

REVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS AND YOUTH TRAINING

Purpose

The Minister for Employment and Learning has commissioned a review of apprenticeships and youth training, 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 those young people are provided with opportunities to develop the skills and gain the relevant experience;
- provide alternative pathways with parity of esteem; and
- take account of best practice in other jurisdictions.

Scope

The review will consider the different issues and factors pertaining to apprenticeships and post-school youth training.

In terms of apprenticeships, it will 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 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 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; and
- how best practice in other jurisdictions can be incorporated into the framework for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland.

In terms of youth training the review will consider:

- how to best ensure that in practice every young person, post 16, has the opportunity to participate in a training programme;
- the essential components for one or more effective programmes, which provides a plausible non-academic pathway to prepare young people for progression to an apprenticeship or into sustainable employment ;
- other elements of flexible content which may be required in addition to the core offer of employability and Essential Skills;

- how to improve young people's employability skills, including the importance of work experience and how it can be integrated into any new offer;
- how to clarify the offer to enable young people to make the correct choices in terms of entry routes and progression opportunities;
- the age range and duration for future programmes;
- how to engage employers in terms of the content of the training programmes and the employers' support in providing work experience opportunities; and
- the delivery arrangements to enable a flexible and personalised offer appropriate to the young person's needs.

Working Procedures and Timescale

The work of the review will be advised by an expert panel which will include employers, education and skills providers, supported by a small team of officials.

An early meeting of a key stakeholder group will be called to take their views and there will be a call for submissions. The stakeholder group will contribute concerns, issues and ideas and will be closely involved in emerging thinking and recommendations.

The Department will report on the review in the Autumn of 2013.