Figure 2.1 shows that retail generally accounts for between 10 and 15% of total employment in each of the ten local districts. The exception occurs in Broxbourne, where retail accounts for 20% of employment (6,400 people). This may be partly due to the presence of one of Tesco's main offices in the district. The majority of office staff employed by this company work in Hertfordshire, either in Cheshunt in Broxbourne or in Welwyn Garden City.

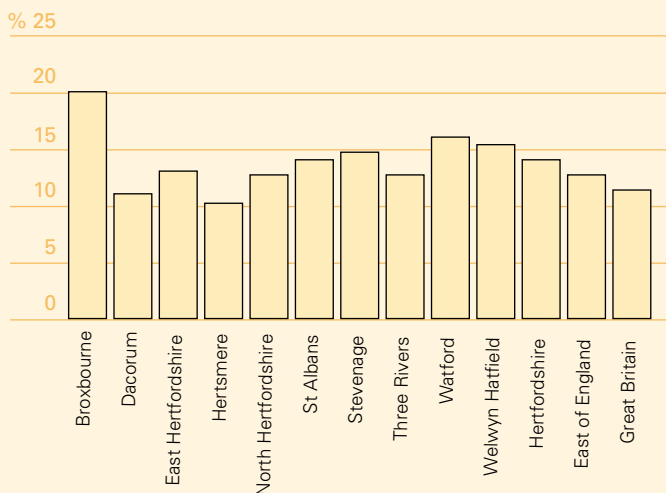
Figure 2.2 shows that Watford and Welwyn Hatfield have the highest number of retail employees and St Albans has the highest number of business establishments in the sector. The lowest number of both retail employees and establishments is in Three Rivers. Broxbourne has the highest concentration of retail employment, with a Location Quotient⁵ (LQ) of 1.47, and Dacorum has the lowest (0.81).

Around 84% of retail establishments in Hertfordshire are 'micro-businesses' employing between 1 and 10 people. This is slightly below the figure for all industries in the county (87%).

⁵ Location Quotients indicate the relative strength of the sector in the district. An LQ of more than 1 signifies that a district has a higher concentration of employment in the sector relative to Hertfordshire as a whole. An LQ of less than 1 indicates that a district has a lower concentration than Hertfordshire as a whole.

Figure 2.1

Retail as a proportion of total employment – Hertfordshire districts



Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Figure 2.2

Hospitality employees and business establishments in Hertfordshire districts

District	Establishment	Employees	% of sector	LQ
Broxbourne	411	6,436	10	1.47
Dacorum	628	7,115	11	0.81
East Herts	630	7,218	11	0.93
Hertsmere	464	4,688	7	0.75
North Herts	624	6,135	9	0.9
St Albans	645	7,546	11	1.0
Stevenage	338	5,970	9	1.08
Three Rivers	305	3,344	5	0.92
Watford	524	9,304	14	1.18
Welwyn Hatfield	411	9,165	14	1.1
Total	4,980	66,921	100	

Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Micro-businesses account for 23% of retail employment in Hertfordshire (15,400 employees). This is in line with the proportion found for all industries in the county but below the national and regional average for the sector (29% and 25% respectively).

While large businesses with more than 200 employees account for only 1% of establishments in the sector, they account for 42% of retail employment in Hertfordshire. This is significantly higher than the proportion found for the sector in either Great Britain (30%) or the East of England (33%). This may be due to the presence of large out-of-town retail developments or the number of retailers with headquarters or large offices in the county.

The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) used in national statistics divides retail into seven sub-sectors. These are:-

- Specialist stores (e.g. butchers, bakers)
- Medical and cosmetics (e.g. pharmacies and beauticians)
- Other new goods (e.g. textiles, clothing, household furnishings)
- Second hand goods
- Non-specialist stores (e.g. supermarkets, newsagents)
- Repair of personal and household goods
- Retail not in stores (e.g. mail order houses, market stalls)

More details of these sub-sectors can be seen in Annex I.

Figure 2.3 shows that 52% of employment in the retail sector in Hertfordshire (34,800 jobs) is in non-specialised stores. A further 36% of employees in the sector (24,100 people) work in the other new goods sub-sector.

The retail sector can be broken down into numerous minor sub-sectors, based on the type of goods for sale and the way in which they are sold. The largest is retail in non-specialised food stores, which accounts for 41% of all employment in the sector and 80% of all employment in the non-specialised stores sub-sector. This sub-sector includes supermarkets and corner shops. The sale of clothing is the largest sub-sector relating to the sale of a particular type of item, accounting for 9% of employment in the sector and 6,300 jobs.

Figure 2.4

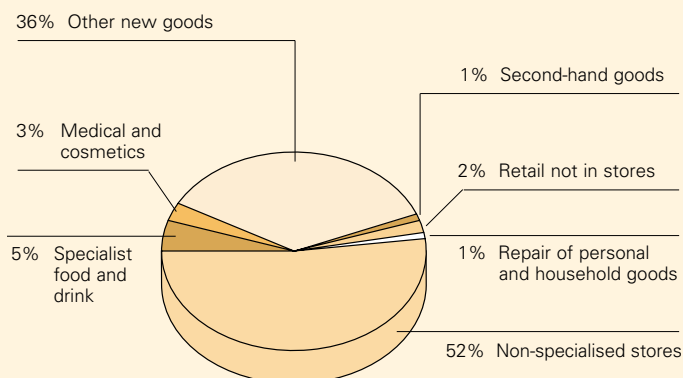
Employees by minor sub-sector – Hertfordshire

Minor sub-sector	% of construction employees	Estimated number of jobs
Retail in non-specialised food stores	41.2	27,600
Sale of clothing	9.4	6,300
Sale of electrical household goods	3.2	2,100
Sale of hardware/paints/glass	3.2	2,100
Sale of furniture etc	2.7	1,800
Sale of books/newspapers etc	2.6	1,700
Sale via mail order houses	1.8	1,200
Sale of alcoholic/other beverages	1.8	1,200
Dispensing chemists	1.6	1,100
Sale of footwear/leather goods	1.6	1,100
Sale of bread, cakes etc	1.3	900
Sale of cosmetic/toilet articles	0.9	600
Other retail sale in specialised stores	13.7	9,200
Other retail in non-specialised stores	10.6	7,100
All other retail	5.1	3,400

Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002.
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed.

