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**Employment
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Review of Youth Training

Interim Report and
Consultation Document

November 2014

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Dr Stephen Farry MLA

Minister for Employment and Learning

FOREWORD

This document sets out our analysis and interim conclusions on a new system of youth training. This new system will form a key part of our wider education and skills landscape.



Building and rebalancing our economy are key strategic priorities for the Executive. Investing directly in people and providing opportunities for personal development and fulfilment, and, consequently, delivering the skills required for the economy, are key overriding responsibilities for my Department and me. We have an important role in preparing our people for the world of work and sustained employment through improving skill levels. Complementary to this is the need to provide opportunities for education and training at all levels, and to ensure that both current and potential future employers have access to the skilled employees, particularly young people, that they require.

A crucial element in the wider skills landscape is our youth training system. In February 2013, I announced the reviews of apprenticeships and youth training, giving a commitment to make them my top priority. In June, I published ‘Securing our Success’ – the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships.

This report sets out a range of interventions and support that will comprise a system of learning for young people aged 16–24. I am proposing that our youth training system will incorporate structured work-based learning for all participants, including an employment-based pathway, and provide a new professional and

technical award at level 2, the curriculum content of which will be informed by employers in order to better match demand and supply. The system will provide flexible routes and support mechanisms to make training accessible to all young people, and facilitate progression into apprenticeships, further education or higher education, and directly or indirectly into sustained employment.

My blueprint for Northern Ireland's future youth training system contains 26 different proposals. Its development has been aided by engagement with key stakeholders, including the Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning and an Expert Panel. This report will now be the subject of public consultation over the next 12 weeks. We are keen to hear your views on our vision, the proposed new system and each of the specific proposals. Particular efforts are being made to gather the views of young people.

I believe that this new system of youth training will deliver a foundation of knowledge and expertise, which will contribute to the skills required by the economy, improved social mobility and facilitate lifelong learning. I commend it to you and look forward to receiving your views.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our aspiration is to build a system of youth training that will be recognised both nationally and internationally by employers, further and higher education providers, young people and parents/guardians for its quality, flexibility and transferability.

The system will be centred on the career aspirations and needs of young people, and will be a conduit to support their ongoing career development. Young people in training will be sought after by prospective employers, and the system will be respected by young people and parents/guardians as an alternative progression route to the traditional academic pathway.

By linking a new baccalaureate-style award to the needs of employers and the wider economy, the youth training system will better match demand and supply, and provide a seamless progression route for young people to a breadth of professional and technical occupations.

This vision will be achieved through the implementation of the following 4 key themes and 26 supporting proposals.

THEME 1: CORE COMPONENTS FOR THE YOUTH TRAINING SYSTEM

This theme outlines the core components that will underpin the new youth training system, highlighting how young people can access a new baccalaureate-style curriculum that delivers a breadth of skills and knowledge at level 2 and integrates structured work-based learning.

THEME 2: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

This theme highlights support measures to help young people successfully complete their training and progress into employment or professional and technical training at a higher level.

THEME 3: DELIVERY AND EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES

This theme sets out proposals for delivering the new youth training system, including new structures to allow employers to inform curriculum content for their sector.

THEME 4: ENSURING QUALITY

This theme sets out a range of measures designed to ensure that the highest standards of quality for training are maintained.

Theme 1:

**CORE COMPONENTS FOR THE
YOUTH TRAINING SYSTEM**

- 1.** Youth training will be available to all young people aged 16–24 who require training at level 2. It will be accessible to those starting a new job, those in existing roles, and those not yet in employment.
- 2.** The youth training system will provide a new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2, equating to a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A*–C, including English and mathematics.
- 3.** Structured work-based learning, whether through employment or a work placement, will be a mandatory element of the youth training system. It will be the primary method for developing skills, including employability, and will offer short, project-based work tasters for those not yet in employment.
- 4.** Youth training will provide opportunities to study additional qualifications that are relevant to the interests of the individual young person and to the requirements of employers.
- 5.** Young people will be supported to attain a minimum of a full level 1 (four GCSEs at grades D–G, including English and mathematics at grades D–F) before commencing youth training.
- 6.** Youth training will be designed to take a maximum of two years to complete.

Theme 2:**SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE**

- 7.** Independent careers advice and guidance, informed by the skills barometer, will be provided to young people before starting training and upon completion.
- 8.** Pastoral support will be provided to assist young people to complete their training and progress into employment or higher-level options.
- 9.** Workplace mentors will be provided by employers to assist young people to develop their employability skills and achieve their learning outcomes.
- 10.** Financial support will be provided to help young people complete their training, through a training wage or allowance.
- 11.** Support and flexibility will be provided for young people with additional requirements (e.g. individuals with a disability, caring commitments or those leaving care).
- 12.** Youth training will make use of online technologies to prepare young people for the workplace and facilitate opportunities for international exchange.

Theme 3:

**DELIVERY AND EMPLOYER
ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES**

- 13.** A Strategic Advisory Forum will advise government on the youth training system.
- 14.** Sectoral Partnerships will define the qualifications to be delivered as part of the youth training curriculum for their sector, and also the duration, structure and timing of work placements.
- 15.** A central service will facilitate the sourcing and advertising of work-based learning opportunities.
- 16.** Dedicated industry consultants will source and manage work-based learning opportunities, and encourage employers to recruit young people from the youth training system.
- 17.** Work-based learning opportunities for young people engaged in training will be sourced through engagement with all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, including local councils and the wider public sector.
- 18.** Consideration will be given to funding mechanisms and a range of incentives, to promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training, and align the youth training system with the priorities of the Northern Ireland economy.
- 19.** Youth training will be supported by clear branding and marketing to employers, young people and parents/guardians.

Theme 4:**ENSURING QUALITY**

- 20.** A registration and approval system will be introduced via the central service for employers participating in the youth training system.
- 21.** Work-based learning will be underpinned by a clear contractual agreement between the young person, the host employer and the training provider.
- 22.** Only those providers who achieve prescribed quality standards will be funded to deliver youth training.
- 23.** Tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training will be required to have recent experience of their industry and relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications.
- 24.** Workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training will be required to have appropriate experience of their industry, hold relevant occupational qualifications, and undertake training as mentors.
- 25.** The youth training system will be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation.
- 26.** Feedback mechanisms will be put in place for participants to report their experiences of training and work-based learning.

Introduction

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1

INTRODUCTION

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 reviews were commissioned to ensure that both apprenticeships and youth training:

- 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; and
- take account of best practice in other jurisdictions.

The terms of reference for both reviews can be viewed at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/terms-of-reference-apprenticeships-and-youth-training.pdf>.

This report presents the interim findings of the review of youth training and focuses on training at level 2 for young people aged 16–24, reflecting this age group’s need for specific support to help them make a successful transition from education to employment.

The review’s focus also reflects wider economic priorities outlined within the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy, which recognised that widening and deepening the skills base of the local economy, to meet the needs of employers, is a key element in achieving wider economic goals. While growth within the Northern Ireland economy is predicted to continue, resulting in greater job creation, there remains a number of structural weaknesses, including low levels of output and productivity, and less development in sectors likely to drive future growth (such as ICT, Finance and Professional and Technical Activities).¹The jobs of tomorrow will

1 Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Review of Youth Training: Background Evidence Presentation (October 2014), <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>, p. 14.

require higher-level skills across a wide range of occupations, and this review provides an opportunity to better match skills to the needs of employers and to more fully capture opportunities for increased economic growth, productivity and employment. Further information on the wider context for the review is detailed in Chapter 2.

This review examines youth training in the context of the Department’s overall pathways for education and training. These pathways range from entry level (basic skills) to level 8 (doctorate level) on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) used for professional and technical qualifications in Northern Ireland and England.

This report should be read in conjunction with ‘Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, ([http://www.delni.gov.uk/securing-our-success-the-ni-strategy-on apprenticeships.pdf](http://www.delni.gov.uk/securing-our-success-the-ni-strategy-on-apprenticeships.pdf)), which articulates that future apprenticeships will be available in professional and technical occupations commencing from level 3 up to level 8.

In taking forward the review of youth training, a range of information has been considered and used to inform the proposals, including:

- an underlying evidence base setting out the economic and social context for the review and summarising relevant research and statistics;
- a series of national and international study visits;
- a review of key literature sources, as set out in the bibliography;
- an assessment of the current youth training system;
- stakeholder forums with employers, and training providers;
- specific forums, and further engagement, with young people;
- responses to a call for submissions;
- responses to the Review of Youth Training Employer Survey;
- responses to the Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships Leavers Survey;
- feedback from meetings with key stakeholders, such as employers, including those in sectors that use skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and
- feedback from meetings of a diverse and experienced Expert Panel that was established to inform the review (see Annex B for details of the panel’s membership).

