

SUCCESS THROUGH SKILLS

SKILLS STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ISSUE 4 – MAR 08

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Labour Market Information:

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How can DEL help employers?

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"Towards the end of January, the Executive published its first Programme for Government which identified the economy as the primary focus of the Executive. Our vision for a successful future economy is one that is characterised by high productivity, a highly skilled and flexible workforce, and employment growth.



"But this is not a new vision by any means - my officials have been addressing these issues since 2004's publication of Success through Skills, the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. For the first time, the scale of the problem was identified across the entire skills spectrum: from the need to improve the levels of numeracy and literacy, right through to management and leadership skills. As such, the Skills Strategy has formed the basis for the development of skills in Northern Ireland for the past three years.

"Government has a key role to play in shaping the skills agenda but real results cannot be achieved in isolation – employers and individuals must also play their part. An increasingly skilled workforce will become increasingly mobile. People with skills that are in high demand are likely to seek the best employment opportunities and if Northern Ireland cannot provide these opportunities, we will lose the very people we have invested in. If businesses and employer bodies wish to attract and retain suitably skilled personnel they must ensure that their sectors, and the opportunities it provides, are attractive.

"The vision of Northern Ireland being highly competitive in global terms can only be achieved if businesses are prepared to engage with the skills development process and to talk directly to us. As I said at the recent Workforce Development Seminar in Armagh – I can assure you that my officials and I will be listening."

SIR REG EMPEY MLA – Minister for Employment and Learning

Latest Labour Market Information

The Review of Labour Market Information was announced as a key

Development Programme

- [Investors in People](#)
- [New Deal](#)
- [Bridge to Employment](#)
- [Disablement Advisory Service](#)
- [Employment Rights](#)
- [Employment Service](#)

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strand of Success through Skills, the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Department for Employment and Learning has just published findings from its review of the Labour Market Information through a report which was launched by the Minister, Sir Reg Empey during a visit to the North West. The report examines how labour market information, which includes information on earnings and employment, can be used to understand better the demand for skills in Northern Ireland.

>> [Read more](#)

Final countdown to National Training Awards 2008

Information breakfast seminars were held in a number of locations throughout Northern Ireland during the months of January and February. These were well attended with over 100 individuals and businesses turning up to find out more about the event. This year's application deadline is 25 April 2008 so if you are still considering entering the competition



it's not too late. Application forms and further information about the Awards can be found at www.ntani.gov.uk or by contacting Catherine Millar, Department for Employment and Learning on 028 9025 7474 or catherine.millar@delni.gov.uk

Women in Construction Network

Did you know that less than 10% of workers in the construction industry are women and that less than 1% are employed in craft related positions? In order to support females in the industry Northern Ireland is developing its own Women in Construction Network through a joint Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)/Construction Skills venture. Registering with the Network is free of charge so if you are a woman involved in the construction industry, or have any female employees, then contact Vilma Patterson at vilma@spaceni.co.uk.

Review of Northern Ireland Economy

Employment and Learning Minister, Sir Reg Empey, recently met with Sir David Varney who has conducted a series of meetings with Ministers as part of the second review of the Northern Ireland Economy.

>> [Read more](#)

Connected – a major new business support service

Minister for Employment and Learning, Sir Reg Empey has welcomed the arrival of an innovative new project which sees Queen's University, the University of Ulster and the six new Further Education Colleges working together. This new and exciting initiative is expected to help companies of all shapes and sizes gain access to world class expertise, technology and research from Northern Ireland's Universities and Colleges. It is thought that this will boost their competitiveness, develop new products and increase market opportunities. For further information contact Boyd McDowell at the Department for Employment and Learning on 028 9044 1778 or email boyd.mcdowell@delni.gov.uk or you can log on to www.connected.ni.org

Graduate Careers Fairs

The Department for Employment and Learning will be one of the many exhibitors at the graduate recruitment fairs to be held in Glasgow and Edinburgh during the month of May. A number of private sector companies, with current graduate vacancies, will be accompanying us. We are keen to highlight the employment opportunities that exist here and encourage people to consider Northern Ireland as a place to live and work. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Sian McCleave at the Department for Employment and Learning on 028 9044 1778 or email sian.mccleave@delni.gov.uk