Figure 2.3

Employment by sub-sector – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

3.0 The Current Workforce

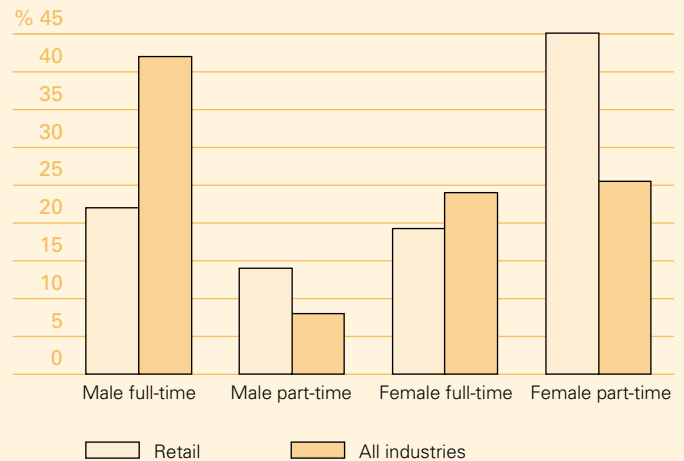
This section profiles the current workforce and typical employment opportunities in the sector. It also looks at the current supply and demand for skills in the retail sector.

Key messages

- The Hertfordshire retail sector relies heavily on a flexible, part-time and predominantly female workforce.
- Workers are much more likely to be aged between 16 and 24 than in all industries and it is likely that many of these young people view a job in the industry as a temporary solution before embarking on an alternative career.
- Around 60% of retail employment is in occupations where most workers are employed within the sector. The concentration of workers in these occupations would suggest that sector-based initiatives would be most appropriate to develop the skills of these individuals.
- Recruitment difficulties are less commonly reported by retail employers in the East of England than in all industries in the region or in the sector nationally. However, skills gaps in the workforce are significant.
- Sales and customer service occupations account for 48% of employment in the sector but 66% of skills gaps reported. Customer handling skills are the most frequently cited skill gaps for workers in these occupations.

Figure 3.1

Gender and employment status



Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Figure 3.2

Gender and employment status of retail workers – district areas

	Male full-time (%)	Male part-time (%)	Female full-time (%)	Female part-time (%)
Broxbourne	18	14	17	50
Dacorum	24	15	17	43
East Herts	20	14	17	49
Hertsmere	24	13	20	42
North Herts	21	13	18	47
St Albans	21	14	19	46
Stevenage	22	15	20	44
Three Rivers	36	8	23	33
Watford	20	13	23	44
Welwyn Hatfield	20	13	20	47

Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry, 2002
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Demographics of the sector

The retail sector is heavily reliant on female labour. There are around 43,500 female retail employees in Hertfordshire, equal to around 65% of the workforce compared with around 50% in all industries.

Around 39,500 retail employees (59%) work part-time, compared with around 34% for all industries. Around 77% of those employed on part-time contracts are women (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.2 shows that the employment structure of the sector is broadly similar across each district. However, retail workers are more likely to be male (44%) and to work full-time (59%) in the Three Rivers area than in any other district. The reasons for this are unclear.

At a national level, employees from ethnic minority communities account for around 14% of employment in the sector, compared with 15% for all industries. Census 2001 data reveals that there is a smaller proportion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in Hertfordshire than in England and Wales as a whole. We estimate that there are around 6,700 people from ethnic minority backgrounds working in the retail sector in Hertfordshire (around 9% of the retail workforce).

Figure 3.3 suggests that the retail sector has a significantly younger age profile than the average for all industries in Hertfordshire. More than 27% of all workers in the sector (19,900 people) are aged between 16 and 24, compared with 14% in all industries. More than 40% of those employed in sales and customer service occupations in the sector are aged 24 or below.

One possible explanation for the concentration of young people in the sector could be the high proportion of students employed part-time and/or young people using the sector as a 'starter job' before moving on to another sector.

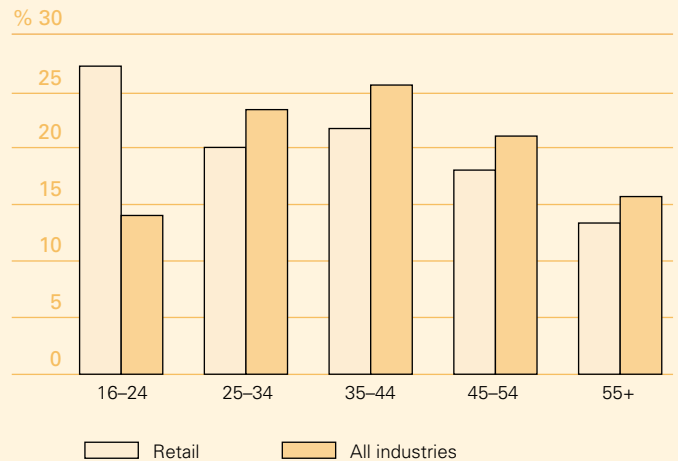
Occupational analysis

Figure 3.4 shows that nearly half (47%) of all retail employment in Hertfordshire (34,600 jobs) is in sales and customer service roles. As might be expected, this is much greater than the proportion found across all industries (8%).

Around 21% of the retail workforce (15,500 people) work in managerial roles and 12% (8,800 people) work in elementary occupations.

Figure 3.3

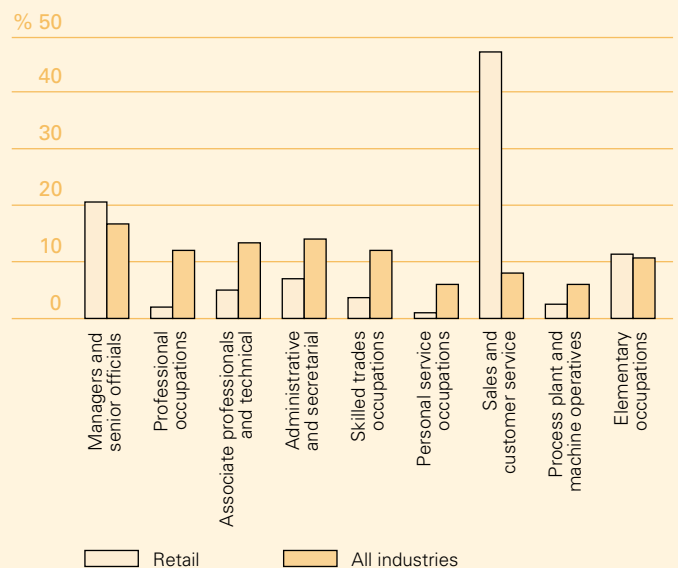
Age breakdown of the sector – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 3.4

Broad occupational breakdown – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 3.5 shows that around 44,200 jobs (60% of employment) in the retail sector are in “sector specific occupations”. These are occupations where over two thirds of employment is in the sector. The concentration of workers in these occupations would suggest that sector-based initiatives would be most appropriate to develop the skills of these individuals.

Sales and retail assistants account for around a third of employment in the retail sector in Hertfordshire (24,000 jobs). Other significant specialist occupations include retail cashiers/checkout operators (10%), shelf fillers (6%) and shopkeepers, wholesale and retail dealers (also 6%).

Figure 3.6 shows that 40% of retail employment in Hertfordshire is in occupations which are not specific to the sector. Cross-sector initiatives to support workforce development may be more appropriate for these occupations.

Retail and wholesale managers form a significant proportion of the retail workforce (around 9% or 6,600 jobs) nearly two thirds of this occupational group (64%) work in the retail sector.