Content of Report

Each chapter within the report outlines the following:

Chapter 2 sets out the context within which the review of youth training is taking place, provides information on the benefits of youth training, and analyses the existing system and its challenges.

Chapter 3 sets out 26 proposals, which aim to achieve the vision for the youth training system of the future.

Chapter 4 outlines key supporting initiatives required to achieve the successful implementation of the new youth training system. These include young people having access to, and support to achieve, qualifications at entry level and level 1; high-quality careers advice and guidance; professional and technical qualifications valued by participants and employers; and assistance for those with additional requirements.

Chapter 5 details further exploratory work that will be taken forward simultaneously by the Department, in line with this consultation, to examine how best we can:

- link the proposed approach with ongoing pilot testing activity being undertaken through the implementation of the NI Strategy on Apprenticeships;²
- pilot elements of the proposed approach, including methods of securing high-quality work-based learning opportunities for young people;
- brand and market the youth training system to engage young people, employers, parents/guardians, and other key stakeholders; and
- begin to scope out development of the new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2.

Screening

Under the terms of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, an equality of opportunity screening has been undertaken and is available to view at <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>. It has determined that the proposals set out in this document will not lead to discriminatory or negative differential impact.

A Shared Future policy proofing, included at Annex E, indicates that a number of the proposals will promote greater diversity in the workplace, with a number of initiatives aiming to increase engagement in youth training and promote shared workplaces. As the review moves forward, further screening will be undertaken.

² DEL, 'Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Apprenticeships', June 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/securing-our-success-the-ni-strategy-on-apprenticeships.pdf>

Strategic Context for Youth Training

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2

STRATEGIC CONTEXT FOR YOUTH TRAINING

This chapter sets out the context within which the review of youth training is taking place, provides information on the benefits of youth training, and analyses the existing system and its challenges.

The target group and their characteristics

This review is focused on all young people aged 16–24 who have left school and do not currently hold a full level 2 qualification (i.e. five GCSEs at grades A*–C, including English and mathematics, or equivalent), including those who are already in employment.

Overall 68,509 (32.4%) 16–24 year olds do not hold a level 2 qualification, and of these, approximately 20,000 are in employment while 32,000 are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).³ In 2012/13, around 38% of young people in Northern Ireland left school without achieving five GCSEs at grades A*–C, including English and mathematics.

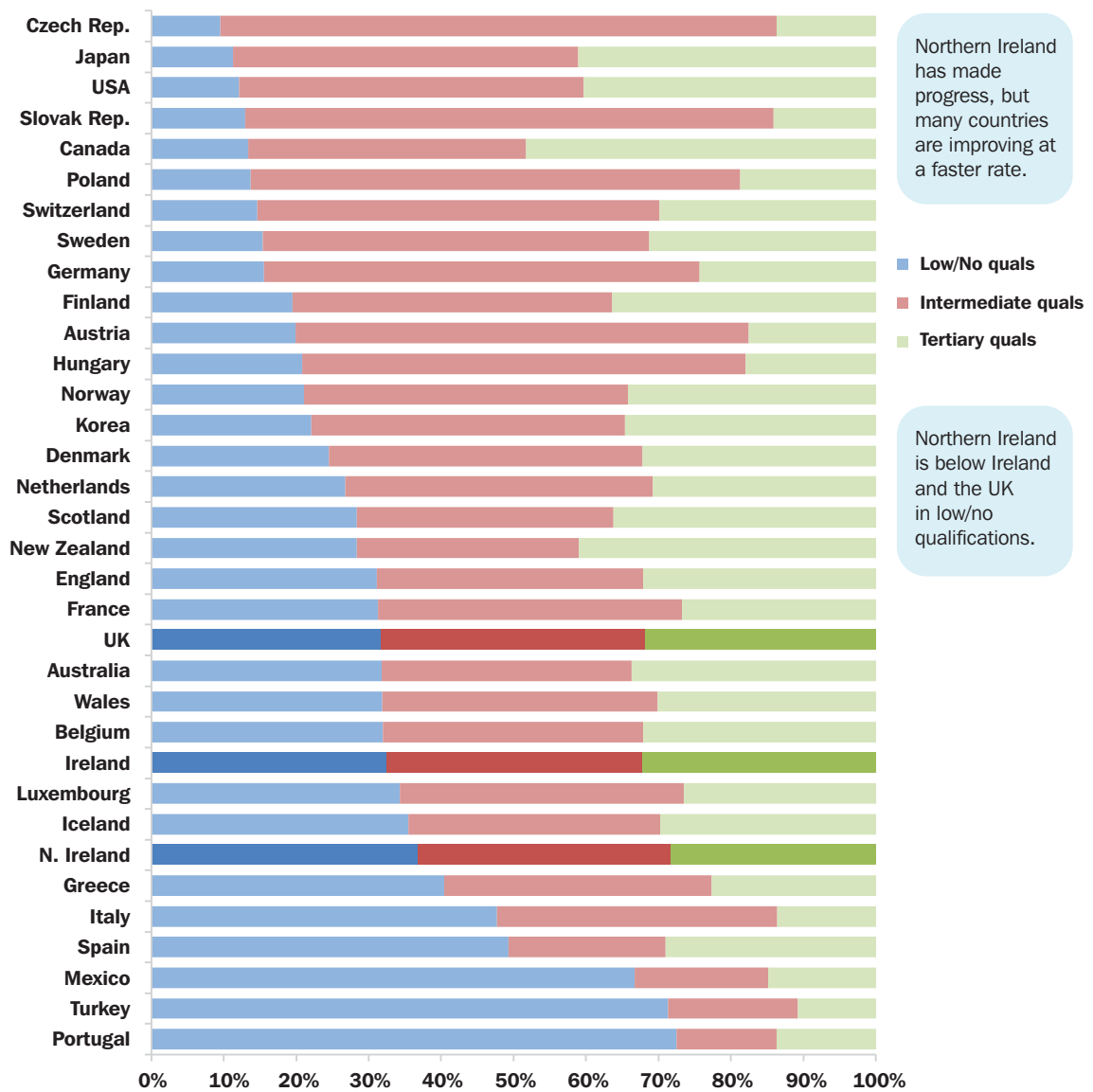
Skills levels

Skills levels in Northern Ireland have been steadily improving, with a 10 percentage point increase in individuals qualified to level 2 over the period 1997–2012.⁴ However, as Figure 2.1 demonstrates, the local skills profile still remains weaker than that of the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) and much of Europe, with a significant proportion of the workforce having low or no qualifications.

3 Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, April–June 2014, 27 August 2014, http://www.detini.gov.uk/lfs_quarterly_supplement_-_april_-_june_2014.pdf?rev=0. Figures refer to second quarter of 2014 and are approximate.

4 DFP, Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, October–December 2012, 28 February 2013, http://www.detini.gov.uk/lfs_quarterly_supplement_q4_2012.pdf?rev=0

