

The summer holidays are by now a distant memory for most of us and our thoughts are now looking towards what the rest of 2009 has in store.



The economic doom and gloom has well and truly dominated the year so far and my Department has worked hard to assist those companies and individuals affected. It had been my concern when the recession hit that employers would cut their training budgets but I am pleased to hear from reports that the opposite is actually true with many employers realising that by increasing the skills of their workforce that they are actually increasing their chances of survival.

I am aware of the high number of graduates who are now looking for work and I understand that as a result, interest in the Department's Graduate Programme, INTRO, which is run by Parity, has been very high this year. This programme, which includes a company based placement, has been a great success since its inception with many of the graduates securing permanent employment with their host company following the completion of the course. This is often because the company can see the tangible benefits employing a graduate brings to their company. I am keen to get as many local companies as possible involved with this programme so that we are able to utilise the talent leaving our universities. As a result of the downturn there are now an extra 200 places which have been made available on this programme. If you feel that this is something you would consider please contact 028 9044 1785.

My Department has also been focusing on apprentices during the recession and has introduced a new programme-led apprenticeship provision which came into effect on 7 September. This intervention aims to help ensure that young people who wish to follow an apprenticeship, but who are unable to find employment can do so through this new provision. If you would like to find out more about the benefits that can be gained from this programme please call the freephone number 0800 0854 573.

In addition to this I launched Skillsafe in June to protect Apprentices in the manufacturing engineering sector and I was able to expand this scheme further in August to take account of those Apprentices in the tradable services sector. Further information can be obtained by visiting www.skillsafeni.gov.uk or by emailing skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk

ISSUE 13 - SEPTEMBER 2009

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I will keep you updated on the progress of these initiatives in the coming months and I would encourage you all to continue with the hard work so that we can move forward and prepare for the upturn in our economy.

SIR REG EMPEY MLA - Minister for Employment and Learning

Department guidance for those affected by downturn

The Minister for Employment and Learning has launched new information packs for [employers](#) and [individuals](#) to provide practical help and advice in the downturn. The packs offer advice, solutions and opportunities and are widely available on the Departmental website www.delni.gov.uk and the government citizen facing website NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can call 028 9025 7781 for information. The packs will be available at 35 Job Centres and Jobs & Benefits offices across Northern Ireland or via the careers offices. [Read more>>](#)

Minister celebrates with Prince's Trust

The Minister attended the graduation ceremony for the 'Get into Cooking' programme run by the Prince's Trust. Speaking at the event in The Merchant Hotel, Belfast the Minister expressed his congratulations to all concerned and commended the great work of the Prince's Trust. The Prince's Trust provides opportunities for young people who may otherwise experience difficulty in finding work.



Lady Empey, Sir Reg Empey and Ian Jeffers, Director of Prince's Trust Northern Ireland pictured on the steps of The Merchant Hotel.

Expansion of Skillsafe scheme

The Department launched its [Skillsafe](#) scheme to assist Apprentices who had been placed on short time working as a result of the economic downturn. The scheme, operational since 8 June, initially benefited those Apprentices in the manufacturing engineering sector and since August it has now been expanded to include Apprentices in the tradable services sector. Further information about the scheme can be obtained by emailing skillsafeni@delni.gov.uk or by contacting 028 9044 1880.



Pictured at the House of Lords for the Team Announcement 2009 is (L-R) James Cracknell, Trevor Woods and Chris Humphries

NI Apprentice to compete in WorldSkills

Trevor Woods, an apprentice based at South West Regional College, Omagh, and employed by McAleer and Teague, Dromore, beat off strong opposition from other joinery apprentices from around the UK joined up with 25 other talented young people who headed off in September to compete at WorldSkills Calgary.

[Read More >>](#)

Latest Labour Market Bulletin Launched

The Department for Employment and Learning has published the 22nd issue of its Labour Market Bulletin. The Bulletin, which brings together a range of information and commentary on the Northern Ireland Labour market, points up the challenges faced in the current downturn and also shows areas where Northern Ireland has been successful.

