



“Employer Engagement”

“- Skills for Business and the Sheffield experience”



Dave Pickersgill,
dave.pickersgill@sheffcol.ac.uk

December 2007



“Employer Engagement”

“ - Skills for Business and the Sheffield experience”

1.0 Introduction.....	2
2.0 Skills for Business and the Sheffield College	2
3.0 Sheffield and South Yorkshire – an economic overview	4
4.0 The relationship between Further Education and the business community	7
5.0 Employer Engagement – good practice	9
5.1 Employer Engagement – examples of good practice	11
5.2 Employer Engagement – examples of the work of SfB	12
(a) Frogson.....	12
(b) Microsoft Office Case Study.....	12
(c) PGB/NHS link via the HSMWP project	13
(d) Taylor and Emmet.....	13
(e) Thornton Precision Components.....	14
(f) Towntalk UK.....	14
6.0 Management Information and Employer Engagement (CRM) ...	15
7.0 External and Internal barriers – good practice.....	16
8.0 Recommendations:	18
9.0 Bibliography/References:.....	19
Appendix One: Geographical location of Sheffield	20
Appendix Two: South Yorkshire Employment Data.....	21
Appendix Three: topographical map of Sheffield	22
Appendix Four: Sheffield Economic Masterplan: SWOT Analysis	23

Dave Pickersgill,
December 2007



 Part of The Sheffield College

1.0 Introduction

This report is concerned with a, perhaps, overused phrase, 'employer engagement,' particularly that engagement between an FE College and (predominantly) local employers. A recent Google search revealed over 3,000 links for < UK + FE + "Employer engagement" > – an indication of the extensive use of this phrase within UK Further Education (FE).

This report does not aim to cover similar ground to that which has recently been covered by a variety of reports (see bibliography, footnotes and references), but, instead, draws on the experiences of Skills for Business (SfB), part of the Sheffield College, over the last three-four years. These experiences may be seen as broadly representative of similar experiences which will have occurred in FE colleges throughout the country.

The next section places SfB in context, with the third section performing a similar task for the City of Sheffield. The following section looks at the role of FE with regard to employer engagement, some examples of local case studies following. The report then discusses the use of CRM software, before concluding with a number of examples of good practice and recommendations.



 Part of The Sheffield College

2.0 Skills for Business and the Sheffield College

The Sheffield College is one of the largest FE Institutions in the UK. It was created and subsequently incorporated some 15 years ago, following the merger of the six tertiary colleges which had previously been created as part of the major Sheffield LEA post-16 reorganisation in 1988. Subsequent closures, restructuring and building works have left the College utilising a federal structure of three main sites (Castle, Hillsborough and Norton) with associated management structures and satellite centres.

The College provides both academic and vocational training, offering an extensive range of full and part-time higher education, advanced, entry level and vocational courses¹. Recently the College has signed its first formal external partnership agreement with the Sheffield-based Law firm Wake Smith & Tofields.²



Skills for Business (SfB)³ was formed, within the College, in early 2004, with the remit of delivering world-class business training and consultation to companies in South Yorkshire. The goal is to meet employer needs by:

- Delivering a range of short courses and knowledge transfer activities;
- Aiming to achieve a standard that could be described as world class;
- Targeting and responding to virtually all industrial sectors.

SfB incorporates the Sheffield College Digital CoVE. This was established in late 2002, receiving full CoVE status in early 2004. It was the first CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence) in South Yorkshire to receive full status, without the need for an extension to the original development year.



¹ Sheffield College: <http://www.sheffcol.ac.uk>

² Sheffield College website: <http://tinyurl.com/38wbnk>

³ Skills for Business: <http://www.sheffcol.ac.uk/skillsforbusiness>



SfB also incorporates the two College IT 'drop-in' centres. These were originally established under the 'Square Mile' brand some ten years ago. In addition to the 'drop-in' centre, the facility at Hillsborough Barracks also includes teaching rooms and a large seminar room. Many SfB courses and events, both internal and outside, are facilitated on this site. For example, Aim Higher have held a careers convention, Digital South Yorkshire have hosted meetings, a national IT CoVE conference has taken place, Microsoft have conducted a training event, a ProjectGB Development Groups meeting has occurred, the local NHS have run a conference



The second SfB 'drop-in' centre⁴ is currently located at the award winning⁵ conference centre, 'the Source' which is situated adjacent to both the M1 and the Meadowhall shopping centre in the east of Sheffield. A major transport interchange is a short walk away. The photograph (below) indicates both the closeness of the Source to the Sheffield tram network and the position of the IT 'drop-in' centre – first floor directly facing the observer.

SfB activities include:

- Development of new 'management' courses – ILM accredited⁶ since July 2007, delivering L3 NCFE management courses since July 2007
- Extensive drop-in IT provision, recently encompassing ITQ
- Innovative developers of accredited 'Open Source' courses⁷
- Microsoft IT Academy status, especially Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) – since 2005, twice achieving a Microsoft 'IT Academy' award and recently the subject of a Microsoft case study⁸
- Provision of 'ESOL for Professionals' and teacher training courses
- Provision of Distance learning courses
- Provision of a variety of bespoke courses, after negotiation with employers
- Sheffield brokers for the South Yorkshire Jigsaw⁹ trainee recruitment, induction and placement scheme



In addition, SfB have hosted a number of high profile national events at prestigious venues in the centre of Sheffield – for example: SfB launch event - June 2004, Disc2006 and more.

⁴ <http://thesource.meadowhall.co.uk/training/46/it-learning-centre>

⁵ Training Venue of the Year 2006 at the World of Learning Awards ceremony, held at the NEC, in Birmingham:

<http://thesource.meadowhall.co.uk/news/6/the-source-wins-prestigious-industry-award>

⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/2vz1q8>

⁷ <http://www.digital2010.org.uk/snapshotView.php?id=37>

⁸ <http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=201480>

⁹ Jigsaw: <http://tinyurl.com/2zjqxd>

3.0 Sheffield and South Yorkshire – an economic overview

Sheffield is England's 4th largest city with a population of over half a million. The city's economy¹⁰ was originally built on the steel, engineering and cutlery industries. Yet whilst Sheffield remains one of the country's foremost manufacturing areas and a centre for advanced engineering, the predominant feature of the local economy over the last thirty years has been the steady growth of service industries.

Fifty years ago, the main employment in Sheffield was directly related to the coal and steel industries, the steel industries having developed along the main river valleys¹¹. The decline of the numbers employed in the steel industry is encapsulated by the story of Stocksbridge, a town with a population of around 14,000, some 10 miles north of the centre of Sheffield. The valley bottom is almost entirely occupied by steelworks, which encouraged the growth of the settlement. At one point thousands of workers travelled in from miles around. In 2005, over 350 jobs were lost and a history of steel-making dating back to 1851 ended, a small number of jobs remaining for steel finishing work. Across South Yorkshire, employment in the steel industry has plummeted, although both distribution and manufacturing remain a higher than average employer sector¹².