Figure 2.1:
International skills profile⁵



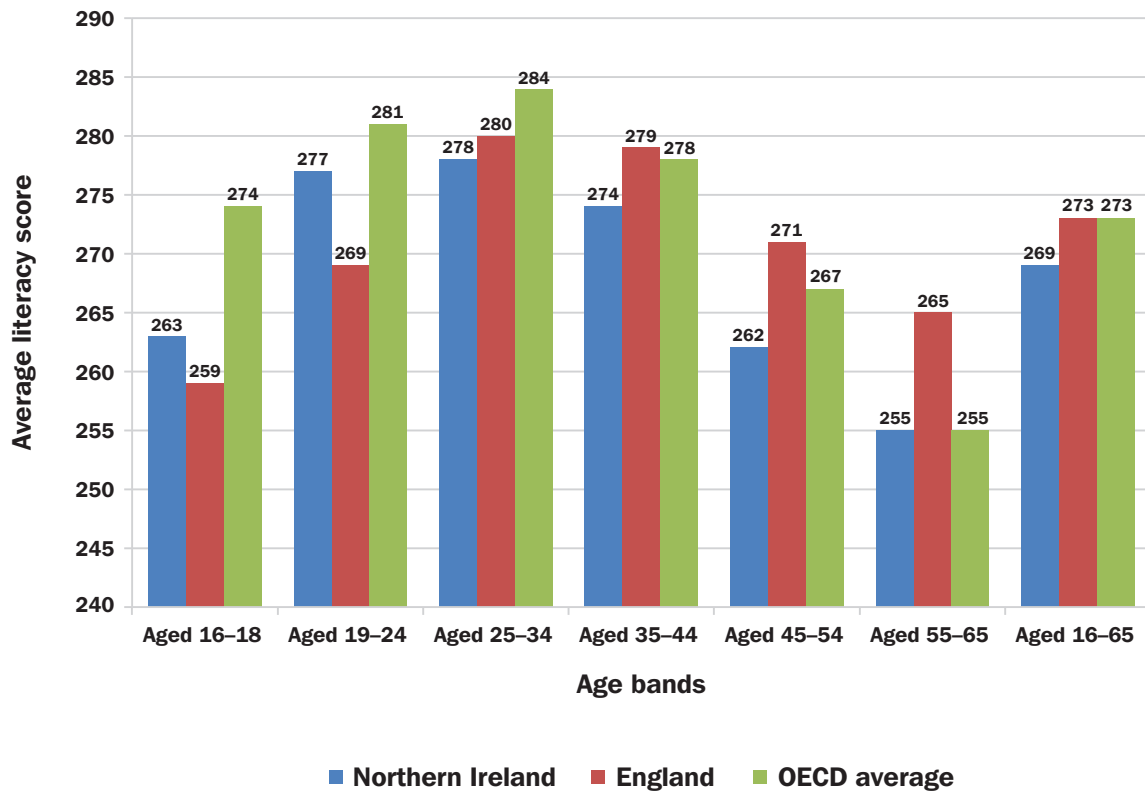
Overall in Northern Ireland, more than one in ten young people join the labour market with very low skills⁶ and, as Figure 2.2 shows, the literacy levels of 16–18 year olds sit below the average of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD’s) member countries.⁷

5 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), ‘The 2010 Report – Ambition 2020: World Class Skills and Jobs for the UK’ (2010), http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1310/1/A2020_web_final.pdf, p. 42.

6 National Foundation for Educational Research for Department for Employment and Learning, The International Survey of Adult Skills 2012: Adult literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills in Northern Ireland, October 2013, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/international-survey-adult-skills-2012.pdf>, p. 40.

7 DEL, Review of Youth Training: Background Evidence, October 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>, p. 49.

Figure 2.2:
Average literacy scores by age band and country⁸



⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

The Department deals with large numbers of young people with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Of those enrolled in Essential Skills courses in these areas, 70% are aged 16–24 and 53% are aged 16–18.⁹

Northern Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe, and this represents a great economic opportunity, providing that young people’s talents are properly developed and that skills are better matched to the needs of employers. Although representing a proportionately small number, local employers with a skills shortage vacancy reported difficulties in recruiting people with the necessary skills, with half or more highlighting shortages in technical, practical or job-specific skills; planning and organisational skills; problem-solving skills; and team-working skills. Skills shortages and gaps have been evident across a number of local sectors, including hotels and catering, business services, retail, software development/testing, and engineering. There have also been calls for government assistance with the development of numeracy, literacy, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) skills amongst employees,¹⁰ skills which are lower in Northern Ireland than in other comparator countries.¹¹

Providing young people now with high-quality, relevant training will help to ensure that, in years to come, employers have access to individuals with the necessary skills to meet the needs of their businesses and the labour market as a whole.

Youth unemployment

In Northern Ireland, unemployment rates are high among young people, having doubled since 2007.¹² Youth unemployment has significant short-term and long-term costs to the economy,¹³ and periods of unemployment at a young age can have a permanent impact on an individual when it comes to future employment prospects and earnings.

9 DEL, Essential Skills Enrolment Return for 2002/03–2012/13; Consolidated Data Return for 2013/14, 20 June 2014.

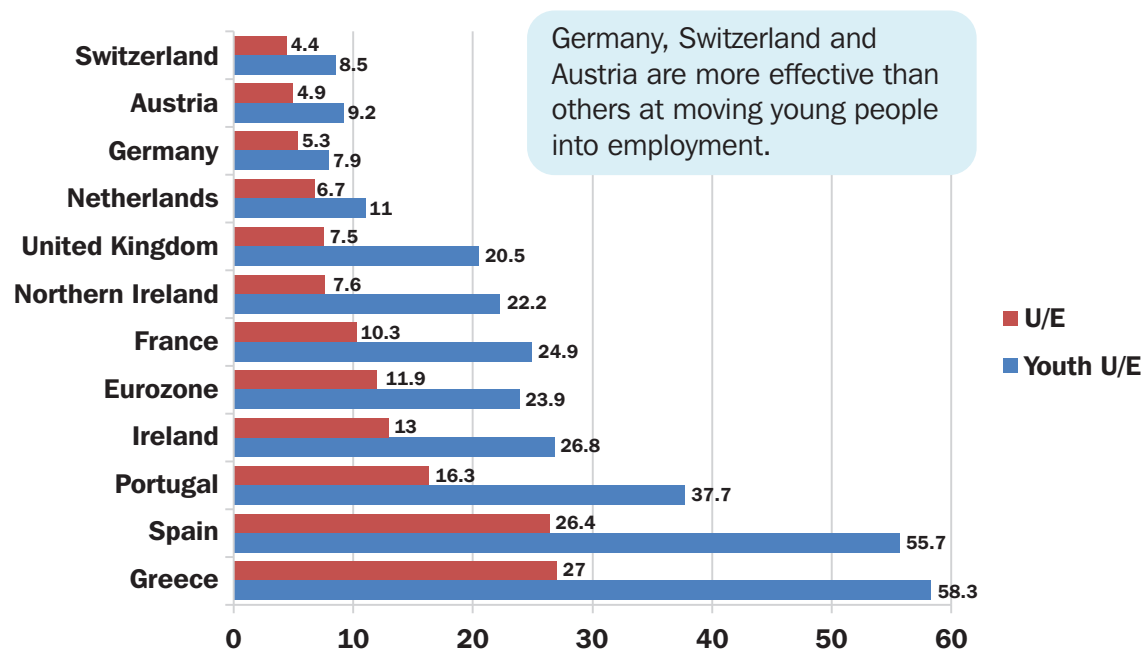
10 Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills (NIAES), ‘Identification of Priority Skill Areas for Northern Ireland’, March 2011, <http://www.niaes.co.uk/NIAESite/files/09/0955d9e2-7b55-4cb2-b19a-db5b5bf39b64.pdf>, pp. 10–11.

11 OECD, ‘Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training’, April 2014, pp. 50–51.

12 DFP, Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, January–March 2014, 28 May 2014, http://www.detini.gov.uk/lfs_quarterly_supplement_january-march_2014.pdf?rev=0

13 The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), Commission on Youth Unemployment, Youth unemployment: the crisis we cannot afford, February 2012, <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/publications/other/youthunemployment.pdf>, p. 4.

Figure 2.3:
Total unemployment and youth unemployment rates in Europe¹⁴



As Figure 2.3 above shows, young people across the European Union have been hit disproportionately hard by the recession and its aftermath, but the youth unemployment rate in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands has remained consistently low at around or below 10% since 2005.¹⁵ This is largely due to the well-established Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems in these countries. Each includes rigorous work-based learning and apprenticeship-style programmes that advance school-leavers into work or further and higher education.¹⁶

¹⁴ Labour Force Survey, Eurostat youth unemployment rates (December 2013). Figures based on 15–24 year olds.

¹⁵ House of Lords, European Union Committee, Youth unemployment in the EU: a scarred generation?, April 2014, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/lducom/164/164.pdf>, p. 16.

¹⁶ European Commission (EC), Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 1.

Benefits of qualifications at level 2 and above

The achievement of professional and technical qualifications can have a substantial positive impact on a young person's future job prospects and earnings.¹⁷ Individuals with a level 2 apprenticeship earn, on average, 12% (£48,000–£74,000) more than a similar individual with level 1 qualifications. They are also 10% more likely to be employed.¹⁸ Research has also indicated that the impact on an individual's earning and job prospects is greatest when the qualification is achieved below the age of 30. In addition to this, there is strong evidence to link higher literacy and skill levels with increased earnings.¹⁹

Another key benefit of level 2 qualifications is that they serve as a springboard for achieving higher-level qualifications, which bring further rewards in terms of employment prospects and potential earnings. The most highly-skilled are rewarded with the highest rates of pay,²⁰ and in 2013 the highest-skilled individuals earned over £20,000 per annum more than those qualified to levels 1 and 2.²¹

In the future, there is likely to be a growth in demand for higher-level skills, and over the next decade more than seven in ten vacancies will require qualifications at level 2 or above.²² Indeed, over three-quarters of employers who responded to the survey undertaken as part of the youth training review (see Annex online) said they had recruited between 1 and 20 employees, in the past two years, for roles for which the highest qualification required was at level 2.