Skills and qualification issues

The analysis of skills in this paper uses qualifications as a proxy measure for skill level. Whilst this is not ideal, qualifications are the best measure available. Three broad skill levels are used:

Low skill (NVQ 1 or less including those with no qualifications). Common skills requirements for these jobs at this level include basic literacy, numeracy and IT skills and a range of generic skills.

Intermediate skill (NVQ 2–3). Skill requirements in these occupations are often vocational or technical in nature. They may also require higher level generic skills including analytical and problem solving abilities.

High skill (NVQ 4+). These skills are important in managerial and professional and associate professional roles. They are sometimes technical in nature but usually require high level analytical, communication and people management skills.

Figure 3.5

Employment in specialist occupations – retail

Code	Occupation	% of sector's employment	Estimated jobs in Herts
7111	Sales and retail assistants	32.9	24,000
7112	Retail cashiers/checkout operators	9.9	7,200
9251	Shelf fillers	6.4	4,700
1234	Shopkeepers, wholesale and retail dealers	6.3	4,600
9259	Elementary sales occupations nec	1.2	900
–	Other sector specific occupations	2.9	2,100
–	Total sector specific	59.6	43,500

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 3.6

Employment in other significant occupations – retail

Code	Occupation	% of sector's employment	Estimated jobs in Herts
1163	Retail and wholesale managers	9.0	6,600
4150	General office clerks	2.9	2,100
7212	Customer care occupations	2.2	1,600
4122	Accounts wages clerk, book-keeper	1.3	900
9223	Kitchen and catering assistants	1.3	900
1132	Marketing and sales managers	1.2	900
9149	Other goods handling and storage occupation nec	1.2	900
1161	Office managers	1.0	700
–	All other occupations	19.7	14,400
–	Total non-sector specific	39.8	29,000

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures include the self-employed

The Hertfordshire LSC Annual Plan 2004–05 highlights that overall the working population of Hertfordshire has the highest skill levels within the East of England.

Figure 3.7 illustrates the importance of intermediate level skills to the retail sector, with over half (around 42,000 or 57%) of the workforce possessing skills at this level. High level skills are less common than in all industries (12% compared with 26%) and an above average proportion of workers in the sector have low level skills. Around 31% of the total workforce (22,800 people) is not qualified to Level 2.

Within the retail sector, around 18% of staff (13,300 people) have no qualifications, compared with 11% in all industries. The proportion of the workforce with no qualifications gives an indication of the likely extent of basic skills issues within the sector.

Skills shortages and gaps

The Employer Skills Survey offers some insight into the sector's skills shortages (a lack of suitably skilled people in the labour market) and skills gaps (skills deficiencies in the existing workforce).

Skills shortages – recruitment difficulties

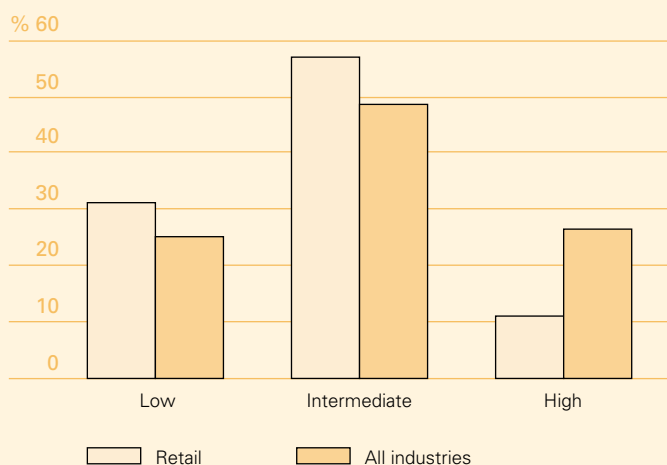
Figure 3.8 shows that vacancies are less commonly reported by employers in the retail sector in the East of England (15%, equal to around 750 establishments in Hertfordshire) than by those in all industries in the region (18%) or by those in the retail sector in England as a whole (17%). East of England retail employers were also less likely to have hard-to-fill or skill shortage vacancies, with just 5% (250 employers) reporting hard-to-fill and 1% (around 50 employers) skill shortages.

Skills gaps

However, the National Employer Skills Survey (NESS) suggests that retail employers in the East of England have significant skills gaps in their existing workforce. Around 27% of retail employers (around 1,300) report skills gaps compared with 23% in all industries in the region.

Figure 3.7

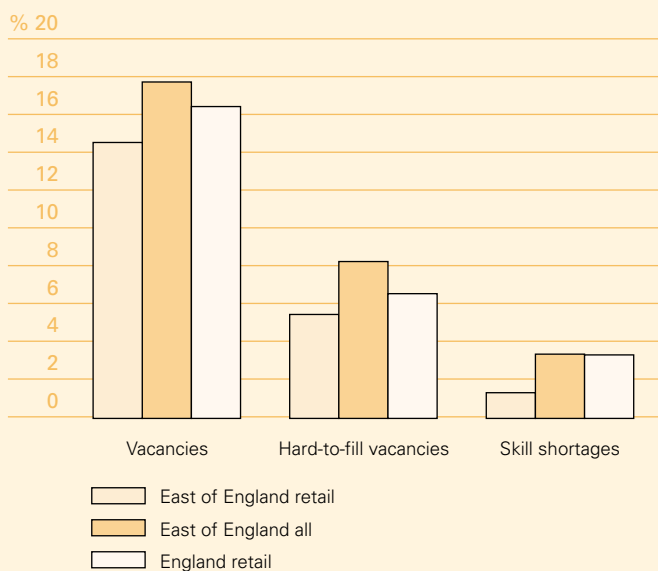
Skill levels – broad analysis – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 3.8

Recruitment difficulties and skill shortages



Source: LSC National Employer Skills Survey, 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed or businesses with only one employee

Figure 3.9 shows that employers in the retail sector in the East of England were most likely to report difficulties in meeting customer service objectives as a consequence of skills gaps, with 41% stating that they had experienced this problem. Skills gaps in the retail sector are more likely to result in a loss of business than in all industries, with 31% of employers in the sector reporting this consequence compared with 25%.

Retail employers are less likely than those in all industries to report that skills gaps lead to increased operating costs (29% compared with 38%) or delays developing new products or services (19% compared with 23%).

