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Department for
**Employment
and Learning**

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Review of Apprenticeships

Interim Report and
Consultation Document

January 2014

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FOREWORD

This review of apprenticeships has the potential to radically reform and improve the training landscape in Northern Ireland, and is a top priority for my team during my term in office.

Rebalancing and rebuilding the economy is a key strategic priority of the Executive. This requires growing the private sector, developing a greater knowledge-based economy, and increasing our exports.

Our main asset is our people. It is on the basis of their talents and skills that we will transform our economy, increase employment, raise productivity and compete globally.

It is my job to ensure that both current and potential future employers have access to the skilled employees that they require, providing people, and in particular young people, with the opportunities to secure and sustain meaningful employment.

Arising from this, there is an ongoing imperative to match closely supply and demand for skills, to bring people closer to the labour market and to increase economic participation.

The Skills Strategy, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*, demonstrates clearly that our economy will require a significant increase in higher level skills. For example, by 2020, around half of our workforce will need to be trained to level 4 (equivalent to sub-degree) or above, on the Qualifications Frameworks. We also need to invest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and improve the management and leadership skills within companies, especially in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

While we have an overarching requirement to deliver a greater volume of higher level skills, including in STEM areas, it is clear that there can be a range of alternative pathways to securing this outcome, including both the traditional university route and, increasingly also, through higher level apprenticeships.

It has become more and more clear to me that some of the most successful economies in the world, judged both in terms of productivity and employment, have well developed professional and technical training systems.

I announced the reviews of apprenticeships and youth training in February 2013, giving a commitment to make them my top priority.



As our economy evolves, focusing more strongly on service and knowledge industries, apprenticeships will need to be extended to a wider range of occupations, while at the same time facilitating progression up the skills ladder from level 3 (equivalent to A level) to level 8 (equivalent to Doctorate). While the current model of apprenticeships in Northern Ireland, ApprenticeshipsNI, has served us well, it needs to be transformed to meet the needs of the economy, both now and into the future.

I recognise the importance of increasing the number of employers offering apprenticeship opportunities if we are to secure the vision to which we truly aspire. We need to be much more responsive to the needs of employers if we are to create a more efficient system of supply and demand, where apprenticeships are the key to providing a skilled workforce for the future.

We also need to encourage our young people, their parents and schools to recognise that apprenticeships are a valuable way of securing an excellent career, getting qualifications while gaining experience, and progressing through a route that has equal value and prestige to the university pathway. To secure this, we must be bold, innovative and creative, to break new ground.

Through the review of youth training, which will report in the Spring of 2014, we will examine how to accommodate those young people who are not quite ready to undertake an apprenticeship.

I believe that the findings of the review of apprenticeships will make the single greatest contribution to changing our skills landscape. Apprenticeships deliver clear benefits to employers, employees and the wider economy. Over the past year, much work has taken place leading to the findings.

This report articulates a blueprint for Northern Ireland's future apprenticeship programme: a model which is driven by strategic partnership; puts employers at its very heart; matches better supply with demand; affords opportunities in a much wider range of occupations and offers a flexible progression pathway across vocational and professional education and training (VET/PET).

This work has benefited from the advice of the Expert Panel which I established at the outset of the review, and I am very grateful to the members. I am grateful also for the advice provided by a wide range of other key stakeholders.

The proposals seek to define our future apprenticeship model and set out, at a strategic level, the cornerstones of its component parts. We have made 32 proposals in all, which we believe are necessary to achieve the vision I have outlined in this document.

I am keen to hear your views on the proposals contained in this consultation document. Feedback received through this process will be used to inform our final policy for apprenticeships, which will be published in the early Summer of 2014.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Northern Ireland's apprenticeship model of the future will deliver highly skilled apprentices in areas of economic importance, for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Apprenticeships will be highly sought after by young people, and recognised as a key route into many professional and technical occupations. They will be seen as congruent to full time higher education, and be held in equally high esteem.

In essence, quality, breadth, progression and portability will form the blueprint of apprenticeships of the future, delivering skills excellence, recognised both nationally and internationally as the gold standard, with apprentices commanding commensurate salaries upon successful completion.

This consultation document seeks views on a series of proposals for a new model of apprenticeships for Northern Ireland, under the following themes: **the components of an apprenticeship; increasing participation; partnership - the roles of the key players;** and **ensuring quality**.

Section 1 sets the scene for the review, outlining its rationale, boundaries and terms of reference. It also explains the methodology followed, leading to the proposals in Section 7.

Section 2 examines the wider strategic, economic and labour market operating context and exemplar international economies, and summarises the evidence base which has been used to inform the review.

Section 3 sets out the benefits to the key partners involved: participants, employers and Government.

Section 4 looks at the existing system, offered through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, and goes on to consider the challenges from the perspective of the wider economic environment, including employers, apprentices, both current and prospective, and training providers.

Section 5 sets out 32 proposals, based on supporting evidence, which aim to secure the vision and underpinning key principles for an apprenticeship model of the future. These proposals are outlined under the key themes below:

The components of an apprenticeship

The following will be the core aspects of the future system of apprenticeships:

- 1:** Apprenticeships will be defined as a system of learning, irrespective of branding.
- 2:** An apprenticeship will be for a new employee or, in the case of an existing employee, a new job role.
- 3:** An apprenticeship will commence at professional and technical Level 3 or higher.

- 4:** An apprenticeship will be for a minimum duration of two years.
- 5:** An apprenticeship will involve a breadth of training beyond the specific needs of a particular job through on and off-the-job training.
- 6:** An apprenticeship will be designed to enable individuals to progress into higher professional or technical training or onto a higher academic pathway.
- 7:** Government will recognise an apprenticeship when it contains each of the components set out in Proposals 2-6.

A number of underpinning elements will support the core components of apprenticeships. These are that:

- 8:** Apprenticeships will have a single award/qualification for each occupation at each level.
- 9:** Apprenticeships will be open to everyone irrespective of age, with the primary focus on young people aged 16-24.
- 10:** Apprenticeships will support progression beyond the initial apprenticeship through a variety of pathways including to higher level apprenticeships and to further and higher education.
- 11:** Apprenticeship awards/qualifications will facilitate portability within a sector and mobility within the wider economy.
- 12:** Measures will be put in place to support individuals to make the transition into apprenticeships at Level 3.
- 13:** Apprenticeships will utilise fully international opportunities for placements and exchanges.

Increasing participation

- 14:** A central service will be introduced to market, promote and support apprenticeship provision, by engaging with employers and potential participants.
- 15:** The central service will provide advice and guidance for employers and potential apprentices on the range of support and training available.
- 16:** An online service will be introduced to advertise apprenticeship vacancies across all sectors.
- 17:** Applications for apprenticeship places will be supported via a UCAS (as used for entrance to university) style portal, to inform young people of the range of opportunities available.
- 18:** Apprenticeships will be offered in a wide range of professional and technical occupations, reflecting the needs of the Northern Ireland economy.
- 19:** Apprenticeships will be expanded to include professional and technical occupations within the public sector.
- 20:** A range of incentives will be considered to support employers, particularly SMEs and micro-businesses, to participate in apprenticeships.
- 21:** The Careers Service will provide impartial pre-entry advice to all young people considering the apprenticeship pathway.

22: The Careers Service will intervene at key transition points for young people to provide impartial advice and guidance.

23: Apprenticeships will include a range of measures to support participation by both genders across occupations.

Partnership – the roles of the key players

24: An advisory group, based around a partnership comprising of employers, trade unions and the providers of off-the-job training, will be established to advise Government at a strategic level on apprenticeship provision.

25: Partnership groups, including representatives from employers, Sector Skills Councils or equivalent bodies, providers of off-the-job training and Government, will be established to design and agree apprenticeship provision and inform demand through a skills barometer approach annually at a sectoral level.

Ensuring quality

26: Quality, achievement and progression will be key measures of success for apprenticeship provision.

27: Employers and industry specialists, in partnership with other key stakeholders, will inform the content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship, including test(s) at the end of the training period.

28: The content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship will be subject to rigorous assurance by inspectors who have up-to-date experience in the professional and technical areas, supported by industry experts to ensure each apprenticeship meets the needs of employers and apprentices.

29: To support the quality of teaching and learning, criteria will be set for all teaching staff, which will establish minimum qualification requirements in the subject area and related pedagogy, as well as significant and up-to-date experience in industry.

30: There will be a requirement that all involved in the delivery of the off-the-job training will undertake professional training in pedagogy.

31: Stringent conditions will be established for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field.

32: Only those providers who meet the minimum quality standards as determined by the Department will be funded to deliver apprenticeship training.

Screening

Under the terms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, an Equality Impact screening has been undertaken. This has determined that the proposals outlined above will not lead to discriminatory or negative differential impact. The equality screening is available to view at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/screening-eqia-2013-2014.htm>

A Shared Future Proof, included at Annex E, indicates that a number of the proposals will promote greater diversity in workplaces, with a number of initiatives aiming to increase engagement in apprenticeships and shared workplaces. As we move forward in developing the proposals for a new model we will undertake further screening.

Section 6 outlines the key enablers which will be required to secure the successful implementation of the new model of apprenticeships. These include a supply chain of appropriately qualified young people, provided through our education and youth training programmes; appropriate careers advice at key stages, to ensure successful transition from education to the world of work; clear post-16 pathways; and funding streams to meet the pressures associated with a demand led model.

Section 7 details further exploratory work which will be taken forward concurrently by the Department in line with this consultation to examine how we can:

- Develop a financial model to determine how best to resource the new model of apprenticeships and to support employers, including through availing of a range of funding sources, such as the HMRC model announced by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 5th December 2013.
- Pilot a central service to market, promote and support apprenticeships for both employers and individuals.
- Develop a demand estimation model.
- Support SMEs to help them participate in apprenticeships.
- Open up apprenticeships to the public sector.

A review of apprenticeships and youth training was announced in the Northern Ireland Assembly by Dr Stephen Farry MLA, the Minister for Employment and Learning in February 2013.

The review of apprenticeships and youth training was commissioned to ensure that they:

- Support the growth and rebalancing of the Northern Ireland economy.
- Meet the future needs of business by developing a highly skilled workforce.
- Provide consistently high quality training leading to qualifications which are valued by both young people and employers.
- Ensure young people are provided with opportunities to develop skills and gain relevant experience.
- Provide alternative pathways with parity of esteem.
- Take account of best practice in other jurisdictions.

The review of apprenticeships specifically was to consider:

- The role of the employer and training provider in shaping, supporting and managing apprenticeship programmes.
- The appropriate role of Government in shaping and supporting apprenticeship programmes.
- Contingency planning around how to make use of any tax incentives that may become available from the United Kingdom (UK) Government.
- Which occupational areas would benefit from government funded apprenticeships and at what levels in order to grow and rebalance the economy.
- Whether the current range of subjects/frameworks is sufficient to meet the needs of employers and the economy.
- The framework for training including the qualifications to ensure they are recognised and valued by employers and the apprentices.
- How apprenticeships can provide support for pathways both academically and vocationally.
- The components of an apprenticeship programme, including its duration, employment, and contents of the training programme, and examination of appropriate requirements for numeracy, literacy and ICT and the development of enterprise and employability skills.
- How to have parity of esteem between apprenticeships and other further and higher education pathways.
- The role that higher level apprenticeships should play and how best to develop and facilitate them.
- How apprenticeships can be expanded into the professions.
- How SMEs could be encouraged to engage with apprenticeships.
- How apprenticeships could have a better gender balance and are attractive to all.
- How the system and processes can be simplified where possible.
- How best practice in other jurisdictions can be incorporated into the framework for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland.

The economy is going through a considerable transformation and the jobs of tomorrow will require higher level skills, across a wide range of occupations. The review provides an opportunity to match better skills to the needs of employers, and to capture more fully the opportunities that exist for increased economic growth, productivity and employment.

The review does not encompass work based adult skills training provision to up-skill and re-skill the existing work force, which is being addressed through the Department's other interventions in further education and skills. Nor does it include Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grades A* to C¹) provision, which is the focus of the Department's review of youth training.

Alongside the review of apprenticeships, a review of youth training is taking place. This aims to examine current provision at level 2, including opportunities to simplify the curriculum offer and progression pathways. The review also seeks to target support as effectively as possible on the needs of young people and the wider economy.

As the youth training review should take account of the impact from the recommendations of this apprenticeships review, and other developments across the UK, it will by necessity operate to a slightly longer timescale. The final proposal for the review of youth training will be delivered in Spring 2014.

In taking forward the review of apprenticeships, information from a range of sources has been examined and used to inform the proposals. These comprised:

- An underlying evidence base setting out the economic and social context for the review and summarising relevant research and statistical evidence.
- A series of national and international study visits.
- A review of key literature sources, as set out in a bibliography.
- An assessment of the current apprenticeship model.
- A summary of the feedback from stakeholder events and responses to a call for submissions.
- Meetings with a range of key stakeholders.

An Expert Panel representative of a diverse range of views on apprenticeships was established to inform the work of the review. The membership is listed in Annex B.

Stakeholder forums were held during 4th - 10th September 2013, with separate events for employers, young people and providers of off-the-job training. The views of all interested parties were sought through a call for submissions which launched on the Department's website on 4th September 2013, for a period of four weeks. The call generated wide interest with some 45 responses received².

1 See Annex A

2 A summary of the stakeholder events and responses to the call to submissions can be accessed at ; <http://www.delni.gov.uk/apprenticeshipreview>

In this chapter we examine the wider strategic, economic and labour market operating context and exemplar international economies, and summarise the evidence base which has been used to inform the review.

Programme for Government

The Executive has taken the step of making the economy the top priority in its Programme for Government³ for 2011-2015.

The key strategic priorities of the Programme for Government are:

- Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future.
- Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and wellbeing.
- Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities.
- Building a strong and shared community.
- Delivering high quality and efficient public services.

The Programme for Government highlights the importance of recognising the inter-relationships that exist between these priorities.

Economic Strategy

The overarching goal of the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy⁴ is to improve the economic performance of the local economy, with the key drivers being innovation, research and development (R&D) and the skills of our workforce. The Strategy recognises the need to improve the skills and employability of the entire workforce so that people can progress up the skills ladder, thereby delivering higher productivity and increased social inclusion.

Equally, the Strategy recognises the need to target areas which have the greatest potential for growth including: Telecommunications and Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Life and Health Sciences, Agri-food, Advanced Materials and Advanced Engineering. It focuses on developing export-led economic growth as the best means of increasing employment and wealth in Northern Ireland and improving the overall level of competitiveness.

Skills Strategy

The Skills Strategy, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*⁵ highlights that the skills of the local workforce have a key role to play in helping Northern Ireland to reach its full economic potential. The Strategy aims to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder in order to:

- Raise the skills level of the whole workforce.
- Raise productivity.
- Increase levels of social inclusion by enhancing the employability of those currently excluded from the labour market.
- Help to secure Northern Ireland's future in a global marketplace.

3 Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government 2011-2015 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>

4 Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (2012): <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

5 Department for Employment and Learning, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures, 2011: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-successthroughskills/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.htm>

The Skills Strategy examines the current skills base, considers the skills we will need in the future to grow the local economy and highlights a number of challenges which must be addressed if we are to have a workforce equipped with the skills needed by employers to rebalance and rebuild the economy. In particular, there will be an increased need:

- For people with higher level skills.
- For people with skills in STEM.
- For people with better management and leadership skills.
- To up-skill those people already in work.
- To attract certain skills into the workforce, as the economy grows.

Priority Sectors

Following the direction set within the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy and the Skills Strategy priority sectors were identified for the focus of employment and skills provision.

The sectors identified to **rebalance** the economy were:

- Business services (specifically ICT).
- Financial services.
- Food and drink processing and manufacturing.
- Advanced manufacturing.
- Advanced engineering.

The sectors identified to **rebuild** the economy were:

- Hospitality and catering (in support of tourism).
- Retail.

A commitment has also been given to support the following new and emerging sectors:

- Life and health sciences.
- Creative industries.

STEM Strategy

The STEM Strategy, *Success through STEM*⁶, produced by the Department for Employment and Learning, the Department of Education (DE), the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety aims to promote STEM and was endorsed by the Executive in March 2011. The STEM Strategy outlines how Government intends to encourage more of our young people to study and pursue a career in STEM. The 'STEM One Year On' report, which was launched in March 2012, highlights the significant progress made by both Government and business since the Strategy's launch, but much more needs to be done.

Review of the Careers Strategy

On 25th November 2013, Ministers Farry and O'Dowd announced their intention to review the careers strategy⁷. This review, which will be taken forward during 2014, will be conducted jointly with DE. It will take into account the recently published Employment and Learning Committee Inquiry report into careers education information advice and guidance. The aim will be to ensure that young people and their parents

6 Department for Employment and Learning, *The STEM Strategy, Success through STEM*, 2011: http://www.delni.gov.uk/es/2857p_stem_booklet_v5.pdf

7 Department for Employment and Learning, *Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Review*, 2013: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/ceiag-review>

are informed of the excellent careers opportunities available through an apprenticeships route that has equal value and prestige to the university pathway. It is anticipated that the review will outline a key role for the Careers Service in facilitating access to the new apprenticeships model.

Economic and Labour Market Operating Context

It is clear that the global economic downturn has impacted significantly on the Northern Ireland economy. The region's heavy reliance on the public sector during a period of austerity, its proximity to the Republic of Ireland, which has been facing its own profound economic challenges, and adjustments to the local property and construction sectors, have weighed down on growth. A number of longer term structural weaknesses which include lower levels of productivity and high inactivity levels are also recognised.

Young people have not escaped the effects of the economic downturn. While it is encouraging that rates of youth unemployment are lower than many of our European partners (including France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece) they are significantly higher than the Germanic countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) which have youth unemployment rates in the region of 8%. These latter countries have been effective at moving young people into employment and this review seeks to learn from the approaches those countries have taken.

The local labour market is now showing positive signs of improvement. For instance, the number of people claiming unemployment benefits has fallen by around 4,000 since the start of 2013. Economic commentators are becoming uniformly more optimistic about future prospects while remaining mindful of the risks, including those that linger from the Euro-zone crisis.