A similar story exists for the coal industry. From a 1929 high¹³, when the South Yorkshire Coalfield produced its record amount of coal (33.5 million tons, 13% of Britain's coal output that year), decline has been steady, the last pit closing in 2006.

The city's economy is currently worth over £7 billion a year, and is one of the fastest growing in the UK. With the assistance of Objective One funding, Yorkshire Forward claims that Sheffield offers inward investors the highest level of funding assistance anywhere in Europe. The number of large cranes currently in action in the City offers prime evidence for this extensive growth. The College is not escaping this investment – a new £27 M centre opened in Hillsborough in 2005¹⁴, with extensive work currently taking place at Castle¹⁵ in the centre of the City.

The recently published, 'Sheffield Economic Masterplan' includes a detailed SWOT analysis (appendix four) of the position of the city in relation to the economic fortunes of the UK. This analysis includes a number of comments which are relevant to the interaction between the College and the local economy.

Both Sheffield and South Yorkshire are now characterised by a higher than average number of SMEs, with relatively few non-public sector large employers. This is indicated by South Yorkshire employment statistics (see appendix one). For example, the percentage of employees in both skilled trades and process/machine operatives are above the national average, whereas those employed as Managers, in Professional occupations and in Sales are below national percentages (see figure one). These are clear indications of both a preponderance of SMEs and a higher than average number of small manufacturing companies.

¹⁰ http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view.asp?content_id=86&parent_id=81

¹¹ See appendix three; 'Topological map of Sheffield'

¹² See appendix one, 'South Yorkshire Employment Data'

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Yorkshire_Coalfield

¹⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/yqgcvn>

¹⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/374hsz>

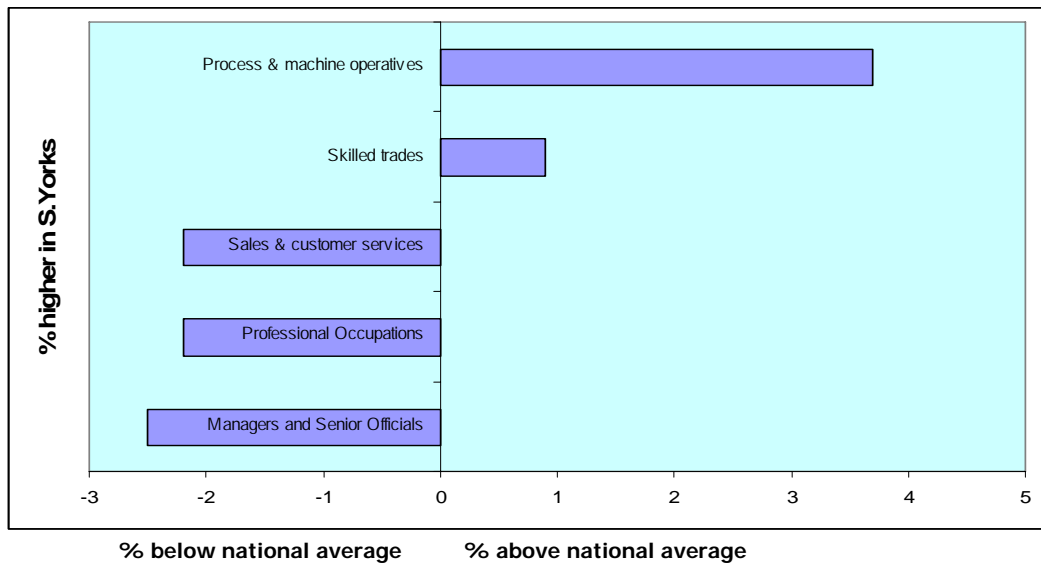


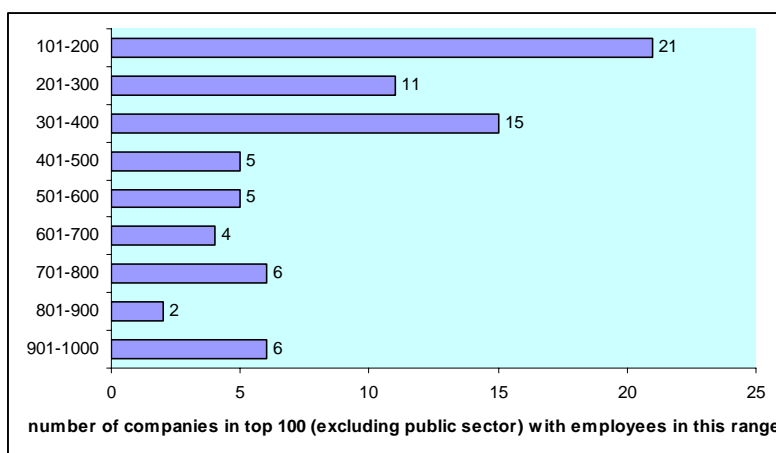
Figure One

Data for the top 100 Sheffield employers¹⁶ emphasises this point - of the top eight employers, only one is in the private sector. 15 of the top 100 are public sector. Of the remaining 85 companies:

- one employs over 4500 staff
(the only Sheffield private sector company who employs over 2000 staff)
- four employ over 1500
- ten employ over 1000
- seventy five employ 1000, or less

Figure 2 illustrates the companies in the top 85 who employ 100 people or less. Of the top 85 non-public sector, 28 are classified as 'medium-sized' companies. Many companies are small with a large number of small and micro companies. Figure 3¹⁷ illustrates that 80% of Sheffield companies are classified as 'micro,' with a further 16% classified as 'small.' Only 4% of Sheffield companies employ fifty people, or more. South Yorkshire produces a similar pattern.

