

Ravenscliffe and Greengates Local Employers Survey

Report of Findings - April 2009

Report prepared by

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Introduction

This report outlines the findings of a survey of a cross section of employers located in the Greengates and Ravenscliffe areas of North Bradford. Members of the Ravenscliffe and Greengates Multi Agency Partnership (RAGMAP) commissioned the research. The research is intended to inform the ongoing efforts of RAGMAP specifically in addressing worklessness and contributing to the ongoing social and economic development of the communities of Ravenscliffe and Greengates.

The interviews were carried out from January to March 2009 when the UK economy officially went into recession. During this period there have been almost daily news reports of firms going into administration and wide spread redundancies, this research whilst not being scientifically rigorous does provide a useful up to date picture of the employment situation locally and the current needs of employers in this part of North Bradford.

Research Aims

The project steering group made up of key local agencies from RAGMAP set the aims for the research, these were:

- To get an up to date picture of the type of employers operating in the area
- To better understand the needs of local employers
- To gather baseline information on the level and type of employment opportunities available locally, and to ascertain to what extent local people were benefiting from these opportunities
- To get a better understanding of the skills needed by local employers
- To gather information on local firms recruitment strategies and gather feedback on their experiences of recruitment and retention of staff
- To explore networking opportunities between local business and the voluntary and community sector
- To ask employers directly what their ideas are for addressing worklessness

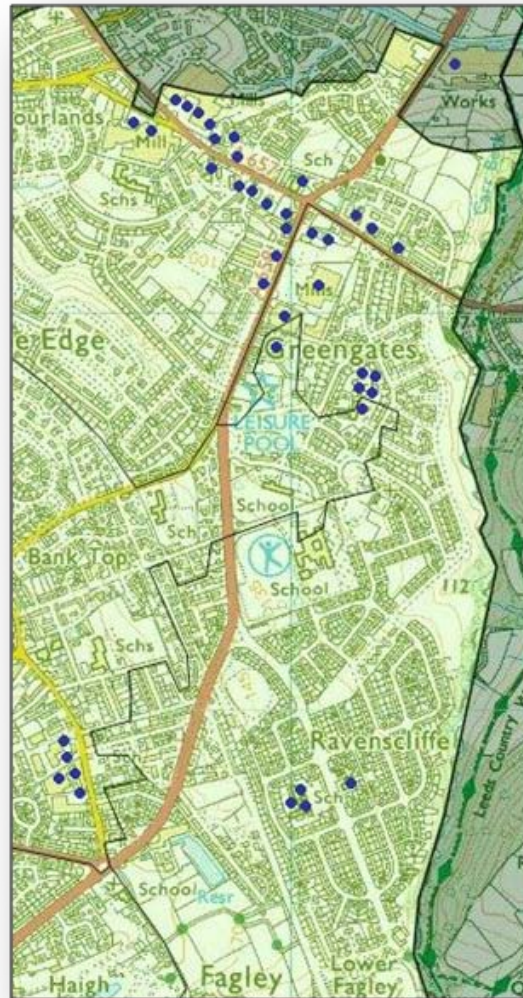
Methodology

The research was undertaken using a semi-structured questionnaire, which was initially piloted with 3 employers before making changes to improve the questions and flow of the interviews. Face to face interviews were then carried out with representatives from 41 employers that took part in the study. (See appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire)

Contact was made with firms by walking in off the street and interviewing the most senior person on the premises, or “whoever is responsible for recruitment”. If no one was available an appointment was then requested to come back at a later date. Some firms were initially contacted by telephone and email but this resulted in a

very low take up rate. A postal survey had been discounted at the outset because it was likely to generate a very low response rate.

The geographical spread of employers interviewed can be seen on the map below.