17 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS), Research Paper Number 47: The Long Term Effect of Vocational Qualifications on Labour Market Outcomes, London Economics, June 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32326/11-1035-long-term-effect-of-vocational-qualifications.pdf, p. 12.

18 DEL, Review of Youth Training: Background Evidence, October 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>, p. 14, pp. 74 and 75.

19 DEL and National Foundation for Educational Research, The International Survey of Adult Skills 2012 (October 2013).

20 DEL and National Foundation for Educational Research, The International Survey of Adult Skills 2012 (October 2013).

21 Department of Finance and Personnel, Results from the Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2013, 12 December 2013 http://www.detini.gov.uk/northern_ireland_ashe_2013_bulletin.pdf

22 Oxford Economics for DEL, Preparing for a lower corporation tax environment, June 2012, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/lower-corporation-tax-environment.pdf>, p. 30.

Conclusion

As we emerge from the downturn of recent years, growing the local economy and addressing skills shortages, particularly among young people, are top priorities for the Northern Ireland Executive.²³ Northern Ireland's young population is a key economic asset, but the potential of these young people must be harnessed in a manner that balances their needs with those of employers.

Benefits of youth training

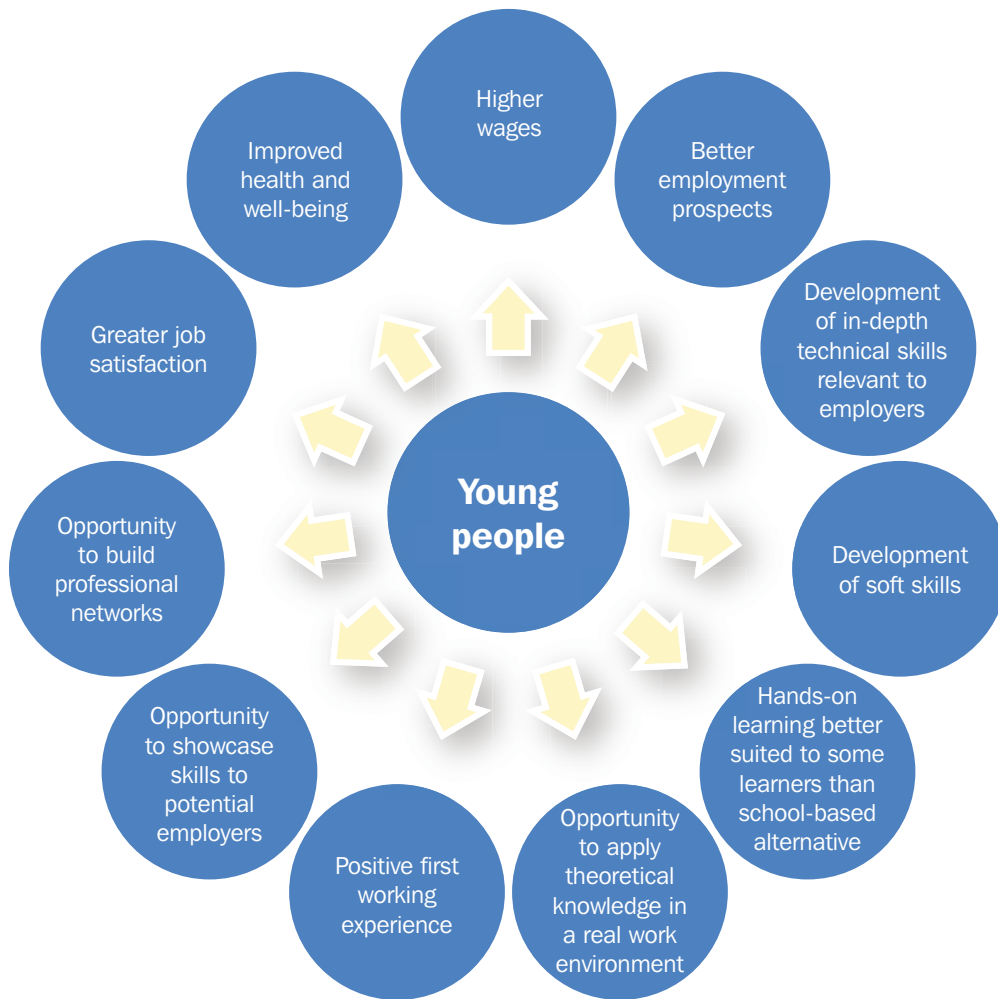
While the delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET) for young people varies a great deal throughout Europe, the evidence suggests that there are substantial advantages to having a strong VET system. These advantages apply to young people, employers, and educational institutions and training providers, as well as the wider economy and society in general.

BENEFITS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Figure 2.4 summarises the key benefits a strong VET system can bring to young people.

23 Northern Ireland Executive, Programme for Government 2011–2015, March 2012, <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>; Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity, March 2012, <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

Figure 2.4:
Summary of benefits



A recent European Commission (EC) report states that there is ‘ample, long-standing and consistent evidence that educational systems which combine theoretical study with practical, work-related training are more effective in easing young people’s school-to-work transition.’²⁴ VET helps school leavers take their first steps towards employment, allowing them to make informed career choices and achieve job-specific qualifications through training tailored to their needs, while gaining a positive first working experience.

²⁴ EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, p. 114. (download required)

EC research suggests that many young people ‘thrive on a more hands-on form of learning and benefit from training in a real-life work environment. Learners are able to pursue learning in environments that are better suited to their learning styles and aspirations than school-based education.’²⁵ Trainees are exposed to the culture and challenges of the workplace, while developing the technical skills required by employers in their chosen occupation, leading to ‘craftsmanship and deep expertise which cannot be stimulated in a purely school-based environment.’²⁶ They also have the opportunity to learn softer skills that will benefit them throughout their working lives, including confidence, motivation, adaptability, time management, communication and team-working.

The skills developed by young people through a well-developed VET system should improve their employment prospects. In the short term, trainees can demonstrate their abilities to the employers delivering their work placements, and their new skills will also contribute to their long-term employability, reducing the amount of time it is likely to take them to find a job.²⁷ According to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), ‘VET is more successful than general education at getting individuals into work in the short and medium terms’.²⁸ VET also allows trainees to begin building professional networks that will be useful to them over the course of their careers.

As detailed previously, professional and technical qualifications can deliver substantial benefits in the areas of employment prospects and earnings. Recent studies also link VET to greater job satisfaction, and improved health and well-being. This seems particularly true in countries ‘that regard VET and general education as equal, both as educational options and as routes of access to higher education’.²⁹

25 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p. 11.

26 Ibid., p. 9.

27 Ibid., p. 8.

28 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), From education to working life: The labour market outcomes of vocational education and training, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3063_en.pdf, p. 9.

29 Cedefop, Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe for people, organisations and countries, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4121_en.pdf, p. 26.

BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

A well-developed VET system also brings a wealth of benefits to employers, the most important of which are illustrated in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5:
Summary of benefits



Employers who offer VET have the opportunity to train young people in line with their organisational culture and the exact requirements of the role, addressing any skills shortages or gaps, thereby improving overall performance and productivity and increasing customer satisfaction. It is not only the young person and those directly involved in their training who benefit, but also other employees across the organisation through knowledge transfer.³⁰ In addition, VET contributes to innovation within businesses, since young people bring with them ‘new ideas and fresh thinking’.³¹

The sharing of training costs with the government can be a bonus, especially for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources. VET can help with recruitment too, as a low-cost, no-risk means of testing potential employees (in the United States, 83% of employers use work-based learning to identify new recruits³²). It also helps with retention, since employers demonstrating a commitment to their workforce through training often enjoy a higher level of employee commitment in return.³³ Similarly, in some European countries investment in VET is seen as the mark of a quality employer and evidence of their corporate social responsibility, strengthening their brand and helping them attract the best talent.³⁴

A good VET system results in the development of links between education and industry, giving employers the opportunity to feed into the curriculum for their area of work and ensure it is targeted to their needs.

30 Ibid., p. 25.

31 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, p. 112. (download required)

32 Ibid., p. 113.

33 Cedefop, Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4121_en.pdf, p. 27.

34 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, p. 113. (download required)

BENEFITS TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

As summarised in Figure 2.6, educational institutions and training providers derive a number of benefits from delivering VET.

Figure 2.6:
Summary of benefits



The creation of links between education and industry enables educational institutions and training providers to match their curricula to the needs of employers and incorporate relevant new skills and knowledge, collaborate with employers on joint projects, keep up to date with developments in the workplace, and have access to the latest technology and equipment. This results in cost-effective training that leads to better outcomes for young people.³⁵

³⁵ EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p. 10; EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717> , p. 114.