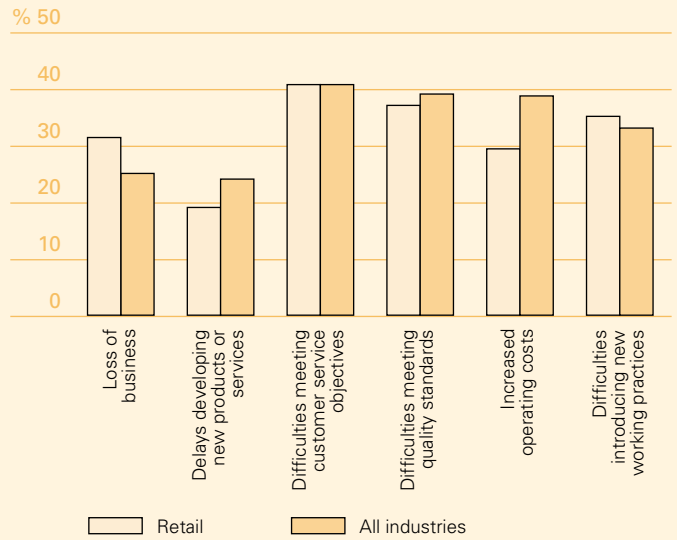
Figure 3.10 shows the incidence of skills gaps by the three largest occupational groups in the retail sector compared with the proportion of the workforce found in each occupation. Two thirds of the skills gaps reported by employers in the retail sector in the East of England relate to sales and customer service occupations. Skills gaps within this occupation are significantly more common than might be expected from the proportion of the workforce employed (48%).

In contrast, skill gaps among managers and senior officials are less commonly reported than might be expected. This occupational group accounts for 21% of employment in the sector but only 8% of reported skill gaps.

When asked about the skills that were lacking among managers who are not fully proficient in their role, retail employers were most likely to identify management skills (cited by 81% of employers with skills gaps for this occupation) and team working skills (63%) as the areas most in need of improvement. Customer handling skills formed the most common gap among sales and customer service staff (81%). Elementary staff were most likely to lack communication skills (72%).

Figure 3.9

Consequences of skills gaps – East of England



Source: LSC National Employer Skills Survey, 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed or businesses with only one employee

Figure 3.10

Proportion of skills gaps in key occupational groups – retail (East of England)

	Manager/ senior officials	Sales and customer service	Elementary
% of workforce with skills gaps in occupation*	8%	66%	14%
% of workforce in occupation	21%	48%	11%

Source: LSC National Employer Skills Survey, 2003 and ONS Labour Force Survey, 2003.

* Figures do not include the self-employed or businesses with only one employee.

This section looks at the changing nature of employment in the sector, the sector's training activity and the implications for learning provision.

Key messages

- Employment in the retail sector in Hertfordshire grew significantly between 1998 and 2002 but employment is expected to be relatively stable between 2004 and 2013.
- Around 1,800 sales and customer service jobs are forecast to be created in retail in Hertfordshire by 2010.
- 43% of those joining the retail sector come from full-time education but the availability of Further Education and Work Based Learning courses with relevance to the sector is limited, suggesting the sector is not viewed as a career choice.
- Workers in the retail sector at all skill levels are less likely to undertake job-related training than in all industries.
- 67% of retail employers had arranged training for staff in the past 12 months but only 32% had arranged training towards formal qualifications. In part, this is the result of employers preferring in-house training programmes over accredited courses.

Employment in retail was at a higher level in 2002 than in 1998, with an overall increase of around 13% (12,700 employees) during this period. However, this figure masks a decline in employment between 1998 and 1999 of 8%, reflecting the volatility of employment in the sector.

Figure 4.2 shows that employment change in the retail sector in Hertfordshire between 1998 and 2000 varied between sub-sectors. The greatest growth occurred in retail not in stores, which includes mail order and internet sales (growth of 21% or around 300 jobs) and non-specialised stores (growth of 18% or 5,200 jobs). The specialist food and drink sub-sector declined by around 200 jobs (6%).

VAT registrations and de-registrations

VAT registrations and de-registrations also give an indication of sector growth and decline. Figure 4.3 shows VAT registrations and de-registrations as a percentage of business stocks at the end of the year.

Both VAT registrations and de-registrations are lower for the retail sector than the average for all industries in Hertfordshire. De-registrations account for a similar proportion of business stocks (8%) as registrations (9%). This suggests that the sector was relatively stable between the end of 2001 and the end of 2002.

It should be noted that VAT registrations and de-registrations provide only an indication of what is going on in the sector. As well as businesses opening or closing down, the measures also

Figure 4.1

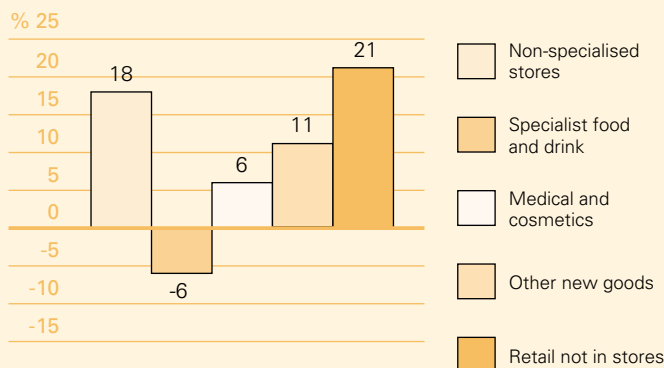
Annual employment change 1998–2002 – Hertfordshire

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Employment	59,103	54,263	60,751	64,605	66,920
% change from previous year	-	-8.2	11.9	6.3	3.6

Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry 1998, 2002
 Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Figure 4.2

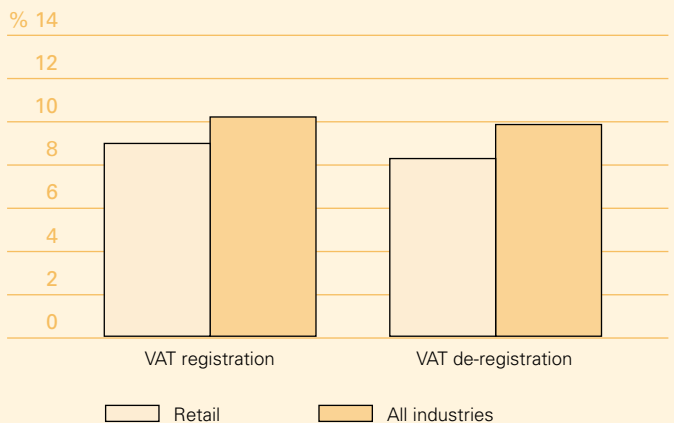
Employment change 1998–2002 by sub-sector – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Annual Business Inquiry 1998, 2002
 Second-hand goods and repair of personal and household goods are not included due to the low level of employment in these sub-sectors.
 Note: Figures do not include the self-employed

Figure 4.3

VAT registrations and de-registrations 2001–2002 – Hertfordshire



Source: NOMIS, VAT registrations/deregistrations by industry, 2002.

include firms moving above or below the threshold for payment of VAT, currently £58,000 p.a. The measures do not take account of businesses below the VAT threshold, so very small businesses are not included.

Projected employment change

The Experian Business Strategies (EBS) forecasting model shows that between 2004 and 2007 retail employment in Hertfordshire is expected to increase by around 1.5% (this equates to around 1,100 workers).