Figure Two: top 85 Sheffield private sector companies, excluding the ten largest



¹⁶ Sheffield First for Investment (2006), page 6

¹⁷ Sheffield First for Investment (2006), page 11

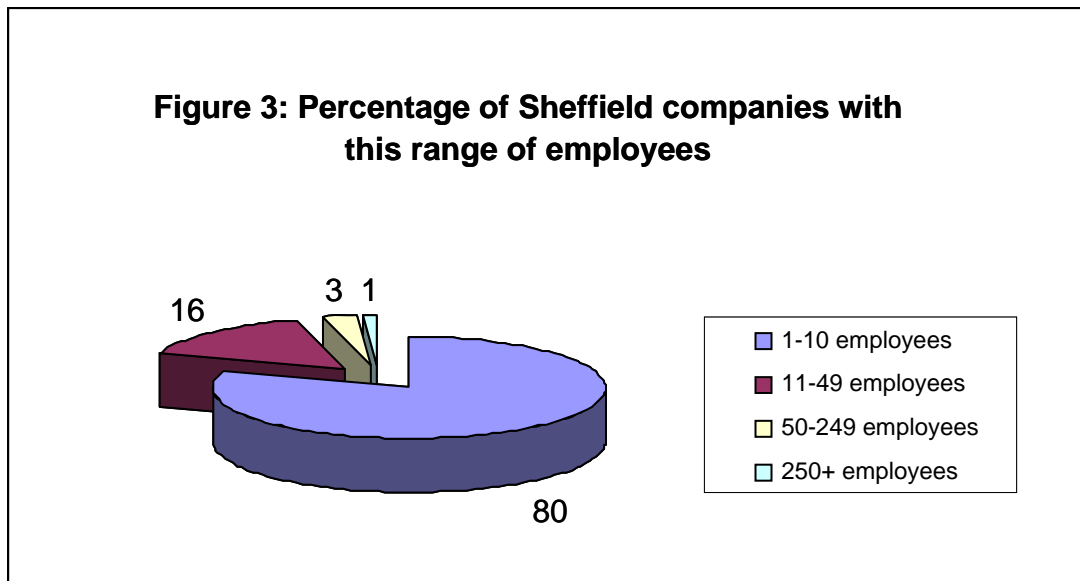
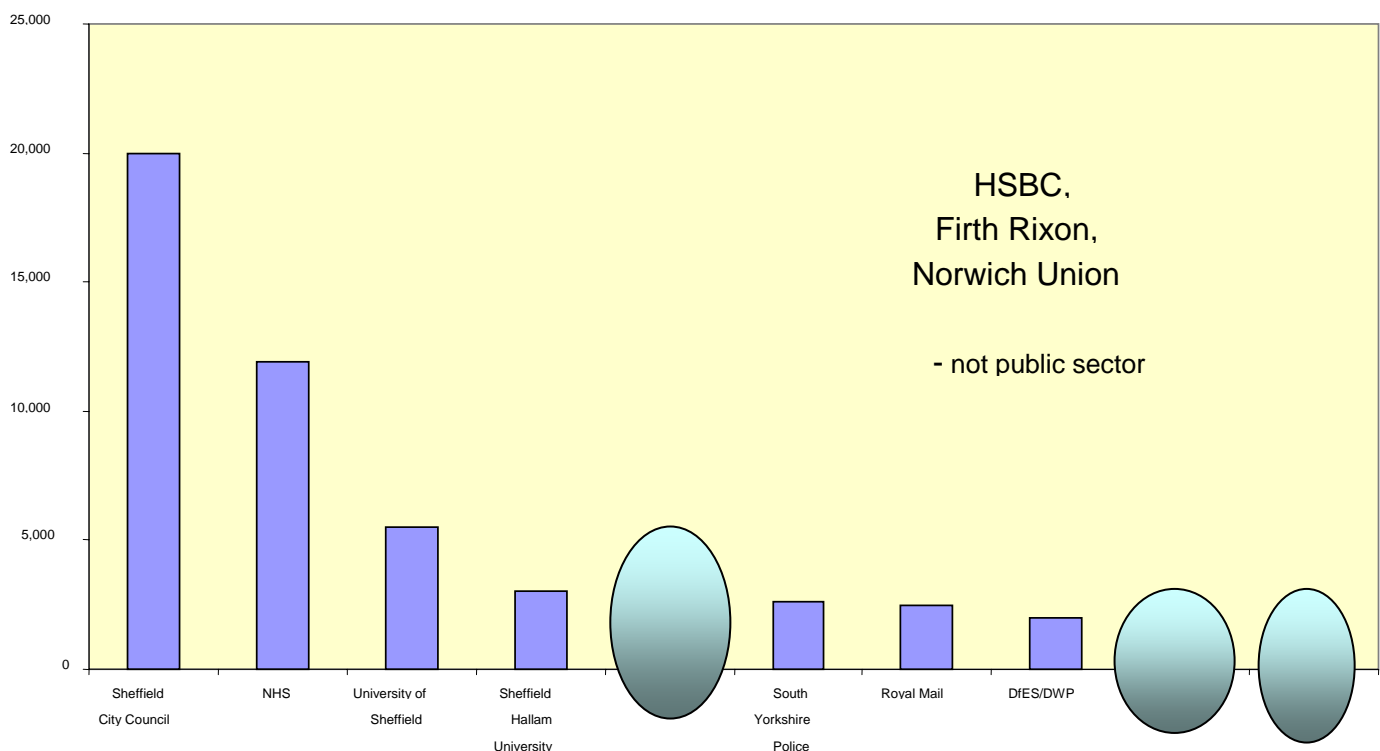


Figure 4 illustrates that of the top 10 Sheffield employers, seven are public sector, with HSBC the only private company to employ more than 2000 people.

In the wake of the decline of both the coal and steel industries, small businesses are now the major employers in South Yorkshire. In short, Sheffield is a city of micro businesses, a notoriously difficult landscape for a College to practice, 'employer engagement.'

Figure 4: Top 10 Sheffield employers



4.0 The relationship between Further Education and the business community

One perennial issue is a mismatch in general understanding of exactly what is the function of FE. This ranges from a straightforward statement, '*the function of further education institutions is to educate learners*',¹⁸ to more detailed mission statements. For example, '*To inspire and equip learners for productive employment and fulfilling lives*'¹⁹ – the mission statement of the Sheffield College.

All colleges have a diverse range of learners, courses and training opportunities. This diversity ranges through HE, through full-time 16-19 provision to bespoke, full-cost short course provision for employers. Sheffield College is no different to this norm.

The recently published Leitch report says that '*less than 10 per cent of employer training is in further education colleges*' (Leitch, 2006, 12). However, it later suggests that;

'the Review's recommendations will have a significant impact on Further Education colleges and providers. The strengthened focus on skills and employability, alongside a more responsive system for employers and a more demand led funding system, has provided strong incentives for colleges and other providers to focus on the needs of employers and individuals. Incentives for greater employer involvement in FE include the need for greater specialisation by colleges. Further development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and the new Employer Standard will combine with Train to Gain and the ability of colleges to offer qualifications to form a vastly improved offer to employers' (para.4.46).

The future focus is undoubtedly on Colleges increasing their focus with employers, expanding both the number and variety of qualifications which are available, at a high standard and an economic cost to employers. Public funding will only be available for vocational qualifications whose content has been approved by the appropriate Sector Skills Council (SSC). An example of such an emerging qualification is ITQ, with its approval from e-skills UK.