BENEFITS TO THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Finally, a robust VET system has a positive impact on the wider economy and society in general, and the key benefits are highlighted in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7:
Summary of benefits



The end product of a good VET system is a workforce with the right skills and qualifications to meet current and future needs. This in turn means a higher employment rate (as outlined previously, countries with well-developed VET systems have the lowest youth unemployment rates, even in periods of limited economic growth) and a reduction in poverty levels.³⁶ The cost-sharing of VET between the government and employers also leads to reduced public expenditure.³⁷

³⁶ Cedefop, Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4121_en.pdf, p. 30.

³⁷ EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p. 10.

Just as professional and technical qualifications at level 2 impact positively on an individual's earnings, they also deliver monetary benefits to the Exchequer.³⁸

Similarly, while VET contributes to productivity and innovation within an individual company, it can have an equally positive effect on the overall productivity and innovation of a country.

VET has been found to support social inclusion and even to help reduce crime.³⁹ As a preventative measure, 'it can play a central role in tackling the problem of poor motivation and alienation',⁴⁰ 're-motivat[ing] and retrain[ing] learners who are otherwise at risk of dropping out'⁴¹ while simultaneously contributing to young people's socialisation.⁴² Early intervention is crucial. As detailed in the 'Benefits to young people' section, VET targets those who have not thrived in a traditional school setting and provides a smooth transition into work or further education, thereby preventing them from potentially entering long-term unemployment.

CONCLUSION

As international research demonstrates, strong VET systems deliver a workforce with the skills necessary to the labour market now and in the future, ultimately increasing overall productivity and employment.

38 BIS, Research Paper Number 53: Returns to Intermediate and Low Level Vocational Qualifications, September 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32354/11-1282-returns-intermediate-and-low-level-vocational-qualifications.pdf, p. 10.

39 Cedefop, Benefits of vocational education and training in Europe, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4121_en.pdf, p. 28.

40 Andrew McCoshan, Anna Drozd, Emmy Nelissen and Anne-Mari Nevala, 'Beyond the Maastricht Communiqué: developments in the opening up of VET pathways and the role of VET in labour market integration – Consolidated Final Report', 2008, http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-b/gdbk/08/vetreport_en.pdf, p. xiv.

41 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p. 11.

42 Anders Nilsson, 'Vocational education and training – an engine for economic growth and a vehicle for social inclusion?', International Journal of Training and Development, Volume 14, Issue 4, November 2010, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2419.2010.00357.x/pdf>, p.260.

The existing system

There are currently three options for school leavers who require VET provision at level 2:

- Training for Success – Skills for Work Level 2;
- apprenticeships at level 2; and
- mainstream further education at level 2⁴³.

In addition, young people who remain in school can access some professional and technical qualifications at level 2 through the Entitlement Framework, the Northern Ireland only framework of qualification provision for young people at Key Stage 4 and Post-16.

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS – SKILLS FOR WORK LEVEL 2

Training for Success (TfS) is aimed at young people aged 16–17, and delivers a common curriculum from entry level to level 3 that includes Essential Skills, personal and social development skills, employability skills, and professional and technical skills.

Skills for Work Level 2 is a strand of TfS and replaced Programme-led Apprenticeships (PLA) in 2013. PLA was a short term intervention measure introduced in 2009 to respond to the economic downturn, which similarly provided young people with the opportunity to work towards achieving a level 2 apprenticeship framework.

Skills for Work Level 2 seeks to ensure that young people who are capable of achieving at level 2, but are yet to secure employment, are prepared for future progression to an apprenticeship. Participants undertake the knowledge-based elements of the level 2 apprenticeship framework within their chosen occupational area, and are also taught essential skills if required. The latest statistical information (April 2014) indicates that there were 2,540 participants on Skills for Work Level 2, with an additional ‘legacy’ number of 1,998 on PLA.

⁴³ Refers to individuals in FLU funded professional and technical full time courses only. Those funded through DEL training programmes, full cost recovery and entitlement framework, or any other funding stream are excluded.

APPRENTICESHIPSNI

Under the current apprenticeship programme, apprentices are employed and receive a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The training follows a set framework consisting of a range of level 2 qualifications, including knowledge, competence and, where necessary, Essential Skills. The latest statistical information (April 2014) indicates that there were 3,248 participants on level 2 apprenticeships. Following the publication of ‘Securing Our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships’, it is expected that the new apprenticeship system will commence in 2016.

MAINSTREAM FURTHER EDUCATION

Young people can also access level 2 VET through mainstream further education, where vocational qualifications can be combined with traditional academic subjects and qualifications in numeracy, literacy, and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as required. In 2012/13, 4,353 16–24 year olds enrolled in mainstream further education professional and technical courses.

Challenges of the existing system

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has highlighted the following key characteristics of a strong VET system:⁴⁴

- a mix of provision that responds to the needs of the labour market;
- adequate core academic skills, particularly literacy and numeracy;
- promotion of inclusivity;
- provision of clear progression routes (i.e. higher-level vocational qualifications, and avenues of progression from initial vocational programmes to higher-level programmes – both vocational and academic);
- a systematic integration of work-based learning;
- a manageable number of qualifications, developed with key labour market players;
- effective and independent careers advice;
- a teaching workforce that balances teaching skills with up to date industry knowledge and experience; and
- strong data.

The following sub-section compares Northern Ireland's current youth training system, against each of the above key characteristics.

PROVISION THAT RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Based on their examination of international best practice, the OECD notes that vocational provision can often be driven by student demand and the capacity of training institutions, rather than by industry and economic needs. Although there is undoubtedly penetration across a wide range of subjects across level 2 provision, the number of participants in many, including some that are deemed economically relevant, is low.

⁴⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training*, April 2014, pp. 11-12.

Following the direction set within the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy⁴⁵ and the Skills Strategy⁴⁶, priority sectors were identified for the focus of employment and skills provision. The sectors identified to rebalance the economy were business services (ICT), financial services, food and drink manufacturing (including agri-food), advanced manufacturing, and advanced engineering. The sectors identified to rebuild the economy were hospitality and catering (in support of tourism) and retail. A commitment was also given to support the new and emerging sectors of life and health sciences, and creative industries.

A comparison of these priority sectors to the current sectoral uptake by participants at level 2 highlights that there are relatively high numbers of young people within those sectors identified for rebuilding, such as hospitality and retail. However, within the sectors identified for rebalancing, whilst there are high numbers undertaking engineering apprenticeships at level 2⁴⁷, or studying ICT through mainstream further education⁴⁸, there are significantly lower numbers in other sectors, such as Business Services and Financial Services.

ADEQUATE CORE ACADEMIC SKILLS, PARTICULARLY LITERACY AND NUMERACY

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of those in employment with qualifications below level 2 is forecast to fall to 10% by 2020. Jobs will require progressively higher levels of qualifications,⁴⁹ with achievement at level 2 likely to become the minimum criterion for labour market engagement. However, in 2012/13, 21.5% of school leavers did not achieve five GCSEs at A*–C, and, approximately 38% left school without five GCSEs A*–C, including English and mathematics⁵⁰. In addition, the current VET offer, in many cases, fails to provide young people with the literacy and numeracy levels required to participate fully and often young people completing training at level 2 are required only to achieve level 1 qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

45 Northern Ireland Executive, Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity, March 2012, <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>, p. 12.

46 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>

47 Department for Employment and Learning Statistical bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014 <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

48 Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Statistical Bulletin: Professional and Technical Retention and Achievement Data in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector for 2012/13, November 2013.

49 DEL, Success through Skills – Transforming Futures, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2011, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf>, p.18.

50 DE, Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland, School Leavers 2012/13, 29 May 2014, http://www.deni.gov.uk/qualifications_and_destinations_1213.pdf

PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVITY

While all the Department's programmes strive for inclusivity, there is still some gender imbalance within the current youth training system. Recent statistics indicate that females represent 43%, 34% and 28% of participants in level 2 apprenticeships, Skills for Work Level 2 and those still in Programme-Led Apprenticeships (PLA) respectively⁵¹. Within further education, 57% of 16–18 year olds enrolled in level 2 professional and technical courses in 2012/13 were female.⁵²

Many subject areas are significantly split along gender lines, and this is particularly noticeable in some economically important areas. Within engineering, 97% of legacy PLA participants⁵³ and 99% of level 2 apprentices aged 16–18 are male⁵⁴. Other areas have high numbers of female participants, such as hairdressing, within which 94% of legacy PLA participants⁵⁵ and 92% of level 2 apprentices aged 16–18 are female⁵⁶. This may risk unequal employment outcomes for males and females on completion of training.