The local economy must continue to rebalance and rebuild, building on its strengths and grasping the economic opportunities that exist both now and into the future. Northern Ireland has a young population, one of the youngest in Europe. This represents an economic strength for the future, particularly if their talents can be honed and harnessed fully. Furthermore, this region is one of the most successful in attracting Foreign Direct Investment and companies that consider Northern Ireland have reported being attracted by the skills system which is focused increasingly on meeting industry needs⁸.

There certainly are opportunities ahead. The Economic Strategy has identified the following targets for jobs:

REBUILDING TARGETS BY 2014/15 (SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM)

- 6,300 jobs, with 4,000 to be created by March 2014.
- 6,000 work experience and training opportunities for young people to be delivered by 2015 in priority sectors.
- 1,150 new employment opportunities to be stimulated in rural areas under the Rural Development Programme by 2015.

REBALANCING TARGETS BY 2030 (LONG-TERM)

- 6,300 jobs in locally owned companies (50% paying salaries above the Private Sector Median).
- A further 6,500 new jobs in new start-up businesses.
- 5,900 jobs secured from inward investors (75% paying salaries above private sector median).

In addition to the targets outlined in the Economic Strategy, evidence from Oxford Economics⁹ has shown that even in the absence of a reduction in Corporation Tax, 57,000 net additional jobs will be created in

8 NI Executive, Economic Strategy – Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Prosperity, SWOT Analysis, 2012: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

9 Oxford Economics (2012), Preparing for a Lower Corporation Tax Environment, Published by DEL June 2012. <http://www.delni.gov.uk/lower-corporation-tax-environment.pdf>

Northern Ireland by 2030 (from a baseline in 2011). These jobs will be in high value added STEM related sectors with managers and the professional sectors the main source of occupation growth.

Recent research which considered future prospects for the Northern Ireland economy in a lower corporation tax environment¹⁰ indicated that in a high growth scenario of that nature an additional 115,000 jobs would be created in the coming years. Software and information technology (IT), health and life sciences, creative industries, financial services and advanced manufacturing are amongst the sectors that would drive such growth. Yet the research also recognised that ambitions of that nature which tie closely with the vision set out in the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, will need to be underpinned by strong and focused skills development with a particular bias towards growing demand for higher level skills (at Level 3 and above). Apprenticeship provision offers a real opportunity to build the specific skills that are required to drive and sustain the future growth of the Northern Ireland economy. Apprenticeships have been proven to provide an effective and rapid route for young people to make the transition from education into the workplace. Linking theory and practice can provide an efficient means of developing the right skills benefiting both the employer and the employee¹¹. Putting apprenticeships at the heart of our skills system will help us deliver our economic aspirations, increasing employment, economic growth and prosperity for all.

The role of our SMEs will be fundamental if we are to achieve our ambition of improved productivity, employment and economic growth. Statistical analysis shows that SMEs account for a significant proportion of employment in the private sector in Northern Ireland. Figures show that small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) account for 98.2%, with medium businesses (50- 249) accounting for 1.5% and large businesses (250+) accounting for 0.3% of total businesses within Northern Ireland. Micro businesses (fewer than 10 employees) account for 89.1% of the total businesses in Northern Ireland; this is similar to the UK, at around 88.7%. Given the business structure of our economy it is therefore important that our SMEs engage comprehensively with the apprenticeship programme if we are to ensure that our future model achieves our aspirations and ambitions.

Qualifications

Improving the skills of our workforce is a crucial component to raising employment and productivity. Recent evidence shows that qualifications of the working age population in Northern Ireland have been improving at all levels (from 2006 we have seen increases of 2.1 percentage points at Level 2 and above, 2.9 percentage points at Level 3 and above, with the biggest increase at Level 4 and above, demonstrating an increase of 4.1 percentage points). This does not however paint the full picture; compared with many other countries, Northern Ireland has a high proportion of people with low or no qualifications. When compared to the UK, a higher proportion of the local working age population has no qualifications (18.3% when compared to the UK average of 9.9%) and fewer hold qualifications at Level 3 and above (47.8% – when compared to the UK 53.8%).

International context

In determining the way forward, the review identified the German-speaking dual system countries as international exemplars of strong apprenticeships provision¹².

These economies have secured high level of skills, low levels of youth unemployment and one of the best matched skills systems and infrastructure. The academic and professional and technical systems work together to deliver the skilled workforce needed to support the economy.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ European Commission (2012), Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union, January <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&type=2&furtherPubs=no>

¹² OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

The movement between academic and professional and technical streams can be relatively fluid, facilitating progression and higher level attainment to meet the needs of employers, young people and the economy. It provides a solid platform for social mobility.

The dual system ensures that young people are provided with opportunities to develop the skills and experience required to be attractive to employers and to provide consistently high-quality training, leading to qualifications that can support them throughout their working lives and ensure higher productivity employability and portability.

There has been a recent focus on apprenticeships and improved professional and technical pathways across much of the developed world as governments seek to improve the prospects of young people through better school to work transitions and provide employers with the skills they need to grow and be competitive. Government in many developed countries are turning to the positive experience of Germany to develop their apprenticeship systems¹³.

Conclusion

The Executive is clear about the importance of pursuing relentlessly economic growth and prosperity. The Programme for Government has the economy at the top of its priorities. The Economic Strategy sets out a clear vision of a successful Northern Ireland economy and provides a pathway for achieving that vision based around investment in skills and innovation. The Skills Strategy and related strategies are similarly clear about the priority actions that are required to deliver the economic vision. The Skills Strategy points to the need for transformational change with people being encouraged and facilitated to move up the skills ladder. There is a particular focus on STEM, management and leadership and on the development of higher level skills. While we are emerging from recession which has created unemployment particularly amongst our young people, our skills profile is improving steadily as we continue to encourage employer investment in skills development.

Northern Ireland's future apprenticeships will be a key leverage to deliver the Executive's priority to rebalance and rebuild the economy. In so doing we can learn much from international exemplars of apprenticeships to deliver higher productivity and social mobility.

¹³ OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

3

THE BENEFITS OF AN APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeships deliver clear benefits to the key partners involved, participants, employers and the wider economy. This chapter sets out the main benefits of apprenticeships to the central partners involved.

Benefits to Employers

The research outlined has identified a clear business imperative both financial and non-financial for employers providing apprenticeships. Where an apprentice is retained after the completion of training there are significant returns to the employer. In addition to the financial return there is a range of other non-monetary benefits secured by the employer such as developing the vital skills for their business in line with their organisational values.

MONETARY BENEFITS

Case studies across the UK have demonstrated that an employer's net investment can be quickly recouped¹⁴.

When apprentices are recruited as full-time employees the return from apprenticeships against the firm's investment is substantial: engaging apprentices can be profitable for participating firms. Cost benefit calculations for Swiss firms undertaken over the past ten years show that an average firm can recoup its training investments by the end of the training period¹⁵. For these firms, the apprentice's productive contribution exceeds training costs, including wages, by 6,000 Euro per apprentice¹⁶. For Swiss firms illustrated in the chart below the net benefit of the apprentice to the firm is negative in the first year. However as the productive contribution of the apprentice improves over time the overall net benefit is positive.

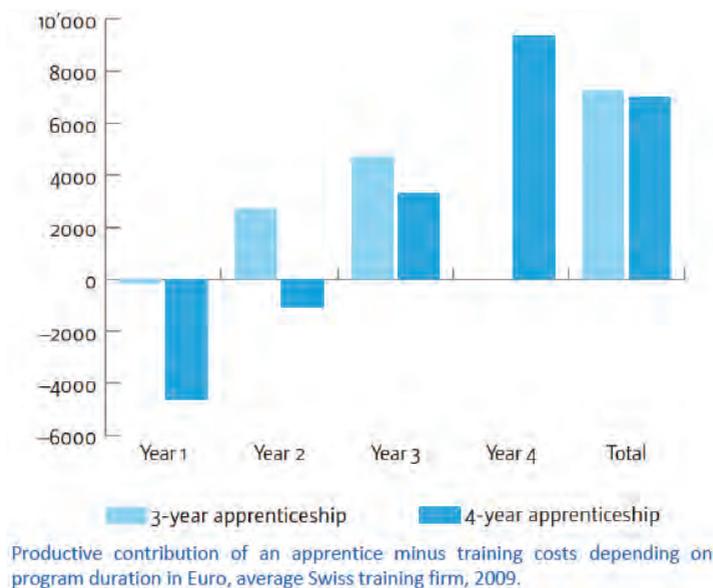


Image replicated with the kind permission of Stefan Wolter, University of Berne¹⁷:

14 Gambin, Lynn, Hasluck, Chris, and Hogarth, Terence. (2010) *Recouping the costs of apprenticeship training : employer case study evidence from England*. Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training, Vol.2 (No.2).

15 WOLTER, S. (2012) 'Apprenticeship training can be profitable for firms and apprentices alike'. EENEE Policy Brief 3/2012, Munich: European expert Network on economics of Education.No.59
http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEContent/_IMPORT_TELECENTRUM/DOCS/PolicyBrief3-2012.pdf

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

A report from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)¹⁸ shows the benefits to employers both in the short-term and longer-term of recruiting and employing young people. Immediate benefits include:

- Lower recruitment costs (CBI, 2007¹⁹) (Education and Employers Task Force, 2010²⁰). Young people in school and college will be actively seeking employment and many apply speculatively to employers reducing the costs of advertising (Hasluck, 2011²¹). Engaging with schools and colleges can also help with the selection of good quality recruits, while a reputation for offering jobs to young people (especially if that reputation is associated with good training opportunities) will encourage other young people to apply, thus widening the pool of applicants from which the business can draw (Mann and Glover, 2011a and 2011b)²².
- Cost effectiveness. The cost of employing young people is lower as they tend to have lower wages than older workers and where employees are under 21 years of age a lower National Minimum Wage rate applies.

A further report by UKCES²³ notes a number of research papers relating to the benefits of employers employing apprentices. It notes that Hogarth and Hasluck (2003) suggest the net costs of apprenticeships are often lower than those of training non-apprentices. Furthermore, the higher productivity of apprentices allows employers to recoup much of the cost associated with participation.

Recruiting apprentices is less costly other than traditional recruitment routes, offers higher staff retention and creates employees with shared organisational values. As such, apprentices are individuals who could fill jobs at a range of levels in the organisation in the future, providing there is the opportunity for structured career development (Hogarth *et al.*, 2005)²⁴. In some sectors, they can also help to access non-traditional sources of labour which in turn gives other business benefits.

A report from Chris Hasluck and Terence Hogarth²⁵ examines the likely scale of the business benefit from training expressed as a mark-up over the trained worker's wage in a range of sectors. The report found that in engineering the mark-up of around 50 percent was substantial and reflected the length (three to four years) and intensity of apprenticeship training in the sector, which leads to substantial increases in productivity after training. By contrast the productivity gap between the apprentice and the skilled worker was much less in retailing and business administration where training was often of shorter duration leading to smaller productivity gains.

NON-MONETARY BENEFITS

Case studies²⁶ considering the benefit to employer investment in apprenticeships report a range of qualitative benefits. Business Europe, an employer organisation representing employer federations across Europe listed the following benefits to employers who provide apprenticeships²⁷. These show that:

- Companies have their staff trained according to practical requirements.
- Apprentices contribute to production.

18 UKCES (2012) Why Businesses should recruit young people <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/why-businesses-should-recruit-young-people.pdf>

19 CBI (2007), *Time well spent: Embedding employability in work experience*, Confederation of British Industry and Department for Education and Schools, London, March, ISBN 978-0-85201-654-1. <http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/timewellspent.pdf>

20 Education and Employer Task Force (2010), *What is to be gained through partnership?: Exploring the value of education-employer relations*, Task Force Report No3, London, May.

<http://www.educationandemployers.org/media/10096/what%20is%20to%20be%20gained%20through%20partnership%20v%202.pdf>

21 Hasluck C. (2011), *Employers, young people and recruitment*, UK Commission for Employment and Skills, <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/why-businesses-should-recruit-young-people.pdf>

22 Mann A. and Glover C. (2011a), 'Employer Engagement in Schools: The Business Case', *Local Economy*, Vol.26, No.3, May, pp214-220. Mann A. and Glover C. (2011b) 'The point of partnership: the case for employer engagement in education', *Strategic HR Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.21 - 27.

23 UKCES The Value of Skills, An Evidence Review 2010: <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-22-the-value-of-skills-an-evidence-review.pdf>

24 Hogarth, T., Hasluck, C. and Daniel, W.W. (2005) *Employing Apprentices: The Business Case. A Report Prepared for the Apprenticeship Task Force*. Institute for Employment Research, Warwick.

25 Hasluck C., T. Hogarth et al., 2008. 'The Net Benefit to Employer Investment in Training', Institute for Employer Research, University of Warwick. http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/~/media/AAN/Documents/Research_1_625.ashx

26 Hasluck C., T. Hogarth et al., 2008. 'The Net Benefit to Employer Investment in Training', Institute for Employer Research, University of Warwick. http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/~/media/AAN/Documents/Research_1_625.ashx

27 Business Europe 2012. *Creating Opportunities for Youth: How to improve the Quality and Image of Apprenticeships*. <http://www.businesseurope.eu/Content/default.asp?pageid=568&docid=29967>

- Providing the professional and technical schools are well equipped, young people can bring the company the newest know-how from the training institute.
- Apprentices contribute to the company with new energy and enthusiasm.
- Companies and their employees get used to training and integrating newcomers and they see the importance of learning.
- Former apprentices constitute a pool of competences for companies or even a sector.

Employers are attracted to the concept of apprenticeship style training as it provides the opportunity to develop their organisations' values and culture and meet their future skill needs. Apprenticeships provide firms with an intake of young employees who have mastered the necessary skillset and developed associated underpinning knowledge and transferable skills.

Benefits to Apprentices

Apprenticeships deliver a range of benefits to participants by supporting a range of learning preferences for on-the-job and off-the-job training and affording opportunities for well-paid jobs and sustainable employment.

A number of apprentices who participated in the apprentice stakeholder forum as part of the consultation process valued the practical nature of an apprenticeship through learning by doing. An apprenticeship offers an opportunity to maximise each apprentice's potential.

EMPLOYMENT RETURNS

Undertaking a quality apprenticeship leads to a much stronger chance of the participant being employed²⁸. In particular countries with well-developed apprenticeships including Switzerland, Austria, Denmark and Germany, are among those with the lowest share of young people experiencing multiple spells of unemployment. The German Federal Government promotes its system of vocational education and training as a key factor in maintaining low youth unemployment²⁹.

Apprenticeships deliver good returns compared to other forms of professional and technical training, with high earnings for the apprentice over his/her lifetime. On average individuals with a Level 3 apprenticeship earn between £77,000 and £117,000 more over their lifetime than similar individuals with Level 2 qualifications³⁰.

Apprenticeships can be a valuable lever to promote social mobility, for example, improving access into the professions for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds³¹. Hayes³² sets out an economic and social imperative for an apprenticeship stressing the ability of an apprenticeship to improve social mobility through a non-academic progression route that is well respected.

28 Quintini, G. Martin, J.P. Martin, S. (2007) 'The changing Nature of the School-to-Work Transition Process in OECD Countries' Discussion Paper Number 2582. The Institute for the Study of Labour <http://ftp.iza.org/dp2582.pdf>

29 Potter, M (January 2013) Briefing Paper - Apprenticeships in Germany. http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2013/employment_learning/2213.pdf

30 London Economics (2011) Returns to Intermediate and low level vocational qualifications <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/r/11-1282-returns-intermediate-and-low-level-vocational-qualifications>.

31 Tant, O and Sherlock, N (2011) "Youth transitions and Apprenticeships: a broader view of skill" in T. Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds.) Reinventing The Apprenticeship: An Employer's Perspective. London: IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/Apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

32 Dolphin, T and Lanning T (2012) (eds.) "Re-thinking Apprenticeships" London: IPPR http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

Benefits to the Economy

A clear paradox has emerged between youth unemployment and the skills gaps experienced by businesses. Despite high levels globally of youth unemployment, a survey from McKinsey reports that across nine countries only 43% of employers think they can find enough skilled entry level workers³³. Middle-sized firms (between 50 and 500 workers) have an average of 13 unfilled entry-level jobs/vacancies³⁴.

Additional evidence from the UKCES³⁵ shows that Northern Ireland also has recruitment and vacancy issues with 10% of business establishments reported as having a vacancy. The report also found that the total number of vacancies per 100 employees rose from 2.4 in 2008 to 2.7 in 2011.

The smallest establishments (those with fewer than five employees), employers in the Business Services sector, those located in Belfast or the Northern region, and those employing professionals, skilled trade occupations and machine operatives were the most likely to report vacancies, indicating that there is scope for apprenticeship opportunities in local SMEs.

Countries with a close link between education and work through developed apprenticeships and youth training provision have the lowest youth unemployment rates, even in periods of limited economic growth. While Northern Ireland's youth unemployment rate is lower than the European average, it is more than double that of countries with a strong apprenticeship tradition like Switzerland, Austria and Germany³⁶.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

A recent paper by the UKCES, which compares apprenticeships provision across Australia, Germany and the Netherlands, sets out OECD estimates of the positive public net returns from investment in an apprenticeship of between €21,000 and €43,000 for each apprentice³⁷. Research by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills estimates returns of £28 for every £1³⁸ spent on an apprentice, and the National Audit Office estimates the return on Government investment to be in the region of £18 per £1 spent³⁹.

BENEFITS FOR COMPETITIVENESS AND GROWTH

It is argued that apprenticeships promote skills matching more efficiently than is possible with school based and full time education⁴⁰. This would offer clear benefits to the local economy, where many employers in specific sectors such as the professions, skilled trade occupations and machine operatives were likely to report vacancies. Such skills gaps limit the competitiveness and growth of the Northern Ireland economy.