However, Colleges, can, and will, continue to provide 'full-cost,' bespoke training for employers. One local example is that of Skills for Business with the bus group First Mainline (FML). First Mainline first contacted SfB in early 2004, when a general discussion occurred, some information being shared between ourselves. They recontacted us some eight months later and we subsequently ran four unaccredited training courses on Microsoft Office applications on their premises. Evaluations were very positive.

However, for financial reasons, FML went to another training provider for a subsequent run of courses. They then returned to SfB as the quality of service subsequently received was not to the standard required. A subsequent eight one day courses are now occurring (November 2007 – February 2008).

¹⁸ The National Assembly for Wales Audit Committee (2005) <http://www.tiny.cc/gmAyE>

¹⁹ Sheffield College Mission Statement: <http://tinyurl.com/39aq3o>

The LSC is currently rolling-out, the 'New Standard'²⁰. This aims to cover all training delivered to an employer that is relevant to the employer's articulated needs. In addition to FE, private training providers are also included in the scope. The LSC aims for a significant number of providers in each region to achieve the standard by the end of 2007. However, it is likely to be a stretching requirement for most providers.



The Standard is not mandatory. However, perceived benefits are:

- the provision of a beacon for employers looking for a quality training solutions provider
- priority access to capital funding and LSC funds
- a competitive advantage
- the opportunity to rigorously review performance against external benchmarks

The Standard is assessed against two qualities:

- Employer Responsiveness (Part A)
- Vocational Excellence (Part B)

The Standard is based on the premise that responsiveness is:

- managing and developing the organisation around employers as customers
- offering products and services with resources that meet employers' needs
- being ready to tailor content to adapt to employers' specific requirements
- being ready to adapt delivery to complement the employer's operations

²⁰ The New Standard: <http://www.newstandard.co.uk/>

5.0 Employer Engagement – good practice

Many colleges have examples of good practice, however, this good practice is often not fully developed within the organisation. The Sheffield College is no exception. A recent Ofsted report (2006)²¹ said:

'20. The college is responsive to the needs of employers. Four CoVEs provide a range of bespoke courses for local business. Careful course design and planning for delivery ensure that the training is provided to match business needs and to minimise disruptions to business activities. Course developments draw on employers' specialist knowledge and the college's curriculum expertise.'

This is perhaps, an over statement of the current position within the College. Some excellent work does occur, but is such provision consistent across the whole college?

Good practice includes a number of practical aspects, but is primarily one of attitude – this College can engage with, and deliver, appropriate courses, training and qualifications to a variety of local employers – our job is to make it happen, not provide obstacles to such developments.

Locally, the LSC have recently made available, an 'Employer Engagement Toolkit'.²² This aims to be: '*be developmental in the sense that it would seek to work with colleges to raise their awareness of good practice and to provide practical guidance on how to take forward employer engagement.*' (LSCYHR, 2006, 02). It considers "*employers as strategic partners*" and "*employers as stakeholders*" in addition to "*employers as customers*".

There are many practical measures which can be taken in order to overcome the many barriers (both internal and external) and facilitate such good practice. A number of practical suggestions are listed on the next page.

²¹ Sheffield College Ofsted report, published May 2006 <http://tinyurl.com/yomgj7>

²² <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/YorkshireandtheHumber/yhrempenqtkjtjan06.pdf>

<p style="text-align: center;">Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Knowing the right people b. Business link c. National marketing d. Local economy e. Market intelligence f. Lack of links g. Market perception h. Viability for small companies i. Effort 	<p>Find the right people & making contact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. email contacts so they have a record of your proposition and contact details on their PC. ii. build a mailing list from people with whom you have interacted (delegates to courses, questionnaire responders etc) and keep the contacts informed of what you are offering iii. have email links on your website (which is ALWAYS up-to-date) iv. publicise your website – pens, letters, signature on your email ... have a memorable logo v. request mentions in JISC-RSC, local Business link newsletters and other mailing lists vi. ensure that there are appropriate advertisements in all College publicity publications – <p><i>(nb. the booklet may be targeting school leavers, but their parents will also read it!)</i></p> <p>If you are offering short courses it may be worth making an "offer they can't refuse" in order to build awareness of your capabilities.</p> <p>But make sure that what they receive is good quality and doesn't put them off!</p> <p>NEVER miss an opportunity to promote your capabilities</p> <p>If (regrettably) you get a complaint, handle it swiftly & effectively. Show that your organisation takes Customer Care seriously and will resolve issues.</p> <p>all enquiries (phone and email) have to be followed up</p>
<p>Internal Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of staff time • Marketing budget • Staff inertia • Resources • FE mind-set • Culture • Unable to find skills to meet customer needs • Availability of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Targeted internal emails to Curriculum managers, T&D, Student Service Managers, Directorate Secretariat, Office Managers etc. ii. Send appropriate internal 'all staff' emails iii. major poster campaigns across the College – ensure that your offerings are 'in your face' iv. offer incentives – voucher/money ... v. build up a list of p/t tutors, you can call on at short notice vi. be part of a larger part of the College – you can't do it all yourself!

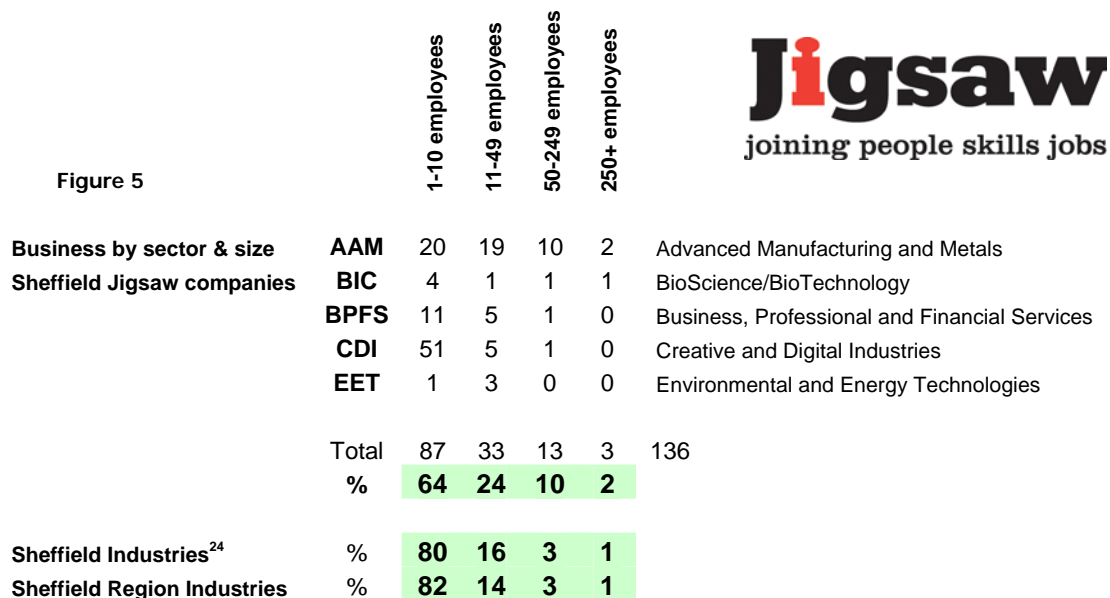
5.1 Employer Engagement – examples of good practice –

