

THE SKILLS STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND: A PROGRAMME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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FOREWORD

SUCCESS THROUGH SKILLS

In November 2004 my colleague, Barry Gardiner, MP launched the draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland for consultation. Over 100 responses from a wide range of organisations and individuals were received. In thanking those who responded, I would like to comment on the strong degree of consensus that was evident surrounding the key points in the draft strategy. It is now time to progress our plans, ensuring that the shared values we have are embraced by partnerships of all the stakeholders involved in skills development. The twin goals of social inclusion and economic success detailed in the draft Skills Strategy remain valid. This document sets out the projects and milestones which will see those goals and targets realised as we continue to invest heavily in our schools, colleges, training organisations and universities.



Alongside policies and strategies being taken forward by, for example, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), Department of Social Development (DSD), Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and Invest NI which include skills-related issues, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and Department of Education (DE) are currently working closely together on work of critical importance to radically develop 14-19 education provision. DE's work towards a new and more skills-focused curriculum, the Entitlement Framework, and pilot of specialist schools meshes with DEL's focus on the outworking of the Further Education means Business and Skills Strategies. Both Departments are working on development of the Vocational Enhancement Programme promoting collaborative working between schools and FE colleges.

Across industry in Northern Ireland, the employer's voice will be heard as they work with their respective Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to influence the design and content of vocational qualifications, determine training needs, and commit to collaborative action with other stakeholders through drawing up Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs).

I am committed to do all I can to make the implementation of the Skills Strategy a success. Key public agencies, employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors, schools, colleges, universities and training providers, trade unions and individuals, all have a specific and important role to play individually, but also by working in partnership with each other. I would urge you to play your part in the most appropriate partnership for you, and I look forward as I'm sure you do, to seeing Northern Ireland reap the undoubted economic and social benefits which will accrue through a more highly skilled workforce.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Smith".

ANGELA SMITH MP
Minister for Employment and Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government is committed to an economic future for Northern Ireland which is underpinned by higher value-added jobs, enhancements to productivity and competitiveness, increased skill levels and improved participation in education and training. This commitment, which is articulated in the Northern Ireland Economic Vision published in February 2005, is vital in a climate where Northern Ireland's traditional industries declined, productivity is relatively low and the demography is changing.
- 1.2 Ensuring that individuals have the skills relevant to future employment opportunities is one of the key drivers to achieving the Economic Vision and the implementation of the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland is the main vehicle through which this will be delivered.
- 1.3 The Skills Strategy, published, in draft, for consultation in November 2004, set out the rationale for putting in place an overarching framework for the development of skills. It defined three different types of skills:
- the **essential skills** of literacy and numeracy and, increasingly, information and communications technology (ICT);
 - **employability skills**, including the key skills of teamworking, problem solving and flexibility; and
 - **work-based skills**, specific to a particular occupation or sector.
- It highlighted the need to focus on:
- raising the skills of the current workforce;
 - enhancing the 'knowledge base' of those entering the workforce; and
 - addressing the employability skills of those not in employment.
- 1.4 It stated Government's aim is to enable people to progress up a skills ladder, in order to raise the skills level of the whole workforce; to help deliver higher productivity and increased competitiveness; and to secure Northern Ireland's future in a global marketplace.
- 1.5 The draft Strategy attracted over 100 detailed responses from a wide variety of individuals and organisations. The consultation process endorsed the need for a strategic approach to skills and confirmed widespread and clear support for the suggested priorities and proposed action plan.

