

Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, including Food Manufacturing and related Industrial Chemistry



Employer Focus on Chemical Industry Skills Development

13th June 2008

Through partnership with the Regional Development Agency's Yorkshire Chemical Focus (YCF) Network, the WYLLN's Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, including Food Manufacturing and related industrial Chemistry Sector, have recently been working together to raise the profile of the WYLLN and to better inform, advise and guide the Network of its core Lifelong Learning ambitions and activities. With YCF's ChemSkills Manager - Sabine Holmes, Paul Denton - the WYLLN' Sector Officer and previous senior manager within one of the representative companies, recently led a ChemSkills workshop at Syngenta's Huddersfield premises on the skills and education challenges facing local industry.

Through presentations, informal discussion and issues sharing, the attendees worked collectively to formalise a contemporary landscape of the developmental issues facing their companies, from which real progress could be made towards developing appropriate intervention strategies. Key considerations were placed upon how global business dynamics were changing the UK's Chemical Industry's structure and affecting the available recruitment pool, together with the higher-level skills competencies required by the future workforce. Of particular note was the requirement to develop effective induction and development programmes for production employees. This area was seen by WYLLN academics, Pat Donovan – Bradford College and Tim Gabriel – University of Huddersfield, as a valuable opportunity where the WYLLN Sector Group could add valuable industry support through the development of a novel Foundation Degree to further industry relationships and support employees in West Yorkshire to become engaged in higher level skills development. Whilst at an early stage, Paul commented that, 'this type of industrial partnership is exactly what the WYLLN was designed to do. Namely, to strengthen the performance of local business through improved vocational and work-based learner progression'.

The YCF Network is a not-for-profit company funded by Yorkshire Forward and industry members to provide an independent voice for £2.2 billion chemical sector and related businesses in Yorkshire. There is a particular focus on West Yorkshire where the largest concentration of companies is found within the Region. Formed in 2005 with funding from Yorkshire Forward and the European Union YCF work in partnership with their members from across the industry and with the public sector to encourage growth and increase competitiveness.

- The chemical industry in West Yorkshire generates over £2.2 billion of direct sales and employs almost 11,000 people.
- The industry has been growing at a faster rate than GDP.
- 55% of products produced by the West Yorkshire chemical industry are exported.
- Around 80% of the 230 chemical companies in West Yorkshire employ fewer than 50 people.