Skills for Business has worked with hundreds of (mostly small/micro) companies. For example, in the period, 2005-2006, as part of the Jigsaw project²³, SfB worked with 136 employers (see figure 5), the breakdown of sector and size, being broadly comparable to that of both Sheffield and the wider region.

In 2007, within Jigsaw, SfB has worked with over 200 employers, and has been the most successful of the brokers involved in this phase of Jigsaw. SfB is the only broker to meet, and exceed, their original targets (over 400 trainees in place from an original target of 330, and a South Yorkshire target of 1200).

This phase of Jigsaw has included a larger training element. In the evaluation report, regarding their accredited training in Sheffield, one trainee commented that:

'This was felt to have been 'brilliant.' The tutor was felt to have been very good and supportive and the training would not have been completed had it not been a requirement of the programme' (mtl (2007), annex 3).



The recent Jigsaw evaluation comments:

'Jigsaw is a good product for which there is a market need and strong policy rationale for its continuation' (mtl (2007), summary, para.2).

²³ Mtl (2007): 1.5 Jigsaw is a Job Interview Guarantee Scheme operating in South Yorkshire and funded by the LSC and Objective 1 ESF. Only businesses within the following high growth sectors are eligible for funding: Advanced manufacturing and metals, Bioscience, Business professional and financial services, Creative and Digital industries and Environmental and Energy Technologies.

1.10 The programme provides businesses with the opportunity to recruit unemployed individuals or those moving from declining sectors as part of a supported training programme. Businesses are assisted to find an appropriate member of staff (or are allowed to source their own), and receive financial assistance in the form of a financial subsidy. This includes:

- 40% of the costs of formal training and development as agreed in an individual training plan;
- 40% contribution to the employer costs for the first Jigsaw trainee employed by the employer;
- 33% contribution to the employment costs for the second and up to tenth Jigsaw trainee employed; and,
- 25% contribution to the employment costs for the eleventh and any subsequent Jigsaw trainees employed.

²⁴ Sheffield First for Investment (2006), page 11

5.2 Employer Engagement – examples of the work of SfB

(a) Frogson



A prime example of how Jigsaw has benefited the employer as well as the trainee was Frogsons Waste Management. Frogson originally interacted with SfB when a number of their employees attended Microsoft (MOS) courses. After further bookings, an enquiry was made regarding a possible job placement. Frogson required assistance in identifying the right candidate and needed the Jigsaw subsidy to fund the process of a new recruit.

Sam Makin was a young school leaver who was looking to get into work when he heard of Jigsaw at his local Jobcentre Plus. He said he wasn't sure what he wanted to do but after seeing the Frogson advert on the Jigsaw website he decided to apply. He now works as a Lab Technician and says, *"When you are at this age it's good to have this help because you don't have much experience."*

Steve Chalupka, Transport and Technology manager at Frogson has been impressed with the benefits Jigsaw brings to a business:

"The Jigsaw concept is superb! Jigsaw takes the pressure off the employer in trying to identify the right candidate and the time and expenses of recruitment. The six month period also gives you peace of mind that you're not hiring the wrong candidate."

(b) Microsoft Office Case Study

Employees can find it hard to get the skills training they need. SfB worked with the Microsoft IT Academy to offer courses in relevant skills, giving employees and businesses widely recognised skills and accreditation.



An early 2004 postal survey of 1000 local businesses located within one mile of our Meadowhall centre, The Source, found people wanted IT training in business packages such as Microsoft Office Excel and Word, preferably near their place of work.

In response to this survey, we trained a number of our staff to deliver Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) courses. Skills for Business delivered its first IT Academy courses to small businesses and college staff in January 2004.

In a relatively short timescale, Sheffield College has helped hundreds of SME employees realise their potential. Its courses are well-attended and accessible to people who may find it difficult to attend conventional training. Microsoft have produced a case study which documents this involvement²⁵.

"The Sheffield College is one of the top ten Microsoft Academies in the UK, having twice achieved a Microsoft 'IT Academy' award, and, in addition, recently featuring as a case study. We are keen to continue to work closely with the Sheffield College, to build on the success of your Centre of Vocational Excellence, and fully extend the benefits that our partnership has to offer."

Terry Killer, Skills Development Manager, Microsoft Limited (UK)

²⁵ Sheffield College Microsoft IT Academy case study is now live on the Microsoft website:
<http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=201480>

(c) PGB/NHS link via the HSMWP project



Yorkshire and the Humber

The Sheffield College worked with the local SHA (South Yorkshire, who became part of the newly formed, Yorkshire and Humberside SHA in mid-2006) as a partner in the Highly Skilled Migrant Worker Project (HSMWP), steering group meetings occurring on a regular basis. This project originally acted as a match funding source for ESOL classes. However, due to political changes, the project ceased at the end of 2006. All targets outlined in the initial project plan were achieved and overall the project was judged a success.

As Jenny Horner, (Senior Project Head, Recruitment and Widening Participation, Yorkshire and the Humber, NHS) put it;

"Working with Skills for Business to deliver our language orientation programme has been a real success. They have tailored the training to meet our exact needs meaning we've been able to access highly prized technical skills much quicker and much cheaper."

One on-going issue is the difficulty encountered by refugee and migrant doctors and nurses in securing appropriate work experience opportunities which utilised their skills and qualifications.

(d) Taylor and Emmet²⁶

Taylor and Emmet refer themselves as 'one of the region's leading law firms.' They have a long successful history and an expanding case load, concerned with commercial, employment, conveyancing, litigation and family law. During 2007, they took on 13 employees on using the Jigsaw scheme.

As Hannah Southern, HR Manager, put it:



"The Jigsaw scheme has enabled Taylor & Emmet to recruit people from a non legal background. The trainees are able to begin a training programme under the Jigsaw scheme that increases their skill set, confidence and the training begins to shape their future career with us. The funding offered with this scheme allows your business to invest in training and development of individuals. At Taylor & Emmet our Jigsaw trainees are highly motivated individuals that feel valued by the firm."