- 1.6 This document sets out how the Department for Employment and Learning will take these proposals forward in partnership with employers and their representative bodies; individuals and trade unions; training and education providers; the community and voluntary sector and other Government departments and agencies, in order to deliver on a long-term vision for skills in Northern Ireland. It embraces and builds on the new skills landscape where 25 employer-led, UK-wide Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are establishing and consolidating their presence in Northern Ireland and are developing Sector Skills Agreements specific to each sector. These Agreements will set out the actions which need to be taken by employers themselves and those who provide education and training, in order to ensure skills needs are met. SSCs will also be responsible for developing National Occupational Standards, Sector Qualification Strategies and Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks. Government in Northern Ireland is investing in these SSCs (collectively with the Sector Skills Development Agency known as the Skills for Business Network) to be the definitive representative voice of employers in each sector and would strongly encourage employers and other organisations to engage with SSCs for that purpose.
- 1.7 In taking a long-term view, this Strategy also takes into account recent developments in England where the Skills White Paper, “Skills: Getting on in business; getting on at work”¹, sets out a further challenging agenda for skills. In taking forward a number of the initiatives, the Strategy will also draw on best practice for example, from Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and the United States, particularly in terms of developing a close and symbiotic relationship between economic development and the provision of skills needed to sustain that development.
- 1.8 The Government is committed to active participation at European level in the ambitious Lisbon agenda, agreed in 2000, to promote economic reform in Europe to enable it to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. Implementation of the Skills Strategy in Northern Ireland will support this work and will contribute to achieving the flexible and skilled workforce on which the delivery of the Lisbon agenda depends.
- 1.9 This paper sets out the vision for skills in Northern Ireland and maps the initiatives to deliver it. It draws together the major strategies, with other related strands of work, so that the skills policy is developed and implemented in a co-ordinated way. Many strategies are already well underway, for example, the implementation of the Essential Skills Strategy, “Further Education Means Business” Strategy and the Welfare to Work agenda. These are important components of the Skills Strategy.
- 1.10 Partnership is the key. Government of course has a role to play, but skills are equally the responsibility of the employer and the individual. Success depends on close co-operation between Government, employers, individuals and social partners, and a shared vision of what we, together, need to achieve.

¹ CM 6483, March 2005.

2. THE VISION FOR SKILLS

- 2.1 The draft Skills Strategy (November 2004) set out, in detail, the underlying rationale for a Skills Strategy, and an assessment of what it needs to achieve. Now, moving forward, we need to articulate our plans to deliver on that agenda.
- 2.2 This section sets out the **vision** for the Skills Strategy and its contribution to Northern Ireland's productivity and competitiveness in the global economy. It is a vision which is shared amongst key partners and it will play a major role in achieving the Economic Vision for Northern Ireland. It will also inform the forthcoming Regional Economic Strategy. The vision is described in terms of outcomes at the end of a **ten year** period and assumes that the key changes will have been in place for at least two years.
- 2.3 The vision is that, by 2015, the Northern Ireland economy is highly competitive in global terms; it is based on high value added jobs, with progressive leadership from a strong cadre of skilled local managers; it has increased export levels and it attracts substantial amounts of inward investment. Its people are entrepreneurial and innovative; small businesses are encouraged to grow and strong, coherent services and support for businesses of all sizes are provided. Employment has increased, leading to an expansion of the workforce and migrant workers are playing a valuable role in the economy. The workforce, increasingly, is literate and numerate and has good ICT skills. Individuals can solve problems, work in teams, are innovative and enterprising and expect to learn new skills throughout their working lives. A broader adoption of technology and e-learning will have reduced transport and location barriers.
- 2.4 In this vision of a buoyant economy, all children at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16) and at post 16 are offered a wide range of vocational subjects within the curriculum and vocational training is recognised as a valuable alternative to the traditional academic pathway. Participation in post compulsory education or training is at a higher level than ever before and learners are given good quality independent information, advice and guidance about opportunities and progression routes, based on accurate labour market intelligence.
- 2.5 The vision includes a much better understanding of the current and future demand for skills. Employers can anticipate and articulate their future skill needs; they are willing to invest in the skills of their employees and new recruits; and they find that their skill needs are more easily met. Management and leadership skills are highly prized and well developed through both formal education and informal mentoring techniques, and contribute to a growth in productivity. The skills needed for innovation and enterprise are better understood and embedded in the training and education systems. The education and training sector is highly responsive to employer needs, offers high quality provision and represents very good value for

money measured in terms of student advancement against international comparators. The sector will work in a more collaborative way, and will have established appropriate partnership working arrangements between colleges, schools, Higher Education Institutions, employers, private sector training organisations, and the community and voluntary sector. This will have led to enhanced quality, synergy and customer satisfaction.

2.6 The role of the voluntary and community sector, both as a sector with its own skills needs, as a support for individuals and as a provider, is fully recognised and valued.

2.7 Through collaboration there is:

- a better understanding of employers' future demand for skills in enough detail and with enough certainty in time to influence the planning of provision;
- an increased focus on improving the skills levels of the workforce;
- a more consistent supply of high quality education and training in all government funded provision; and
- an understanding and acceptance of the balance between the respective responsibilities of Government, the employer and the individual, based on the benefits derived by each.

2.8 In summary, we have much to achieve if people are to progress up a skills ladder in order to raise the skills of the whole workforce so that productivity is raised and competitiveness increased and Northern Ireland's place is secured in a global marketplace.