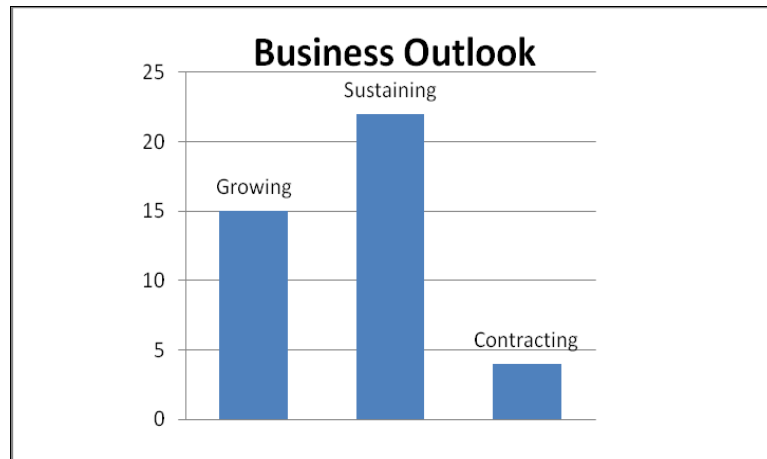
A full list of collated responses is contained in Appendix B. The following section of this report summarises the more significant findings and highlights any key issues that could influence the ongoing work of RAGMAP

Results

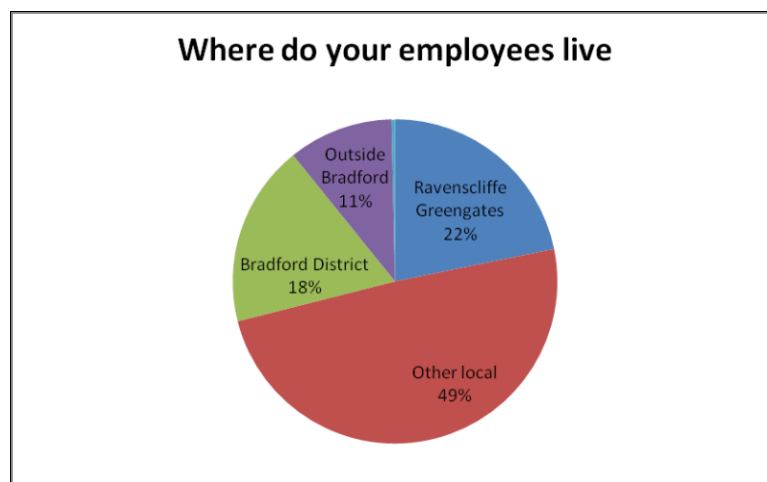
In total 41 employers completed the questionnaire. These companies employed 1013 people

The results presented and interpreted below follow the format of the questionnaire

Section 1 - Business Profile and locality



Only 4 employers (less than 10%) stated that their business was contracting. Around a third actually expected their business to grow during 2009 the majority expected growth to be stable. Food retailers were the most optimistic; firms involved in property and construction were the most pessimistic.



Nearly three quarters of employees live locally with nearly a quarter being from Ravenscliffe and Greengates. Only 11% come from outside Bradford. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the people coming from outside Bradford are in more senior managerial roles. These results do demonstrate clearly the importance of locally based employers creating local jobs for local people.

Most firms were happy with Greengates as a location for their business, crime wasn't seen as a big issue by most. Most firms hadn't heard of Business Watch but when the initiative was explained a quarter expressed an interest in joining a scheme.