"Training is an essential part of employees every day working life. Without training over time people feel less committed, productivity levels drop as skills become outdated. If businesses want their employees to feel involved and valued from their induction Jigsaw is a great scheme to participate in. The funding on offer not only assists with the compulsory training but can be put towards the employees' future development with the business. All of these positive points contribute towards an effective business with highly motivated and skilled employees."

²⁶ Taylor and Emmet - www.tayloremmet.co.uk

(e) Thornton Precision Components²⁷

Thorntons is a subsidiary of the international Symmetry Medical Group²⁸. They have worked with the College for a number of years. They took part in the last phase of Jigsaw and have 18 trainees in the current phase.

The HR Manager, Harry Toews has visited SfB premises on a number of occasions, and was one of the employers who took part in a discussion session at the IT CoVEs national event which was held on our premises in January 2007. He has also sent staff on CDI Specialist Skills funded training – work which was brokered with ourselves.



As Harry puts it:

“Working with Skills for Business at The Sheffield College provides a great benefit to our business and its growth, as well as employment in the local area. The funds that we were able to access helped us pay for induction training that helps our staff throughout their employment.”

(Sheffield First for Business, August 2007, page 7)

(f) Towntalk UK

Towntalk employ six people and provide a website design and hosting service - www.towntalk.co.uk - This is an award-winning national network of town centre web sites offering information for residents, shoppers and visitors. There are currently over 100 towns and cities involved in the Project, which has been supported by the regional development agencies, the DTi and the European Regional Development Fund. Their clients include: Bromley Council, Omagh Council, Waltham Forest Council and many others.

Towntalk have worked with SfB as part of the 2007 Jigsaw project, employing three trainees, and effectively, doubling the size of their business.

As Chief Executive, Phil Davies put it;

‘Jigsaw has reduced the risk involved in recruiting and inducting new staff. It has assisted us to prioritise both induction and training. Our Jigsaw brokers have provided us with great support and have been very helpful in supporting our growth.’

²⁷ Thornton Precision Components, Beulah Road, Sheffield S6 2AN

<http://www.symmetrymedical.com/facilities/index.cfm?page=16>

<http://www.opnews.com/profiles.php?index=14&total=46>

<http://www.engnetglobal.com/c/f.aspx/THO003>

²⁸ Symmetry Medical - <http://www.symmetrymedical.com/pages.asp?pageIndex=170>

6.0 Management Information and Employer Engagement (CRM)

'Management information is a potentially valuable tool for colleges seeking to engage with employers. For many colleges it is currently under-exploited, primarily because there is no single database that contains all activity the college undertakes with employers.'

(LSCTHR, 2006, 47)

This issue can be resolved by the appropriate use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology. CRM was originally designed for small businesses. There are elements of CRM systems, such as contact, lead, account, order, and case management that are fundamental to all businesses and deliver tangible value. The benefits of CRM technology stem from increased revenue and decreased costs.

Increased revenue primarily comes from more satisfied customers, the ability to upsell and cross-sell, and higher acceptance rates on marketing campaigns. Reduced costs are attained through a reduction in administrative time used to track down information, improved reporting, and quicker issue resolution.

Hence, CRM assists in understanding, anticipating and responding to customers' needs in a consistent way, right across the organisation. It requires an efficient and integrated internal business system. Many businesses benefit from the organisational discipline CRM imposes, as well as from the technology itself. It is a technology which Colleges need to use and exploit.

Key issues for consideration are:

- how enquiries are initially handled
- service standards that are set for college staff covering how employer enquiries are handled
- the progression of an employer enquiry up to the point at which learning starts to be delivered
- maintenance of an on-going relationship with individual employers
- complaints and appeals procedures for employers who are dissatisfied with their experience of the college.

It is important to ensure that employers – and their employees – have high quality engagements with the college if individual college-employer relationships are to continue and to develop over time.

For example, within the Sheffield College, we have ContactWise²⁹ available. However, we now require:

- (i) a detailed implementation plan which takes account of all the varied factors involved, puts names to actions and has a realistic and achievable timeline – a six-month lead-time is likely to be required before any tangible results are seen to be forthcoming
- (ii) a dedicated Project Manager who drives the development and ensures suitable training and associated staff development is in place
- (iii) appropriate resources, both people and financial

²⁹ ContactWise: <http://www.grouplink.net/products/crm/>

7.0 External and Internal barriers – good practice

External Barriers:	Good practice examples:
Business Link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Chamber of Commerce events to assist marketing activity. • Making contacts at Business Link and local Chamber of Commerce is a valuable exercise in getting the college known as a training provider for business customers.
Knowing the right people Market intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make use of personal contacts of college staff – friends, family etc. who are likely to be employed locally and can give information on local need and current practice. • Past students (both 16-19 & adult) now in the workplace can form the basis of marketing activities. Assuming they are already satisfied customers, FE can engage them as employees. • Employers with whom you already have a good working relationship can be asked to share their training plans with you. • Appropriate use of CRM software
Lack of links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build customer relationships by offering consultancy and Training Needs Analysis. Being able to carry out good TNA is a competitive advantage of FE over commercial providers. Charging for TNA as consultancy can improve perceptions of quality. • Aim to meet people face-to-face, and for technical training find out if the HR or training manager is really the right person to speak to or if it is handled, for example, by the IT manager. • Regular newsletter with interesting info e.g. news from Sector Skills Council can be used to link to courses. Only use e-marketing if your customers can “opt-in” to your mailing list.
Market perception. <i>Problem: many employers do not perceive FE colleges to be their first choice training provider.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a specific brand which is linked to the College, not be a College ‘which also does this’ – for example, the Sheffield College, ‘Skills for Business’ brand • Remember – we are marketing skills, not qualifications • Don’t under-price good training. Check competition and price keenly but there is no need to vastly undercut commercial competitors, this can devalue your offer, as it is perceived as low quality as well as low cost. • Be clear on what your target market is; is it employer training departments, or unemployed/job changers? Low prices will attract a different customer base • Use the right people in your organisation to talk initially to businesses (e.g. use account managers or business development staff, not teaching staff or curriculum managers). Good subject knowledge is no substitute for good business sense or sales skills. However, some lecturers/trainers are excellent when relating to business. • If you are charging a commercial rate, quality of <i>everything</i> must be right, not just training, e.g. well turned-out instructors, good quality lunch provided and training away from 16-19 student environment. Separating business customers from full-time students does not mean you are degrading full-time learners; they are simply a different market. • Don’t underestimate the impact of the 16-19 experience on parents of students; they are your local employer customers. • Use an information seminar with no hard sell to draw people into the room. Branding using partnerships such as the Microsoft Academy programme can be successful.
Viability for small company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use outside funding (eg. Objective One, ESF, Jigsaw ...) to provide subsidised provision
Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a CD version of the prospectus as well as printed copies – CDs are cheaper to produce & can include video/sound – perhaps your radio ad.?