In terms of accessibility, all programmes are open to those with disabilities, but there is variance in the actual uptake. In 2013/14, 20.6% of legacy PLA participants had a recorded disability⁵⁷, compared to 11.9% of Skills for Work Level 2 participants, 11.6% of 16–24 year olds in mainstream further education at level 2⁵⁸, and 4.1% of level 2 apprentices⁵⁹.

CLEAR PROGRESSION ROUTES

Each level 2 youth training option interacts with the overall landscape of available education and training. Figure 2.8 illustrates the current entry routes and progression options available from entry level to level 3 and highlights the pathways available for young people aged 18+, including employment support programmes and ongoing professional and technical training.

51 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>; Statistical bulletin on Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/tfs-pla-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

52 Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), Statistical Bulletin: Professional and Technical Retention and Achievement Data in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector for 2012/13, November 2013.

53 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/tfs-pla-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

54 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

55 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/tfs-pla-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

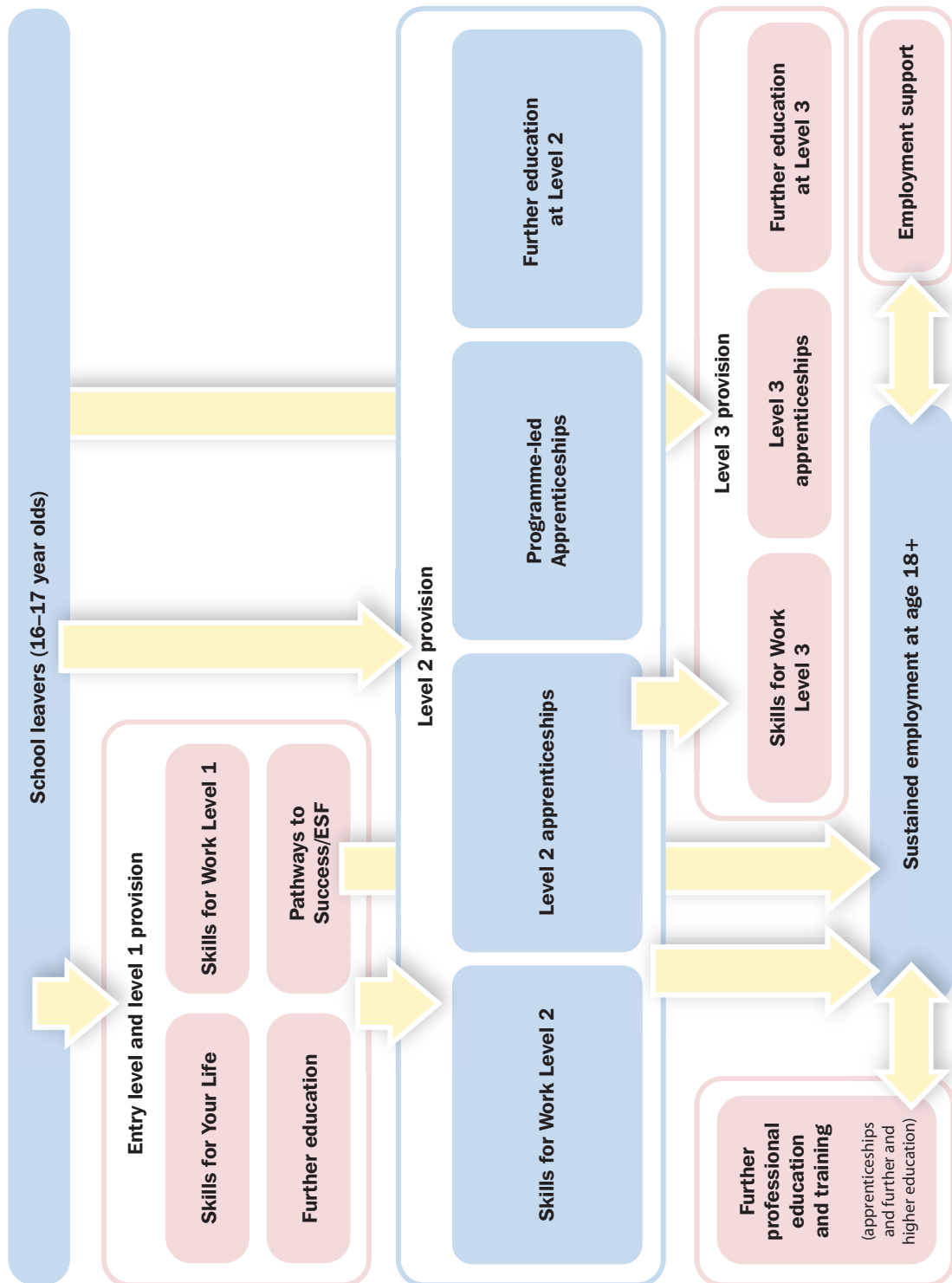
56 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

57 DEL, Statistical bulletin on Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/tfs-pla-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

58 DEL, Statistical Bulletin: Professional and Technical Retention and Achievement Data in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector for 2012/13, November 2013

59 DEL, Statistical Bulletin on ApprenticeshipsNI, Statistics from September 2007 to April 2014, 27 August 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-14.pdf>

Figure 2.8:
Current further education and training pathways for school leavers (entry level to level 3)



Research suggests that by 2020 the demand for workers with level 3 qualifications will outstrip demand for those with level 2 qualifications.⁶⁰ It is therefore vital that level 2 training provides the necessary tools to help young people progress into level 3 provision and beyond.

However, stakeholder feedback has revealed a lack of clarity regarding current progression options from level 1 into level 2 and subsequently to level 3. Stakeholders feel that this confusion arises from the multiple routes available; an insufficient awareness around the likely benefits, outcomes and progression pathways for each route; and differing entry criteria, duration and funding depending on the route followed.

This lack of clarity on progression may be a factor in the current low levels of progression and continued engagement in learning across a number of strands; across ApprenticeshipsNI enrolments decrease at level 3⁶¹, and according to the TfS and PLA leavers survey (Annex H), 76% of respondents from Skills for Work Level 2, and 65% of those from PLA have not gained any additional qualifications since completion.

SYSTEMATIC INTEGRATION OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

While work-based learning is essential to the delivery of apprenticeships and is integrated to varying extents into both Skills for Work Level 2 and mainstream further education courses, barriers remain for employers wishing to engage. Stakeholder feedback indicates that the benefits of participation are not always made clear to businesses, and that even where such awareness exists it is frequently out-weighed by concerns over bureaucracy and added costs. These issues, while not unique to Northern Ireland,⁶² are magnified by the fact that the vast majority of local companies are SMEs. Feedback from local employers suggests that these businesses do not receive the necessary level of support to facilitate their participation in youth training programmes.

60 Oxford Economics in association with FGS Consulting, Forecasting Future Skills Needs in Northern Ireland – Final Report, DEL, April 2009, http://www.delni.gov.uk/del_future_skill_needs_final_report_june_09_v4_no_links.pdf, p. xii.

61 Ibid.

62 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeships Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation (ILO), November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf, pp. 6-7

The OECD⁶³ notes that, outside of apprenticeships, work-based learning is limited in training programmes within Northern Ireland. An analysis of PLA provision in January 2012 indicated that only 61% of participants had secured a work placement.⁶⁴ In terms of further education, approximately 8,500 students were recorded as having been on work placements in 2013/14. While these figures may indicate high levels of work-based learning, there is no central detail on the number of employers involved or the duration of the work placements provided.

In addition to the above, employer participation is often reliant upon a training provider's ability to secure placements in a relevant occupational area, diminishing the role of employers in terms of informing and driving demand. There are at present no mechanisms in place to allow work placements to be centrally recorded and for employers to be able to promote placement vacancies, or for young people to be given the opportunity to consider all available options in order to make better-informed decisions.

Research and stakeholder engagement highlighted a further barrier to encouraging employers to provide work placements, being the concern that young people in training programmes are not adequately prepared for working life. UK-wide surveys have revealed the attitude and work ethic of young people to be a problem for employers seeking to fill entry-level positions⁶⁵ The Confederation of British Industry's (CBI's) 2012 Education and Skills Survey identified employability skills as the key area the majority of employers surveyed (71%) would like to see developed in 14–19 year olds,⁶⁶ and local employers taking part in the stakeholder engagement process raised employability and enterprise skills as priorities. The results of the review's employer survey support this, with 95% of respondents stating they would be encouraged to engage if participants were more work ready.