3. DELIVERING THE VISION: A PROGRAMME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 In order to deliver this ambitious vision in respect of skills, a Programme for Implementation has been developed which takes into account the comments made in the consultation exercise. In addition, each strand of work being taken forward will also draw on the consultation responses, as appropriate.

Scope

3.2 The Skills Strategy Implementation Programme will operate across the Department and its success depends on effective co-ordination of a large number of the Department's existing and new initiatives, although the work of other departments and agencies will also have an important and complementary impact. A communications strategy will be crucial to ensure that a range of stakeholders are kept fully informed.

Timescale

3.3 The Skills Strategy espouses a vision of the Northern Ireland economy in 2015 and envisages a 10 year timeframe for the full effects of the Strategy to be realised. However, for the purposes of implementation, the initial focus for delivery is a period of **three years** at which point the implementation plan will require to be refreshed, programmes evaluated and progress towards achieving the vision assessed. However, progress will also be reported on annually within the Department's Annual Report. It should be noted that work in almost all of the projects or strands has started.

Components

3.4 The component projects and strands are grouped into **four broad themes** which underpin the vision:

- **understanding the demand for skills;**
- **improving the skills levels of the workforce;**
- **improving the quality and relevance of education and training; and**
- **tackling the skills barriers to employment and employability.**

A key target is set out in respect of each project, with a more detailed summary of key milestones contained in Chapter 4.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR SKILLS

- 3.5 This theme groups together those activities that engage with employers and others to forecast future skill requirements in order to inform the planning and funding of post 16 education and training.

Labour Market Information Project

- 3.6 A review is underway to determine how labour market information (LMI) can be used to understand better the demand for skills in Northern Ireland and improve the planning of provision. It will consider how this information can be presented at a local level to better inform the choices of individuals in education, training and the career paths they follow. It includes an assessment of what LMI currently exists and its uses. It will identify future needs and what improvements in LMI are required, to make it more accurate, complete and timely. It will also examine best practice elsewhere. The review will be informed by a pilot study to assess how LMI can be used to extend the advice offered to Jobs and Benefit Office clients.

Key Target: Action Plan produced in order to improve the use of LMI for individuals and providers of skills by September 2006.

Regional Employment and Skills

Action Plan Project

- 3.7 This Project will facilitate the development and maintenance of a regional employment and skills action plan that will recognise and articulate skills needs at local and regional levels and determine Northern Ireland's priority skills areas. Components include the re-configuration of the Skills Taskforce into an Expert Group at regional level and the development of employer-led sub-regional Workforce Development Fora (WDF).

Key Target: To put in place a Regional Employment and Skills Action Plan by September 2007.

Employers' Skill Needs Analysis Project

- 3.8 This Project involves a comprehensive skills demand and supply analysis of 25 sectors during the period 2005-2007, which will form the core evidence for Sector Skills Agreements. In this 5 stage process, the initial focus for the Project will be on Stages 1 to 3 which cover LMI, supply and demand issues. The initial objective will be to ensure that information deriving from the first three stages of the Sector Skills

Agreements informs the formulation of skills policy in Northern Ireland as soon as that information becomes available. The ultimate objective of the project is to put in place a suite of Sector Skills Agreements across all the sectors. The Project will be delivered by the Sector Skills Development Agency with management input from the Department.

Key Target: Sector Skills Agreements for 25 sectors developed by December 2007

Skills for Innovation

3.9 Innovation is of fundamental importance to the economy and excellence in product and product development is central to the growth of local businesses. This Project will identify the skills needed to help deliver an innovative economy and will examine the role that the education and training sector plays in providing the right support. The project will also assess and address gaps in current provision.

Key Target: Development of a Skills for Innovation Action Plan by September 2006



THEME 2: IMPROVING THE SKILLS LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

3.10 This theme is about getting the basics right and focuses on individual members of the workforce (i.e. those currently in employment or training and those about to join the workforce). Component strands include:

Essential Skills Programme

3.11 This is a critically important component of the Skills Strategy and is designed to raise the foundation of literacy and numeracy skills within the Northern Ireland workforce, in order to address one of the most significant weaknesses which currently exists. Already well advanced, the project will ensure that strategies and policies are in place to support learners to achieve an essential skills qualification. It will complement work which the Department of Education is taking forward in schools to tackle literacy and numeracy problems. ICT as a third essential skill will be trialled through a small pilot. This project will also consider the development of the wider employability skills (Working with Others, Managing One's Own Learning and Problem Solving). Account will be taken of developments in England in relation to the convergence of Key Skills and Essential Skills and the wider initiative in relation to the inclusion of functional skills in courses such as General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).