Internal barriers:	Good practice examples:
Lack of staff time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure marketing activity is in proportion to the ability to cope with responses. Possibly market in stages to groups of employers, follow them all up before moving on. • Assessors can refer trainees from the employers they are already visiting. Giving assessors sales training would assist this process. Make assessors aware they need to be salespeople to ensure their futures.
Staff inertia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the culture of trainers/lecturers. Start by training delivery staff in appropriate sales techniques so teachers become your sales force.
FE mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at how commercial companies source new business and try to implement their ideas and processes – don't follow FE student recruitment practice that doesn't work with employers. • Stop thinking about "students" and start thinking about "delegates" and "customers"
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer customers need to be handled in a business-to-business not college-to-student relationship – e.g. if possible, re-brand enrolment forms to "booking forms" for full cost training and try to keep paperwork to a minimum for trainees. • Have a "customer journey" and make sure everyone knows it – this will need SMT support to ensure there is "no wrong door" when employers contact the college. • Culture change will take time but it is essential to have clear backing from Senior Management.
Unable to find skills to meet customer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage employers with existing good products.
Availability of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating lower contact hours for full-time staff enables them to be used for commercial training without impacting on the rest of their workload.
Locations of venue/building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential to have: separate reception area, 'smiling' reception staff, no car parking issues, good public transport links – Skills for Business has achieved this vital first step
Marketing department not always geared toward employer contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a separate business marketing/prospectus, so employers don't have to trawl through student prospectuses, which are often inappropriately branded for the employer market. • Survey potential customers to find out what local training needs are then build courses to suit the local need. The business database can start from existing employer customers that have used the college for training. • Contact appropriate email lists (eg JISC/RSC, local Business Link, Letcetera etc ...)

8.0 Recommendations:

1. The exploration of the development of a 'National Work Experience' scheme. This could be used for many groups, for example: Y10/11 pupils in school, 16-19 students in FE, HE placement students, unemployed, returnees to work, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. If all the institutions responsible for work experience schemes could be brought together (with employer organisations, as partners), there would be both greater clarity and consistency, in addition to the development of common processes and protocols. Such a development would require a clear lead from government
2. Development of an easy to use, web-based tool which will equate the levels of overseas qualifications to their UK counterpart. Such a development would require a clear EU lead. One immediate use for Colleges would at enrolment – is this student studying for their first full level 2, first full level 3 or are they a full level three 'jumper?' – all categories which currently qualify for LSC fee remission.
3. Colleges will require a more carefully considered policy in relation to fees and income generation than has perhaps historically been the case.
4. While accepting that all staff are likely to be involved in selling the college to employers at some point, the Sheffield College should consolidate a single employer-facing section - not disparate. This should be the developing Skills for Business (SfB) brand. This would ensure that we are:
 - speaking with one voice
 - providing a speedy, consistent response to employer requests
 - utilising a single data collection/contacts interface - ContactWise

In summary, an employer-responsive **college**:

- is NOT one that sends a prospectus to 15,000 employers and sees what happens
- is a college that can answer my questions and provide me with solutions efficiently and effectively
- is a no hassle organisation
- is where one phone call fixes all
- is where I can get the right person straight away
- is one where I have a Business to Business relationship – key account managers – named people.
- has staff who understand my business
- has staff who understand my needs
- has staff who can sort my problems in a timescale and cost I am happy with
- has a slick and professional telephone system
- produces marketing and promotional activities that use the language of employers – both paper based and web
- has a fully effective CRM system – that all appropriate staff can use – that provides real management information
- provides an holistic service – organisational needs analysis – tailored courses – flexible modes of delivery – up to date physical and human resources – advice
- provides feedback loops that deal with problems quickly and continually improve services
- has a brokerage/referral system that is comprehensive and responds quickly

9.0 Bibliography/References:

The Foster Report: Realising the potential: A review of the future role of further education colleges. (2005) DfES

Learning and Skills Council Yorkshire and the Humber Region – LSCYHR (2006) Employer Engagement Toolkit: A toolkit for FE Colleges
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/YorkshireandtheHumber/yhrempengtktjan06.pdf>

Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the global economy - world class skills (2006) http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf

Microsoft (2007) Case Study: the Sheffield College
<http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=201480>

Milburn Trinnaman Lacourt (mtl) (2007) Evaluation of the Jigsaw Programme FINAL REPORT. LSC Y&H

Pickersgill, D (2006, revised 2007), Delivering an Outside Event. Skills for Business (internal paper)

Sheffield First for Investment (2006) Sheffield, England key location factors 2006

Appendix One: Geographical location of Sheffield

Sheffield is located in a central, inland location, within easy reach of many parts of the UK. The city is well served by national road and rail networks and has easy access to a number of international airports.



Appendix Two: South Yorkshire Employment Data³⁰

	South Yorkshire		Y & H		
Total Area (km ²)	1,559		10.1%	15,413	
Population and workforce	South Yorkshire		England		
Population	1,266,337	2.6%	49,138,831		
Working Age Population	775,000	77.3%	35,324,000	77.2%	
	Male	401,000	82.7%	18,136,000	82.4%
	Female	374,000	72.3%	17,188,000	72.5%
Economically Active	586,000	75.7%	27,805,000	78.7%	
	Male	323,000	80.6%	15,165,000	83.6%
	Female	263,000	70.4%	12,641,000	73.5%

Source: Office of National Statistics, local area labour force survey, 2003

	South Yorkshire		GB	
Employment				
Managers & Senior Officials	71,000	12.4%	4,101,000	14.9%
Professional Occupations	58,000	10.2%	3,403,000	12.4%
Associate Professional & Technical	74,000	12.9%	3,812,000	13.9%
Administrative & secretarial	59,000	10.3%	3,461,000	12.6%
Skilled Trades Occupations	72,000	12.5%	3,116,000	11.3%
Personal service occupations	48,000	8.4%	2,099,000	7.6%
Sales & Customer Services	51,000	8.8%	2,181,000	7.9%
Process Plant & Machine Operatives	64,000	11.1%	2,039,000	7.4%
Elementary occupations	75,000	13.1%	3,185,000	11.6%
All employed in Manufacturing	95,000	16.5%	3,680,000	13.4%
All employed in Construction	57,000	10%	2,150,000	7.8%
All employed in Service Industries	416,000	72.5%	20,932,000	76.2%