33 Moursed, M Farrell, D and Barton, B McKinsey Center for Government, Education to Employment: Designing a System that Works http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Education-to-Employment_FINAL.pdf

34 The Economist "Generation Jobless" April 27 2013. <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21576657-around-world-almost-300m-15-24-year-olds-are-not-working-what-has-caused>

35 UKCES Employer Skills Survey: Northern Ireland National Report (2011) <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-60-employer-skills-survey-11-ni.pdf>

36 Labour Force Survey and Eurostat Youth Unemployment Rates December 2012

37 Volger – Ludwig, K. Giernalczyk, H. Stock, L. (2012) ' International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate Level Skills and Apprenticeships' Case Study Report, Evidence Report 42, Volume 2. Economic Research and Consultancy. UKCES, Warwick Institute for Employer Research. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-42-international-approaches-synthesis-report.pdf>

38 FE Week (2012) The National Audit Office passes judgement on adult apprenticeships. <http://feweek.co.uk/2012/02/01/the-national-audit-office-passes-judgement-on-apprenticeships/>

39 National Audit Office (NAO) Adult Apprenticeships Estimating Economic Benefits from Apprenticeships – Technical paper. http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/10121787_Technical_paper.pdf

40 Steedman, H (November 2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

Many of the benefits that are ascribed to business such as productivity gains increased innovation and meeting skill shortages in turn benefit the wider economy. In Germany, an apprenticeship is considered to be central to the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector⁴¹. German apprentices have high earnings, develop high level skills that have been identified by employers as necessary for growth and increased productivity. These higher earnings and productivity are associated with increased taxable returns that, in turn, contribute to social benefits such as health, education and general welfare measures⁴².

BENEFITS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

The impact of a strong apprenticeship offering on youth unemployment has been highlighted with Germany, Switzerland and Australia enjoying low levels of youth unemployment despite sluggish growth across the European Union (EU). Youth unemployment is a major focus for governments given its current high level⁴³. The implementation of a dual system linking education and training has also received a lot of attention due to its assumed potential to alleviate youth unemployment by improving school to work transition (OECD 2006). A dual system is characterised by a strong linkage between work-based training and apprenticeships, and school-based education.

Summary of Benefits

A high quality apprenticeships system can deliver significant benefits for the three partners: employers, apprentices and the Government:

- **Employers** - delivering clear monetary and non monetary benefits.
- **Apprentices** - delivering substantial employment and wage returns.
- **Government** - delivering a more efficient skills matching to the needs of the economy, addressing the challenges of youth unemployment and improving competitiveness of employers.

41 Volger – Ludwig, K. Giernalczyk, H. Stock, L. (2012) ' International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate Level Skills and Apprenticeships' Case Study Report, Evidence Report 42, Volume 2. Economix Research and Consultancy. UKCES, Warwick Institute for Employer Research. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-42-international-approaches-synthesis-report.pdf>

42 Steedman, H (November 2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

43 Görlich, D., I. Stepanok, and F. Al-hussami (2013). Youth unemployment in Europe and the world: causes, consequences and solutions. Kiel Policy Brief, IfW, No. 59. http://www.ifw-kiel.de/wirtschaftspolitik/politikberatung/kiel-policy-brief/KPB_59.pdf

ApprenticeshipsNI

Apprenticeships have been a long term feature in the skills landscape of Northern Ireland. ApprenticeshipsNI, the Department's current apprenticeship programme offers support across a wide range of occupational areas. Through the programme apprentices receive a combination of both on-the-job and off-the-job training alongside their employment. The programme provides, through a framework, a range of qualifications comprising knowledge, competence and, where necessary, the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Since its launch in 2007 it has supported a significant number of participants to gain the experience, skills and underpinning knowledge required to be successful in the world of work. On the international stage, a number of Northern Ireland apprentices have been recognised through the achievement of awards and accolades in recent skills competitions.

The latest statistical information indicates that from 2007/08 to 2012/13⁴⁴ 43,376 people had started on ApprenticeshipsNI. Of these, 68% were at Level 2, 10% at Level 2/3 and 22% at Level 3. The number of starts on ApprenticeshipsNI increased from 4,282 in 2007/08 to 6,345 in 2012/13.

The proportion of female starts on ApprenticeshipsNI has increased from 35% in 2007/08 to 49% in 2012/13. Of the total number of starts over the last six years 51% were female and 49% were male.

The most popular sectors in terms of numbers of starts since the launch of the programme in 2007 are: health and social care (6,764), catering and hospitality (5,251), retail (3,964), management (2,504), engineering (2,485), customer service (2,020), business and administration (1,839), construction (1,762), child care, learning and development (1,702) and team leading (1,532).

In the latest year for which information is available in those sectors which have been designated as economically important, males represent the majority of participants at 85% compared to 15% females. This is particularly notable in engineering where males represent 97% of participants and food and drink manufacturing where they represent 73% of participants. One of the few sectors deemed as an economic priority where females are more prevalent is pharmacy services at 84%⁴⁵.

Details of the Department's current model of apprenticeships, ApprenticeshipsNI, are set out at Annex C.

Challenges

Looking forward, provision for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland will need to address the challenges faced

44 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

45 The number of participants in other sectors is too low to give an accurate indication of gender differences.

by ApprenticeshipsNI. This chapter considers these challenges from the perspective of the wider economic environment including our employers our apprentices, both current and prospective, and providers.

Economic Environment

The skills needs of the workforce in general, including apprenticeships, is changing with a requirement for a higher level of skills across the economy. As demonstrated by the Department's most recent statistical bulletin⁴⁶, the current model needs to adjust to give sufficient recognition of the current and future skills needs of the economy and its young people. The focus in the main of apprenticeships provision at level 2 does not support skills projections for 2020 and beyond, with demand for lower level skills expected to halve and demand for higher level skills at Levels 3-8 set to increase significantly⁴⁷. During 2012, 59% apprentices were enrolled on Level 2 apprenticeships, with 41% at Level 3.

The current programme's frameworks do not offer apprenticeships beyond level 3, thus offering no opportunities for the apprenticeship pathway to supply the economy's skills needs beyond level 3.

The Department's Skills Strategy identified the likely 2020 skills profile that employers will need if productivity is to improve. Apprenticeships at level 3 and above offer a valuable conduit to increase productivity and in turn increase GDP.

The statistical information⁴⁸ also indicates that currently there is not an equal spread of apprenticeships opportunities across the full range of frameworks. Whilst there is penetration across a wide range of economically important sectors, participation across many of the frameworks relevant to these sectors is low. This indicates that the current model does not offer efficient matching of apprentices to the needs of the economy due to under supply of apprentices at the right level for economically important sectors.

Employers

DELIVERY MODEL

The current delivery model is balanced more heavily towards a supply led model. Providers of the off-the-job training play a lead role in the programme maintaining the principal relationship with both employers and apprentices. As a result, employer participation is reliant upon a provider's ability to secure apprenticeships in many occupational areas. This has diminished the role of the employer in terms of informing and driving demand. Additionally, there are no mechanisms in place for employers to place vacancies or for prospective apprentices to consider available opportunities in order to make better informed decisions.

The consensus in the call for submissions responses and feedback from the stakeholder forums questioned whether micro and SMEs had the right level of support to participate in the current apprenticeship programme. In a recent survey, (UKCES Employer Perspectives Survey 2012), the main reason employers did not offer apprenticeships in Northern Ireland was structural barriers.

PROGRESSION

Statistical data relating to ApprenticeshipsNI⁴⁹ indicates that enrolments at Level 3 are lower than those at Level 2 (41% and 59% respectively during 2012/13). Enrolments for Level 3 include those who are pursuing an NVQ Level 2 route to a targeted outcome which is NVQ Level 3 or equivalent.

46 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

47 Oxford Economics (2009) Forecasting Future Skill Needs in Northern Ireland. Lisburn: Oxford Economics.
http://www.delni.gov.uk/del_future_skill_needs_final_report_june_09_v4_no_links.pdf

48 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

49 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

No progression pathways are currently offered beyond the Level 3 framework with the exception of a small number of higher level apprenticeships currently being piloted.

A clear road-map detailing the linkages between professional and technical and academic pathways is not explicit. This limits the acceptance of ApprenticeshipsNI across wider further and higher education and training for the purpose of further progression. Unlike the model in German speaking dual system countries, the absence of this road-map leads to confusion and lower perceived status, when compared to the prestige of a university education which is seen as portable and is held in high regard.

APPRENTICESHIPS FRAMEWORKS AND QUALIFICATIONS

The majority of the existing apprenticeship frameworks have been developed at a national level and have been in operation for a considerable time. In many cases, they are inflexible and out-of-date, particularly in the priority and emerging areas of the economy.

The qualifications landscape is complicated. There is a wide range of qualifications for employers to choose for each of the apprenticeship frameworks. This hinders the ability of employers to inform the content of apprenticeships.

CLASSIFICATION

Each apprentice participating on the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is recorded by a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) and framework. However it is not possible to easily map these SOC codes to specific sectors. This reduces the Department's ability to monitor the programme's impact on wider Government strategies, such as developing the priority and emerging sectors identified for our economy.

AWARENESS

The Department has supported a series of high profile advertising campaigns to promote the current system to employers. However it is too heavily reliant on the training providers securing employment for young people. No system currently exists to overtly market apprenticeships to employers. In England, this function is carried out by the National Apprenticeship Service and in other jurisdictions by an Employment Service. The National Apprenticeship Service promotes the benefits of apprenticeships to employers and provides information on incentives available.

Young People/ Individuals

INITIAL ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Most young people in schools receive a one to one impartial career guidance interview to help them make an informed decision about their career options. Despite this there is still a mismatch between labour supply and employer demand. The Careers Service has recently placed a greater emphasis on the use of labour market information in the guidance process. It is accepted that more needs to be done to inform young people and their parents of the risks and rewards associated with various careers paths.

The labour market has become increasingly complex and difficult to navigate, particularly for those entering it for the first time. Assumptions and out of date preconceptions about sectors are made, leading to pathways that are not attracting the right calibre of talent in sufficient numbers, yet offer excellent opportunities both at home and internationally. The current structures for progressing from education to apprenticeships are complex. Accessing higher education is deemed a simpler more easily understood option.

ELIGIBILITY

The conditions of entry to the existing programme are not sufficiently flexible. Potential apprentices, particularly young people, are excluded if they already hold qualifications at a similar level, achieved through an alternative pathway, such as further education or the Entitlement Framework⁵⁰.

ENTRY ASSESSMENT

The current model permits individuals who have been employed for some time by a company to become apprentices. Many of these employees are already sufficiently proficient in their current job role. Without provision for independent initial assessment advice and guidance it is difficult to identify eligibility for particular frameworks and levels or indeed if any training is required. This can lead to the accreditation of existing competences.

PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

The current provision does not offer any frameworks beyond Level 3, impacting adversely on the decision-making process for young people when choosing their preferred career pathway at ages 14, 16 and 18. While apprenticeships beyond Level 3 are currently being piloted as an interim step to offer alternative pathways to higher level education and training, this needs to become the mainstream pathway for apprentices.

PORTABILITY

Existing frameworks do not detail clearly the portability of content across a range of employers and sectors in Northern Ireland or its neighbouring jurisdictions. This can hamper the apprentice's lifelong employment and learning journey.

Some young people in schools are of the view that apprenticeships should be sufficiently flexible to allow portability, as the current programme is perceived as being very specific to a job, as opposed to the flexibility offered through higher education.

AWARENESS

In the absence of a central support service, similar to the National Apprenticeship Service which operates in England, apprenticeship vacancies are not clearly signposted and as a consequence there is no independent support to match prospective apprentices with employers. This leads to a lack of awareness of the apprenticeship route as a potential alternative to higher education, limiting the ability of prospective apprentices to make informed career choices at critical stages in their educational journey.

Recent Developments

The Department, on a pilot basis, is working on a range of interventions to support widening apprenticeships to facilitate participation at higher levels.

HIGHER LEVEL APPRENTICESHIPS

The Department published the Employer Engagement Plan in early 2012⁵¹, setting out the intention to work with employers to increase the skills of the workforce by focusing on a number of 'priority sectors' which would help to re-balance and re-build the economy. To support this aim, the Employer Engagement

50 Department for Education: Delivering the Entitlement Framework: Guidance to schools for phase II of the Entitlement Framework Support Arrangements 2013/14. http://www.deni.gov.uk/14-19_cet_2013_14_ef_circular_english_version_.pdf

51 Department for Employment and Learning Success through Skills: Transforming futures - Employer Engagement Plan, 2011: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-employer-engagement-plan.pdf>

Plan committed to developing and piloting higher level apprenticeships programmes in the ICT and engineering sectors. Consequently, a number of higher level apprenticeships programmes are currently being piloted in response to demand from local employers.

Higher level apprenticeship pilots enable apprentices to work towards frameworks comprising of Foundation Degree/underpinning knowledge qualifications and practical skills at Level 4 and Level 5.

The Higher Level ICT Apprenticeship pilot was launched in November 2012, with 15 people employed as apprentices and undertaking training through the South West Regional College. The college works closely with employers to ensure the apprentices are adequately supported in their workplace.

The Professional Services Higher Level Apprenticeship pilot programme commenced in July 2012⁵², and is delivered by a local training provider working with 20 apprentices to train in audit and taxation.

A Higher Level Apprenticeship in engineering is also underway, which comprises of two strands: an employer led strand with Bombardier Aerospace working in partnership with the Belfast Metropolitan College and a college led strand delivered by the South West College and the Northern Regional College.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIPS

The Department has been working to support the local ICT sector through a Ministerial Working Group which developed an ICT Skills Action Plan. Employers within this sector have traditionally recruited from local universities. The focus on one educational pathway has resulted in the sector struggling to meet its skill needs.

The Department has worked with employers to develop a Public/Private ICT apprenticeships scheme, to recruit and train individuals for software and infrastructure roles. This pilot is an interesting area of development for the Department because the public sector in Northern Ireland has not traditionally supported apprentices. Last year, 32 apprentices were employed in the public sector and a number of private sector companies.

As part of the scheme, the Department funds the cost of recruitment, including advertising and aptitude testing, as well as critical intensive training for the apprentices to ensure they are well prepared for entry to the workplace. The Department funds the off-the-job training of the apprentices employed in the private sector through ApprenticeshipsNI. The Department does not however fund the off-the-job training of the apprentices employed in the public sector. These costs are being met by the public sector employer.

The pilot has proved so successful that industry expressed a desire to run a second cohort which launched in August 2013. The number of participating organisations has increased and 44 apprentices have been recruited to software development and infrastructure jobs.

52 Formally supported by DEL as a higher level apprenticeship pilot from May 2013.

Our Vision

Northern Ireland's apprenticeship model of the future will deliver highly skilled apprentices in areas of economic importance for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Apprenticeships will be highly sought after by young people, and recognised as a key route into many professional and technical occupations. They will be seen as congruent to full time higher education, and be held in equally high esteem.

In essence, quality, breadth, progression and portability will form the blueprint of Northern Ireland's apprenticeship of the future, delivering skills excellence, recognised both nationally and internationally as the gold standard, with apprentices commanding commensurate salaries upon successful completion.

Key Principles

To achieve this vision, apprenticeships will:

- Support the growth of the Northern Ireland economy, taking account of the priority sectors.
- Be aligned with the needs of sectors to meet their diverse needs.
- Support and enable progression within employment and/or to higher education.
- Be based on partnership between Government, employers and training providers.
- Be accessible to a wide range of employers, especially SMEs.
- Be responsive, flexible and future-orientated.
- Support permeability within a wider professional, technical and academic education system.
- Prepare participants for their specific job roles and beyond.
- Provide portability for apprentices within sectors.
- Facilitate mobility within the wider Northern Ireland economy, across the rest of the UK and across international boundaries.
- Deliver high quality training leading to valued awards/ qualifications.
- Be easily understood and administered.

This section sets out 32 proposals based on supporting evidence which aim to secure the vision and underpinning key principles for apprenticeships moving forward. These are set out under the following key themes:

- The components of an apprenticeship.
- Increasing participation.
- Partnership - the roles of the key players.
- Ensuring quality.

THEME 1:

The Components of an Apprenticeship

In future, apprenticeships should be defined as a system of learning and employment as opposed to a particular brand name. This concept, which may be supported by legislation⁵³, is proposed to ensure a form of professional and technical training that is adaptive to the particular needs of sectors.

The following will be the core aspects of the future system of apprenticeships.

1. Apprenticeships will be defined as a system of learning, irrespective of branding.
2. An apprenticeship will be for a new employee or, in the case of an existing employee, a new job role.
3. An apprenticeship will commence at professional and technical Level 3 or higher.
4. An apprenticeship will be for a minimum duration of two years.
5. An apprenticeship will involve a breadth of training beyond the specific needs of a particular job through on and off-the-job training.
6. An apprenticeship will be designed to enable individuals to progress into higher professional or technical training or onto a higher academic pathway.
7. Government will recognise an apprenticeship when it contains each of the components set out in Proposals 2-6.

The rationale for each of these components is explored below.

FOR A NEW EMPLOYEE OR, IN THE CASE OF AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE, A NEW JOB ROLE

Research by IIF (2012)⁵⁴ confirms that 'new employees are more likely to report improvements to their skills and knowledge'. In 'Re-Thinking Apprenticeship' (2011)⁵⁵, Keep and James argue that much of the recent growth in apprenticeships in England has been on the basis of rebranding and re-labelling existing in-house training. This would not be recognised as apprenticeship training in continental Europe. Moreover, much of the literature considers this to be 'deadweight provision'. That is to say taxpayer funded activity that would have taken place in any case in the absence of Government subsidy.

Training for both new and existing employees delivers benefits for learners, employers and the wider economy. While up-skilling the existing workforce is important, this should however, remain separate from apprenticeships and be catered for under the Department's range of interventions such as the Skills Solutions Service and Customised Training to up-skill and re-skill adults in work.

The National Apprenticeship Service has a number of requirements for delivering a high quality apprenticeship model. One of these is that the focus of an apprenticeship should be on equipping individuals with the new skills and learning they need for their job roles and future employment and progression. Apprenticeships are therefore appropriate for those moving into a new job or for individuals in an existing job where significant new knowledge and skills will be acquired through the apprenticeship.

Focusing apprenticeships on new employees or new roles helps to reduce the risk of deadweight provision and helps differentiate apprenticeships from other forms of work based training.

COMMENCE AT PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL LEVEL 3 AND ABOVE

There is strong evidence to support apprenticeships commencing at professional and technical Level 3 and above.