Section 2 – Business Support

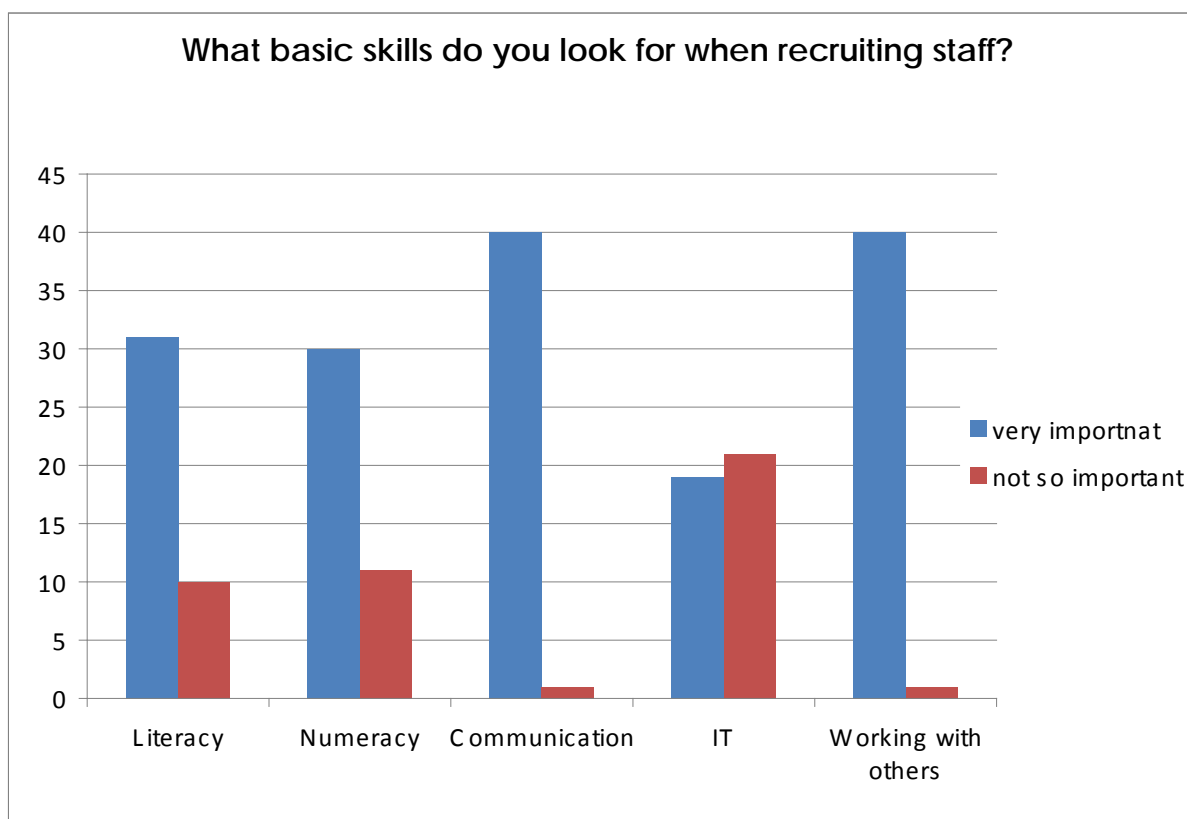
A quarter of employers had accessed some kind of Business support in the past. Business Link, Newlands Local Enterprise and Yorkshire Water mentoring scheme were all cited.

Just under a quarter of businesses expressed an interest in receiving help from a Business advisor, of those that did want help marketing and business planning were the two main areas where support was needed.

Section 3 – Skills and Training

Skills

The questionnaire asked employers to state which core skills they considered to be most important and which job specific skills they look for when recruiting.



Every employer bar one considered communication skills and the ability to work with others as essential skills. These "life" skills or rather lack of them, were cited on multiple occasions as the main reason for employees failing. Having a positive attitude, being reliable and friendly were what most employers were looking for above any other attributes.

The job specific skills were predictably varied depending on the job role, administrative, IT and customer skills were commonly cited. The full list of specific skills is contained in Appendix B.

Just over half of the employers interviewed stated that they had difficulty recruiting people with the right skills. When asked what skills they found it hardest to find the majority reiterated their frustrations at being unable to attract candidates with good “life” skills.

Training

The vast majority of employers offer their own in house training. This training is quite varied ranging from basic health and safety, manual handling etc through to longer term accredited training opportunities as part of a career development programme. The key message from the majority of employers was as long as the candidate has a decent attitude we can develop their specific skills whilst in the job.

Work Experience and Apprenticeships

More than half of the organisations interviewed had offered work experience placements to young people. 5 out of the 41 currently run apprenticeship schemes a further 10 expressed an interest in finding out more about modern apprenticeships. Most employers saw work experience and apprenticeships in a positive way although some expressed concern that these opportunities were often hard work for the employer and felt that placements sometimes took up too much staff time.

Qualifications

Only half of the employers asked for specific qualifications when recruiting. Of those that did require qualifications GCSE Maths and English were most commonly cited along with job specific qualifications, which varied according to the role.

15 out of the 41 interviewed stated that they did not understand the National Qualifications Framework. They were unclear about NVQ levels, BTEC and Diplomas. GCSE s were most widely understood.