²**Key Target:** By 2007, 18,500 people will have achieved a recognised qualification in Essential Skills compared to 100 in March 2003.

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

3.12 This Project will result in the development of an independent all-age Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Careers (EIAG) Strategy. It will enhance the Careers Education offered to young people and adults and will also ensure that the mechanisms are in place to enable Careers EIAG to be based on up to date labour market information. Through better-informed decision-making, the project is aimed at encouraging increased participation in education, training and employment. It will be taken forward in conjunction with the Department of Education and other key stakeholders.

Key Target: To publish a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy by October 2006 which will improve and develop the quality and range of independent Careers EIAG available.

² This is also a PSA Target.

Adult Skills Project

3.13 This major Project will, in conjunction with employers, focus on the upskilling of employees. A range of options, such as a Level 2 entitlement and an increase in the number of apprenticeships as well as introducing all-age apprenticeships will be determined as a mechanism to upskill employees.

Key Target: Pilot Adult Skills programme commences – September 2006.

Management and Leadership Skills

3.14 This Project will result in the development and implementation of a Management and Leadership Strategy for Northern Ireland in partnership with Management and Leadership Network (MLN) and other key stakeholders such as Invest NI. It will also address and revise the nature and extent of the Department's direct interventions to support management and leadership.

Key Target: MLN-led draft Management and Leadership Strategy for Northern Ireland developed – June 2006.

Investors in People

3.15 This Project will develop and implement a marketing and promotional strategy to increase the number of organisations using the Investors in People Standards to align skills development with the achievement of the business goals such as efficiency, profitability and improved competitiveness.

Key Target: New IiP Marketing Strategy developed by May 2006



THEME 3: IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.16 This theme is about improving the planning and delivery of education and training. It is about putting in place a 'skills ladder' which acknowledges the value and complementary nature of academic and vocational progression routes. Component programmes and projects include:

Further Education

3.17 Implementation of the Further Education (FE) Strategy for Northern Ireland, "*FE Means Business*" will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Skills Strategy. The FE sector is at the heart of lifelong learning, its more refined strategic objectives being to strengthen economic development, enhance social cohesion and advance the individual's skills and learning. FE colleges will be key drivers of local, sub-regional and regional economic and workforce development by, for example: raising skills and qualifications levels, particularly in areas that meet the needs of the local economy; ensuring that curriculum provision in colleges is focused on economic and workforce needs; supporting business creation, incubation and development; developing flexible approaches to learning through the use of technologies, through partnership with local providers and by being responsive to local needs; responding, in particular, to the needs of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs); and by ensuring that college provision is high quality and kept up to date with best practice.

3.18 In order to ensure that "*FE Means Business*" is implemented in the most effective way, the sector is undertaking a major re-organisation that will see the 16 existing FE colleges merge to form 6 new larger regional colleges by August 2007. These larger and more influential colleges will enhance the sector's profile and status, particularly with employers and employer representative bodies, and will be key providers of education and training to meet the skill needs of the economy. The new structure will also enable the sector to play an increased role in regional planning and in the delivery of qualifications and skills at all levels across Northern Ireland.

3.19 Those elements of "*FE Means Business*" that support the Skills Strategy most directly are outlined, in paragraphs 3.21 to 3.24.

FE Support for Economic Development

3.20 This Project will determine the role that FE colleges can play in supporting employers in practical ways, in addition to the provision of relevant vocational and business skills for individuals. This might include business creation, incubation and product

development. There will also be a review of the role and effectiveness of centres of excellence in colleges, which will be part of the wider recommendations on how colleges can best provide key workforce and economic development support through the new six-college structure.

Key Target: To enhance the contribution of the FE sector to economic development throughout the period.

Reform of Vocational Qualifications

3.21 Qualifications are the key measure of skills and they must be fit for purpose, up-to-date and reflect the skills required in the modern workplace. The main aim of the Project is, within a UK-wide setting, to reform and rationalise the current range of vocational qualifications and place within a simple and accessible Framework for Achievement (FfA) which will be unitised, credit rated and will eventually replace the present National Qualifications Framework.