53 As in a number of countries across Europe - see Steedman 2010. Steedman, H (August 2010) The State of Apprenticeship in 2010. <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/cepsp22.pdf>

54 Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Learners, IFF and IER – BIS Research Paper Number 76, 2012: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/e/12-812-evaluation-of-apprenticeships-learners.pdf>

55 Keep, E and James, S (2011) "Employer Demand for Apprenticeships" – Re-thinking Apprenticeships IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

Low skill levels are identified at a UK level as one of the main reasons for its poor productivity compared to other countries. Lower level skills also limit employment opportunities and impact negatively on social inclusion⁵⁶. While Northern Ireland has made progress in this regard many other countries are improving at a faster rate. The OECD has stated that the rising skill demands in member countries have made the completion of upper secondary education the minimum requirement for successful entry into the labour market and participation in lifelong learning⁵⁷. Consequently, across much of Europe apprenticeships commence at Level 3 and above⁵⁸.

In a similar vein, the skill needs of our work force are also changing. Research from Oxford Economics (Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics)⁵⁹ indicates that, in Northern Ireland, the demand for lower level skills, at Levels 1 and 2, is set to halve by 2020 from 2007 levels and the demand for higher level skills at Levels 3 to 8 is set to increase significantly.

Research by the IPPR⁶⁰ demonstrates that the UK has a higher concentration of apprentices at Level 2 compared to other European countries. It notes that in most other countries apprenticeships commence at Level 3 or higher.

The consensus view from the stakeholder engagement process was that the apprenticeship model should commence at Level 3 and above, with progression to higher levels. This would help to address the productivity gap and provide parity of esteem between apprenticeships and higher education graduates.

Broad consensus exists across many business and policy groups of the need to increase apprenticeships at Level 3. A report by the Centre for Economic Performance⁶¹ proposes apprenticeships should commence at Level 3, with Level 2 attainment as the entry requirement.

Recognition of the need to commence apprenticeships at Level 3 was also highlighted in the recent Richard Review,⁶² which recommended that the UK Government, with respect to provision in England, should introduce a new separate work-based programme to support entry into employment to replace some apprenticeships at Level 2.

It is proposed that the apprenticeship system should, in the main, commence at Level 3 or higher. This will be supported by a progression ladder in order to ensure potential participants without a Level 2 in mathematics and English can work towards securing the pre-requisites for an apprenticeship place. There may, however, be a few exceptions to such an approach where there may be a clear case for a lower level that offers the conceptual framework of an apprenticeship and leads to subsequent progression.

BE FOR A MINIMUM DURATION OF TWO YEARS

Research considering return on investment in England⁶³ and Switzerland⁶⁴ demonstrates that duration is an essential element in making the business case for an apprenticeship. The evidence gathered from case

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- 56 Leitch Review of Skills 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills,' 2006. [http://www.delni.gov.uk/leitch_finalreport051206\[1\]-2.pdf](http://www.delni.gov.uk/leitch_finalreport051206[1]-2.pdf)
- 57 Quintini, G. and S. Martin (2006), "Starting Well or Losing their Way?: The Position of Youth in the Labour Market in OECD Countries", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 39. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/starting-well-or-losing-their-way_351848125721
- 58 European Commission, (2012) Apprenticeship supply in the Member States of the European Union – Final report. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&type=2&furtherPubs=no>
- 59 Oxford Economics (2009) *Forecasting Future Skill Needs in Northern Ireland*. Lisburn: Oxford Economics. http://www.delni.gov.uk/del_future_skill_needs_final_report_june_09_v4_no_links.pdf
- 60 Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds.) (2011) *Rethinking Apprenticeships*. London: IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/Apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf
- 61 Centre for Economic Performance Apprenticeship Policy in England, 2011: Increasing skills versus boosting young people's job prospects <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/pa013.pdf>
- 62 Richard, D. (2012). The Richard Review of Apprenticeships. An independent review commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Education. London: School for Startups. <http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/richard-review/richard-review-full.pdf#63>
- 63 Hasluck C., T. Hogarth et al., 2008. 'The Net Benefit to Employer Investment in Training', Institute for Employer Research, University of Warwick. <http://www.motor.org.uk/documentlibrary/research/Apprenticeship%20benefits%20jan09.pdf>
- 64 Hasluck C., T. Hogarth et al., 2008. 'The Net Benefit to Employer Investment in Training', Institute for Employer Research, University of Warwick. <http://www.motor.org.uk/documentlibrary/research/Apprenticeship%20benefits%20jan09.pdf>
- 64 WOLTER, S. (2012) 'Apprenticeship training can be profitable for firms and apprentices alike'. EENEE Policy Brief 3/2012, Munich: European expert Network on economics of Education. No.59 http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEContent/_IMPORT_TELECENTRUM/DOCS/PolicyBrief3-2012.pdf

studies through Hasluck, Hogarth, Adam and Briscoe⁶⁵, demonstrates that monetary investment in apprenticeship training is recouped within two to three years in most instances. Where the employer retains the apprentice beyond this time period, there can be significant returns.

In England, there have been examples of apprenticeships of much shorter duration, in some cases less than a year, which attracted criticism, with the Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee⁶⁶ questioning how much added value is derived from such apprenticeships.

In October 2013, the OECD called for a radical overhaul to the workplace training system in England. The report, *A Skills Beyond School Review of England*⁶⁷, calls on the UK Government to take strategic measures to encourage the expansion of high-quality, post-secondary vocational programmes reflecting both labour-market demand and student needs. The report emphasises that while the minimum duration for apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds in England is 12 months, in Austria, Australia, Canada and Germany it is often between three and four years. As a result, it articulates the view that apprenticeships in England play a small role in post-secondary education.

If apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are to re-capture the previous levels of prestige once enjoyed and are to secure parity of esteem with other educational pathways they need to be of guaranteed for a minimum duration, to ensure sustained learning which combined with robust assessment, will deliver a clear level of achievement for the apprentice. Best practice in countries with the most effective apprenticeship systems include Germany and Austria, where the average duration of an apprenticeship is 36 months and in Switzerland 48 months.

In order to deliver the full benefits for the two core partners, the apprentice and the employer, apprenticeships in Northern Ireland should be for a minimum duration of two years.

INVOLVE A BREADTH OF TRAINING BEYOND THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF A PARTICULAR JOB THROUGH ON AND OFF- THE- JOB TRAINING

When compared to other work based learning systems, it is the combination of on and off-the-job training, through a programme of learning, formal assessment and recognised certification that differentiates apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships across much of Europe generally consist of training to develop the following four key elements:

- **Competence** – in a range of practical skills.
- **Knowledge base** – the associated theoretical knowledge.
- **Employment rights and responsibilities.**
- **Transferable skills** –including, problem solving, team working, enterprise and communication.

The above elements are typically delivered through a combination of on and off-the-job training⁶⁸ and are necessary to ensure that apprentices are able to progress in their careers beyond their programme of training. A recent OECD paper⁶⁹ on quality apprenticeships recommended that apprenticeship training should not be too narrowly focused as highlighted below:

- **Quality apprenticeships should have a strong training component.** By the end of their apprenticeship period, apprentices should have acquired relevant skills for durable and productive working careers.

65 Hasluck C., T. Hogarth et al., 2008. 'The Net Benefit to Employer Investment in Training', Institute for Employer Research, University of Warwick. <http://www.motor.org.uk/documentlibrary/research/Apprenticeship%20benefits%20Jan09.pdf>

66 Jayard, R and Steedman, H (2012) BIS Committee written evidence. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmbis/83/83vw68.htm>

67 Musset, P. and Field, S. (2013) *A Skills beyond School Review of England*, OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolReviewOfEngland.pdf>

68 OECD (2012), *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies*, OECD Publishing <http://skills.oecd.org/documents/OECDSkillsStrategyFINALENG.pdf>

69 OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

- **Quality apprenticeships should provide training that is not too narrowly focused.** Training should not focus exclusively on specific job-related skills but also cover broader skills. This is important to ensure participants develop and maintain the ability to progress in their careers and adapt to change after they have left the programme. Thus, ideally, training should take place both on and off-the-job.

The German VET system is a good example of this, with the main aim of equipping a young person for the world of work, not just a specific job. This enables apprentices to gain exposure, and sufficient breadth and depth of experience, to meet the demands of work and increases their prospects of securing sustainable employment.

Apprenticeship schemes are spread well across the majority of EU Member States. Twenty-four Member States have VET schemes which can be categorised, in the main, as company based because more than half of the training activities take place within a company. However, in many of these countries company-based apprenticeships co-exist with other mainly school-based training schemes⁷⁰. In Germany and Switzerland, apprenticeship is known as dual-system apprenticeship. This refers to apprentices receiving structured training by an employer alongside general education and technical skills development in a vocational school.

The off-the-job training element can be delivered in a variety of ways⁷¹. In Switzerland, Germany and Austria off-the-job training is delivered in a school one or two days a week, while in the Republic of Ireland training is delivered through alternating periods of several months, both on-the-job and in the classroom. In Norway, school-based learning is followed by workplace training. In many apprenticeship systems the employer, where appropriate, may also deliver the off-the-job training element.

To ensure appropriate skills development, the off-the-job training component needs to be significant. Apprenticeships with limited off-the-job training have received criticism due to the lack of continued general education⁷².

BE DESIGNED TO ENABLE INDIVIDUALS TO PROGRESS INTO HIGHER PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL TRAINING OR ONTO A HIGHER ACADEMIC PATHWAY

In order to be attractive to potential participants and in particular young people, apprenticeships must be recognised as a substantial achievement that will facilitate progression across professional, technical and academic pathways. Oates (January 2013)⁷³ articulates the view that the focus should be on linking vocational qualifications to the content of work and the labour market, and on ensuring that they give rise to effective progression to sustainable employment and further and higher education.

In a paper for the IPPR, Fuller and Unwin⁷⁴ state that apprenticeships must create a work-based scaffold for career progression, whereby a continual general education should form a core part of the programme, to provide apprentices with access to higher-level knowledge.

The UKCES⁷⁵ highlights that in many EU countries the vocational pathway has not provided a route which allows trainees to progress readily into higher education. This is currently the situation in Northern Ireland, as was articulated through stakeholder engagement with young people in schools, who highlighted the importance of facilitating progression from the vocational route to higher-level education or training.

In future, apprenticeships will form an important part of an overall education system that will support seamless progression between further and higher education, as set out in table 1, overleaf.

70 European Commission (2012), Apprenticeship Supply in the Member States of the European Union, January <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6633&type=2&furtherPubs=no>

71 OECD (2012). Skills Strategy Spotlight Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives. http://skills.oecd.org/developskills/documents/Apprenticeships_and_Workplace_Learning.pdf

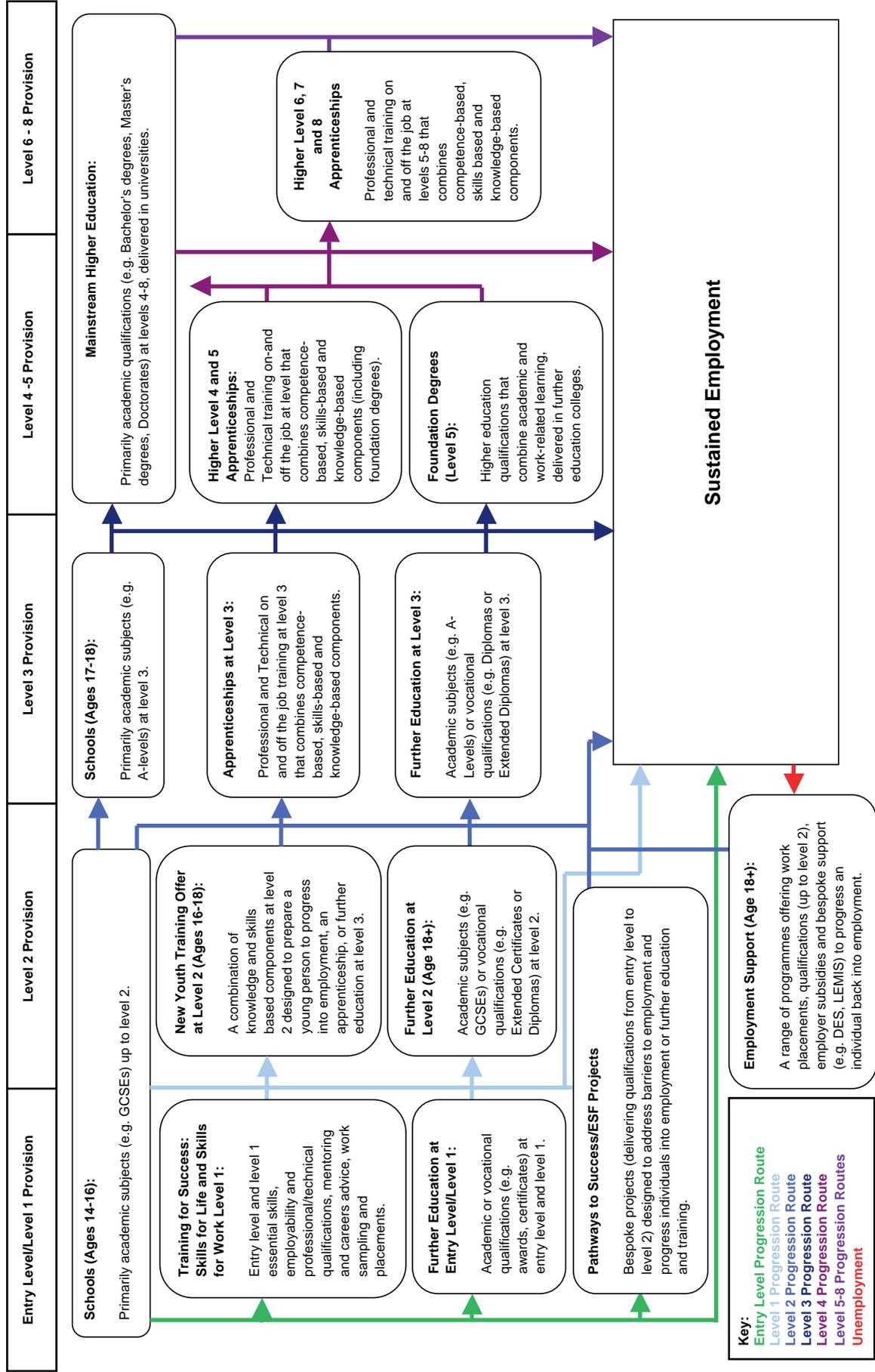
72 OECD (2012). Apprenticeships in London Boosting Skills in a City Economy with Comment on Lessons from Germany skills. http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/London_final.pdf

73 Oates, T (January 2013) Towards a new VET. <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf>

74 Fuller, A and Unwin, L (2011). "Youth transitions and Apprenticeships: a broader view of skill" in T. Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds.) *The Content of Apprenticeships*. London: IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/Apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

75 Volger – Ludwig, K. Giernalczyk, H. Stock, L. Hogarth, T. (2012) 'International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate Level Skills and Apprenticeships' Synthesis Report, Evidence Report 42, Volume 1. Economix Research and Consultancy. UKCES, Warwick Institute for Employer Research. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/publications/er42-intl-approaches-dev-int-skills-and-apps>

Table 1. Proposed Systems for Education and Training (Entry Level to Level 8)



Proposal 1:

Apprenticeships will be defined as a system of learning irrespective of branding.

Proposal 2:

An apprenticeship will be for a new employee or in the case of an existing employee, a new job role.

Proposal 3:

An apprenticeship will commence at professional and technical Level 3 or higher.

Proposal 4:

An apprenticeship will be for a minimum duration of two years.

Proposal 5:

An apprenticeship will involve a breadth of training beyond the specific needs of a particular job through on and off-the-job training.

Proposal 6:

An apprenticeship will be designed to enable individuals to progress into higher professional or technical training or onto a higher academic pathway.

Proposal 7:

Government will recognise an apprenticeship when it contains each of the components set out in Proposals 2-6.

Underpinning Elements

We propose that a number of underpinning elements will support the core concept of apprenticeships. These are:

- **A simplified awards/qualifications system.**
- **Access, irrespective of age.**
- **Entry levels and progression pathways.**
- **Improved portability.**
- **Supporting transitions.**
- **Internationalisation.**

The rationale for each of these is set out below.

A SIMPLIFIED AWARDS/QUALIFICATION SYSTEM

Many European countries have a much simpler qualifications system for apprenticeships including a nationally recognised single award for each occupational area. In the Swiss system, for example, businesses determine the content and qualifications for apprenticeships with each of the 230 occupations having one nationally recognised qualification.

Many of the employers, particularly SMEs, consulted through the review process expressed the view that the current apprenticeship qualification landscape was complex, hampering businesses' ability to engage.

Oates⁷⁶ sets out that Government should concentrate on the fitness for purpose, linking vocational qualifications to the content of work and the labour market, and on ensuring that they give rise to effective progression to employment, training, and further and higher education. He stresses that qualifications should be a stable feature of the system; the principle focus of VET policy should not be on meeting qualification targets but rather on developing high quality learning processes in the workplace. Oates⁷⁷ states that qualifications and levels need to be tuned to the needs of specific sectors.

The proposed approach

In Northern Ireland it is proposed to simplify the qualifications system by agreeing one award/qualification for each occupation at each level, with content driven by employers to ensure that there is sufficient in-built flexibility to meet employers' needs.

The award/qualification agreed for each occupational area will include sufficient content to enable the apprentices, on completion, to use the acquired knowledge and skills within their current roles and the wider sectors. In examining the constituent parts of a single award/qualification, particular attention will be paid to the need to develop employability and enterprise skills.

Proposal 8: Apprenticeships will have a single award/qualification for each occupation at each level.

ACCESS, IRRESPECTIVE OF AGE

Apprenticeships will be available to all age groups. This is consistent with the Department's commitment to lifelong learning, and a recognition that the development of apprenticeship pathways will lead to a greater diversity of participants such as graduates, those who have already concluded an existing Level 2 apprenticeship, and those returning to the labour market after a period of economic inactivity. Furthermore, it is important to facilitate opportunities for all ages for progression through apprenticeships at different levels.

This commitment must be considered in conjunction with the criteria that support the concept of apprenticeships set out earlier in this theme: that apprenticeships should be for new jobs, or for substantially new roles, within organisations; and that the minimum duration of an apprenticeship should be two years. It is important, however, to note that as well as the apprenticeship programme, the Department will continue to support the up-skilling of existing employees at different qualification levels through a range of bespoke support programmes using its Skills Solutions Service and Customised Training.

