

## Skills Strategy Evaluation 2008

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### PROJECT DETAILS

**Funded by:** Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA)  
**Commissioned to:** Skyblue Research Ltd

### Overview

A project was undertaken to evaluate the success of the 2005-2008 Greater Manchester Skills Strategy in meeting its objectives that included a varied methodology that incorporated feedback from partners, employers and young people. The aim of the employer research was to assess the progress made during the strategy period and inform the priorities for action for the 2009-2013 skills strategy.

### Methodology

**Sample size:** 40 tourism businesses from Greater Manchester  
**Research method:** 35 businesses completed a depth phone interview and 5 the shorter on-line survey.  
**Date:** March and April 2008.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Changes between 2005 & 2008

- The most positive change was the image of the industry in terms of employment, careers opportunities, benefits and conditions that employers felt was much more favourable than in 2005.
- Employers reported that the issue that had shown the least improvement over the period was retaining good staff for longer, especially for jobs that have traditionally been regarded as being in short supply (e.g. chefs).
- 63% felt that the industry's general level of customer service skills had improved over the 3 year period.

- 45% felt that there had been no change in the general level of the industry's leadership and management skills.

### **Participation in industry training & initiatives**

- 83% of businesses had experienced training in the 3 years that had been beneficial to staff
- 75% of businesses had been involved in campaigns aimed at raising the image of the sector
- 50% of businesses had entered one of their employees for a skills award competition
- 25% had received some business support over the period

### **Recruitment difficulties in 2008**

- Chefs (13 mentions)
- Front of house (7 mentions)
- Sales & marketing posts (6 mentions)
- Housekeeping posts (6 mentions)

### **Current skill needs for 2008**

- Customer service received the most mentions (16 mentions)
- Leadership & management (10 mentions)
- Language skills - predominantly for those who English is their second language (9 mentions)
- Front of house skills (9 mentions)

### **Drivers for change**

- Customers have higher expectations - important to anticipate and meet their needs
- More hotels opening - leading to more competition
- The need to keep up with other destinations in terms of service standards and friendliness
- The size of projects and ambitions require strong leadership skills
- Increase of workforce who do not speak English as their first language

### **Future skill needs for 2009 and onwards**

- Customer care (19)
- Leadership & management skills (12)
- Language skills (4)