Section 4 - Recruitment and Retention

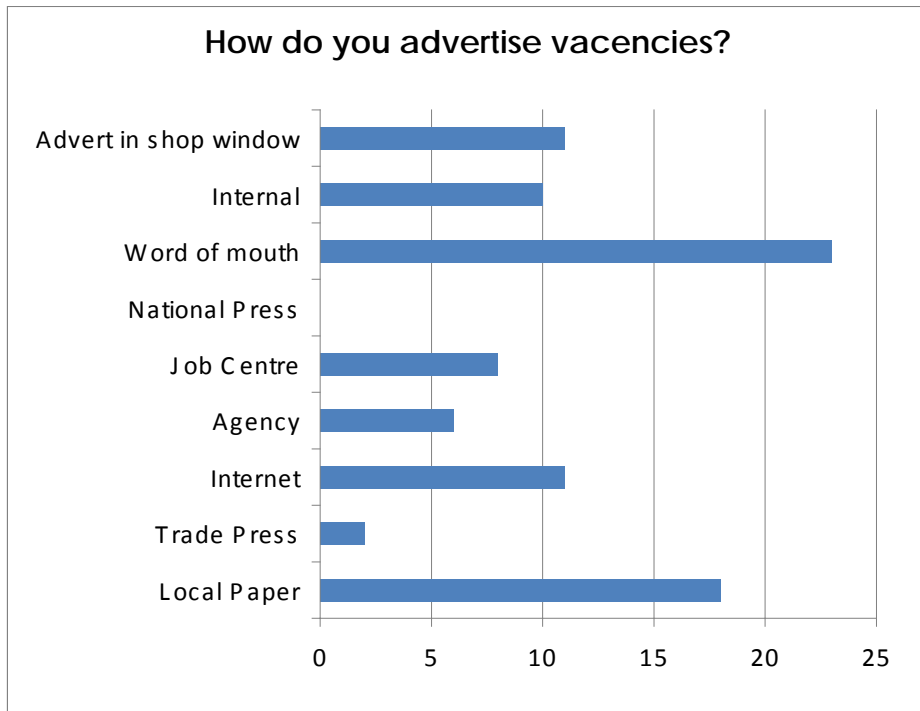
Recruitment

Over half of the respondents stated they had had difficulty recruiting in the last year. Employers complained it was hard to get good candidates and that recruitment was expensive and quite an unreliable process. The Job Centre was criticised by a number of businesses for sending unsuitable candidates.

The vast majority of those interviewed were anticipating recruiting new staff at some stage over the next 12 months.

The Chart below shows that there is no consistent method for advertising vacancies. The most common way to advertise a vacancy is through word of mouth followed by the local paper. A quarter of firms also stated they advertised in the shop window, recruited internally or advertised on the Internet either their own site or a

recruitment site. Only 7 employers said they advertised vacancies through the job centre. A few employers said that they often recruited people who “walked in” usually keeping their details on file until a vacancy arises.



Skills and Experience were seen as being more important than qualifications when recruiting new staff.



Retention

The vast majority of employers stated that staff turnover was not a problem. There were big differences in the average length of service between companies. Generally retailers and restaurants had the highest turnover.

The most common reasons for leaving were for career development and due to a change in personal circumstances. Just under a quarter of employers stated that dismissal due to poor performance and breakdown in relationships were common reason for leaving.

Childcare

8 employers stated that their staff were unable to find appropriate childcare. A quarter of the businesses interviewed currently offer childcare vouchers to their staff. A further 11 employers expressed an interest in finding out more about the Child Care Voucher scheme

Section 5 – Community Links

3 out of 4 companies interviewed stated they had been involved in an activity designed to “put something back into the local community”. Over half of the companies said they would like to find out more about local activities they could be involved with as part of their corporate social responsibility agenda.

Over half of the firms interviewed said they would be interested in attending local networking events if they were useful. Only a quarter of respondents felt that they were “well informed” about local regeneration initiatives.

What would you do if you were in charge?

Towards the end of the questionnaire employers were asked directly what they would do if they were charged with improving skills and reducing unemployment. Respondents were encouraged to speak as openly as possible; the following issues emerged as key themes.

Training and Education should be made more vocational, practical and more in line with the skills that employers actually need. It was felt that this “real world” education should start at school.

A number of respondents stated that there needed to be more opportunities for people to gain work experience and support for apprenticeship schemes. It was felt that training in the work place was most beneficial but that employers needed additional support to develop these opportunities further.