Key Target: To put in place a new simplified credit-based framework of qualifications, by December 2010.

14-19 Reforms

3.22 The 14-19 Reform agenda is not specific to DEL. However, a number of strands associated with the wider reform programme are being taken forward primarily as part of the 'Further Education Means Business' Strategy. Under the reform, all young people will have the opportunity alongside their academic curriculum, to take high quality, high value vocational education courses with up to date industry and equipment. The Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP) is a joint project with the Department for Education. It involves the development and implementation of collaborative models between post primary and the FE sectors as they move forward towards the implementation of the Curriculum Entitlement Framework as outlined in the Post Primary Review. This will ensure that all 14-19 year olds in the Post Primary sector have access to high quality vocational education through the provision of robust collaborative partnerships between FE colleges and the Post Primary Sector.

Key Target: To strengthen, develop and promote collaboration based on the VEP between schools and the FE sector in order to support the implementation of the Curriculum Entitlement Framework in the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 academic years.

3.23 The Department will also develop a differentiated curriculum offer for all full-time 16-19 year old students within FE colleges. It will integrate the skills of problem solving, team-working and ICT for all students. It will also encompass enterprise within the curriculum to engender an enterprise culture among 16-19 year olds. The curriculum will also be focused on the needs of the economy with greater priority given to those vocational areas that meet local and regional priority skill areas.

Key Target: Full integration of Differentiated Curriculum – September 2007 onwards.

Higher Education

3.24 Many higher education (HE) courses ensure that students gain the relevant knowledge required for higher level professions. As the demand for higher level skills and qualifications increases there is an emerging need to enable students to enhance their employability. This strand will comprise an assessment of the contribution of the HE sector to meeting Northern Ireland's skills needs through the provision of foundation degree, honours degree and postgraduate courses, and the relationship between the demand for higher level skills and the supply provided by the tertiary education sectors.

Key Target: In consultation with HE sector and employers, develop a policy for higher level skills and the enhancement of student employability – March 2008.

Reconfiguration of Training

3.25 This Project, which is already underway, involves a comprehensive review of existing training provision for 16-19 year olds, with a view to the development and implementation of a revised vocational training programme, which will be one strand of the policy for 14-19 year olds. It will balance academic and vocational education also and meets the needs of young people with a disability or with personal and/or social problems. It will also include a renewed emphasis on Apprenticeships, in order to meet the target of providing 10,000 Apprenticeships by 2010. It will include two sub-projects:

Pre-Apprenticeships: This project will put in place a pre-Apprenticeship programme for 14-16 year olds to complement the Vocational Enhancement Programme to allow young people to explore a vocational educational pathway leading to a full Apprenticeship programme.

Transitions: This project will build on the existing pre-Vocational Access Pilot to allow young people experiencing a range of physical, emotional or learning disabilities to have targeted provision. A suite of flexible programmes would focus on personal and social development and essential and employability skills within a vocational context.

Key Target: To put in place a new Vocational Training Programme by April 2007.

Quality Improvement

3.26 This programme of work aims to enhance the quality of vocational education and training funded by the Department through the development of a quality and performance framework. It will ensure that quality standards are defined and benchmarked across the Department's provision; that lessons are drawn from inspections and addressed appropriately and coherently; and that support is provided in an appropriate way. Key linkages will be with Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), universities, FE colleges and training organisations.

Key Target: To promote quality across the Department's skills provision through the development and implementation of a Framework for a Quality Improvement Strategy – September 2006



THEME 4: TACKLING THE SKILLS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

3.27 This theme is about equipping those who are not in work with the skills necessary for economic activity. A contributor to this theme is the government's Welfare to Work Agenda, through which individuals will, where possible, be assisted to address their main barriers to employment. These barriers include ill health, child-care, mobility, skills, drug/alcohol misuse/abuse, homelessness, being an ex-prisoner/ex-offender etc. A menu of provision, including referral to specific services, will be developed to seek to tackle these barriers, which will include options for increasing skills levels where that is seen as the major barrier to employment. The development of the menu is dependent to a significant extent on progress at National level.

Key Target: Development of menu of more targeted provision in line with GB developments.