There is a compelling case for focusing the provision of apprenticeships on younger learners with the global economic crisis exacerbating many of the longstanding challenges faced by young people entering the labour market. Apprenticeships can play a vital role in promoting a successful transition from education to the world of work.

Apprenticeships have been recommended by a wide range of sources to help address the challenge⁷⁸ of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is a particular problem in Northern Ireland where young people make up a large proportion of the total unemployed, compared to the average in the EU. Steedman (2011)⁷⁹ recommends that in line with other European jurisdictions, Government should direct public funds to ensure that young people are not excluded from participating in apprenticeships.

Research carried out in England highlights that younger apprentices are more likely to report positive impacts on their skills through apprenticeships than older employees. Over 90% of 16 -18 year old

76 Oates, T (2013) Towards a new VET. <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf>

77 Ibid

78 OECD, (2013). Action plan for youth – giving you a better start in the labour market <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/Youth-Action-Plan.pdf>

79 Centre for Economic Performance, (2011) Apprenticeship Policy in England: Increasing skills versus boosting young people's job prospects. <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/pa013.pdf>

apprentices report improvements to their skills, knowledge and career prospects, as a result of undertaking an apprenticeship. The figure is lower amongst those aged 25+, although a considerable majority still report benefits (70%)⁸⁰.

In considering best practice, it is clear that those countries with the strongest apprenticeship programmes focus provision on young people. The table overleaf illustrates this, with three of the countries with the lowest youth unemployment focusing their provision almost exclusively on learners under the age of 25.

Regulated apprentices and youth unemployment in selected G20 countries⁸¹

Country	Duration (Years)	Business & Services in Top 3	% Female	Apprentices Per 1000 Employed	% < 25	Youth Unemployment 10 Year Average (1)
Australia	1-3	Yes	34	40	54	11.4
Austria	3-4	Yes	34	32	100	7.5
Canada	2-5	No	15 (?)	30	20 (?)*	12.7
China	3	N/A	45	N/A	N/A	N/A
Denmark	3-4	Yes	46	27	65	8.2
France	3-4	No	31	17	97	20
Germany	3-3.5	Yes	41	39	92	10.9
Italy	3	Yes	43	24	60	25.8
Indonesia	1-3	No (?)	42	N/A	N/A	25.9
Ireland	3-4	No	2	10	N/A	8.4
Switzerland	3-4	Yes	42	44	100	6.9
Turkey	2-3	?	20	N/A	90 (?)*	18.4
United Kingdom (2)	1-3	Yes	54	20	60	12.2
United States	1-4	No	N/A	14	5 (?)*	11.1

Notes (1) 1999-2008; (2) Apprenticeship England only; Youth unemployment for UK; (*) approximation

Sources: *The State of Apprenticeship in 2010: Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland Report commissioned by the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science Special Report, 2010*, and <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/cepsp22.pdf>; *Apprenticeship Participation by Age 2009/10: Australia, Austria, England, France, Germany, Switzerland: An Update on 'State of Apprenticeship' September 2010 December 2011 Apprenticeship AmbassadorsNetwork*<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/~media/AAN/Documents2/AAN-StateofApprenticeship2010Update.ashx>; *Possible futures for the Indian Apprenticeships system' project: Canada, Indonesia, Turkey and United States ILO and University of Ballarat; UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/default.aspx>, retrieved 18.08.2012. <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/NR/rdonlyres/49C26BEA-9E14-408F-A304-B54DD7DE826B/0/XIIRapportodiMonitoraggioApprendistato.pdf>; ILO Statistics for youth unemployment data (1999-2008).*

The proposed approach

Apprenticeships should be open to everyone irrespective of age. However, for the reasons set out above, there will be a particular focus on those aged 16 - 24. Companies and organisations will be encouraged to consider other programmes and interventions in place for the upskilling of their existing workforce.

Proposal 9: Apprenticeships will be open to everyone irrespective of age, with the primary focus falling on young people aged 16-24.

⁸⁰ Evaluation of Apprenticeships: Learners, IFF and IER – BIS Research Paper Number 76 (2012):<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/e/12-812-evaluation-of-apprenticeships-learners>

⁸¹ Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

ENTRY LEVELS AND PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

The demand for skills at Levels 3 to 8 is set to increase significantly. If apprenticeships are to play a major role in the Northern Ireland education system, then apprenticeships will not only commence at Level 3 but offer a pathway with entry points through to Level 8, in line with the needs of the economy.

The Department is working on a range of interventions to support widening participation to higher levels of professional, technical and academic pathways. This is being developed through higher level apprenticeship pilots, access to skills development and foundation degrees. The provision of higher level apprenticeships running alongside, and as a route into, the higher education sector is a relatively new development and, consequently, the numbers participating are currently small. Nevertheless, higher level apprenticeships provide a potentially seamless route along the professional and technical pathway to achieving higher level skills.

Access to Success⁸², the Department's strategy for widening participation in higher education, is developing pathways into higher education through the promotion and expansion of the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning. Foundation Degrees also offer a route into higher education.

In a recent survey carried out by the CIPD⁸³ on employees in the UK, 22% of respondents believe that they should have considered alternatives to University such as apprenticeships more seriously. The interest from both employers and potential participants in higher level apprenticeships is clear across the UK. In England, following the introduction of the Higher Apprenticeship Fund, growth in higher apprenticeships was particularly strong, increasing by 67.6 per cent. In Northern Ireland, this demand is also clear through the expansion of higher level apprenticeship pilots in financial services, engineering and ICT.

This report also considers the expansion of apprenticeships into the professional services sector. Offering apprenticeships at higher levels is crucial to support expansion in this sector, and others. Following the introduction of the High Apprenticeship Fund, professional service firms have begun to develop higher level apprenticeships, including the first post graduate apprenticeship.

In Switzerland, the prospect of non progression is avoided by potential upward movement across all areas in the VET/PET system⁸⁴. Well-qualified applicants are encouraged to accept an apprenticeship by the prospect of subsequently gaining the Professional Baccalaureate (Berufsmaturität). This qualification is open only to those following the apprenticeship route and requires additional study and a written examination. The additional study can be undertaken either concurrently or subsequent to the apprenticeship.

Providing apprenticeships at Levels 3 through to 8 will play a key role in incentivising individuals to apply for an apprenticeship, providing higher skills levels to help close the skills gap, improving the productivity of Northern Ireland's workforce and delivering a greater diversity through a highly skilled workforce.

82 Department for Employment and Learning, Access to Success: An integrated regional strategy for widening access in Higher Education, 2012: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/access-to-success.pdf>

83 CIPD (2013). Employee Outlook: Focus on Apprenticeships. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. [http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/6138%20EO%20Focus%20Spring%202013%20\(WEB\).pdf](http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/6138%20EO%20Focus%20Spring%202013%20(WEB).pdf)

84 Hoeckel, K. Field, S. Grubb, W. OECD Learning for John OECSD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Switzerland <http://www.oecd.org/switzerland/42578681.pdf>

The proposed approach

In order to best meet the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the apprenticeship system should commence at professional and technical Level 3 and include opportunities for entry between Levels 3 and 8 as appropriate. Apprenticeships will support progression through a variety of pathways including higher level apprenticeships and, further and higher education.

The Department will engage with employers, providers and potential participants to explore the actions required to build the capacity of higher level apprenticeships across the Northern Ireland economy.

Proposal 10: Apprenticeships will support progression beyond the initial apprenticeship through a variety of pathways including to higher level apprenticeships and to further and higher education.

IMPROVED PORTABILITY

Most people will be employed in a range of roles during their lifetime and, consequently, apprenticeships need to be sufficiently broad to prepare the learner for the world of work, rather than limited to a specific role or occupation. As stated by Professor Dr. Dieter Euler⁸⁵, the main objective of vocational training is to produce skilled workers, with flexible qualifications, who are mobile and capable of working across their chosen fields.

This section examines the importance of those undertaking an apprenticeship acquiring the necessary skills and competence to provide sufficient portability within a sector and facilitate mobility within the wider Northern Ireland economy. This broader recognition of achievement and employability will also be important if we are to secure the aspiration for global recognition of our apprenticeship model, across borders.

The main aim of the German VET system is to equip a young person for the world of work, not just a specific job. It is recognised that this approach increases the sustainability of employment for apprentices throughout their working lives, as they gain exposure, sufficient breadth and depth of experience, to the demands of work. German employers consider apprentices as fully employable on completion of their apprenticeship.

The skills many employers require are gained mostly through on-the-job experience. However, academic qualifications are often prized by employers over vocational qualifications⁸⁶. An apprenticeship award/qualification needs to be recognised as a significant achievement in its own right, ensuring that those who complete successfully are capable of progressing to the highest levels within their chosen professional and technical occupational area. As is the case with higher education qualifications, an apprenticeship award needs to be sufficiently broad to ensure portability to other related employment opportunities and to progression.

Business Europe⁸⁷ indicated that the unemployment rate of the EU in March 2012 stood at 10.1%, corresponding to more than 24 million men and women without jobs. At that time, there were 2.2 million unfilled vacancies in the EU (last quarter of 2011), with more than a million in Germany and more than 450,000 in the UK. It is imperative that Northern Ireland apprenticeships equip young people and adults with sufficiently robust, portable skills to compete for these vacancies.

85 Euler, D (2013) Germany's dual vocational training system: a model for other countries? http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-3A192E26-71604707/bst/xcms_bst_dms_37644_37778_2.pdf

86 BYNNER, J. (2011) "Youth transitions and Apprenticeships: A Broader View of Skill" in T. Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds.) Rethinking Apprenticeships, pp. 17-28. London: IPPR. <http://www.ippr.org/publications/55/8028/rethinking-apprenticeships>

87 Business Europe, (2012). How to Improve the Quality and Image of Apprenticeships:) <http://www.businesseurope.eu/Content/default.asp?pageid=568&doid=29967>

Fuller and Unwin⁸⁸ articulate the view that if apprenticeships are to fulfil economic, educational and social goals then the content needs to encompass the following dimensions:

- Vocational skills and knowledge.
- A working environment that develops expertise through practise with others.
- Access to knowledge and skills that will enable apprentices to grow beyond, as well as within, their current roles and sectors.

During the stakeholder engagement events, young people in schools highlighted the importance of the skills and qualifications/awards attained through an apprenticeship being sufficiently broad to ensure transferability and portability to other related employment opportunities and to progression, as is the case with qualifications achieved through further and higher education.

The content of apprenticeships should support portability across a range of occupational areas and sectors, where appropriate, with the model being recognised as a gold standard that aspires to recognition and portability, across national borders.

The proposed approach

As set out in the section on partnership, a strategic advisory group will inform the balance between the specific skills employers require and the need for apprenticeships to be recognised as a mark of employability within sectors and across the Northern Ireland economy.

This focus on portability will support our aspiration for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland to be recognised across borders.

Proposal 11: Apprenticeship awards/qualifications will facilitate portability within a sector and mobility within the wider economy.

SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS

With the shift in focus to apprenticeship delivery at Level 3 and above, as outlined earlier, it is likely that there will be increased entry requirements for mathematics and English. Although the exact requirements of entry will be determined by the sectors in collaboration with Government, there will be an increased demand for prospective apprentices to have a GCSE A*-C (or Level 2 equivalent) in mathematics, English and, where appropriate, ICT, to commence an apprenticeship. Recognising this shift and the need to ensure that young people have the opportunity to access an apprenticeship the Department through its youth training offer will provide a dedicated, bespoke programme to enable prospective apprentices to secure the necessary entry requirements for their chosen occupation.

The proposed approach

In recognition of the shift of apprenticeships to Level 3, the review of youth training will examine current provision at Level 2, including simplifying the offer and providing clear progression pathways to an apprenticeship, employment or further and higher education.

Proposal 12: Measures will be put in place to support individuals to make the transition into apprenticeships at Level 3.

88 Fuller, A and Unwin, L (2011) "Youth transitions and Apprenticeships: a broader view of skill" in T. Dolphin and T. Lanning (eds.) *The Content of Apprenticeships*. London: IPPR. http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/Apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

INTERNATIONALISATION

One of the main attractions for students in higher education is the opportunity to avail of extended placements and to study abroad in a relevant institution, facilitated by programmes such as Erasmus⁸⁹, the EU's flagship educational exchange programme.

Placements and exchanges would also be beneficial to apprentices. Such opportunities would offer a rich experience to support the apprentice's professional and personal development and, in so doing would contribute to the parity of opportunities available to learners across different educational pathways.

The European Commission launched a European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAFA) in July 2013 as a response to the unprecedented levels of youth unemployment across Europe. The Alliance brings together public authorities, business, providers of VET and other key stakeholders to work on improving the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU.

The EAFA is supported by a range of funding sources, including Erasmus+, the new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, which will be launched imminently, offering opportunities for apprentices to study, train, work and volunteer, through a series of placements and internships in leading industries across Europe.

The proposed approach

Opportunities for international work placements will be offered to apprentices, to support each apprentice's professional and personal development. Aligned with the EAFA, Erasmus+ will be utilised to provide opportunities for Northern Ireland's apprentices to study, train, work and volunteer, through a series of placements and internships, in leading industries across the world. Participation will provide opportunities to improve skills, enhance employability, and share good practice and innovation, through partnership with colleges and universities.

Proposal 13: Apprenticeships will utilise fully international opportunities for placements and exchanges.

89 European Commission Erasmus + Overview. http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm

THEME 2:

Increasing Participation

The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy⁹⁰ and the Skills Strategy⁹¹ emphasise the importance of increasing skill levels by improving participation in education and training to ensure a strong and vibrant economy. Apprenticeships will play an important role in meeting the future skills needs of the economy.

Achieving this success will be heavily reliant upon greater participation of both employers and apprentices. While the proposals outlined in theme 1 will support increased participation, a package of initiatives and additional support measures may be required.

Central Service

The operation of a central service to promote and manage apprenticeships is a key feature across many international apprenticeship systems.

In England, the National Apprenticeship Service supports, funds and co-ordinates the delivery of apprenticeships throughout England. It is responsible for increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities, providing a dedicated, responsive service for both employers and apprentices. This includes simplifying the process of recruiting an apprentice through 'Apprenticeship Vacancies', an online system where employers can advertise job vacancies and potential apprentices can apply. For employers, this service secures a seamless process for the recruitment of an apprentice, providing support to reduce the administrative burden associated with recruitment.

The Welsh Government launched an apprenticeship matching service in 2011 which provides a free online service on behalf of employers, offering an advertising platform for apprenticeship vacancies.

Similarly, the Australian Apprenticeships Support Services provide a free service to employers apprentices and trainees to assist with administration and to advise employers on incentives. It offers a one-stop shop for all apprenticeship and traineeship services.

YOUNG PEOPLE

It was apparent from engagement with young people in schools that many had low awareness of how to source an apprenticeship, what it had to offer or the range of occupations covered. A number were aware of the current practice in sourcing an apprenticeship, but found the idea of having to approach employers directly challenging. In addition, young people identified a need to increase awareness among careers teachers and parents of what is available through apprenticeship training.

EMPLOYERS

There was a consensus across respondents who participated in the review's stakeholder engagement process that employers, particularly SMEs, required a range of support measures and incentives to create and help sustain more apprenticeships. Employers called upon the Department to explore potential support measures to support employer participation in the revised apprenticeship model.

90 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy. <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

91 Department for Employment and Learning, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures, 2011: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/pubs-successthroughskills/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.htm>

The proposed approach

A central service will be introduced to promote and support apprenticeship provision for both employers and participants.

For employers the service will:

- Administer subsidies and other support.
- Centrally advertise employer apprenticeship vacancies.
- Provide a matching service between employers and prospective apprentices.
- Sign-post employers to approved providers of off-the-job training.
- Provide a small business service to help SMEs access the benefits of the programme.

For apprentices the service will:

- Administer subsidies and other support to participants.
- Centrally advertise apprenticeships vacancies.
- Provide a matching service.
- Support a portal of apprenticeship vacancies across all professional and technical occupational areas (in line with a UCAS style approach).
- Source independent careers support and advice through interaction with young people, particularly at key transition points.

Proposal 14: A central service will be introduced to market, promote and support apprenticeship provision, by engaging with employers and potential participants.

Proposal 15: The central service will provide advice and guidance for employers and potential apprentices on the range of support and training available.

Proposal 16: An online service will be introduced to advertise apprenticeship vacancies across all sectors.

Proposal 17: Applications for apprenticeship places will be supported via a UCAS style portal (as used for entrance to university) to inform young people of the range of opportunities available.

Occupations

This section explores how apprenticeships can be expanded to cover a wider range of sectors such as the public sector and professional services.

It is vital that apprenticeships are not limited to a few traditional sectors otherwise it may exclude participation in innovative and emerging sectors, limit gender balance among participants and lead to apprenticeships not matched to the needs of the economy.

There are a range of approaches across the UK and Republic of Ireland. In England, apprenticeships are available across all sectors. Indeed, in recent years there has been strong growth in non-traditional apprenticeship sectors. In Scotland, the Modern Apprenticeship programme takes account of the needs of the Scottish economy through a weighted funding mechanism. The provision in sectors is informed by employer demand with no area excluded. In the Republic of Ireland, where a review of apprenticeships is underway, the current model is limited to a narrow set of occupations.

As part of the review's international study visits, two notable exemplar countries were identified on the basis of the wide and varied range of occupations offered through their apprenticeship models, Switzerland and Denmark. The successful Swiss system offers a broad range of apprenticeships across the economy with apprenticeships in 230 occupations. Similar to Switzerland, Denmark has a wide number of specified job roles, with 325 occupations available under its apprenticeship programme.

The occupations offered in apprenticeships have a significant impact upon gender participation. Apprenticeships can, in some cases, entrench gender stereotypes. For example, an OECD Review⁹² looking at the provision in the Republic of Ireland noted that the apprenticeships trades are traditionally male occupations and the participation of women in apprenticeships is negligible⁹³. In a paper to the ILO⁹⁴, a diverse offer of apprenticeships across a range of occupations is recommended. This is the case in Northern Ireland, while a good gender balance across the overall programme is achieved, some frameworks have a very unbalanced gender participation⁹⁵.