Figure 4.4 shows that employment in the retail sector in Hertfordshire will be relatively stable compared with the employment increase forecast for all industries in the county (8%). The increase in retail employment is forecast to occur after 2007.

However, if Hertfordshire continues to attract a growing share of internet or mail order companies, growth in the sector could be even greater than the forecasting model suggests.

In the Hertfordshire retail sector, employment in personal service occupations is forecast to grow faster than in any other occupational group with an increase of 28%. However, because relatively few people are employed in these occupations in the sector, this growth will only equate to around 100 jobs. Numerically, the greatest growth is forecast to be in sales and customer service occupations, where employment is expected to increase by around 1,800 jobs or 5% to 2010. The greatest decline is forecast for employment of managers and senior officials (7% or around 1,100 jobs). This may reflect a continuation of the trend towards larger chain stores or a movement to flatter management structures in the sector.

Employment flows

While projections suggest that new retail jobs will be created in Hertfordshire, the majority of annual demand for new staff in any sector is to address annual turnover in the labour market,

where people leave their current post through retirement, sickness or job changes for example. Around 20% of the retail workforce changes each year. This does not include people moving between jobs or sub-sectors within retail. Therefore, turnover experienced by an individual retail employer may be even higher.

It has been reported that sales assistants for example will change jobs frequently for small incremental pay rises. A national DfES survey suggests that only 81% of sales and retail assistants are currently working in the same firm as they were 12 months ago⁶.

The majority of those leaving retail jobs changed sectors (61%), while a further 39% left employment due to factors such as family commitments, sickness or retirement.

A large proportion of those joining the sector do so from full-time education (43%), which reflects the high proportion of 16–24 year olds in retail (Figure 3.3, page 7).

Newly qualified staff

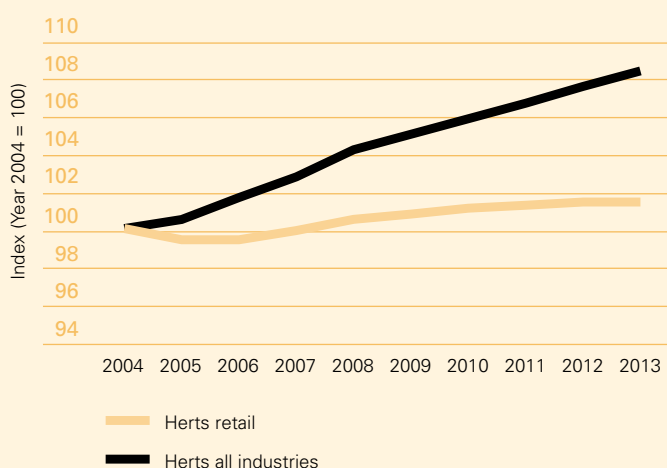
In 2003, around 7,400 workers joined the retail sector in Hertfordshire from full-time education. In 2002/3, some 970 learners were enrolled on courses in the 'retailing, customer service and transportation' programme area at Hertfordshire colleges. However, only around 120 individual learners were enrolled specifically on 'retailing' courses. This highlights the fact that relatively few young people regard retail as a career.

Around 290 people completed or left Work Based Learning (WBL) programmes in retail in 2003-2004. The majority were enrolled on Foundation Apprenticeships (73%) and 20% were undertaking Advanced Apprenticeships. However, the level of NVQ achievement is relatively poor and improvements need to be made if this is to become a significant route for new

⁶ An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002.

Figure 4.4

Forecast employment in retail 2004–2013



Source: Experian Business Strategies Forecasting Model, 2003.
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 4.5

Fastest-growing occupations 2004–2010

Occupation (model categories)	% change in employment 2004–2010	Estimated jobs in Hertfordshire
Managers and senior officials	-7	-1,100
Professional occupations	-2	-
Associate professional and technical occupations	-10	-300
Administrative and secretarial occupations	2	100
Skilled trades occupations	-12	-400
Personal service occupations	28	100
Sales and customer service occupations	5	1,800
Process, plant and machine operatives	16	200
Elementary occupations	4	300

Source: Experian Business Strategies Forecasting Model, 2003.
ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures include the self-employed

entrants. Indeed the Adult Learning Inspectorate reported in August 2002 'that nearly 80% of trainees on retail and customer service courses received unsatisfactory training'. In particular the Inspectorate highlighted a need to improve basic skills training within the qualifications.

Recent announcements⁷ on the development of Apprenticeships could increase the importance of this route into the sector and include proposals to:

- Introduce 'Young Apprenticeships' to give more young people 'tasters' of vocational work and learning.
- Extend the programme to offer more places to those aged over 25.
- Improve the portability of the programme between employers.

Training levels in the current workforce

Figure 4.7 shows that around 67% of the retail employers in Hertfordshire report that they have funded or arranged training for some of their employees in the past 12 months, a higher level than in all industries (57%). However, the proportion of employers who had arranged training leading to a formal qualification was lower for the retail sector (32% compared with 44%).

However, the NESS suggests that nationally, the retail sector is closer to the all industry average. Some 42% of retail employers nationally report that they offer some employees training leading to a qualification.

Skillsmart, the Sector Skills Council for the retail sector, report that while large retail employers generally regard training as a business necessity and invest heavily in their own internal training departments, they do not perceive a need for

⁷ DfES Press Release 10 May 2004. 'New Apprenticeships will widen opportunity and boost business – Clarke'

Figure 4.6

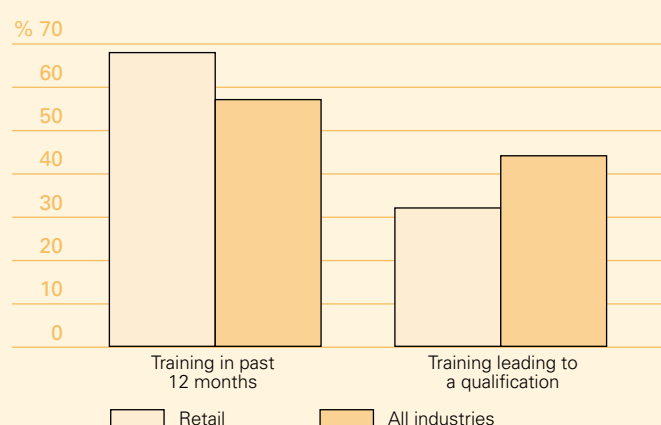
Inflow and outflow 2002/3 – retail

Inflow	%
Full-time education	43%
Changed sector	26%
Unemployment	10%
Other out of work (including family commitments etc.)	21%
Outflow	
Retirement	2%
Changed sector	61%
Unemployment	15%
Other out of work (including sickness, maternity etc.)	22%

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, 2001. Inferred data
Note: Figures include the self-employed

Figure 4.7

Establishments funding job-related training in past 12 months – Hertfordshire



Source: LSC National Employer Skills Survey, 2003.
Note: Figures do not include the self-employed or businesses with only one employee

accredited training. Although many would like to offer recognised qualifications to raise the profile of their training, they will not do so if they feel that this will reduce the effectiveness of their training or significantly increase its cost. Some have abandoned using NVQs for these reasons⁸.

