

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

It is hard to believe that we have another year behind us and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best for 2009.

As 2008 drew to a close the current economic downturn had started to create many challenges and, unfortunately, it looks like this gloom will continue in the weeks and months ahead. For all our employers, how they address these challenges will determine how quickly they will be able to react once we reach the inevitable upturn.



It is therefore important that we continue to encourage and promote training to upskill our workforce to ensure that we have the skills that will enable us to make the most out of any potential opportunities we encounter.

In response to the increasing numbers of unemployed people claiming Jobseekers Allowance my Department has introduced a number of measures to increase operational capacity and ensure that we provide the service that clients expect and deserve.

As every week we heard of more redundancies across Northern Ireland in the Automotive, Construction and Engineering sectors, some of our Apprentices' futures had been in doubt. I am pleased to say that new contingency arrangements have now been made for those Apprentices who may face redundancy that will enable them to continue their training. You can find out more about these arrangements by calling the free phone number 0800 085 4573 or emailing ApprenticeshipsNI@delni.gov.uk.

Whilst a number of people are facing uncertain employment futures I am also hearing from employers that there are still skills shortages in key economic sectors, such as ICT. The 'C'Mon Over' campaign is, as ever, working to attract suitably skilled people to Northern Ireland and if you have vacancies, I would urge you to become involved. We will be out and about at many graduate fairs in the coming months and if you would like to become involved in this, or one of our networking events, then please email us at cmonoverni@delni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9044 1813 for

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Contact us:
 Skills and Industry
 Division
 Department for
 Employment
 and Learning
 Lesley Buildings
 61 Fountain Street
 BELFAST
 BT1 5EX
[Successthroughskills
 @delni.gov.uk](mailto:Successthroughskills@delni.gov.uk)
 Tel: 028 90441813

further information.

More than ever we need to work closely to overcome the challenges ahead and to make the best of what we have.

SIR REG EMPEY MLA – Minister for Employment and Learning

Minister visits North Carolina



Sir Reg Empey, called for businesses, colleges and employment services to work together to help create economic prosperity during a recent visit to North Carolina. During the visit the Minister was keen to see what was being done to attract and retain high quality businesses and industries and how US practices could be applied

back home.

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Apprentice of the Year Awards 2009

Each year the Department for Employment and Learning pays tribute to the Northern Ireland Apprentice of the Year. This year's event is due to take place on 19 May 2009 at the Belfast Hilton hotel. There are currently over 9000 Apprentices in Northern Ireland, representing a diverse range of industry and business sectors. Through the Apprentice of the Year event the Department seizes the opportunity to recognise those who play a pivotal role in the delivery of top quality Apprenticeship training i.e. employers and Training Organisations. By investing in your workforce through Apprenticeship training you will reap the benefits in a variety of ways, by improving your productivity, motivating your staff, avoiding skills gaps and keeping up to date with the ever changing skills requirements of your industry, helping you prepare for the challenges ahead. If you already employ an Apprentice and consider that you do an exemplary job as an employer you! owe it to yourself and your Apprentice to find out more. Closing date for entries is 3rd March 2009. Visit www.apprenticeshipsni.info for application forms.

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Success through Skills Stakeholder Event

The Department hosted a stakeholder event in November 2008 in Malone House, Belfast. The event was attended by key stakeholders including representatives from local Universities, Further Education colleges, Sector Skills Councils and

businesses. The purpose of the event was to give Oxford Economics the opportunity to present their initial findings having been commissioned by the Department to undertake a skills forecasting exercise. It is expected that once complete, the study will forecast the demand for skills in Northern Ireland in the short, medium and longer term under a number of economic growth scenarios.

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Skills Conference 2009

This years skills conference will take place on 27 May 2009 in W5 at the Odyssey Arena. Registration will open shortly and we will keep you informed about the event over the coming months through this newsletter and the Department website.

Management Month

Each year in Northern Ireland, February is designated as **Management Month**, where the clear focus is on assisting NI owner-managers to invest in the development of their leadership and management capability. Further details of the 2009 Management Month activities can be found on the Management Month website at www.managementmonth.com Management Month is co-ordinated by the Management and Leadership Network (MLN.)

Labour Market Information

The Department for Employment and Learning has recently published information on each of the Workforce Development Forum (WDF) areas in Northern Ireland with some interesting findings. In addition to this, a report providing an overview of labour market information for Northern Ireland was also published. The reports examine labour market issues within each of the WDFs and provide information on employment, qualifications, vacancies, redundancies and annual development demand by occupation.