THE PROFESSIONS

A paper for the IPPR⁹⁶ makes the case for the expansion of apprenticeships into professional services. This includes:

- The projected growth of the services industry which requires a significant increase in recruitment that cannot be met by university graduates alone; alongside the benefits gained by employers is a potential shift from the view that university followed by a training place is the only route into the sector.
- The fact that apprenticeships will enable firms to develop their own 'home grown' talent and provide an immediate return on investment, as trainees will apply classroom learning in the work environment – learning by doing.
- The traditional professional services staffing model means that after a three year training contract there is a high likelihood of changing firm.
- The fact that increasing the variety of entry routes ensures increased diversity of recruits.

92 OECD, (2004) Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap
<http://www.oecd.org/employment/oecludgesreformstonationalcareerguidanceservices.htm>

93 Kis, V. (2010), Learning for Jobs OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Ireland <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/44592419.pdf>

94 Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

95 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

96 Dolphin, T and Lanning T (2012) (eds.) "Re-thinking Apprenticeships" London: IPPR
http://www.ippr.org/images/media/files/publication/2011/11/apprenticeships_Nov2011_8028.pdf

Demand for an apprenticeship model that meets the needs of the professional services sector is already apparent in Northern Ireland, with the Department currently piloting a professional services higher level apprenticeship. It has been well received and has attracted high calibre applicants. A number of other approaches have been received from the professional services sector, demonstrating an appetite in Northern Ireland for the expansion of apprenticeships into the professions.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The public sector is a major employer across the UK, particularly in Northern Ireland, where the public sector accounts for 27.6% of the total workforce. It has an important role to play in apprenticeships, both as an employer and through the inclusion of social clauses requiring the employment of apprentices contained within the public procurement process.

It will be important for the public sector to play an active role in the provision of apprenticeship opportunities, with a particular focus on the professional and technical occupations. For public sector apprenticeships, the relevant public sector employer will be responsible for funding the off-the-job training element of the apprenticeship.

The proposed approach

One of the main benefits of apprenticeship provision is the efficient matching of apprentices to the needs of the economy. This benefit needs to be fully realised through the expansion of provision across a wider range of sectors and occupations. This will include sourcing high quality apprenticeship opportunities within the public as well as the private sector, for the benefit of the wider economy.

Proposal 18: Apprenticeships will be offered in a wide range of professional and technical occupations, reflecting the needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

Proposal 19: Apprenticeships will be expanded to include professional and technical occupations within the public sector.

Incentives and Interventions

Employer participation is the most critical factor in driving forward apprenticeships. The participation of employers in Northern Ireland in ApprenticeshipsNI lags behind the participation figures for comparative systems in other countries. In Australia, nearly a third of employers offer apprenticeship opportunities, while one quarter do likewise in the dual system countries. In Germany nearly all large firms offer apprenticeships.⁹⁷

Through the stakeholder engagement process it was clear that there are many employers who face a range of challenges and barriers to participating in an apprenticeship programme. The main challenges encountered include the lack of interventions and support, particularly for SMEs and micro-businesses, which make up a significant proportion of our private sector economy.

97 Steedman, H (August 2010) The State of Apprenticeship in 2010. <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/cepsp22.pdf>

The proposed approach

In addition to the central service, articulated in proposal 14, Government will provide a range of incentives and interventions to support employer engagement in apprenticeships. This will entail the promotion of apprenticeships to SMEs, having particular regard to micro-businesses and under-represented sectors, including those deemed a priority for our economy.

Consideration will be given to a number of the following interventions:

- Upfront payment on apprentice start up and achievement.
- Apprenticeship Training Agencies/Group Training Agencies/Shared Apprenticeship Schemes - (interim bodies who fulfil the role of the employer/ or provide apprentices for employers).
- Over training - (larger employers training more apprentices than they need to meet the needs of the supply chain).
- Public Private Partnerships (statutory and private organisations collaborating in the delivery of apprenticeships).
- Incentives and interventions to encourage greater employer participation.

Proposal 20: A range of incentives will be considered to support employers, particularly SMEs and micro-businesses, to participate in apprenticeships.

Careers

A formal review of the Careers Strategy will be carried out during 2014, which will include consideration of how career guidance can effectively mobilise young people to maximise their potential and secure a better alignment between labour market supply and demand. The OECD in its report '*Bridging the Gap*'⁹⁸ stated that key policy drivers for careers guidance are that it improves the functioning of education and training systems, contributes to effective operation of the labour market, supports social equity and facilitates both social inclusion and mobility.

In countries that operate a successful apprenticeship system, the promotion of apprenticeships is embedded within careers delivery.

In Switzerland, careers engagement with pupils commences from age 14 and involves parents. This engagement includes focussed job sampling to ensure that young people make informed choices. Ongoing mentoring and support are also provided once the young person starts an apprenticeship to help him/her to make progress in training and reduce the risk of drop out.

In Finland, the school curriculum must include a description of how co-operation with local labour market and business communities is to be implemented⁹⁹. Subject teaching must identify the relevance of learning to the world of work, available job opportunities and progression routes, including apprenticeships.

In Denmark, youth guidance centres assess the extent to which young people have the academic, vocational, personal and social competences to begin and complete an upper secondary education¹⁰⁰. Guidance relating to the transition from compulsory to youth education is the responsibility of the youth guidance centres and there is a statutory responsibility to offer options between different pathways, levels, methods and learning opportunities, corresponding with a student's individual goals.

98 OECD, (2004) Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap <http://www.oecd.org/employment/oeecdurgesreformstonationalcareerguidanceservices.htm>

99 Hughes, D. & Borbely-Pecze, T.B. (2012). Youth Unemployment: a Crisis in Our Midst: the Role of Lifelong Guidance Policies in Addressing Labour Supply and Demand. Jyväskylä, Finland: ELGPN. http://kti.jyu.fi/img/portal/23229/Hughes_and_Borbely-Pecze_youth_unempl_concept_note_web.pdf?cs=1350649971

100 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. (2012) Vocational Education and Training in Denmark. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf

The impact of careers teachers, parents and others as key influencers on young people cannot be overestimated. Ensuring that these key groups are kept informed and involved will be vital to the success of apprenticeships.

Through engagement with schools, a number of careers teachers cited the following measures as necessary to support the growth of apprenticeships:

- The need to ensure that information relating to available opportunities is easily accessible and up to date, as it is difficult at present to source such information. This will empower young people to consider an apprenticeship as congruent to further academic study.
- The need to remove the stigma around an apprenticeship, as it is not currently viewed as an option for those who are more academically inclined. Parental influence must be considered in marketing any new provision.

Young people and careers teachers suggested that a web site outlining details of apprenticeship provision and available opportunities would be advantageous. The promotion of apprenticeship through social media was also seen as important.

The proposed approach

The review of the Careers Strategy will examine how examples of best practice could apply in the Northern Ireland context. More than ever individuals, particularly young people, need help to navigate the complex local labour market and ever changing global economy. Effective careers policy and delivery structures are the foundation stone of a strong economy.

The Department, in partnership with DE, will carry out a formal review of the Careers Strategy during 2014. The terms of reference will take account of the Employment and Learning Committee's inquiry report on careers education and guidance.

The review will consider the following:

- The necessary interventions with young people, including identification of the correct point at which to engage and how to gain support of parents and other key influencers.
- How to use the skills of the Northern Ireland Careers Service as an impartial broker for post -16 options, including apprenticeships, to maximise the return on public investment for the individual, and the economy.
- The promotion of the apprenticeship route to young people, schools and parents, as a viable alternative to university.
- Mentoring and support, focussing on outcomes, to ensure a successful education to work transition, in partnership with the employer.
- Advice and guidance, underpinned by up-to-date and reliable labour market intelligence to ensure that individuals make informed career choices.
- Developing formal partnerships between schools and employers, through existing Area Learning Communities, to ensure the provision of work experience for young people early on in career planning.

Proposal 21: The Careers Service will provide impartial pre-entry advice to all young people considering the apprenticeship pathway.

Proposal 22: The Careers Service will intervene at key transition points to provide impartial advice and guidance to all young people.

Gender

The OECD¹⁰¹ has recommended that apprenticeships should cover multiple sectors and occupations and should encourage the wider participation of women. In particular, apprenticeships should not be confined to the traditional trades, where men are usually over-represented, but should also extend to the service sector where there are more women. This is fundamental to ensuring that apprenticeships are inclusive and that apprentices acquire the skills required in new and innovative sectors that are more likely associated with the strongest labour demand in the future.

Apprenticeships can in some cases entrench gender stereotypes in occupations. For example, an OECD Review¹⁰² looking at the Republic of Ireland's provision noted that the apprenticeship trades are traditionally male occupations and the participation of women in apprenticeships is negligible. As set out in the proposal on occupations, it recommended that broadening the range of occupational areas with workplace training would help to remedy gender imbalance. In the Northern Ireland economy, high level STEM posts currently constitute over 11% of the workforce with men outnumbering women by nearly 3 to 1. This can be contrasted with the overall employment situation, where women comprise 47.3% of those aged 16-64 currently in employment, similar to the rate of 46.5% in Great Britain. It is clear, therefore, that a proactive approach is needed to address the gender imbalance within the STEM industries.

In a paper to ILO¹⁰³, Hilary Steedman emphasises that young women's choices of apprenticeship occupations have remained focussed primarily on business and service sector occupations. Such choices will likely remain and should continue to be facilitated and resourced.

As part of the review's engagement, female students saw merit in raising the profile of female role models who have undertaken an apprenticeship in a male dominated sector, in order to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes. This could be achieved through active engagement with schools, raising awareness of what is available in occupations/sectors not traditionally viewed as attractive to females.

Apprenticeships will build upon the Department's on-going interventions to foster greater gender balance, particularly in the STEM sectors. This includes the work of the Business Co-ordinator for STEM who has been appointed to work on behalf of businesses to examine the issue of gender bias, share best practice and identify additional steps to make careers more attractive in the STEM industries.

The advice of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) will be important in determining what measures can be undertaken to encourage greater gender balance across occupations within apprenticeships.

101 OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

102 Kis, V. (2010) Learning for Jobs OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Ireland <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/44592419.pdf>

103 Steedman, H (November 2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

The proposed approach

Apprenticeships will be offered across a range of occupations, to ensure that opportunities are created which appeal to both male and female. This will be complemented through improved careers guidance.

Working with the ECNI, plans are also underway to produce an 'Addressing Gender Balance - a Good Practice Manual', to help embed best practice.

In conjunction with the ECNI, a series of further interventions will be considered to secure greater gender balance across apprenticeships, through a series of positive outreach measures, including: welcoming statements; targeted marketing campaigns; bridging courses; open days; promotion of work life balance; and other measures deemed appropriate.

The Department's Careers Advisers will continue to spend time in business, to ensure young people receive the most up-to-date advice on suitable opportunities through Careers Industry Insight placements.

Proposal 23: Apprenticeships will include a range of measures to support gender participation across occupations.

THEME 3:

Partnership - The Roles of the Key Players

The most successful apprenticeship systems are based upon a partnership of key stakeholders working effectively together. This does not simply mean participation of stakeholders in a Government sponsored board, but building sustained engagement at every level of the apprenticeship provision. This theme explores the evidence related to the concept of partnership and the proposed structures that will facilitate partnership, including the roles and responsibilities of the partners involved.

Partnership

Apprenticeships offer a range of benefits to the various partners involved. As the main benefactors, these partners need to share responsibility for the design and delivery of apprenticeships. Much of the literature indicates that it is the balancing of burden and profit sharing among partners that has enabled apprenticeships to flourish in the dual system countries¹⁰⁴, delivering the short and long-term needs of the economy and of the partners involved. Apprenticeships, supported through partnership, can secure a commitment to quality, ensure progression, promote demand and inform funding arrangements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order for partnership arrangements to work, the role and responsibilities of the key players need to be clear. The proposed roles for the partners are as follows:

- **Employers** will own the principal relationship with the apprentice and be responsible for the on-the-job training.
- **Trade Unions** will help to ensure that the voice and perspective of apprentices are articulated.
- **Providers of off-the-job training**¹⁰⁵ will work in partnership with employers and Government to ensure that off-the-job training meets the individual needs of the apprentice, and the wider needs of the employer and the sector.
- **Government** will approve the content and assessment arrangements to ensure alignment with the apprenticeship concept in terms of components, quality and portability.

Government will also facilitate the partnership relationship and oversee performance and quality assurance. Government will direct the development and adjustment of incentives in order to ensure that apprenticeships meet the needs of the economy and business.

DEMAND-LED

In the 2011 to 2015 Programme for Government, the top priority is growing a sustainable economy. Under this priority there is a commitment to increasing employment and supporting young people into employment. The Economic Strategy sets the vision that Northern Ireland should be 'an economy characterised by a sustainable and growing private sector, where a greater number of firms compete in global markets and there is growing employment and prosperity for all'. If apprenticeships are to make a significant contribution to the re-balancing and re-building of the economy, businesses must be empowered to lead provision and influence its content.

Delivering business needs is fundamentally important. If the number of quality apprenticeships is to be increased and contribute significantly to the skills and employment landscape, it is important that employer participation in every aspect of the design and delivery of apprenticeships is facilitated.

104 Volger-ludwig, K. Giernalczyk, H and Stock L. (2012) International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate level skills and Apprenticeships. UKCES Case Study Report. Evidence Report 42 – Volume 2. http://www.opf.fi/download/140974_evidence-report-42-international-approaches-case-study-report.pdf

Volger-ludwig, K. Giernalczyk, H and Stock L. (2012) International Approaches to the Development of Intermediate level skills and Apprenticeships. UKCES Case Study Report. Evidence Report 42 – Volume 1. <http://www.ukces.org.uk/assets/ukces/docs/publications/evidence-report-42-international-approaches-synthesis-report.pdf>

105 The provider of the off the job training may include an employer or groups of employers.

In many countries with highly valued apprenticeship systems, employers play a central role in providing and managing the provision. In Switzerland, employers, working with partners, are involved in decision making at every level¹⁰⁶. In the current Northern Ireland model, the main relationship in many cases is between the apprentice and the provider of the off-the-job training. As a consequence of this model, the employer becomes a passive partner who takes on an apprentice but is not engaged sufficiently in training or in the outcome of the programme. This arrangement does not benefit either partner. The outcome of the training will therefore be less valuable to the employer, and the apprentice will lose out because of the insufficient integration of the on and off-the-job training.

Developed economies around the world face a continual problem of trying to match efficiently the demand and supply of skills. Constant changes in the labour market result in variation in the overall demand for skills both in quantity and type. There are frequent mismatches in skills supply and demand because of the long time periods required to train and develop individuals in specific skill sets.

While interventions such as the provision of good careers education, information, advice and guidance and short-term training programmes are beneficial, the forecasting of future skills needs is critical if a better match between skills demand and supply is to be achieved. Northern Ireland has long recognised this challenge. Many very effective short-term training interventions have also been implemented in areas such as ICT and engineering. In tandem with this, research in skills forecasting has been used to provide an evidence base for the development of skills policy in Northern Ireland.

However, to remain competitive with other developed economies more needs to be done. International exemplars in Singapore and Switzerland have demonstrated the benefits of having a regular (six monthly or annual) forecast of skills demand from business. National examples, such as Scotland, show how an annual forecast can help determine the demand for apprenticeships across all business sectors.

We propose the development of a skills barometer mechanism to support a better match of supply and demand and ensure that any skills gaps are identified and addressed by the Department. This will involve:

- Forecasting the demand for apprenticeships, especially in the priority sectors, on an annual basis.
- Providing Government with an up to date picture of demand for apprentices in terms of business sector, quantity, and level.
- Detailing the number of new jobs to be created through new apprenticeship opportunities and the number of new job roles envisaged.

Forecasting, through this barometer approach, will allow Government to allocate its funding for apprenticeships in a more efficient manner to meet business needs and provide the evidence for more flexible responses to future skills needs.

PORTABILITY

One of this review's proposals is the embedding of portability into apprenticeships to secure their relevance across the economy. Partnership arrangements can play an important role in supporting this by ensuring the interests of apprentices are represented through the requirement to develop transferable and general skills. In Germany, partnership arrangements have defended the general education and transferable elements of the apprenticeship programme¹⁰⁷. This ensures that provision delivers benefits to both the apprentice and the economy through enhanced labour mobility and human capital¹⁰⁸.

106 Steedman, H (August 2010) The State of Apprenticeship in 2010 <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/cepsp22.pdf>

107 Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

108 Oates, T (2013) Towards a new VET <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf>

DESIGN

Partnership can support the design of apprenticeship for the full range of needs. In a paper to the ILO¹⁰⁹, Steedman (2012) provides examples of such arrangements in Denmark and the Netherlands. In Denmark, partners sit on the board of the vocational schools, which provide the off-the-job training. In the Netherlands, a central council of partners work with representatives of vocational colleges to develop qualifications that are required for both apprentices and full time learners. In Canada, sectoral committees have been credited with delivering increased flexibility and improved content in apprenticeship programmes¹¹⁰.

In Switzerland, at the Federal level, partners decide on the legal basis of each apprenticeship, including the outline occupational competence¹¹¹. The strongest apprenticeship systems have partnership as a core feature in their governance. In Germany, apprenticeships are regulated by Federal law which apportions responsibility between regional education authorities, employer and employee organisations and the Federal Government.

In considering the quality of the dual system in Switzerland and Germany, Oates (2013) sets out that the dual system has been based upon embedding the views and commitment of all of the partners in the system. Such a system works best when all the partners are committed to quality rather than coerced into providing it¹¹².

The proposed approach

In order to build in the participation of the key partners in apprenticeships at every level, two levels of engagement are proposed:

- An advisory group to inform Government at a strategic level.
- A series of sectoral level groups to inform the provision of apprenticeships in their respective areas.

Purpose and function of the advisory group

An advisory group with representation from key stakeholders, comprising Government, businesses (including micro businesses, SMEs and large employers), trade unions and providers of off-the-job will be established to advise on apprenticeship provision in Northern Ireland.

This group's role will be to advise Government across all aspects of apprenticeship provision.

This will include:

- Providing strategic oversight of apprenticeship provision.
- Advising on apprenticeship legislation.
- Considering and advising on supply and demand issues.
- Devising appropriate support vehicles for particular sectors or types of employer.
- Commissioning research to continually be aware of best practice in skills training across the world.
- Balancing the specific training needed for a role against the broader more transferable skills required for an apprenticeship.
- Addressing challenges such as equality of opportunity.