63 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf>

64 No similar exercise for Skills for Work level 2 has been conducted.

65 CBI/Harvey Nash, Facing the Future, CBI/Harvey Nash Employment Trends Survey 2012, July 2012, http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1676818/cbi_harvey_nash_ets_july_2012.pdf, p. 22; UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), UK Commission's Employer Skills Survey 2011: UK Results, July 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303374/ukces-employer-skills-survey-11.pdf

66 CBI/Pearson, Learning to grow: what employers need from education and skills, Education and Skills Survey 2012, June 2012, http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf

A MANAGEABLE NUMBER OF QUALIFICATIONS, DEVELOPED WITH KEY LABOUR MARKET PLAYERS

A key challenge for employers, identified through research and stakeholder engagement, is the relevance of vocational qualifications. Employers taking part in the review of youth training's stakeholder forums expressed concerns about the rigour and relevancy of the current range of vocational qualifications at level 2, as well as the considerable number that are currently available. The qualifications landscape at level 2 is undoubtedly complicated, and in 2012/13 there were 928 level 2 vocational qualifications available in Northern Ireland, from no fewer than 100 awarding bodies.

The OECD states that qualifications should be developed with labour market players, meaning that curricula, programmes and assessments are organised to best meet the needs of industry in terms of content and modes of study. However, most of the current level 2 apprenticeship frameworks were developed at a national level, and the vast majority of vocational and technical qualifications at level 2 were not specifically designed in conjunction with employers.

Consistent with this evidence, the review's employer survey found that 84% of respondents state more relevant training would encourage their engagement, with 68% highlighting the importance of more relevant qualifications. In fact, more relevant training and/or qualifications was cited as being one of the three most important factors that would influence employers to get involved. Similarly, 80% of respondents to the CBI's 2013 Education and Skills Survey identified as a key priority vocational qualifications being based around employers' needs and industry standards. A lack of understanding of the content and value of vocational qualifications or a lack of ability to influence and inform requirements at this level, may indeed limit the willingness of employers to engage with VET.

EFFECTIVE AND INDEPENDENT CAREERS ADVICE

Helping young people navigate the range of options open to them is a key issue, and most students in schools already receive a one-to-one impartial careers interview to help them make an informed decision about their future. In terms of the current youth training options at level 2, entry criteria and guidelines encourage programmes to be matched to the needs and capabilities of the young person, however, there is no formal, independent mechanism whereby an assessment is made of an individual's suitability for an apprenticeship, training programme or further education course. This may potentially result in them enrolling in provision that does not match their ability or career aspirations.

The Department's Careers Service has recently placed a greater emphasis on the use of labour market data in the guidance process, using industry fact sheets to provide relevant information on job prospects, skills and entry requirements. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to educate young people and their parents/guardians about the risks and rewards associated with various career paths. Indeed, the OECD has identified high-quality advice and guidance, informed by knowledge of the local labour market, as a key element of a well-functioning VET system.⁶⁷ The OECD advises that this guidance and support should sit independently of training providers.

A TEACHING WORKFORCE THAT BALANCES TEACHING SKILLS WITH UP-TO-DATE INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

A further challenge to be addressed is the need to ensure high-quality standards of teaching in the delivery of VET provision. Best practice involves regular exchanges between teaching staff and industry to ensure skills are kept up to date, and the Department has worked very hard over the last few years to ensure lecturers and tutors advance their levels of vocational expertise and pedagogical skills.⁶⁸ However, feedback from some employers and young people has raised concerns regarding the currency of a minority of tutors' vocational skills, as well as the equipment used for the delivery of training.

⁶⁷ OECD, Learning for Jobs: career development, Pointers for Policy Development, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/48078260.pdf> , p.1

⁶⁸ Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf> p.47

STRONG DATA

The Department publishes detailed statistics on apprenticeships, TfS, PLA and further education, covering measurements such as performance, enrolments, deprivation and equality categories. However, currently there is no comprehensive collection of destination data for level 2 vocational programmes.

While the Department has recently implemented several measures to address this data gap it is clear that without such data, it is not possible to measure how many learners progress within, and beyond provision.

If collected, this kind of data may provide a further mechanism for assessing the extent to which post-16 provision produces employable learners capable of progressing, and offer an additional check regarding the labour market relevance of all vocational provision.

CONCLUSION

The current youth training system is already helping young people to learn important transferable skills, but in building a new system various key challenges must be addressed to ensure the best possible outcomes for all concerned: the young people themselves, employers, and the wider economy and society in general.

The Future for Youth Training in Northern Ireland

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3

3

THE FUTURE FOR YOUTH TRAINING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Our vision

Our aspiration is to build a system of youth training that will be recognised both nationally and internationally by employers, further and higher education providers, young people and parents/guardians for its quality, flexibility and transferability.

The system will be centred on the career aspirations and needs of young people, and will be a conduit to support their ongoing career development. Young people in training will be sought after by prospective employers, and the system will be respected by young people and parents/guardians as an alternative progression route to the traditional academic pathway.

By linking a new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award to the needs of employers and the wider economy, the youth training system will better match demand and supply, and provide a seamless progression route for young people to a breadth of professional and technical occupations.

This chapter highlights the key proposals for a youth training system that will deliver on this vision, under four key themes:

THEME 1: CORE COMPONENTS FOR THE YOUTH TRAINING SYSTEM

This theme outlines the core components that will underpin the new youth training system, highlighting how young people can access a new baccalaureate-style curriculum that delivers a breadth of skills and knowledge at level 2 and integrates structured work-based learning.

THEME 2: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

This theme highlights support measures to help young people successfully complete their training and progress into employment or professional and technical training at a higher level.

THEME 3: DELIVERY AND EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES

This theme sets out proposals for delivering the new youth training system, including new structures to allow employers to inform curriculum content for their sector.

THEME 4: ENSURING QUALITY

This theme sets out a range of measures designed to ensure that the highest standards of quality for training are maintained.

Theme 1:

CORE COMPONENTS FOR THE YOUTH TRAINING SYSTEM

This theme outlines the core components that will underpin the new youth training system, highlighting how young people can access a new baccalaureate-style curriculum that delivers a breadth of skills and knowledge at level 2 and integrates structured work-based learning.

A new youth training system

The previous chapter highlighted the key benefits of Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems for both young people and employers, and the importance of achievement at level 2 (GCSE level) for young people in Northern Ireland for helping them to access sustainable employment and further education and training options at higher levels.

The chapter also outlined how current level 2 provision for young people compares against international best practice, and how many young people in Northern Ireland leave school and enter the labour market without achieving a full level 2 (five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics).

Underachievement in school and integration with the labour market can be addressed through an effective VET system. In countries with well-developed VET systems such as Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, youth unemployment has been kept consistently low at around or below 10% since 2005,⁶⁹ in spite of an overall growth in youth unemployment across the EU.⁷⁰

69 House of Lords, European Union Committee, Youth unemployment in the EU: a scarred generation?, April 2014, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/ldeduc/164/164.pdf>, p. 16.

70 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p.1.

Available literature on VET systems across the EU identify apprenticeships as a key element of an effective VET system, that can meet the twin goals of improving an individual’s employability and increasing economic competitiveness.⁷¹ The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, “Securing our Success”, includes a commitment that, going forward, apprenticeships will commence at level 3 (equivalent to A level) to level 8 (equivalent to Doctorate).⁷²

For those young people in work who previously would have completed an apprenticeship at level 2, an alternative professional and technical training route is required. This professional and technical training route for young people in employment can assist both those already in employment and those starting a new job role to achieve at level 2 and progress into higher level options, including apprenticeships. Equally, for those not currently in employment, high quality training at level 2 can assist in their transition into work or their progression into further study.

Case study:

The MBO system in the Netherlands

The Dutch *middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*, or MBO system⁷³ was recommended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the key case study of effective VET at upper-secondary level, as it maintains high completion rates of 93%⁷⁴ and trains young people through either school-based training and a structured work placement (BOL) or work-based training for young people in employment (BBL). While the majority of MBO students (around 80%) move into the college-based MBO strand, due to the shared curriculum across both routes, young people can switch pathways from BOL to BBL if they gain an employment contract and continue with their studies.

71 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p. 4.