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Steps to Work Employer Subsidy

The Department's Steps to Work (StW) Employer Subsidy which is available to employers in Northern Ireland offers financial assistance towards the cost of recruiting additional employees. The subsidy is available to all those employers who recruit eligible clients and is payable for a period of 26 weeks. The amount payable is dependent on the client's age.

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National Training Awards 2009



Pictured above with the Minister is TV personality, Jenni Falconer.

A National Training Award sets you apart your competitors. It rewards the lasting excellence and success you have achieved through training. The award ensures that business is recognised as a training and development exemplar! The competition open to any business, private or public, as well as individuals and training providers. The only requirement is that you are serious about training and development and are prepared to tell everyone about it. National Training Awards information seminars were organised throughout Northern Ireland during January 2009.

These were noted to be very useful for potential entrants in the 2009 competition. If you are interested in putting forward an application this year then why not go along to one of the information seminars. There are two in Belfast, one on the 27 January and the other on 10 February, so why not register?

[register now >](#)

Alternatively, you may want to download a 2009 application form which you can do from www.ntani.gov.uk or contact Catherine Millar by calling 028 9025 7474 or by emailing catherine.millar@delni.gov.uk.

Department's contingency arrangements for Apprentices

In view of the current economic climate the Department has put in place contingency arrangements for Apprentices who may face redundancy. The announcement sees Apprentices working in some areas being able to complete professional and technical training, even if they have been made redundant.

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Minister welcomes close collaboration on Essential Skills

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in Northern Ireland and the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency (INALA) have come together to highlight the importance of tackling the significant

literacy, numeracy and ICT issues we face and to realise the great benefits to be had in both economies, North and South, from a coordinated approach towards literacy.

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Minister offers encouragement to Employers

The Minister paid a visit to S McConnell and Sons Ltd in Killeel and highlighted the importance of training. He noted the great benefits to be reaped by employers who continue to invest



Sir Reg with Leslie McConnell

in training their employees. The successful family run stone masonry business has been involved in some high profile contracts such as the Diana Memorial and the restoration of the Connaught Hotel, London.

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Bring IT On Campaign

The Department, in association with e-skills UK (the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms), Momentum (the Northern Ireland ICT Trade Federation) and Invest Northern Ireland, are co-ordinating a career attractiveness campaign for the ICT sector in Northern Ireland. Part of this saw the launch of the [Bring IT On](#) campaign on 1 January 2009 which included a series of adverts on television, radio and online. The adverts aim to encourage young people to pursue a career in IT, particularly the software sector.

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'C'Mon Over' Initiative

The Department's campaign to attract suitably skilled people to live and work in Northern Ireland is set to continue during 2009. As always if you want to get involved in the campaign you can email us at cmonoverni@delni.gov.uk or visit the website at www.cmonoverni.info. Alternatively you can call 028 90441 813 for further information.

Investors in People Case Study: K-Space (NI)

Ltd

Craigavon based K-Space (NI) Ltd went into production in May 2006 and currently employs eight people. Its core product is secure site accommodation, designed and manufactured with security, protection and affordability in mind. Within a considerably short

period K-Space has grown significantly under the dynamic management of their two directors and a highly competent workforce. Continuous improvement of the organisation is clearly highlighted within its sales and marketing strategy, which includes targeting new market segments, building brand awareness, being loyal to the customers and producing high quality products.

Company Director, Bernie Bradshaw, highlighted how [Investors in People](#) has helped them succeed in business: "We recognise the importance of a competent and motivated workforce and saw real opportunity in implementing the principles and practices of the Investors in People Standard. In achieving the Investors in People Award we saw real benefits from the onset and would confidently say that it has somewhat prepared us for the economic slowdown."

Fellow Director, Kevin Bradshaw added: "With the sharp rise in the cost of raw materials and supplies, we have been able to really evaluate our work practices and identify ways of doing better business - increasing productivity, raising quality standards and instilling a greater customer focus. We are now continually reviewing product and process design, and evaluating the options for eliminating, reducing or migrating various impacts."

All staff contribute to K-Space's managerial decisions and K-Space firmly believe that such bottom-up leadership keeps everyone on the same page when it comes to the business's long-term goals. The company business plan clearly defines the organisation's purpose and vision and the strategy for improving performance. In addition, all members of staff have a very clear understanding of their role and how they can contribute to the success of the organisation. There is an awareness that the development of new ideas, and indeed the products and service our customers have come to expect, will

only derive from teamwork and involvement from all staff. K-Space used Investors in People to ensure that its managers seized the opportunity to set the tone for the entire company. K-Space has now become a great place to work with good talent management and retention.

If you are interested in finding out more about Investors in People then contact Jillian Gilmore jillian.gilmore@delni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9044 1794.

[Read more about the most recent Investor in People recipients >>](#)



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