[Read more>>](#)



Bring IT On

The Department for Employment and Learning, in association with e-skills UK, Momentum and Invest Northern Ireland has just launched the next phase of its ICT career attractiveness campaign - [BringITon](#). The campaign aims to create greater awareness about the wide range of exciting career opportunities available

within the ICT industry in Northern Ireland.

This phase of the campaign will include TV, radio, online, outdoor and for the first time cinema advertising. A series of events in universities and schools also kicks off this month to deliver the message directly to the young people who could be the IT professionals of tomorrow. Many of Northern Ireland's ICT employers are already involved in the campaign and have contributed much to the success enjoyed so far. If you would like to get involved or would just like to find out more about what is happening please pay a visit to our website - www.bringitonni.info

Call for Businesses to invest in talent

The Department for Employment and Learning's Graduate Talent Development Programme [INTRO](#) has recently been extended for a further two years. This is an extremely positive move and it is hoped that it will go a long way to solve two of the economy's greatest challenges: the need to develop talent in the current climate in preparation for the future and addressing Graduate unemployment which has risen on average by 20% since the recession began.

For a limited period only, the programme fee on [INTRO](#) is 100% funded by the Department, allowing NI SMEs to benefit from 4,000 worth of talent development and support within their business. [INTRO](#) has proven to be a low risk way to develop your workforce whether you have a need for new talent, or wish to develop your existing graduate employees. To find out how [INTRO](#) can help your business achieve real, tangible business results please contact Vickki Marshall at Parity on 0845 873 9698 or email v.marshall@parity.net.

National Training Awards 2009

We are now on the countdown to this year's [National Training Awards](#) ceremony which will take place on 13 October in the Harbour Commissioners Office. The event promises to be a great success and will recognise and reward the very best in training and development. If you want to find out more about National Training Awards or are interested in entering the 2010 competition then visit www.ntani.gov.uk. Alternatively you can email catherine.millar@delni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9025 7474.

Official opening of NI Adviser on Employment and Skills office

The Minister attended the official opening of the NI Adviser on Employment and Skills office on 1st July. The office based in the city centre will work closely with the Department on employment and skills issues. The NI Adviser on Employment and Skills, Bill McGinnis, took up the appointment in October 2008, and will continue the role until September 2011. You can contact the Skills Adviser's Office on 028 9027 9760.



The Minister is pictured above with Bill McGinnis

NI Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (NI VQRP) Website

The Department for Employment and Learning is implementing a number of reforms through the NI VQ reform programme to the vocational qualifications system to address skills need within the UK economy. The reform programme centres on the implementation of a new credit and unit-based framework, the qualifications and credit framework, which will make learning more accessible and flexible than ever before. To assist stakeholders involved in the reforms, the Department recently launched a new NI VQRP website which can be accessed at www.nivqrp.org.uk. The website is a simple, comprehensive resource of information which aims to support learning providers, employers, learners and others to implement and understand the reforms in NI. The site consists of up-to-date information on all aspects of the reform programme, resources and links to relevant partner organisations. For further details on the NI VQRP please contact Nick Gibson on 028 9025 7973 or email nicholas.gibson@delni.gov.uk.

Investors in People case study: Workspace

Workspace Group of Companies is proud to be an [Investors in People \(IiP\)](#) organisation and was established in 1982 to stimulate social and economic regeneration in the Magherafelt District Council area. The Workspace Group has developed over the years and now includes a number of services, including business premises and business start-ups, a cavity wall insulation and energy conservation



Workspace proudly accept their IiP award.

company and a specialist event management company.

The most recent IIP assessment aimed to give Workspace more insight into processes which would take them forward, and explored the company's objective of fast growth. This was in line with recent developments to Investors in People, which now offers organisations a more flexible and tailored approach to how they work with the framework. On top of the benefits that IIP was already bringing to Workspace, including high staff morale, a clear vision, improved communication and a competitive edge, Celine O'Hara, Office Manager, noticed a further improvement from the new assessment process: "The focus of our review assessment was very much on taking the business forward. Everything was specifically based on Workspace's business and business needs. We felt there was more time given to us for our specific business issues and the feedback we received has been invaluable".

If you would like to find out more about how Investors in People can help your organisation then contact Jillian Gilmore at jillian.gilmore@delni.gov.uk or telephone 028 9044 1794.



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