The most commonly reported barriers to developing and maintaining a skilled workforce are a lack of time for training (reported by 50% of retail employers), lack of cover for training (44%) and lack of funding (33%).

Although a large proportion of employers report funding or arranging job related training it is likely to be lower level training. The NESS reveals that retail employers are most likely to fund or arrange job-specific (86%), health and safety (84%) or induction (65%) training. Furthermore this training is not likely to be available to all employees.

Indeed the proportion of the workforce reporting that they had undertaken job related training in the last three months is lower for retail than for all industries (20% compared with 27%) and particularly so for the high skilled (see Figure 4.8). Only 28% of the high skilled retail workforce report having undertaken job-related training in the previous 3 months compared with 39% of high skilled workers in the Hertfordshire economy as a whole.

Engaging SMEs in learning

Given the importance of small and micro-businesses in the retail sector, encouraging employers to train their staff is a key challenge. Encouraging SMEs to engage in workforce development is one of the priorities of Hertfordshire Business Link.

Business Link data suggests that in 2003/4, some 290 visits had been made to retail establishments by business advisors, many of which were to businesses with between 1 and 9 employees (44%) or between 10 and 49 employees (23%).

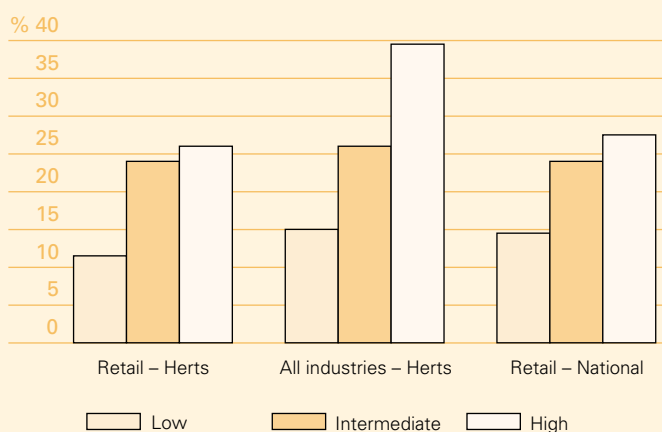
However, relatively few retail employers have achieved or committed themselves to Investors in People (IiP). IiP is a national quality standard that sets out a level of good practice for the training and development of people to improve business performance. Data supplied by Business Link reveals that no retail establishments in Hertfordshire gained IiP recognition in 2003/04 but 25 were working towards the standard.

Interestingly, all 25 retail employers currently working towards the standard employ fewer than 50 people. It will be important for any future evaluations of the scheme to investigate why some SMEs feel that the standard is appropriate to them and not others.

⁸ A Skills and Qualifications Strategy for the Retail Industry, Skillsmart, 2004.

Figure 4.8

Job-related training by skill level – Hertfordshire



Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003. Inferred data.
Note: Figures include the self-employed

This section looks at the bodies active in the retail sector, their activities and their plans for the development of the sector. It also sets out the key issues and skills concerns for the sector that they have identified and the efforts they are making to try to address these issues.

Key messages

- The retail sector is represented by Skillsmart, one of the original five “trailblazer” SSCs to be established in 2002.
- A major challenge for the SSC will be to ensure qualifications are aligned to business needs in the sector and to encourage the take-up of more transferable accredited qualifications.
- Skillsmart is planning to develop a database of retail competencies/units for use by candidates, employers, training providers and the SSC itself.
- Skills identified as required by customer service personnel include interpersonal and communication skills, motivation, intellect and problem solving abilities.
- Skills identified as required by supervisory and managerial staff include customer service and leadership skills, communication skills and the ability to take a strategic view.

Figure 5.1

Skills issues and priorities for action identified by Asset Skills

Objectives

- Reduce skills gaps within the sector
- Improve productivity, business and public service performance
- Increase the opportunities to boost the skills of everyone in the sector, whilst ensuring quality for all
- Improve the learning supply

Business goals

- Promote and raise the profile of employment and career opportunities within retailing
- Devise and champion tailored solutions to skills gaps in retail
- Devise and implement activities to increase participation and investment in learning by employers and individuals
- Assemble, maintain and disseminate information on changing skills needs within the sector.

Source: Skillsmart Annual Review 2002-3.

Workforce development

In 2001 the Government announced plans to replace the existing network of National Training Organisations (NTOs) and replace them with a smaller number of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs).

Skillsmart, the SSC for the retail sector, was granted a licence to become one of the original five ‘trailblazer’ SSCs in 2002. The idea of the trailblazer SSCs was for them to demonstrate the value of strong and influential employer-led SSCs and to help develop effective ways of working for the first fully licensed SSCs that would follow them. Skillsmart differed from the other trailblazers in that it was created from scratch rather than from an existing organisation.

Skillsmart aims to boost the UK retail sector’s competitiveness through employment skills by ensuring retail training and education opportunities are relevant, accessible and of a high quality. The SSC engages with retailers to establish their needs and with learning providers to try to develop solutions to ensure that these needs are met. Skillsmart’s objectives and business goals, as set out in their annual review for 2002–3, are shown in Figure 5.1.

As mentioned in the previous section, research conducted by Skillsmart found that many large retailers have developed their own systems of training and development in preference to government sponsored provision. A major challenge for the SSC will be to ensure qualifications are aligned to business needs in the sector and to encourage the take-up of more transferable accredited qualifications.

Skillsmart has a qualifications strategy focused on working with employers to create a skills and qualifications map and to create an environment where learning, skills acquisition, career development and qualifications are seen as important and natural. The map will initially be for retail operations but in time will cover all head office and logistics operations. It will broadly clarify what skills employers are seeking at what levels and how individuals can train or qualify to achieve them.

Skillsmart’s strategy is based on the need to:

- Ensure that the sector’s occupational standards are up to date and reflect practices within businesses
- Challenge and influence the qualifications content of government skills programmes so that they reflect the needs of retail employers and are aligned with business operations
- Influence the content and delivery of retail undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

The SSC is also planning to develop a database of retail competencies/units that would allow candidates to appraise their own skills, employers to profile the requirements of different jobs, Skillsmart to define the requirements for qualifications in retail and training providers to design training and development programmes.

Skillsmart believes that a single database would mean that while all these activities could be considered separately, they would be related, so there would no longer be a need to try to exactly match jobs, training programmes and qualification design.

Furthermore, retail has been highlighted as one of the national LSC's priority sectors and the LSC is currently developing an Action Plan for retail informed by its own Sector Forum.

Figure 5.2 shows the skills that employers in the retail sector stated that they would like to see from their employees in customer service and managerial roles, as outlined as part of the "Retail & Related Industries Skills Dialogue", developed in partnership by NTOs with an interest in the sector, employers and the Government.