Some strong opinions were expressed about the benefits system, a number of respondents expressed concern that there was a lack of incentive for people to move off benefit and into work.

A number of businesses felt isolated from the wider community and believed that employers, training organisations, schools, community groups and regeneration agencies should work together in a more coordinated way to maximise economic benefits for this locality. Examples of training schemes responding to employer's

needs and a better system to match job vacancies to suitable candidates were given.

The final theme that emerged was around support for the Business sector in general. A great deal of concern was expressed about the current economic situation with a fair amount of anger and frustration being directed toward the government. Most of these concerns centred around access to finance, tax burden and a bureaucracy.

Key Findings

- Employers based in the Greengates and Ravenscliffe area do employ a large number of local people. There is little evidence to support the perception that people from Ravenscliffe are discriminated against because of their address.
- Local businesses are concerned about the recession however the majority remain relatively optimistic. (*A note of caution: these responses could date very quickly for example Stylo Barrat Shoes officially went into administration 2 days after being interviewed*).
- Well developed "Soft Skills" or "Life Skills" are the most important attribute employers look for when recruiting staff. Attitude, communication skills, ability to get on with people, reliability, personal presentation etc. Lots of employers have had bad experiences of recruiting people without these core skills, this is their most common complaint and the most common reason for people leaving after a short time in the a job.
- Almost all employers offer some kind of in house training. Most employers are happy to develop their staff provided they have a motivated and reliable employee.
- In general skills and experience were seen as being more important than qualifications
- Employers recognise the importance of providing opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and on the job training. They are keen that education and training providers work more closely with them to develop a workforce with appropriate skills.
- There is no consistent method for advertising vacancies and recruiting new staff. Word of mouth is the most common route and was seen as being cheap and relatively reliable.
- Over half of the respondents expressed an interest in becoming more involved with local initiatives if it was mutually beneficial and efficient.

Recommendations and next steps

1. Soft skill development

Members of RAGMAP should consider developing opportunities which enable people to develop their soft skills. This should be seen as an extension of existing programmes aimed at helping people to secure employment. Employers consider these basic attributes of good attitude, communication skills reliability etc to be fundamental requirements in the work place.

2. Local employer facing jobs brokerage.

There is a need to better coordinate the advertising of local job vacancies. Consideration should be given to setting up a recruitment network. Very simply employers would email or phone through details of their vacancy to a central contact point who would then in turn distribute the vacancy throughout the local network. Consideration should be given to linking this with the electronically connected community centre study.

3. Better links with local employers

There is a need and an opportunity to build better links with local employers. A significant number of local firms would like to be more “connected” to the local area. A number of firms would like to influence and be involved in local training and education programmes. More than half currently offer work experience placements and there is significant interest in apprenticeship schemes.

For successful and long term links to be maintained the relationship between local businesses and the community needs to be mutually beneficial and time efficient.

4. Follow up requests for information.

A number of employers interviewed stated they would be interested in finding out more about Apprenticeships, Child Care Vouchers, Business Advice and Business Watch. These requests should be past onto the relevant agencies and followed up. Contact details through Ian Kenning.

Appendix A - Ravenscliffe and Greengates local employers survey

Contact Name _____
Address _____ Post Code _____
Email _____ Tel No. _____

BUSINESS PROFILE

1. What is the name of your business? _____

2. What is the nature of your business? _____

Industry sector SIC Code _____

3. How long have been trading in this location? _____

4. How is your Business doing at the moment, is it:
Growing Sustaining Contracting

5. How many employees work here at this site? _____

6. Roughly where do your workforce live? Actual numbers or percentage split

Ravenscliffe and Greengates Other local
Bradford District Outside Bradford Don't Know

7. Do you have any plans to change location in the next 2 years? Yes No

8. If "Yes" what are the reasons for this?

9. Are you a member of a Business Watch Scheme Yes No

10. If "No" would be interested in being part of a Business Watch Scheme Yes No

BUSINESS SUPPORT

11. Are you a member of a Trade or Business Association Yes No

12. If "Yes" which one? _____

13. Have you accessed any Business Support programmes?

Yes No

14. If "Yes" which ones

15. Would you like help from a Business advisor?

Yes No

16. If "Yes" what help do you need?

Referral?