109 Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

110 Ibid

111 Steedman, H (2010) The State of Apprenticeship in 2010 <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/special/cepsp22.pdf>

112 Oates, T (January 2013) Towards a new VET <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf>

Purpose and function of our sectoral partnerships

A range of sectoral partnerships will be established to facilitate the sustained engagement of stakeholders in the design and delivery of apprenticeships. The sectoral partnerships will include representatives from employers, Sector Skills Councils or equivalent representative bodies, providers of off-the-job and Government. Their main role will be to design and agree the provision of apprenticeships for specific occupations and sectors. The main responsibilities of the sectoral partnerships will include:

- Feeding into the provision of annual information on the number of places required in each sector/ occupation.
- Developing interventions within sectors to increase, where appropriate, participation numbers;
- Designing apprenticeship content/ curriculum for new occupations.
- Revising and refreshing the content of existing qualifications/ awards for the range of occupations in each sector.
- Securing the views of employers to influence standards of delivery and assessment processes.
- Achieving the necessary balance between meeting the needs of particular employers and those of the wider sector.
- Advising on any exceptions to the standard model.

Proposal 24: An advisory group, based around a partnership comprising of employers, trade unions and providers of off-the-job training, will be established to advise Government at a strategic level on apprenticeship provision.

Proposal 25: Partnership groups, including representatives from employers, Sector Skills Councils or equivalent bodies, providers of off-the-job training and Government, will be established to design and agree apprenticeship provision and inform demand, through a skills barometer approach annually, at a sectoral level.

THEME 4:

Ensuring Quality

Northern Ireland's future model of apprenticeship must focus on quality, from the perspective of the employer, the apprentice and Government. The range of stakeholders who are supporting apprenticeship must work collectively to ensure breadth, depth and portability throughout every facet of the apprentice's journey, from initial engagement to final accreditation and progression. This will include a high level of employer involvement in reviewing the curriculum content, assessment requirements and observation of off-the-job training as exemplified in the best practice found in the dual system models. These practices are recognised as best practice by both the OECD and the ILO to ensure the needs of both employers and apprentices are met.

The ILO report¹¹³ provides an overview of apprenticeship systems and considers how to make apprenticeship systems work. The paper acknowledges the key role Swiss employers have in directing and influencing every aspect of apprenticeship, including curriculum, content, recruitment, qualifications and assessment. Through the sectoral partnerships we wish to establish a central role for employers in Northern Ireland.

The OECD, in their paper on Quality Apprenticeships¹¹⁴, emphasises that representatives of employers should be involved directly in the development, implementation and governance of apprenticeship systems.

Both the reports from OECD and ILO emphasise the importance of robust and rigorous assessment, occurring usually at the end of the apprenticeship, to confirm the development of the apprentices' skills and knowledge. Assessment of this nature ensures consistency of standards and builds confidence in apprenticeships.

The Implementation Plan¹¹⁵ for delivering apprenticeship reform in England recommends an enhanced role for employers in the design and delivery of the assessment of apprentices. A single approach to assessment against an occupational standard is proposed to ensure a robust test of competence in which employers can have confidence. Through the plan, employers and professional bodies will develop the approach to assessment, working with experts as they see fit.

In Switzerland, the main element for assuring the quality of examinations is the involvement of professionals, ensuring that the competence tested reflects the needs of the labour market and represents a national occupational standard. The continuous updating of examination rules to reflect latest developments are a further quality assurance measure¹¹⁶.

In its report on Switzerland¹¹⁷, OECD highlights that at the end of training programmes, students take a series of tests, established at national level, including a practical examination on the job, carried out by trained examiners. Because the assessments are carried out by agencies external to the vocational school and the host company, they ensure that all school based and work based learning meet the same standards.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, in their report on quality in apprenticeships,¹¹⁸ recognised that in England, weaknesses in apprenticeship provision centred on too much coaching of learners for assessment rather than developing a broad range of skills.

113 Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf

114 OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

115 Department for Business Innovation and Skills. (2013) 'The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan' Department for Education. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253073/bis-13-1175-future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-implementation-plan.pdf

116 OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment, Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%2026%20Sept.pdf>

117 Hoeckel, K. Field, S. Grubb, W. OECD Learning for Jobs OECSD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Switzerland <http://www.oecd.org/switzerland/42578681.pdf>

118 Ensuring quality in apprenticeships, Ofsted, October 2012, No. 120153 <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/15806/1/Ensuring%20quality%20in%20apprenticeships.pdf>

Inspections carried out by the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland confirm the mostly good standards of work performed by apprentices in the workplace and the good levels of achievement for those who complete their training. However, the Inspectorate also confirmed that there is too much assessment of existing competences rather than developing and enhancing skills and knowledge.

In its report¹¹⁹, the OECD states that VET/ PET professionals in Switzerland are well trained, with the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training providing basic and continuing training to vocational teachers, trainers and examiners. It also offers an MSc in VET for people involved in the management of Switzerland's VET/ PET system. The report also recognises that many vocational teachers enrol in continuing education and training programmes. Switzerland's VET/ PET system has developed a relatively broad concept of vocational and professional education and training, with a high awareness of vocationally specific pedagogy, to handle the challenges of vocational instruction¹²⁰.

The proposed approach

The content of apprenticeships will be reviewed and developed in conjunction with employers and other key partners, to ensure that they are current, relevant and sufficiently broad to develop the appropriate level and range of skills, knowledge and competence required.

The assessment methodologies for the achievement of an apprenticeship will be subject to ongoing review and evaluation to ensure that they are sufficiently robust, with a test/tests at the end of the apprenticeship, involving employers, to secure a robust test of competence in which all can have confidence.

Independent initial advice and guidance will be available from the Careers Service for prospective apprentices prior to engagement onto the programme to ensure that the apprentice has the required qualifications on entry to the training programme, taking account of prior achievement and is signposted to future progression routes.

The quality of the teaching/training and learning processes, including both on-the-job and off-the-job elements, will be designed to meet the needs of employers and apprentices. First hand observations will be carried out by inspectors who have up to date expertise in the relevant professional and technical areas they are inspecting, supported by industry experts. For the purposes of evaluation, the Improving Quality: Raising Standards framework will be utilised and aligned with the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

To support the quality of teaching and learning, criteria will be set for all teaching/ training staff, which will establish minimum qualification requirements in the subject area and related pedagogy, as well as significant and up to date experience in industry. There will be a requirement that all involved in the delivery of the off-the-job training will undertake professional training in pedagogy. Stringent conditions will be established for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field.

Providers of off-the-job training will ensure apprentices have access to high quality accommodation and resources and learn in a technology rich environment.

Data on performance and quality will be published to ensure that employers make informed decisions when sourcing off-the-job training.

119 Hoeckel, K. Field, S. Grubb, W. OECD Learning for Jobs OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Switzerland <http://www.oecd.org/switzerland/42578681.pdf>

120 Steiner, G. (2008), Les Processus de l'Apprentissage, HEP Verlag AG, Bern.

Proposal 26: Quality, achievement and progression will be key barometers of success for apprenticeship provision.

Proposal 27: Employers and industry specialists, in partnership with other key stakeholders, will inform the content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship, including test(s) at the end of the training period.

Proposal 28: The content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship will be subject to rigorous assurance by inspectors who have up-to-date experience in the professional and technical areas, supported by industry experts to ensure each apprenticeship meets the needs of employers and apprentices.

Proposal 29: To support the quality of teaching and learning, criteria will be set for all teaching staff which will establish minimum qualification requirements in the subject area and related pedagogy, as well as significant and up-to-date experience in industry.

Proposal 30: There will be a requirement that all involved in the delivery of the off-the-job training will undertake professional training in pedagogy.

Proposal 31: Stringent conditions will be established for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field.

Proposal 32: Only those providers who meet the minimum quality standards as determined by the Department will be funded to deliver apprenticeship training.

The model of apprenticeship as described earlier cannot be achieved in isolation. In particular, we will require a supply chain of appropriately qualified young people, provided through our education and youth training programmes, which offer sufficient breadth and depth to enter apprenticeships, with the capability to perform effectively in a chosen occupation, appropriate careers advice at key stages, to ensure successful transition from education to the world of work; clear post-16 pathways; and funding streams to meet the pressures associated with a demand led model.

Review of Youth Training

In light of the number of young people currently undertaking a Level 2 apprenticeship and our proposal to commence future apprenticeship provision at Level 3 and above, it will be imperative that the future youth training programme is sufficiently flexible to provide a seamless pathway into an apprenticeship, further education or employment. One of the main aims of the review of youth training is the development of a youth training offer, of sufficient breadth and depth, to prepare young people who have the capability to progress to apprenticeship programmes and to perform effectively at Level 3 in occupational areas. Others may wish to progress to a Level 3 further education programme, or into employment.

Careers Advice (at school and college)

Impartial and timely careers advice is vital, particularly at the key stages 3 and 4 (14 and 16 years of age) to ensure that every young person is supported to make a successful transition from education to work. Careers advice and guidance has a pivotal role to play in helping to balance the career aspirations and abilities of the individual with the current and future demands of the labour market. Key to this is alerting young people to the breadth of opportunities open to them and the various routes available to achieve their full potential.

For many young people, the apprenticeship route will provide the best environment, combining working and learning, while improving employability skills and qualifications. A flexible progression route, incorporating both professional and technical and academic pathways, underpinned by ongoing careers guidance, and supported by employers, will enable career progression and long term job sustainability.

Further Education and Higher Education

In addition, there will need to be clear post -16 pathways which allow apprentices to progress on their learning journey, right to the top of their chosen professional or technical career, for all those participating in an apprenticeship, from Level 3 through to Level 8. To secure such a model, further and higher education will need to collaborate to develop and deliver a seamless curriculum, with each level building to the next in terms of skill and knowledge and technical capability. The road map must be transparent and capable of navigation, and should include explicit reference to professional and technical education as an entry requirement for entry to higher education academic pathways.

Funding Sources

In taking the new proposed apprenticeship programme forward, we will need to develop a suitable financial model, exploring all available funding sources. Such a model will take account of the considerable commitment and investment made by employers in the delivery of apprenticeships. The budget at present for the existing apprenticeship programme, ApprenticeshipsNI, for 2013 to 2014 is around £21 million. This budget is sourced from:

- £12.75 million coming from Departmental programme funds; and
- £8.5 million being drawn from the European Social Fund (ESF).

Moving forward, the Department will continue to fund apprenticeships from its programme funds and is proposing to allocate 40% of its expected ESF allocation for 2014-2020 to thematic objective 10 – Investing in Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (approximately 73 million Euros), for apprenticeships and youth training provision.

Under the section on Next Steps, the Department has committed to examining how we can develop a financial model to determine how best to resource the new model of apprenticeships and to support employers, through availing of a range of funding sources. This will include the HMRC model announced by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Autumn Statement¹²¹, in which the UK Government has given a commitment to enable employers to receive funding for the training costs of apprentices directly through an HMRC-led system.

121 <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/autumn-statement-2013>

7

NEXT STEPS

The views expressed through the consultation will help to consolidate our thinking as we move forward in developing the proposals for a new revitalised apprenticeship model for Northern Ireland. We will publish the way forward in the Summer of 2014.

During the period we will continue to develop proposals to examine how we can:

- Establish a financial model to resource the new model of apprenticeships and to support employers, including through availing of a range of funding sources such as the HMRC model announced by the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 5th December 2013.
- Pilot a central service to market, promote and support apprenticeships for both employers and individuals.
- Develop a demand estimation model.
- Support SMEs with the aim of encouraging them to participate in apprenticeships.
- Open up apprenticeships in the public sector.

ANNEX A

Level	Level Equivalence	QCF Qualification Examples	Framework for Higher Education Examples
8	NVQs at level 5	Level 8 VQs: Award, certificate and diploma in strategic direction	Doctorates
7	Post Graduate Certificates and Diplomas. BTEC advanced professional awards, certificates and diplomas fellowships and fellowship diplomas. Diploma in Translation. NVQs at Level 5	Level 7 VQs: Advanced professional awards, certificates and diplomas	Masters degree, postgraduate certificates and diplomas
6	National Diploma in Professional Production Skills. NVQs at Level 4	Level 6 VQs: BTEC advanced professional diplomas, certificates and awards	Bachelor degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas
5	Higher National Diplomas. Other Higher Diplomas. NVQs at Level 4	Level 5 VQs: HNCs and HNDs. BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards	Diplomas of higher education and further education, foundation degrees and higher national diplomas
4	NVQs at Level 4 Key Skills Level 4 Certificates of Higher Education	Level 4 VQs: BTEC professional diplomas, certificates and awards	Certificate of higher education
3	AS/A Levels Advanced Extension Awards International Baccalaureate Key Skills Level 3 NVQs at Level 3. Cambridge International Awards. Advanced and Progression Diploma	Level 3 VQs: BTEC awards, certificates and diplomas at Level 3 BTEC Nationals OCR Nationals	
2	GCSEs graded A* - C. NVQs at level 2 Level 2 VQs Key Skills Level 2 Skills for Life. Higher Diploma	Level 2 VQs: BTEC award, certificates and diplomas at Level 2. Functional Skills Level 2	
1	GCSEs Graded D – G NVQ Level 1 Key Skills Level 1 Skills for Life Foundation Diploma	Level 1 VQs BTEC awards, certificates & diplomas at Level 1. Functional Skills Level 1. OCR Nationals. Foundation Learning Tier pathways	
Entry	Entry level certificates. Skills for life at entry level	Entry Level VQs: Entry level awards, certificates & diplomas. Foundation Learning Tier Pathways. Functional Skills at entry level	

ANNEX B

Expert Panel

Name	Company
Carol Philips	Bombardier Aerospace
Mark Huddleston	Magellan Aerospace
Professor Norman Black	University of Ulster
Gordon Parkes	NIE
Kirsty McManus	Confederation of British Industry
Rob McConnell	Momentum
John D'Arcy	Open University
Dr. Clare Passmore	Clear Spirit Design
Roisin McKee	People 1st
Roger Pollen	Federation of Small Business
Bryan Keating	CIP Partnership
Gavin Killeen	Nuprint
Brian Doran	Southern Regional College
Judith Compton	UKCES
Jonathan Guest	Paper Yacht
Ronnie Moore	Energy and Utility Skills
Alastair Hamilton	Invest NI
Marie-Therese McGivern	Belfast Metropolitan College
Doctor Lutz-Peter Berg	Swiss Science and Technology Attaché
Roisin McDonough	Arts Council NI
Conor Crossey	Bombardier Aerospace
Malachy McAleer	South West Regional College
Bill McGinnis	McAvoy Group Limited
Barry Neilson	CITB NI
Roseann Kelly	Women in Business NI Ltd
Clare Moore	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
David Mawhinney	E-Skills UK
Andrew Brownlee	Institutes of Technology
Wilma Fee	QUB
Geraldine Browne	PWC
Liam McNeill	Bryson Future Skills
Ann McGregor	NI Chamber of Commerce
Peter Dixon	Phoenix Group NI

ANNEX C

The Current Provision

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are currently offered through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme, which was introduced in 2007. The programme has faced a number of refinements since its introduction, including moving to an all age programme and opening it up to those working reduced hours.

The programme is open to those who have reached school leaving age, are either entering or already in employment and are contracted to work a minimum of 21 hours per week. Details on the programme can be viewed at: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsni>.

THE DELIVERY MODEL

The Department currently contracts with a range of training suppliers, including further education colleges, private sector providers and community and voluntary organisations to deliver off-the-job training, which helps develop an apprentice's skills and provides underpinning knowledge leading to the achievement of recognised qualifications. Depending on the training requirements, delivery can be in a classroom, workshop or simulated workplace setting.

Contracting is undertaken through the public procurement process. The most recent contracts were awarded on 9th August 2013 and run until 31st March 2016. Contracts are let based on occupational areas and geographical location.

THE ROLE OF THE TRAINING SUPPLIER

Training suppliers are funded to deliver off-the-job training to apprentices through an output related contract with the Department. Suppliers work with employers and support apprentices in working towards the qualifications outlined in apprenticeship frameworks through the delivery of knowledge and skills training off-the-job to complement the on-the-job training provided through the employer.

THE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER

A key element of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is that apprentices are in permanent remunerative employment from day one (a minimum of 21 contracted hours per week) with one employer, which includes day release/off-the-job training. Payment of apprentices must be in accordance with the National Minimum Wage Regulations.

The employer is paid an incentive via the training supplier on completion of the apprenticeships framework.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The Department funds the off-the-job training element, with part funding secured through the ESF. Contract performance is monitored by the Department's Quality and Performance Branch, with financial assurance being provided by its Financial Audit Support Team. Quality of provision is monitored by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

THE ROLE OF THE APPRENTICE

Apprentices must undertake to work actively towards the achievement of the targeted qualifications as outlined in the apprenticeships framework. They also apply learning gained off-the-job to the context of their employment.

FUNDING

Funding for off-the-job training ranges from £1,300 to £10,800, depending on the age of the apprentice and the apprenticeship being undertaken.

In September 2011, the level of funding available for apprentices aged 25+ was revised to 50% of that available for apprentices aged between 16 and 24 years. From August 2012, the funding available for apprentices aged 25+ was targeted at the economically important sectors needed to rebalance the economy, namely business services (specifically ICT), financial services, food and drink manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, advanced engineering, and the emerging sectors of life and health sciences and the creative industries.

QUALIFICATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

ApprenticeshipsNI provides participants with the opportunity to work towards a Level 2/Level 3 apprenticeship, through an industry-approved Level 2/Level 3 apprenticeship framework. The achievement of a qualification within a framework is certified by an Awarding Body.

The apprentice will be deemed competent in his/her occupational area on the achievement of all the qualifications within a framework.

Each framework has been developed at a national level by a Sector Skills Council, informed by employers.

Apprenticeships frameworks follow a standard format that comprises:

- A competence based qualification, e.g. a National Vocational Qualification.
- The essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT (where appropriate).
- A knowledge based qualification
- Other mandatory or optional elements as specified by the particular industry for the occupational area.