Figure 5.1

Skills needed by customer service personnel and supervisory and managerial staff

Customer service personnel

- Strong interpersonal and empathic abilities
- Ability to work constructively with colleagues and other departments
- Ability to adapt well developed behavioural and communication skills to suit customer needs
- Good mix of technical skills and people skills
- Flexible and multi-skilled
- Dynamic, energetic and empowered
- Motivated, with a desire to take responsibility to resolve customer problems
- High calibre, higher intellect
- Better educated, and with more commitment to the task
- Able to balance the needs of the customer with the needs of the organisation

Supervisory and managerial staff

- Customer service skills
- Leadership abilities
- Ability to take balanced decisions quickly
- Ability to act as coaches and mentors
- Ability to manage in dynamic environments
- Commercially astute, totally customer focused, with excellent people management and communication skills
- Able to take a more strategic view

Source: An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002. Information based on research by the Institute of Customer Service and Bain & Company.

This section sets out the workforce development priorities for the retail sector in Hertfordshire. It explores what is currently being done to address these priorities and what opportunities there may be for further action.

While the retail sector in Hertfordshire is spread across districts, within each district retail jobs are usually clustered together in particular locations such as town centres or out-of-town retail parks. There may be opportunities to exploit this clustering by encouraging retail employers in a particular location to work together to achieve mutual benefits. It may be possible for employers to come together to share buses to bring employees to work or crèche facilities for example. Employers could also be encouraged to come together to form training consortiums to share the cost of training.

The LSC could seek to ensure that new retail developments include 'learning shop' centres that offer on-going customer service skills training for staff during lunch breaks or before or after a shift. A number of such schemes have been developed across the country (e.g. Bluewater) and the LSC should seek to review and exploit the Best Practice lessons of these schemes. This would require strategic negotiation with those responsible for planning, to ensure that it forms part of the planning permission for the retail development.

At the start of this paper, three workforce development priorities for the retail sector in Hertfordshire were proposed.

1. Attracting and retaining competent staff and reducing labour turnover

Evidence suggests a need to promote the image of the retail sector as a permanent employer, especially in the eyes of young people.

A recent survey⁹ found that while young people view retailing as a friendly, open, accessible sector in which to work, they do not perceive it to be an industry that would give them fastest access and closest proximity to "learning" opportunities, a factor that would attract them to a sector.

The survey also found that young people have only limited knowledge of retail courses at Higher Education level and see

jobs in the sector as offering responsibility but lacking challenge or stimulation. There are widespread perceptions that full-time work in the sector is low paid.

This suggests a need to further promote learning relevant to the sector including Further and Higher Education courses and Work Based Learning and to engage with schools, careers advisors and others with an influence on young people to raise awareness of the opportunities open to them within the sector. Evidence from the Destination Retail survey suggests an interest in the retail sector among young people during their teenage years so opportunities for this age group to have a "taster" of work in a wider variety of roles in the sector could have an important impact.

As many young people gain their first experience of work in the sector, there is a clear opportunity to build on this to improve the image of retail as a permanent employer. Ensuring that line managers with supervisory responsibilities for young staff have adequate skills to ensure that their first encounter with the sector is positive will be vital if this is to be achieved.

Building on the efforts of many employers to encourage greater numbers of older people to join the sector is also likely to be important. A number of retail employers have reported that they value older workers for having a more mature attitude, more life experience and less incentive to leave their job, thus reducing turnover¹⁰.

The retail sector can be particularly attractive to those looking for flexible working arrangements; for example, women wishing to return to employment after having children. The sector offers opportunities for part-time work, which can fit around childcare responsibilities for example.

Whilst some labour turnover is to be expected in a sector with high levels of low skill and flexible employment, the labour turnover rates in the retail sector are a significant issue. High levels of labour turnover are damaging in terms of the cost of recruiting and inducting new employees and in terms of the discontinuity of service experienced by the customer, which can be particularly important for small employers and higher value-added retail services.

⁹ Destination Retail: A Survey of Young People's Attitudes towards a Career in Retailing, Foresight Retail E-Commerce Task Force, 2001.

¹⁰ An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002.

Encouraging the take up of accredited qualifications could help to improve retention within the sector. In addition, if more retail employees were endowed with common competencies that could be applied across the sector, rather than just in one particular firm, this could help to reduce some of the costs associated with staff turnover.

Hertfordshire LSC could work in partnership with Skillsmart to investigate whether a scheme similar to the On-site Assessment and Training (OSAT) scheme currently available in construction would be appropriate for the retail sector. As part of the OSAT scheme employees gain accreditation through on-site assessment of their day-to-day work and the aim is to ensure a baseline standard of qualifications across the workforce. However, as we saw in Section 4, Skillsmart report that employers are reluctant to undertake NVQs. The challenge for the SSC is therefore to ensure that vocational qualifications are relevant to the sector.

2. Management skills

Although skills gaps among managers were reported relatively infrequently by retail employers in Hertfordshire, research conducted on behalf of the DfES found that these skills are felt to be particularly important to the sector.

The skills of managers can have an important impact on the quality and experiences of other employees, as outlined above. In recognition of this, Hertfordshire Regional College is developing a Foundation Degree in Retail.

Managers and owner-managers in SMEs in the sector will have a need for strong entrepreneurial and management skills to compete with larger competitors. In their Market Assessment for the retail sector, Skillsmart suggest that the core competencies required by smaller retailers to prosper in the future will include visual merchandising, business planning, management of premises, time management, people management and health and safety.

It has been suggested that small retailers may be most pre-disposed to taking on board training and advice at the start-up and pre-start-up stages of business life, suggesting a possible demand for courses aimed at this type of business¹¹.

Small owner-managers are notoriously difficult to engage in learning as they often have very little time to devote to anything other than simply running their business. This suggests a need

for flexible and bite-sized courses to meet the needs of these individuals.

3. Customer service skills

Almost half of the Hertfordshire retail workforce is employed in sales and customer service occupations and customer service skills are vital to the retail sector as they represent an important means by which businesses in the sector can attract customers.

However, sales and customer service employees account for two thirds of all skills gaps in the sector and the main skill gap reported for these occupations is customer handling skills.

Retail employers report that they would like to see higher calibre, better educated customer service staff but Further Education and Work Based Learning provision with relevance to the retail sector in Hertfordshire is limited.

The customer service skills of existing retail employees could also be improved by encouraging take-up of training, for example through Investors in People, and by working to address the basic skills needs of some employees.

There will be a need to address the negative perceptions of accredited qualifications held by some employers in the sector. While local partners may have limited scope to change the content of nationally recognised retail qualifications, they need to work with the SSC to develop more appropriate provision and there may be local opportunities to influence employer perceptions of the qualifications and training on offer.

The LSC could investigate the possibility of getting large firms to open their training centres up to other businesses in the sector and work with the SSC to pilot a scheme locally. The SSC could accredit the best centres for training, allowing the centre to gain a reputation for customer excellence and employers access to sector focused provision.