Business Planning Marketing Other _____

Human Resources Access to Finance _____

SKILLS AND TRAINING

17. What kind of skills do you look for when recruiting new staff

Basic Skills

Very Important

Not so important

Literacy

Numeracy

Communication Skills

Information Technology

Working with others

18. What vocational or job specific skills do you look for?

19. Do you have difficulty recruiting candidates with the right skills?

Yes No

20. If Yes which skills do you find difficult to find?

21. Do you offer in house training to your employees

Yes No

22. If "Yes" what training do you offer

23. Do you offer Work Experience placements?

Yes No

Apprenticeship schemes?

Yes No

24. If "No" would this be something you would consider?

Yes No

25. Do you ask for specific qualifications when recruiting staff Yes No
26. If "Yes" which qualifications and at what level do you look for

27. Do you understand the National Qualifications Framework? e.g. NVQ Levels Yes No

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

28. Have you had difficulty recruiting in last 2 years Yes No
29. If "Yes" what were the reasons for this?

30. Do you think you will be recruiting new staff in the next year? Yes No
31. If "yes" what job and when?

32. How do you generally recruit staff?

Local Paper Trade Press Internet Agency Job Centre
National Press Word of mouth Internal Advert in shop window
Local jobs broker (eg Jobs @) Other _____

33. Which of the following selection methods do you use?

Application form CV
Formal Interview Assessment tests
Work trials Informal interview
None of the above Presentations

34. How long on average do people stay with your organisation?

Less than a year 1-3 years 4-10 years More than 10 years

35. In your opinion do you have a "problem" with staff turnover? Yes No

36. What are the most common reasons for people leaving?

	Common	Rare	Never
Personal career development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change in personal circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dismissal due to poor performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Redundancy due to downsizing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
End of contract due to casual / seasonal work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breakdown in relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't like the job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other _____

37. Are your employees able to find appropriate childcare? Yes No
38 If "No" what is the problem?

39. Do you offer childcare vouchers Yes No

40. Would you be interested in finding out more about childcare vouchers? Yes No

41. What is most important to you when recruiting staff, rank them 1- 3 (1= most important)

Skills

Experience

Qualifications

42. If you were setting the governments priorities for improving skills and addressing unemployment what would your top two priorities be?

Priority 1 _____

Priority 2 _____

43. If a local organisation was tasked with getting people into work, what 3 things should they focus on?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

COMMUNITY LINKS

44. Have you ever been involved in an activity designed to "put something back" into the local community. Yes No

Team Challenge s Charitable Fundraising

Work experience placements Mentoring schemes

Other _____

45. Would you be interested in finding about opportunities like these? Yes No

46. Would you be interested in attending local networking events? Yes No

47. To what extent do you know what is happening in the local area, for example housing and regeneration schemes?

Well informed Know a bit Not well informed

In order for us to monitor the employment situation locally would be prepared to fill out this monitoring form. Please use return envelope provided to send back to us once complete.

How many employees work here? _____

How many are full time _____

How many are part time (less than 30 hours) _____

Employees by age 16-20 _____ 21-35 _____, 36-55 _____ over 55 _____ Don't' Know

How many people work here that are registered disabled _____ Don't' Know

Employees by ethnic group, please fill out either level 1 detail or level 2 detail if known

LEVEL 1

White

Mixed

Asian

Black

Chinese or Other

LEVEL 2

White British

Irish

Other White background

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Other mixed background

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Other Asian background

Caribbean

African

Other Black background

Chinese

Other ethnic group

How many of your employees have dependant children _____ Don't Know

How many of your employees have other caring responsibilities _____ Don't Know

Appendix B - Ravenscliffe and Greengates local employers survey - Full results

The information is based on 41 surveys with a total of 1013 employees

BUSINESS PROFILE

How long have been trading in this location?	Less than 1 year	3
	2 – 5 years	19
	6 – 10 years	9
	over 10 years	19
How is your Business doing at the moment?	Growing	15
	Sustaining	22
	Contracting	4
6. Roughly where do your workforce live?	Ravenscliffe and Greengates	188
	Other Local	425
	Bradford District	157
	Outside Bradford	90
	Don't know	3
Do you have any plans to change location in the next 2 years?	Yes	6
	No	35
Are you a member of a Business Watch Scheme?	Yes	1
	No	40
If "No" would be interested in being part of a Business Watch Scheme?	Yes	12
	No	25