Source: Office of National Statistics, local area labour force survey, 2003

	South Yorkshire	GB
Employment Costs		
Average gross weekly wage	£414.00	£475.08

Source: Office of National Statistics, New Earnings Survey, 2003

	South Yorkshire	England
The Economy		
GVA / GVA per head	14.8/11,692	81.5/16,339

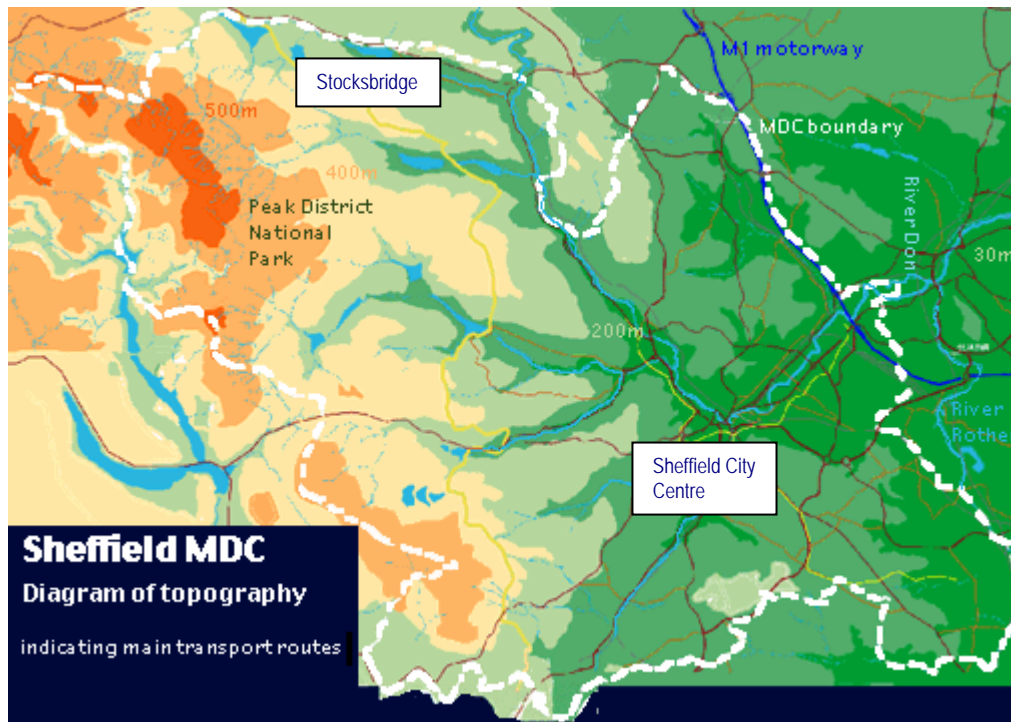
Source: Office of National Statistics, Regional Gross Value Added, 2004

	South Yorkshire		GB	
Businesses				
Agriculture & fishing	61	0.2%	12,086	0.5%
Manufacturing	3,567	10.0%	171,665	7.8%
Construction	3,519	9.9%	199,262	9.0%
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	12,086	33.8%	653,264	29.5%
Transport & communications	1,947	5.5%	103,185	4.7%
Banking, finance & insurance, etc	8,083	22.6%	674,480	30.5%
Public admin, education & health	3,591	10.1%	191,603	8.7%
Other services	2,802	7.8%	203,435	9.2%
Total	35,720		2,213,793	

Source: Office of National Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry, 2003

³⁰ http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/www/view.asp?content_id=81&parent_id=42

Appendix Three: topographical map of Sheffield³¹



Sheffield Metropolitan District - Topography

	Hectares	Percentage
Land over 500m	25742	2.18
400-500	125424	10.64
300-400	210773	17.88
200-300	259665	22.03
100-200	346252	29.37
Land under 100m	207677	17.62

94% of all housing land is over 100m above sea level

15% of all housing land is above 200m

200m is the normal limit for devel. in UK, above that the level of energy required to heat homes becomes excessive

This diagram indicates the altitude differences in Sheffield between the highest and lowest points. The lowest is about 30 m above sea level – on the east, where the River Don leaves the city and flows into Rotherham; the highest points are on the moors to the west of the city where the land is above 500 m. Over 60% of the city is above 200 m above sea level, above the normal limit of development.

Much of Sheffield MDC is undevelopable rural land protected by National Park or Greenbelt status. The River Don and its tributaries form the natural drainage system, but were also responsible for the extensive June 2007 flooding, a natural disaster which will cost over £30M simply to renew the Sheffield infrastructure.³²

³¹ From: <http://www.arbeer.demon.co.uk/MAPweb/Sheffield.htm>

³² Floods 'will cost Sheffield £30m' http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/south_yorkshire/6896710.stm

Appendix Four: Sheffield Economic Masterplan: SWOT Analysis³³

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two successful Universities, with a strong City (physical) and international presence • Competitive niches in advanced engineering and CDI, environmental technologies, health & healthcare • Recent growth in financial and business services sectors and increasing confidence in the commercial office market • Strong public sector employment base, including National Departments and agencies • A legacy of innovation within industry • A liveable place - attractive neighbourhoods, good sport & leisure facilities, access to the countryside • A rejuvenated city centre and improving investor confidence • Excellent City Leadership and a strong track record in successful regeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak economic hinterland and limited city regional market • Limited high value added service sector employment • Low productivity across the business base • Low levels of economic participation and high levels of worklessness in some neighbourhoods. • Income levels lower than other core cities. • Limited business and economic infrastructure (prime office offer) • Poor connectivity to London, Leeds and Manchester • Limited business base and lack of an entrepreneurial culture • Poor or neutral external perceptions of the city
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities have tremendous potential as drivers of growth - IPR, innovation and student expansion. • Growth in leisure and visitor markets and green and environmental product markets • Economic growth of the key northern cities (Manchester & Leeds) • Increased leisure and recreation spending, locally, nationally and internationally • Growth in business and professional services • Growth in world trade/globalisation • New investment and fiscal freedoms • Increasing importance of the climate change agenda • Public sector relocation • Linkages and collaboration within the city-region • International Gateways – Manchester & Doncaster Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation, increasing competitive pressures on manufacturing base • Strong competition from other cities and towns • Development of Manchester & Leeds axis without Sheffield • Failure to maintain strong Government confidence • A national or international economic slowdown • Limited public sector investment in major infrastructure projects in the north of England • Increasing regulation and red tape

³³ From Sheffield Economic Masterplan (2007) <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/?pgid=117660&fs=s>