There are currently over 140 apprenticeships frameworks for a range of occupational areas. The current frameworks can be accessed at:

Level 2 Frameworks

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/apprenticeshipsni-publications/apprenticeshipsni-l2-frameworks.htm>

Level 3 Frameworks

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/apprenticeshipsni-publications/apprenticeshipsni-l3-frameworks.htm>

ANNEX D

Review of Apprenticeships: A Summary of Proposal And Consultation Questions

The consultation will be open for submissions from 13 January 2014 to 7th April 2014. The consultation response booklet can be downloaded from the DEL website at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/apprenticeshipreview>

Theme 1 (Part A): The Components of An Apprenticeship

The following proposals will govern the core aspects of apprenticeships.

Proposal 1:

Apprenticeships will be defined as a system of learning, irrespective of branding.

Proposal 2:

An apprenticeship will be for a new employee or in the case of an existing employee, a new job role.

Proposal 3:

An apprenticeship will commence at professional and technical Level 3 or higher.

Proposal 4:

An apprenticeship will be for a minimum duration of two years.

Proposal 5:

An apprenticeship will involve a breadth of training beyond the specific needs of a particular job through on and off-the-job training.

Proposal 6:

An apprenticeship will be designed to enable individuals to progress into higher professional or technical training or onto a higher academic pathway.

Proposal 7:

Government will recognise an apprenticeship when it contains each of the components set out in Proposals 2-6.

Question 1:

Do you agree that apprenticeships should be defined as a system of learning, irrespective of branding?

Question 2:

Should apprenticeships be for a new employee or, in the case of an existing employee, a new job role?

Question 3:

Do you agree that the apprenticeship system should commence at Level 3, and above?

Question 4:

Do you agree that the minimum duration for apprenticeships should be two years?

Question 5:

Should apprenticeships involve a breath of training beyond the job role?

Question 6:

Should apprenticeships facilitate progression into professional or technical training or onto a higher academic pathway? How can the outcome of apprenticeships support this?

Question 7:

Should Government only recognise an apprenticeship when it contains each of the components set out in Proposals 2-6?

Theme 1 (Part A) General Comment:

Please provide any additional comments on the seven proposed components of apprenticeships outlined under proposals 1 - 7. Are there components that you believe are unnecessary or, are there additional components which should be considered?

Theme 1 (Part B): Underpinning Elements of Apprenticeships

To support the apprenticeships system, a range of proposals are set out below.

Proposal 8:

Apprenticeships will have a single award/qualification for each occupation at each level.

Proposal 9:

Apprenticeships will be open to everyone irrespective of age, but with the primary focus on young people aged 16-24.

Proposal 10:

Apprenticeships will support progression beyond the initial apprenticeship through a variety of pathways including to higher level apprenticeships and to further and higher education.

Proposal 11:

Apprenticeship awards/qualifications will facilitate portability within a sector and mobility within the wider economy.

Proposal 12:

Measures will be put in place to support individuals to make the transition into apprenticeships at Level 3.

Proposal 13:

Apprenticeships will utilise fully international opportunities for placements and exchanges.

Question 8:

Do you agree that there should be a single award/qualification to denote the outcome of an apprenticeship for each occupation at each level?

Question 9:

Should apprenticeships be available for all ages? If apprenticeships are open to all ages, how can Government best ensure that young people are not crowded out of apprenticeship provision?

Question 10:

How can Government best support progression beyond the initial apprenticeship through a variety of pathways including to further and higher education?

Question 11:

How might Government best secure the portability of apprenticeships within a sector and the wider economy?

Question 12:

How can Government best support learners who have not acquired the pre-requisite level of qualifications to access apprenticeships?

Question 13:

How might the apprenticeship programme best support opportunities for international exchanges and placements?

Theme 1 (Part B) General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on the underpinning elements outlined under proposals 8 - 13. Are there other underpinning elements that Government should consider?

Theme 2: Increasing Participation

The following proposals seek to facilitate increased participation from employers and apprentices.

Proposal 14:

A central service will be introduced to market, promote and support apprenticeship provision, by engaging with employers and potential participants.

Proposal 15:

The central service will provide advice and guidance for employers and potential apprentices on the range of support and training available.

Proposal 16:

An online service will be introduced to advertise apprenticeship vacancies across all sectors.

Proposal 17:

Applications for apprenticeship places will be supported via a UCAS (as used for entrance to University) style portal, to inform young people of the range of opportunities available.

Proposal 18:

Apprenticeships will be offered in a wide range of professional and technical occupations, reflecting the needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

Proposal 19:

Apprenticeships will be expanded to include professional and technical occupations within the public sector.

Proposal 20:

A range of incentives will be considered to support employers, particularly SMEs and micro-businesses, to participate in apprenticeships.

Proposal 21:

The Careers Service will provide impartial pre-entry advice to all young people considering the apprenticeship pathway.

Proposal 22:

The Careers Service will intervene at key transition points for young people to provide impartial advice and guidance.

Proposal 23:

Apprenticeships will include a range of measures to support participation by both genders across occupations.

Question 14:

Would a central service to market, promote and support apprenticeships, which engages with employers and participants encourage greater levels of participation?

Question 15:

Would a central service that provides advice and guidance for employers and potential apprentices on the range of support and training available increase participation?

Question 16:

Would an online service to advertise apprenticeship vacancies across all sectors encourage greater participation?

Question 17 (a):

Would a UCAS style portal best inform potential apprentices of the full range of opportunities available?

Question 17 (b):

How might such a portal be designed and function in order to generate greater levels of participation?

Question 18:

Do you agree that apprenticeships should be offered across a wider range of occupations across the Northern Ireland economy? Please provide your views on how Government might best facilitate this expansion?

Question 19:

Do you agree that apprenticeships should be expanded to professional and technical occupations in the public sector?

Question 20:

Would employers, in particular micro and small to medium size employers, require specific incentives and support to facilitate participation in the apprenticeship programme? If so, what support measures are required?

Question 21:

Do you agree that the Careers Service should promote the benefits of the apprenticeship pathway to young people and their parents, as appropriate, highlighting the parity of esteem with other pathways such as higher education?

Question 22:

Would continued careers support throughout the apprenticeship help to reduce drop-out rates and improve programme outcomes?

Question 23:

How can a revised apprenticeship programme best support participation by both genders across occupations?

Theme 2 General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 14 - 23. Are there other measures that Government should consider to facilitate greater levels of participation?

Theme 3: Partnership - the roles of the key players

The review highlights the importance of ensuring the key stakeholders are central to the design and delivery of apprenticeships. The following proposals seek to address this.

Proposal 24:

An advisory group, based around a partnership comprising of employers, trade unions and the providers of off-the-job training, will be established to advise Government at a strategic level on apprenticeship provision.

Proposal 25:

Partnership groups, including representatives from employers, Sector Skills Councils or equivalent bodies, providers of off-the-job training and Government, will be established to design and agree apprenticeship provision and inform demand through a skills barometer approach annually at a sectoral level.

Question 24 (a):

Do you agree that Government should establish an advisory group comprising of the key stakeholders to provide strategic guidance on apprenticeships?

Question 24 (b):

Please comment on which stakeholders should be involved in the advisory group.

Question 24 (c):

What should be the remit of the advisory group?

Question 25 (a.):

Do you agree that Government should establish a range of the sectoral partnership groups to design and agree apprenticeship provision and inform demand annually, at a sectoral level?

Question 25 (b):

Please comment on which stakeholders should be involved in the sectoral groups.

Question 25 (c):

How should these groups inform the provision of apprenticeships in their relevant sectors?

Theme 3 General Comment:

Please provide any additional comments on the partnership concept set out in proposals 24 and 25.

Theme 4: Ensuring Quality

Northern Ireland's future apprenticeship provision must be based on the highest quality of training. The following proposals seek to secure this.

Proposal 26:

Quality, achievement and progression will be key measures of success for apprenticeship provision.

Proposal 27:

Employers and industry specialists, in partnership with other key stakeholders, will inform the content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship, including test(s) at the end of the training.

Proposal 28:

The content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship will be subject to rigorous assurance by inspectors who have up-to-date experience in professional and technical areas, supported by industry experts to ensure each apprenticeship meets the needs of employers and apprentices.

Proposal 29:

To support the quality of teaching and learning, criteria will be set for all teaching staff which will establish minimum qualification requirements in the subject area and related pedagogy, as well as significant and up-to-date experience in industry.

Proposal 30:

There will be a requirement that all involved in the delivery of off-the-job training will undertake professional training in pedagogy.

Proposal 31:

Stringent conditions will be established for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field.

Proposal 32:

Only those providers who meet the minimum quality standards as determined by the Department will be funded to deliver apprenticeship training.

Question 26:

Do you agree with the following as indicators of the apprenticeship programme's success: quality, achievement and progression? Are there other criteria that should be considered in the monitoring of apprenticeship provision?

Question 27:

How might Government empower employers, industry specialists and other key stakeholders to inform content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship?

Question 28:

Do you agree that apprenticeships should be subject to rigorous assurance? How should the content, duration and assessment of each apprenticeship be monitored to ensure it meets the needs of the key stakeholders?

Question 29:

Do you agree that quality of teaching and learning should be supported through minimum qualification and related pedagogy requirements for each occupational area?

Question 30:

Do you agree that those involved in the delivery of off-the-job training should undertake professional training in pedagogy?

Question 31:

Do you agree that stringent conditions should be established for continuous professional development to ensure that those delivering training remain expert in their field?

Question 32:

Should providers of training be approved only where they meet clear quality standards? If so, what standards should be applied?

Theme 4 General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 26 - 32. Are there other measures that Government should consider in the high quality provision of apprenticeships?

Shared Future Policy Proofing

Impact (Positive/Negative/No impact)	Qualitative Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Possible Mitigating Measures
<p>Does the proposed policy promote individuals from different religious, political, racial or other Section 75(1) backgrounds sharing or engaging together?</p>	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>The review of apprenticeships aims to ensure that Northern Ireland's (NI) future apprenticeship provision will be a key leverage in delivering the NI Executive's key priority, to rebalance and rebuild the economy, delivering higher productivity and social mobility.</p> <p>Achieving this success will be heavily reliant upon greater participation of both employers and apprentices. The review's proposals aim to support increased participation by employers across a range of occupations through a package of initiatives and additional support measures.</p> <p>Encouraging more young people to undertake an apprenticeship as opposed to the traditional academic pathway will move them into shared workplace spaces sooner.</p> <p>Focus Groups were held with young people in schools as part of the stakeholder engagement. This involved representative schools from the controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish Medium sectors. There was universal support for the apprenticeship concept and the opportunities presented, particularly through employment across a range of sectors.</p>	<p>Research from ECNI points to increased numbers of people working in integrated workplaces¹²² and increased public support for employers taking steps to engage with communities currently under-represented in their workforce.¹²³</p>	<p>Not Applicable</p>

122 Osborne, B. and Shuttleworth, I., "Fair Employment in Northern Ireland: a Generation On", Equality Commission, 2004.

123 "Do You Mean Me? Discrimination: attitudes and experience in Northern Ireland - Equality Awareness Survey", Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2011

Impact (Positive/ Negative/No impact)	Qualitative Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Possible Mitigating Measures
<p>Does the proposed policy inadvertently create a situation where people categorised in different groups under Section 75(1) backgrounds will be accessing services or facilities on a segregated or separate basis?</p>	<p>Positive impact</p>	<p>Future provision will mirror the existing provision currently offered through ApprenticeshipsNI, in that it will be offered across NI. The revised programme will be open to and inclusive of all Section 75 groups.</p>	<p>ECNI survey work has found strong support (65% of respondents) for increasing the representation of disabled people in the workplace, and similar support for increasing female representation in key roles.¹²⁴ Currently only 37.3% of disabled people are in employment, compared to 73.4% of non-disabled persons,¹²⁵ while women account for the majority of those unable to engage with the labour market due to caring commitments (60.5% of carers and 97.8% of lone parents).¹²⁶</p> <p>Not Applicable</p>

124 "Do You Mean Me? Discrimination: attitudes and experience in Northern Ireland - Equality Awareness Survey", Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2011

125 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, "Labour Force Survey: January-March 2013", Department of Finance and Personnel, 2013

126 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, "Client Group Analysis - Summary of Statistics: February 2013", Department for Social Development, 2013

Does the proposed policy remove or address any barriers to people sharing?	Impact (Positive/Negative/No impact)	Qualitative Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Possible Mitigating Measures
	<p>Positive impact</p>	<p>In the implementation phase cognisance will be given to the continuance of the support arrangements provided under the existing programme for those participants with a disability.</p> <p>Apprenticeships will be offered across a range of occupations to ensure that opportunities are created which appeal to both male and female learners. This will be complemented through improved careers guidance.</p> <p>The revised policy proposes that a number of underpinning elements will support the core concept of apprenticeships including access irrespective of age. Furthermore, the review recognises the importance of facilitating opportunities for all ages for progression through apprenticeships at different levels.</p> <p>In the 2011 to 2015 Programme for Government, the top priority is growing a sustainable economy. Under this priority there is a commitment to increasing employment and supporting young people into employment.</p> <p>Apprenticeships will be open to everyone irrespective of age, but with the primary focus falling on young people aged 16-24.</p> <p>Consultation on the interim report seeks views on whether or not apprenticeships should be available for all ages.</p> <p>These proposals will contribute to greater diversity in the workforce and in particular occupational areas and hence to more shared workplaces.</p>	<p>The OECD¹²⁷ has recommended that apprenticeships should cover multiple sectors and occupations and should encourage the participation of women.</p> <p>In particular, apprenticeships should not be confined to the traditional trades, where men are usually over-represented, but should also extend to the service sector where women are more present. This is fundamental to ensuring that apprenticeships are inclusive and that apprentices acquire the skills required in new and innovative sectors that are more likely associated with the strongest labour demand in the future.</p> <p>The occupations offered in apprenticeship have a significant impact upon gender participation. Apprenticeships can, in some cases, entrench gender stereotypes. For example, an OECD Review¹²⁸ looking at Republic of Ireland's provision noted that the apprenticeship trades are traditionally 'male' occupations and the participation of women in apprenticeship is negligible¹²⁹. In a paper to the ILO¹³⁰, a diverse offer of apprenticeships across a range of occupations is recommended. This is the case in Northern Ireland - while a good gender balance across the overall programme is achieved some frameworks have very unbalanced gender participation¹³¹.</p> <p>Apprenticeships have been recommended by a wide range of sources to help address the challenge¹³² of youth unemployment. This is a particular problem in Northern Ireland with youth unemployment making up a large proportion of the total unemployed, compared to the average in the EU. Steedman (2011)¹³³ recommends that in line with other European jurisdictions, Government should direct public funds to ensure that young people are not excluded from participating in apprenticeships.</p>	<p>The advice of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) will be important in determining what measures can be undertaken to encourage greater gender balance across occupations within apprenticeships. Consultation on the interim report seeks views how a revised apprenticeship programme could support balanced gender participation.</p> <p>As part of the review's engagement, female students saw merit in raising the profile of female role models who have undertaken an apprenticeship in a male dominated sector, in order to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes. This could be achieved through active engagement with schools, raising awareness of what is available in occupations/sectors not traditionally viewed as attractive to females.</p> <p>Apprenticeships will build upon the Department's ongoing interventions to build greater gender balance, particularly in the STEM sectors. This includes the work of the 'Business Co-ordinator for STEM' who has been appointed to work on behalf of businesses to examine the issue of gender bias, share best practice and identify additional steps to make careers in the STEM industries more attractive.</p> <p>In conjunction with the ECNI, a series of further interventions will be considered to secure greater gender balance across apprenticeships, through a series of positive outreach measures, including: welcoming statements; targeted marketing campaigns; bridging courses; open days; work life balance promotion; tasters; and other measures deemed appropriate.</p> <p>The Department's Careers Advisers will continue to spend time in businesses, to ensure young people receive the most up-to-date advice on suitable opportunities through 'Careers Industry Insight' placements.</p>

127 OECD (2012) Note on 'Quality Apprenticeships' for the G20 Task Force on Employment. Paris, 2012/09, OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/OECD%20Apprenticeship%20Note%206%20Sept.pdf>

128 OECD, (2004) **Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap** <http://www.oecd.org/employment/oeecdurgesreformstationalcareerguidanceservices.htm>

129 Kis, V. (2010), Learning for Jobs OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training Ireland <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/44592419.pdf>

130 Steedman, H. (2012) Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Employment; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department - Geneva: ILO. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed/emp/-ifp_skills/document/wcms_190188.pdf

131 Department for Employment and Learning. Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to July 2013 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-nov-13.pdf>

132 OECD, (2013). Action plan for youth – giving you a better start in the labour market <http://www.oecd.org/els/emp/Youth-Action-Plan.pdf>

133 Centre for Economic Performance, (2011) Apprenticeship Policy in England: increasing skills versus boosting young people's job prospects. <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/pa013.pdf>

	Impact (Positive/ Negative/No impact)	Qualitative Evidence	Quantitative Evidence	Possible Mitigating Measures
<p>Does the proposed policy inadvertently erect any barriers to people sharing?</p>	<p>No impact</p>	<p>A number of the proposals in the interim report will promote greater diversity in workplaces. A number of initiatives aim to increase engagement in the programme and shared workplaces.</p>	<p>See above.</p>	<p>Apprenticeships will be offered across a range of occupations, to ensure that opportunities are created which appeal to both male and female learners. This will be complemented through improved careers guidance.</p> <p>Working with the Equality Commission for N. Ireland, plans are also underway to produce an 'Addressing Gender Balance - a Good Practice Manual' to help embed best practice.</p> <p>In conjunction with the ECNI, a series of further interventions will be considered to secure greater gender balance across apprenticeships through a series of positive outreach measures, including: welcoming statements; targeted marketing campaigns; bridging courses; open days; work life balance promotion; tasters; and other measures deemed appropriate.</p> <p>The Department's Careers Advisers will continue to spend time in businesses, to ensure young people receive the most up-to-date advice on suitable opportunities through 'Careers Industry Insight' placements.</p>

GLOSSARY

CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
DE	Department for Education
Department	Department for Employment and Learning
ECNI	Equality Commission Northern Ireland
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EU	European Union
Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HMRC	HM Revenue and Customs
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NAS	National Apprenticeship Service
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PfG	Programme for Government
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
STEM	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
UK	United Kingdom
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
VET/PET	Vocational and Professional Education and Training

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