UNDERPINNING STRANDS

3.28 There are four strands which underpin and are crucial to the successful delivery of the Skills Strategy.

- **Funding** – an overarching review of funding arrangements for post-compulsory education and training is being commissioned, which will take account of the development of new funding arrangements for the FE sector. This will also include a ‘funding for learners’ project and will clarify the respective funding responsibilities of government, employers and the individual. The purpose will be to ensure that funding arrangements meet the design criteria of: simplicity, transparency, accountability, and equity. The aim will be to strengthen the linkages between demand and supply and offer stability of funding whilst rewarding good outcomes and supporting more flexible delivery to meet the needs of individuals and employers. This review will be completed by **April 2007**.
- **Communications** – a Skills Strategy Communications Plan will be developed which will utilise and build on existing channels and consultation arrangements with particular focus on engagement with SMEs. This will be developed by **April 2006**.
- **Research, analysis and evaluation** – research and analysis work relating to the Skills Strategy will be commissioned under the Department’s published Research Agenda, which sets out its research needs and the process by which those needs will be addressed. This Agenda is reviewed annually to ensure emerging research needs are accommodated. In the coming year, the Research Agenda will among other things, deliver forecasts of occupational demand up to 2015 and the qualification levels that will be required to satisfy that demand; provide additional evidence on the rates of return to different levels of qualification in Northern Ireland; and assess the economic value of investing in the enhancement of literacy and numeracy skills. This programme of research complements the Department’s evaluation work which assesses the effectiveness of policies and programmes on a structured rolling basis. The evaluation requirements of the Skills Strategy, which are set out in this document, will be taken forward within the wider Departmental evaluation programme.
- **Performance Measurement: Key success criteria** - Although this document sets out a number of key targets which relate to outputs, the success of the Skills Strategy will be judged on a wide range of measures which relate to the delivery of the outcomes identified in the vision. Some of these will be linked to the Department’s Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. The measures include whether:

- information about skill demand, both existing and potential, and the interaction between demand and supply are improved;
- employers and their representative bodies are able to identify skills problems in key sectors of the economy;
- the numbers in the workforce, and flowing into the workforce, with essential skills problems are reduced in line with the PSA target below;
- the numbers in the working age population with a level 2 or above qualification are increased to meet the skills needs of the economy in line with the PSA targets below;
- the curricula in second and third level education incorporate enterprise and innovation; and an appreciation and understanding of entrepreneurship is embedded in the education system;
- careers education, information, advice and guidance is enhanced and based on up-to-date labour market information;
- the disadvantaged and economically inactive are assisted to engage with skills acquisition where that is their main barrier to work;
- vocational and academic qualifications are regarded equally; and
- the quality of teaching and training is improved to match best practice.

PSA Targets:

1. To increase the percentage of working age people qualified at Level 2 or above from 63% in Summer 2003 to 68% in Spring 2007.
2. To increase the percentage of working age people qualified at Level 3 or above from 46% in Summer 2003 to 48% in Spring 2007.
3. By 2007, 18,500 people will have achieved a recognised qualification in Essential Skills compared to 100 in March 2003.

A Performance Measurement Project will be taken forward to develop a suite of key performance indicators based on outcomes and will be in place by December 2006.

Monitoring Progress

3.29 The overall Programme of Implementation is overseen by a Programme Board which includes representation from the Economic Development Forum. In addition, individual projects will, as appropriate, have dedicated Steering Groups comprising key stakeholders. Progress against the identified targets will be included in the Annual Reports of the Department for Employment and Learning. A full evaluation of progress towards achieving the vision will be carried out by the end of 2009

Impact Assessments

3.30 Each component of the Strategy will undertake a preliminary Equality Impact Assessment, with full Equality Impact Assessments being carried out, where necessary. Policy proofing (for example in respect of human rights, rural proofing, and new Targeting Social Need (TSN)) will also be conducted where appropriate.