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Are you a member of a Trade or Business Association?	Yes	4
	No	36
Have you accessed any Business Support programmes?	Yes	11
	No	30
If "Yes" which ones?	NLEL Business Link A Business mentor from Yorkshire Water	
Would you like help from a Business advisor?	Yes	9
	No	31
If "Yes" what help do you need?	Business Planning	3
	Human Resources	1
	Marketing	4
	Access to Finance	0
	Other	0
Are you a member of a Trade or Business Association?	Yes	4
	No	36

SKILLS AND TRAINING

What kind of skills do you look for when recruiting new staff?	Very important	Not so important
Literacy	31	10
Numeracy	30	11
Communication Skills	40	1
Information Technology	19	21
Working with others	40	1

What vocational or job specific skills do you look for?

Data input, Typing, Advanced IT, NVQ's, professional, ability to work with children
 Experience of people with learning difficulties, attitude, customer service skills, disposition
 empathy, sensitive, time management, flexibility, customer service, business experience
 working with children, skateboarding, skilled roofer, plasterer and painting decorators
 NVQ2, Health and Social Care, Food hygiene, driving licence, experience with roofers
 fully qualified vets, personality, customer service experience, sales experience,
 depends on post: Communication Skills, IT, Personality, Qualification, Experience
 enthusiasm, positive attitude, skills to work with children, qualification in childcare
 organized, good designer, NVQ's in Beauty Industry or high tech Diploma
 appearance, positive attitude caring skills, honesty, cash handling
 organisational and telephone manor, skills that relate to the specific job
 customer service, deal with pressure, Personal hygienic(doesn't smell)
 Personality/Attitude, common sense, obvious job specific skills, willingness to work
 Basic assessment, previous experience, in house assessment, merchandise, maths tests

If Yes which skills do you find difficult to find?

Attitude, people with potential to develop, are people choosing it as a career
 good supervisors are hard to get, Warehouse/Driving/IT, trust, communication, liability
 Career, get more response from right skills from Leeds, less from local, written communication
 managerial, play work, Communication, English language (especially with eastern EU applicants)
 Multi skilled people, problem solving, analytical, confident, self motivated, literacy
 trustworthy and reliable, can't get the right attitude, plastering, good plasterers with good skills
 attract poor candidates, personality, People not point what their told, customer service skills

Do you have difficulty recruiting candidates with the right skills?	Yes	21
	No	19

Do you offer in house training to your employees?	Yes	38
	No	3

Do you offer Work Experience placements?	Yes	23
	No	18

Do you offer Apprenticeship schemes?	Yes	5
	No	34

If "No" would this be something you would consider?	Yes	10
	No	26

Do you ask for specific qualifications when recruiting staff?	Yes	19
	No	20

If "Yes" which qualifications and at what level do you look for?

GCSE Maths and English, play work, Vet, good CV with experience, job relevant education
NVQ level 2-3 Beauty, BTEC, CASH, NNEB, city and guilds, Teacher qualification

Do you understand the National Qualifications Framework?	Yes	26
e.g. NVQ Levels	No	15

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Have you had difficulty recruiting in last 2 years?	Yes	26
	No	15

If "Yes" what were the reasons for this?

good supervisors are hard to get, Warehouse/Driving/IT skills, plastering
lack of experience, hard to attract high quality candidates, Buyers/merchandiser
Recruiting is expensive and time consuming, poor response to advert,
"either too pretty nobans or rough as abadgers arse", poor quality candidates

Do you think you will be recruiting new staff in the next year?	Yes	38
	No	3

How do you generally recruit staff?	Local Paper	18
	Trade Press	2
	Internet	11
	Agency	6
	Job Centre	8
	National Press	0
	<i>Other:</i> Word of mouth	23
	University Job Shop, own Website, Job "at", Local Community Centres, take over, contracts (don't like agencies), walk in's, college, T+A	10
	Internal	10
	Advert in Shop window	11
Other	10	

Which of the following selection methods do you use?	Application form	21
	Formal interview	31
	Work trials	17
	Presentations	10
	CV	19
	Assessment test	13
	Informal Interview	13

