

Cleaning, hygiene and waste industry remains central to UK economy

3 years ago



The number of businesses in the cleaning, hygiene and waste sector grew to 69,005 in 2021 and the number of employees working in the sector remained static at 1.47 million, according to the latest statistics available, the British Cleaning Council's (BCC) has revealed.

The BCC's 2022 research report, which has just been published, has produced a number of interesting insights that are good news for the UK economy.

The number of people employed in the cleaning, hygiene and waste sector in 2021 was approximately five per cent of the UK workforce, ensuring that the industry remains one of the top ten biggest industries in the UK, the report said.

According to the latest information available, the industry contributed £58.9 billion to the UK economy in 2019, up from the previous year, showing that it went into the Covid-19 pandemic in robust health. All subsectors, bar landscape service activities, saw a year-on-year growth in turnover up to 2021.

The report recorded that turnover in the sector increased by 22 per cent from 2015 to 2021, a similar figure to growth in the economy as a whole, further showing the strength of the industry.

Sector staff had been on the frontline in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, the report also noted, with the current pressures, increased workloads and ongoing uncertainty leaving many exhausted.

The BCC releases a research report packed with interesting and revealing facts and figures about the sector every year. Free, digital copies of the report are available on request.

This year's report says that the number of sector businesses grew from nearly 66,420 in 2020 but included a number of opportunistic firms which started up during the pandemic offering cleaning services.

The BCC and members have warned previously that consumers need to be wary of purchasing cleaning products and services from the rogue traders which sprang up during the pandemic to profit from public alarm about Covid-19.

The report said that the cleaning and hygiene industry directly employed over 941,000 people in 2021, two per cent less than the previous year. The much higher figure quoted above includes cleaning across other industries such as public services and hospitality. Many BCC member organisations have also reported a greater interest in firms joining.

A BCC survey of the sector during the first year of the pandemic demonstrated how variable the impact of Covid-19 had been on the industry, with some sectors and businesses seeing work drying up and staff going into furlough, while others saw a boom in demand.

The new research also found that the cleaning and hygiene industry was quite competitive and nearly nine in ten firms were micro businesses, employing less than ten individuals.

It also identified some challenges for the sector, including a record number of job vacancies. Employers in the cleaning sector need to adapt to a rapidly changing workforce if they are to win the 'frantic' battle for workers, it said.

With 27 per cent of the workforce aged over 55 years, the industry needs to do more to attract younger staff, the report said.

In terms of training, it also highlighted the 'good headway' made with the proposal for a Cleaning Hygiene Operative apprenticeship. A repeated request across all areas of the industry is the need for basic, entry level qualifications, the report noted.

BCC Chairman Jim Melvin said: "It is clear going into the pandemic that the industry was arguably in good shape in as much as it was growing and maintaining its position as one of the top ten biggest sectors in the UK and continuing to contribute a huge amount to the UK economy.

"Clearly, we do not yet have the more recent figures which will show the full impact of the pandemic immediately and in the longer term. It also is possible that the decline in numbers directly employed by the industry in 2021 is the first sign of the current severe staffing problems, and next year's report will give a clearer picture.

"The latest report is full of interesting and revealing facts and figures about the cleaning, hygiene and waste industry, which will be useful and interesting to anyone working in the sector. We will be pleased to be able to provide a free copy to industry colleagues, on request."

For a free digital copy of the research report, visit the BCC stand at the Manchester Cleaning Show or email compsec@britishcleaningcouncil.org

You can read the report in full here: https://issuu.com/thebcc/docs/bcc-rr-2022_final_4.4.22

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