4. SUMMARY OF KEY MILESTONES

PROJECT	MILESTONES	DATES
Understanding the Labour Market	Review of LMI completed (Phase 1)	June 2006
	Future actions agreed and timetabled as Phase 2	Sept 2006
Regional Employment and Skills Action Plan	Skills Expert Group established	Mar 2006
	WDF models agreed	June 2006
	Workforce Development Fora operational	Sept 2006
	Regional Employer and Skills Action Plan developed	Sept 2007
Employers Skills Needs Analysis	Pathfinder SSCs. Stage 1-3 SSA completed	Mar 2006
	Pathfinder SSCs. Stage 1-5 SSA completed	Sept 2006
	Tranche 2 SSCs. Stage 1-3 SSA completed	June 2006
	Tranche 2 SSCs. Stage 1-5 SSA completed	Nov 2006
	Tranche 3 SSCs. Stage 1-3 SSA completed	Sept 2006
	Tranche 3 SSCs. Stage 1-5 SSA completed	May 2007
	Tranche 4 SSCs. Stage 1-3 SSA completed	Dec 2006
	Tranche 4 SSCs. Stage 1-5 SSA completed	Sept 2007
	Tranche 5 SSCs. Stage 1-3 SSA completed	June 2007
	Tranche 5 SSCs. Stage 1-5 SSA completed	Dec 2007
Skills for Innovation	Development of a Skills for Innovation Action Plan	Nov 2006
	Review of progress against Action Plan	Sept 2007
Essential Skills	ICT Trial introduced	Sept 2005
	Upskill 200 tutors to Level 4 qualifications	Aug 2006
	Develop policy for the introduction of ICT as a third Essential Skill	2006/07
Careers EIAG	Future Search Conference	March 2006
	Draft Careers EIAG Strategy developed for consultation	June 2006
	Launch of Strategy	Oct 2006
Adult Skills	Consultation on options for upskilling employees	April 2006
	Pilot Adult Skills programme commences	Sept 2006
	Review of Pilot	April 2008

SUMMARY OF KEY MILESTONES

Management and Leadership	MLN-led Strategy published for consultation	Feb 2006
	Launch revised DEL 3-year M&L Intervention Programmes	April 2006
	Review M&L Strategy and Programmes	April 2009
Investors in People	Marketing audit completed	March 2006
	New IIP marketing strategy	May 2006
	2,300 recognised IIP organisations in Northern Ireland	By 2015
HE Strand	Strengthen involvement of employers in delivery of Foundation degrees	March 2006
	Initiate a review of current policy and develop proposals for the future delivery of HE in FE	June 2006
	Assess contribution of HE sector to meeting Northern Ireland skills needs	March 2007
	In consultation with HE sector and employers, develop policy for higher level skills and the enhancement of student employability	March 2008
FE Support for Economic Development	To provide policy guidance to the FE sector	Sept 2006
Reform of Vocational Qualifications	Begin testing and trialling FfA	Jan 2006
	Evaluate outcome of testing and trialling	Jul 2008
	Continue to populate FfA with reformed qualifications	Aug 2008
	Transition to FfA completed	Dec 2010
14-19 Reforms	Evaluation, refinement, implementation and funding to support VEP	2006/07 and 2007/08 academic years
	Evidence gathering/preliminary findings/report	Nov 2005- June 2006
	Policy development/Guidance development	July 06–Oct 06
	Implementation Planning	Nov 06- Jun 07
	Full Integration	Sept 07 onwards

SUMMARY OF KEY MILESTONES

Reconfiguration of Training	Consultation on preferred option	April 2006
	Roll-out of new Programme	April 2007
	Interim evaluation of new Programme	April 2008
Quality Improvement	Development of a Framework for DEL Quality Improvement Strategy	Sep 2006
	Post-inspection support programmes embedded across provision	Sept 2006
Tackling Skills Barriers to Work	Development of menu for provision	In line with GB development
Communications/ Stakeholders	Skills Conference	Feb 2006
	Development of a Communication Plan	Apr 2006
Funding	Review completed	Apr 2007
Research, Analysis and Evaluation	Annual Review of Research and Evaluation needs to coincide with Annual Business Planning	April 2006
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	“ “ “ “ “ “ “ “ “	April 2009
Performance Measurement	Suite of key performance indicators developed	Dec 2006

GLOSSARY

DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
DE	Department of Education
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning
DETI	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
DHSSPS	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
DSD	Department of Social Development
EIAG	Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FE	Further Education
FfA	Framework for Achievement
GB	Great Britain
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
iiP	Investors in People
Invest NI	Invest Northern Ireland
LLUK	Lifelong Learning United Kingdom
LMI	Labour Market Information
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
M&L	Management and Leadership
MP	Member of Parliament
MLN	Management and Leadership Network
NI	Northern Ireland
PSA	Public Service Agreement
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
SSA	Sector Skills Agreement
SSC	Sector Skills Council
TSN	Targeting Social Need
UK	United Kingdom
VEP	Vocational Enhancement Programme
WDF	Workforce Development Fora

Further Information:

Telephone: 028 9044 1803

Fax: 028 9044 1810

Email: skillsstrategy@delni.gov.uk

Web: www.delni.gov.uk

This document is available in other formats upon request.