How long on average do people stay with your organisation?	Less than a year	14
	1 – 3 years	445
	4 – 10 years	607
	More than 10 years	46

In your opinion do you have a "problem" with staff turnover?	Yes	3
	No	38

What is most important to you when recruiting staff?	1 st important	2 nd important	3 rd important
Skills	22	18	1
Experience	16	23	2
Qualification	3	4	34

What are the most common reasons for people leaving?	Common	Rare	Never
Personal career development	16	10	1
Change in personal circumstances	13	7	1
Dismissal due to poor performance	8	11	2
Redundancy due to downsizing	4	8	10
End of contract due to casual / seasonal work	2	9	8
Breakdown in relationships	3	8	7
Don't like the job	3	10	6

Are your employees able to find appropriate childcare?	Yes	29
	No	8

Do you offer childcare vouchers?	Yes	10
	No	31

Would you be interested in finding out more about childcare vouchers?	Yes	11
	No	28

<p>If you were setting the governments priorities for improving skills and addressing unemployment what would your top two priorities be?</p> <p>offer more relevant vocational training, incentive for businesses to take apprenticeships on, access for disabled clients, remove restrictions to education, Benefit system Career advice for older adults, work experience, literacy, Numeracy free training, trades apprenticeships, monetary incentive, help school leavers work experience/taster sessions, training allowance, Improve basic skills, remove barriers to learning, training is too expensive find out what skills businesses need, help employers to train and skill up new staff, more incentives to go into work, benefit system doesn't help, school system, teach more practical things, too much tax and bureaucracy start banks lending again, get housing market moving again, support for growing business, make qualifications more real to the skills required reduce tax, focus on improving skills through experience, attract businesses work ethos installed at School, basic life skills, attitude, more regeneration in Bradford, make training more accessible, incentive work not benefits. match needs of employers and trainers, link people to jobs make it easier to re-train/move careers, offer people more money, better working conditions. stop supermarkets selling alcohol, make unemployed do community work. more help for small firms - financial aid, VAT exempt per start ups + SMES more opportunities to gain experience needed, work experience/trail/ better opportunities Basic Numeracy/literacy skills, Communication skills</p>		
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<p>If a local organisation was tasked with getting people into work, what 3 things should they focus on?</p> <p>help get right people matched up to the right job - maybe through a local agency, more info on local training and business support fair wage, fair and open recruitment process, provide continues professional development Peer support, more information on local jobs, affordable childcare, work experience community based advice, basic skills training, free access to IT prepare candidates for interviews, additional help to match candidates with role help improve peoples attitude at work, encourage willingness to learn, give people a sense of worth, more career advise, flexible hours, interesting and stimulating jobs, work needs to be financially worth wile, more apprenticeships some youngsters should leave school early and do practical vocational experience, offer 1st opportunity to get on the ladder and gain skills, CITB Apprenticeships</p>		
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Basic life skills, attitude, start in schools/young people,
 too easy to return to benefits/need to be better off working
 understand local community and economy,
 Re-skill those laid off, At the end of the day it is down to the individual
 encourage job centres to advertise all vacancies - not just low level jobs
 Training, money for appropriate clothing, local training, local childcare
 free childcare(too expensive), still lack of support for parents.
 Comes down to families and attitude to work, benefit system is a problem, work for your benefits
 Easier for companies to offer opportunities for experience.

COMMUNITY LINKS

Have you ever been involved in an activity designed to "put something back" into the local community	Yes No	30 11
If yes, in what?	Team challenges Work experience placement Charitable Fundraising Mentoring schemes	6 18 19 5
Would you be interested in finding about opportunities like these?	Yes No	24 16
Would you be interested in attending local networking events?	Yes No	26 14
To what extent do you know what is happening in the local area, for example housing and regeneration schemes?	Well informed Know a bit Not well informed	10 17 14

WORKFORCE PROFILE

NB Incomplete figures due to forms not being completed by large firms with personnel departments

How many employees work here?	Full time Part time (less than 30 hours) Male staff Female staff	419 233 312 305
Employees by age	16 – 20 21 – 35 36 – 55 over 55	70 217 302 51
How many people work here that are registered disabled?		6
Employees by ethnic group:	White Mixed Asian Black Chinese or Other	408 14 20 19 7
How many of your employees have dependant children?		275