

The Automotive Sector

As the economy recovers, new jobs and opportunities will emerge. The basic skills required for many of these jobs are expected to rise – it is estimated that by 2010 around 95% of all new jobs will be at Level 2 or above. This range of fact sheets have been designed to support people in making informed choices about future employment and / or training to make the best of these new opportunities.

The North East Automotive Sector

The Automotive sector relates to the manufacture of vehicles. It is a dynamic and forward-looking sector to work in, and includes not only making the vehicles but also research and development (R&D) and specialist services such as design engineering. It covers construction and advanced performance engineering aspects of motor sport, as well as the core vehicle manufacturers and component suppliers. It does not include retail (selling cars to people).

Job roles in the sector are varied. Many come with excellent training opportunities. They include production line operatives, designers, safety engineers, parts manufacturers, researchers, planners and IT experts.

The sector employs roughly 26,000 people in the region. The Nissan plant in Sunderland is one of the UK's largest car factories and employs over 3,000 people. The Automotive sector also includes many smaller companies in the 'supply chain' which make parts for the bigger companies like Nissan, and are also very important.

The British car industry is both efficient and sustainable, and it has a promising future. The Government recognises this and it is currently working with car companies to keep people working in the Automotive sector (by making sure that job losses are minimised).



To stimulate demand for new cars, the 2009 Budget introduced a new scheme to encourage people to buy new cars by trading in their old ones for a cash discount.

The so-called 'Green Agenda' (the move towards environmentally friendly cars and vehicles) is having a big influence on the Automotive industry today and the North East hopes to benefit from these developments. The region is one of eight locations for the low carbon vehicle project which is set to accelerate the use of low carbon cars. The £10.7m North East project will see an initial 35 passenger vehicles developed in the region. In addition, the North East is forging ahead and installing new electronic vehicle charging points. These developments will be a massive step forward in plans for the large-scale development of electric vehicles in the North East.

Skills required in the Automotive sector

The skills required in the Automotive sector are often 'hands on' trade skills but there are opportunities for people from all backgrounds. Increasingly there is a need in the industry for people with high level skills to work in roles that are 'hands off'. There is a need for creative people who are capable of developing new ideas, for jobs such as car designers.



Employers in the North East Automotive sector look for skills such as:

- Management and leadership
- Team working
- Customer-handling and communication skills
- Innovation and creativity

The sector has traditionally hired a high proportion of its employees through Apprenticeships, and there is demand for older people to fill vacancies, as well as for younger people. Previous work experience is valued, and every year there is demand for new applicants to replace those who retire. Many types of qualifications are valued in the Automotive sector, from Apprenticeships to NVQs to Degrees. Qualifications which provide 'hands on' experience are generally the best ones to study for.

People working in the Automotive sector will need to have higher skill levels than before, often at NVQ Levels 3+ or equivalent, so that the industry can keep improving and can compete internationally. This is because cars are becoming more and more complex, so higher skill levels are needed to design and build them.

Automotive sector training provision in the North East is quite varied and there are a number of courses available in engineering, manufacturing and associated areas. There are five universities throughout the North East which provide a choice of related courses.

For more information about the Automotive sector please see the following websites:

- The Auto Industry website North East page www.autoindustry.co.uk/regions/north-east
- The Institute of the Motor Industry www.motor.org.uk
- The Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership www.lowcvp.org.uk