

## FASHION AND TEXTILES FACT SHEET – NORTHERN IRELAND

### OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS



Skillfast-UK represents the fashion and textiles sector, including the areas of: apparel, footwear and leather, laundry and dry-cleaning and the design, manufacture and wholesale of textile products.

An estimated 10,000 people are employed in the sector in Northern Ireland, across 1,800 businesses.<sup>1</sup>

There is a wide range of careers available in the sector. These range from craft jobs such as weaving, where fabrics are produced using a weaving machine, to design and technical roles.

An estimated 2,000 people will need to be replaced as they retire from the sector in the period up to 2015. However, the level of recruitment will be balanced by the continuing decline of the sector in Northern Ireland. Fashion and textiles is a relatively small sector in Northern Ireland, making it difficult to estimate the recruitment needs over the coming years. Best estimates indicate there will be around 500 openings between now and 2015.<sup>2</sup>

### OCCUPATIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

The broad trends in the sector's projected recruitment requirement for the UK are set out below, extrapolated from the Working Futures 2007-2017 study.

Design occupations are expected to have the largest recruitment need over the next ten years. This is a result of the expansion in demand, as well as the need to replace existing staff. Other occupations, such as production managers, sales and retail assistants and managers (including those in laundry and dry-cleaning) will also have a positive recruitment requirement.

There will be a decline in the recruitment needs for operative roles, including textile process operatives, who are involved in turning fibres into yarns, and sewing machinists. However, technical skills will remain critical to the future success of the sector.

<sup>1</sup> TBR economic survey 2008

<sup>2</sup> Skillfast-UK estimates based on Working Futures 2007-2017, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

## SKILLS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entry requirements vary according to the job. There are no formal qualification requirements for many jobs at shop-floor level, although employers will usually look for a candidate with good practical skills. Training is usually provided on the job and it takes time and patience to master the techniques.

For technical and design jobs a qualification at degree level is usually preferred, although practical experience and skills are the most important factors in a recruitment decision. Employers also expect applicants to demonstrate enthusiasm, time management, communication skills and commercial awareness. Further information on skills and qualifications can be found at Skillfast-UK's careers websites.

## CURRENT VACANCIES AND SKILL SHORTAGES

70% of sector businesses in Northern Ireland feel there is a shortage of skilled recruits to fill the technical roles they rely on.<sup>3</sup> Key examples of these jobs are sewing and pattern cutting/grading. Employers report that candidates lack hands-on technical skills, commercial awareness and have a lack of practical experience.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT IN NORTHERN IRELAND...

- there is an even split of males and females employed in the sector, although this can vary by occupation. For example, men form the majority in the textiles sector<sup>4</sup>
- around 87% of employees in the sector work full-time, although part-time work is more prevalent in particular industries, such as laundry and dry-cleaning<sup>4</sup>
- around 100 people are currently enrolled in higher education courses in fashion and textiles subjects<sup>5</sup>
- the average gross weekly earnings for a skilled worker in a textiles/garment trade is £374, in comparison to the figure of £347 for employees across all industries<sup>6</sup>
- the average working hours for an employee working in a textiles/garment trade is 40 hours per week, compared to 37 hours for employees across all industries.<sup>6</sup>

## USEFUL LINKS

Careers Service NI	Provides an impartial all-age careers information, advice and guidance service: <a href="http://www.careersserviceni.com">www.careersserviceni.com</a>
JobCentre Online	Contains vacancies currently notified to Jobs and Benefit offices: <a href="http://www.jobcentreonline.com">www.jobcentreonline.com</a>
Just the Job	Skillfast-UK's careers website: <a href="http://www.skillfast-uk.org/justthejob">www.skillfast-uk.org/justthejob</a>
Can U Cut It?	Skillfast-UK's careers website for fashion: <a href="http://www.canucutit.co.uk">www.canucutit.co.uk</a>
Technical Textiles	Skillfast-UK's careers website for technical textiles: <a href="http://www.techtextiles.co.uk">www.techtextiles.co.uk</a>

Information provided by Skillfast-UK. Last updated Jan 2009. To check that this is the most up-to-date fact sheet go to [www.careersserviceni.com](http://www.careersserviceni.com)

<sup>3</sup> Skillfast-UK survey of businesses 2008

<sup>4</sup> NI Census of Employers 2005

<sup>5</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency 2006/2007

<sup>6</sup> Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2008