Bridge to Employment

Local firm, Schrader Electronics, employs 830 people in Carrickfergus and Antrim and is a market leader in devices which detect deflation in tyres and display dashboard information to the driver. The Department for Employment and Learning's Bridge to Employment Programme has worked with Schrader since 2004, and has assisted them in creating over 75 jobs to date. Bridge helps the company cover the cost of initial training for new employees in various roles throughout the company including production and machine operators as well as more technical posts like Research and Development Technicians, Customer Product Engineers and Product Support Engineers. The Department is to provide further support, worth over £56,000 over the next six months as the firm seeks to expand its workforce in order to meet rising demand for its products, particularly from the USA. This support complements the recent announced by DETI Minister, Nigel Dodds, of support for Research and Development and high levels skills training from Invest NI.

If you are an employer and would like to find out more about the *Bridge to Employment* programme, please download our [Employer's Guide](#) or alternatively, please [contact us](#) and we will send you a copy. See what previous client companies have to say about *Bridge to Employment* [here](#).

All Island Skill Conference

An All Island Skills Conference, jointly hosted by the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department for Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, will take place on the 9 October in the North West. Plans are being finalised at present and further information will be available on the Department's website over coming months.

CASE STUDY: ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Hugh Scott from Carrickfergus is the lifelong learner representative with FG Wilson and would be the first to admit that he has come a long way since taking the decision to return to education. Hugh left school at 14 with little or no qualifications and through time he realised that there was real need for him to brush up on his literacy and numeracy skills. Working in a job requiring his practical abilities rather than academic knowledge, learning was the furthest thing from his mind. Through time, work and the duties associated with it,



changed, and Hugh was required to put pen to paper which he found quite an ordeal considering that he hadn't done so in years. Through his employer, FG Wilson, and his involvement with the union Hugh became involved in [Essential Skills](#) learning. Whilst he was hesitant about the idea of returning to the Classroom, Hugh has great praise for Essential Skills learning and would encourage anyone in a similar situation to sign up for courses today. Hugh's experience has given him a whole new outlook on life and brought about new and exciting opportunities.

Hugh explains further:

"I was never very academic and having left school at an early age I was more concerned about getting a skilled job and earning a wage. Through time I came to realise that perhaps my reading and writing wasn't as good as I would have liked and I wasn't always happy about having to rely on others when it came to filling in forms or writing a simple letter.

"It was through FG Wilson and my involvement with the union that I heard about the Essential Skills Courses and decided that it was now or never. Whilst I was nervous about going back into a classroom environment I signed up for the courses and have since achieved numerous literacy and numeracy qualifications. My concerns about the classes were short lived as they were far removed from how remembered them from my school days. Lessons were very informal and there was a real sense of teamwork. The encouragement and support from both the tutor and other learners was invaluable. As a result of this learning I have now moved into a new line of work and am part of the technical training team within FG Wilson working as a lifelong learner representative. My role here is to work with the employees and encourage them to embark on Essential Skills courses as well as various other work specific courses. I have a new found confidence and I am now the one filling in forms and writing letters for others which is quite an achievement for me."

If you are an employer who is interested in offering learning opportunities within the workplace or at your [local Further Education College](#), then please call 0800 731 2426. Learning opportunities for individuals can be obtained by calling 0800 660 800. Trade Unions are also involved with Essential Skills Learning and further information can be found at [Trade Union Learning](#)

Do you need help with your recruitment?

Ever thought of using the Department's online recruitment service? Employers and Recruitment agencies can avail of our vacancy listing service -

at no cost - by simply logging on to [EmployersOnline NI](#). Your vacancy is then automatically displayed on [JobCentreOnline](#) and throughout the Department's network of Jobs and Benefits Offices. If you would like to find out more, call 0800 3289135.



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