Furthermore the LSC, perhaps in conjunction with Jobcentre Plus could seek to encourage joint recruitment drives for retail clusters and to develop pre-employment training in customer service skills for staff joining the retail sector from unemployment or other forms of inactivity.

¹¹ An Assessment of Skill Needs in the Retail and Related Industries, DfES, 2002.

Annex 1. Sector Description

19

Retail: SIC92 Definition

521 Retail sale in non-specialised stores

Includes the retail sale in non-specialised stores with food, beverages or tobacco predominating, confectioners, tobacconists and newsagents and other retail sale in non-specialised stores.

522 Retail sale of food, beverages and tobacco in specialised stores

Includes the sale of fruit, vegetables, meat, meat products, fish, crustaceans, molluscs, bread, cakes, flour confectionery, sugar confectionery, alcoholic, other beverages and tobacco products.

523 Retail sale of pharmaceutical and medical goods, cosmetic and toilet articles

Includes dispensing chemists, retail sale of medical and orthopaedic goods, hearing aids, cosmetics and toilet articles.

524 Retail sale of new goods in specialised stores

Includes the sale of textiles, clothing, adults' fur and leather clothing, children's and infant's clothing, women's clothing, men's clothing, footwear and leather goods, furniture, lighting equipment and household articles, electrical household appliances, hardware, paints and glass, books, newspapers and stationery, floor coverings, photographic, optical and precision equipment, office supplies, jewellery, clocks and watches, sports goods, games and toys, stamps and coins.

525 Retail sale of second hand goods

526 Retail sale not in stores

Includes sale via mail order houses, stores and markets.

527 Repair of personal and household goods

Includes the repair of boots, shoes, electrical household goods, watches, clocks and jewellery.

Occupational job roles, SOC 2000 (key specialised occupations)

7111 Sales and retail assistants

Sales and retail assistants demonstrate and sell a variety of goods and services in shops, showrooms and similar establishments.

No minimum academic qualifications are required although some employers may require GCSEs/S grades. Training is typically provided on-the-job. Modern Apprenticeships at NVQ/SVQ Level 3 and National Traineeships at NVQ Level 2 may be available. NVQs/SVQs in Retail Operations are available at Levels 1 and 2.

Tasks

- discusses customer requirements, including type and price range of goods/services desired;
- advises customer on selection, purchase, use and care of merchandise and quotes prices, discounts and delivery times;
- receives full or partial payment, writes bill, receipt or docket and packages merchandise for customer.

7112 Retail cashiers and check-out operators

Retail cashiers and check-out operators accept payments from customers and give change in respect of sales or services.

There are no minimum academic requirements although some employers may require GCSEs/S grades or relevant experience. Training is typically provided on-the-job. NVQs/SVQs in Retail Operations are available at Levels 1 and 2.

Tasks

- records cost of each item on cash register or by use of bar code reader and totals the amount to be paid;
- receives cash, cheque or credit card payment, gives change and issues receipts for purchase;
- debits customer's account in respect of purchases or services;
- monitors fuel taken by self-service customers or refuels vehicle if required;
- reconciles takings with receipts and till rolls and maintains other transaction records as requested.

9251 Shelf fillers

Shelf fillers receive incoming goods from storage, check them for damage and place them on the appropriate shelves in the store.

There are no minimum academic entry requirements. Some on-the-job training may be provided.

Tasks

- selects goods from storeroom and checks for any damage;
- checks store layout or written instructions to determine the appropriate shelf location for the goods;
- prices goods by machine and fills shelves with goods;
- monitors depletion of stocks and re-fills shelves as required.

1234 Shopkeepers and wholesale/retail dealers

Workers in this unit group co-ordinate, direct and undertake the activities in the running of small independent retail and wholesale establishments.

There are no formal academic entry requirements. There are a variety of NVQs/SVQs relevant to the activities of specialist retail establishments. NVQs/SVQs in Retail Operations are available at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

Tasks

- provides information about merchandise to staff and customers;
- ensures that adequate reserves of merchandise are held and orders new stock as required.

9259 Elementary sales occupations NEC

Workers in this unit group perform a variety of elementary sales related occupations not elsewhere classified in MINOR GROUP 925: Elementary Sales Occupations.

There are no minimum academic entry requirements. Some on-the-job training may be provided.

Tasks

- strips old posters from hoardings and fits new posters using brushes and working from a ladder if necessary;
- collects shopping baskets and trolleys in and around wholesale/retail establishments and positions near entrance to store;
- offers shopping baskets to customers entering retail establishments;
- uses a pricing gun to attach price labels on goods for sale.

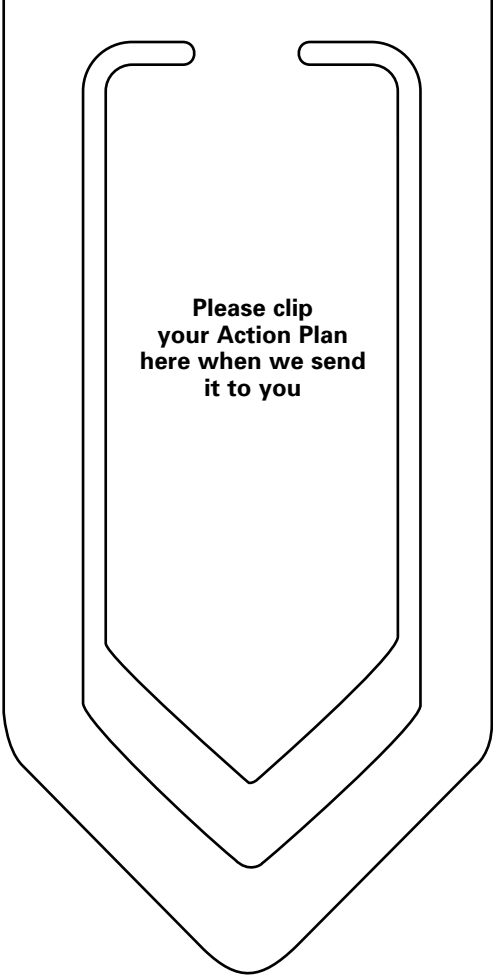
1163 Retail and wholesale managers

Retail and wholesale managers plan, organise, direct and co-ordinate the operations of retail and wholesale establishments.

Entry requirements vary from company to company. Entrants may possess GCSEs/S grades, A levels/H grades, GNVQs/GSVQs, a BTEC/SQA award, a degree or equivalent qualification. Entry is also possible through promotion after gaining sufficient experience. NVQs/SVQs in Retail Operations are available at Level 4.

Tasks

- provides information about merchandise to staff and customers;
- ensures that adequate reserves of merchandise are held and that stock keeping is carried out efficiently;
- maintains financial and other records and controls security arrangements for the premises;
- authorises payment for supplies received.



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