72 Further information on QCF levels is presented in Annex A.

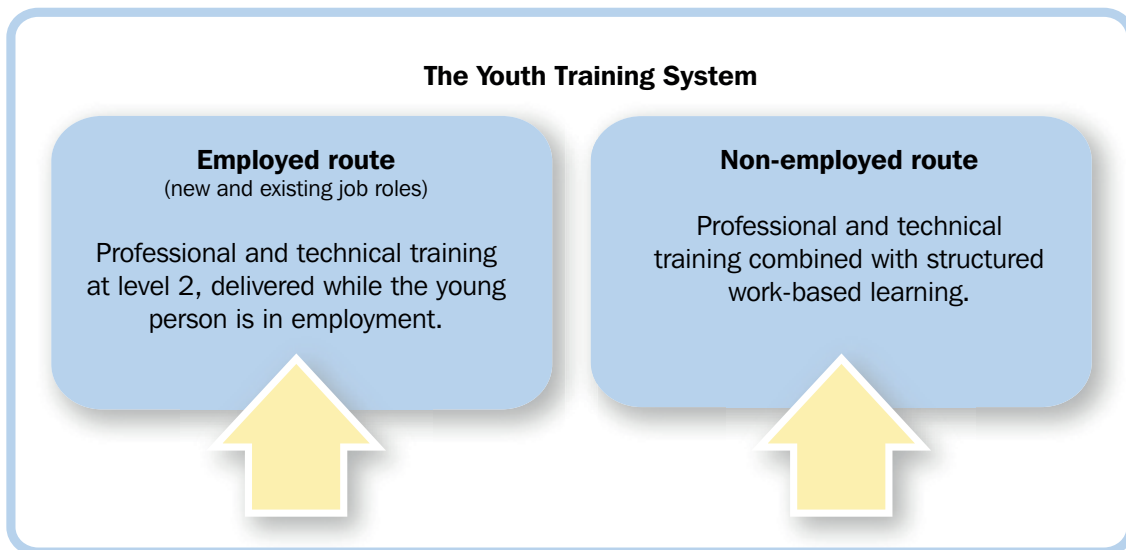
73 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf , p. 28.

74 Casey, P., Vocational Education and Training System in the Netherlands, UKCES, August 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303481/briefing-paper-vocational-education-system-netherlands.pdf , p. 14.

As the evidence highlights, a significant cohort of 16–24 year olds leave statutory education provision without what is deemed a pre-requisite for entry to the labour market, namely five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics.

To address this challenge, a new system is proposed which will offer all young people aged 16–24 the opportunity to complete a new level 2 bacculaureate-style award. This will be available for those young people entering the labour market for the first time, those already in employment and those who have not yet secured employment, including those who are as yet undecided in respect of their preferred occupational area. As highlighted in the previous chapter, figures from the labour force survey estimate that 68,509 young people aged 16–24 have either no qualifications or have their highest level of qualification at level 1.⁷⁵ Approximately 20,000 of this cohort are in employment, and with the remainder either currently unemployed or economically inactive. Figure 3.1 illustrates the two routes through which all young people can access the new youth training system: an employed route and a non-employed route.

Figure 3.1:
Accessing the new youth training system



75 DFP, Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, April–June 2014, 27 August 2014, http://www.detini.gov.uk/lfs_quarterly_supplement_-_april_-_june_2014.pdf?rev=0

EMPLOYED ROUTE

The employed route will be open to those new to the labour market, and unlike previous models, this proposed system will provide young people already in the labour market with an opportunity to gain a level 2 qualification, affording opportunities to progress further in their lifelong employment and learning journey and, in so doing, align with the wider needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

NON-EMPLOYED ROUTE

The non-employed route will be open to those young people who have not yet secured employment, including those who are as yet undecided about their preferred occupational route.

Through these two routes young people in training will benefit both from professional and technical training at level 2, and structured work-based learning, regardless of their employment status.

Accessing the new system

A further step in defining the system is to specify the target group for youth training. In terms of the age range of participants on current training provision at level 2, the focus of Training for Success (TfS) is on 16 and 17-year-old school leavers, with extended eligibility for certain individuals up to age 24. The current ApprenticeshipsNI programme's primary focus is on 16–24 year olds, with funding restricted for those aged 25 and over.⁷⁶

While unemployed young people in the school leaver age bracket (16 and 17 year olds) face different challenges from unemployed young people aged 18–24,⁷⁷ a primary focus on skills development offered by professional and technical training can benefit both groups. As such, making youth training accessible to all young people aged 16–24 can help to ensure that the system is more accessible and easier to navigate for young people.

76 DEL, ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2/Level 3 – Operational Guidelines 2013, August 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311520/apprenticeshipsni-level-2-3-operational-guidelines-2013.pdf , p. 84.

77 Gorlich D. et al., Kiel Policy Brief: Youth Unemployment in Europe and the World: Causes, Consequences and Solutions, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, January 2013, http://www.ifw-kiel.de/wirtschaftspolitik/politikberatung/kiel-policy-brief/kpb-2013/KPB_59.pdf , p. 2.

In widening access to training from the 16 and 17-year-old target group for TfS to all 16–24 year olds requiring training at level 2, consideration will be given to flexibilities to allow young people to reach a certain milestone and suspend their training temporarily. Young people in this age group can face a range of issues that can cause them to leave training before completing their course of study, ranging from personal and family problems to mental health issues. The youth training system must also take account of the conditionality of benefits available to unemployed young people aged 18–24. Through tracking, via the Unique Learner Number (ULN) and other measures, these young people will be able to access training at a later point and complete their programme of study.

PROPOSAL 1

Youth training will be available to all young people aged 16–24 who require training at level 2. It will be accessible to those starting a new job, those in existing roles, and those not yet in employment.

A new curriculum

By delivering training at level 2 to young people through both an employed and non-employed route, the future youth training system has a critical role to play in the Northern Ireland skills landscape. A robust and relevant professional and technical curriculum at level 2 is required to ensure transitions from the youth training system into sustained employment, and progression into professional and technical training at higher levels.

The breadth and depth of learning delivered at level 2 is key to a robust curriculum. Research carried out by Oxford Economics in 2009 to inform the Department for Employment and Learning’s Skills Strategy, ‘Success through Skills – Transforming Futures’, projected that only one in six jobs will be for people with low qualifications (Level 1 and below) going forward, compared to one in five in previous years.⁷⁸ The proportion of total employed individuals in Northern Ireland with low skills (below level 2) is set to fall from a level of 29% in 2005 to 16% (baseline) or 12% (aspirational) by 2020.⁷⁹ The Skills Strategy also adopted five GCSEs at A*–C or equivalent as a common measure of achievement at level 2, and recognised it as the minimum platform of skills required for employment.⁸⁰

78 Oxford Economics in Association with FGS Consulting, Forecasting Future Skills Needs in Northern Ireland – Final Report, Department for Employment and Learning, April 2009, http://www.delni.gov.uk/del_future_skill_needs_final_report_june_09_v4_no_links.pdf, p. xi.

79 Ibid, p. xii.

80 DEL, Success through Skills – Transforming Futures, The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, 2011, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf>, p. 28.

Literacy and numeracy

Achievement at level 2 in literacy and numeracy is also vital. International comparisons of literacy and numeracy levels such as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey⁸¹ highlight challenges for Northern Ireland going forward. With 38% of young people in Northern Ireland leaving school without at least five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics, there is a need for all professional and technical training in Northern Ireland to contribute to improving literacy and numeracy as well as teaching job-specific skills.⁸² This is in line with the recommendations of the OECD’s Learning for Jobs review of upper-secondary VET,⁸³ which highlighted this combined approach as important to preventing limited job prospects following professional and technical training.

Currently, however, most apprenticeship frameworks for the level 2 strands of ApprenticeshipsNI and TfS require achievement of Essential Skills qualifications at level 1,⁸⁴ with only certain frameworks requiring achievement at level 2 in literacy and numeracy. For individuals with basic skills needs below level 2, the OECD recommends thorough initial assessment to identify and address weaknesses at the outset of training.⁸⁵ Some countries with highly developed VET systems have shifted the focus of basic training similar to entry level and level 1 provision in Northern Ireland towards progressing more young people to an intermediate level, rather than into the labour market.⁸⁶

81 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

82 DE, Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2012/2013, 29 May 2014, http://www.deni.gov.uk/qualifications_and_destinations_1213.pdf

83 OECD, OECD reviews of vocational education and training – Learning for Jobs, Pointers for Policy Development, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf>, pp. 5 and 8.

84 Ibid., p. 21.

85 Ibid., p. 8.

86 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, November 2013, http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/a-skills-beyond-school-review-of-the-netherlands_9789264221840-en, p. 46.

Case study:**Reform of the upper-secondary system in the Netherlands**

MBO training at upper-secondary level in the Netherlands has four levels of qualifications (MBO1 to MBO4). Young people at lower MBO levels can immediately proceed to the next level, with half of all MBO1 and MBO2 graduates entering courses at a higher level, and around a third of MBO3 graduates moving into MBO4. In addition, the MBO4 qualification permits access to professional and technical training at post-secondary level (HBO), with around half of MBO4 graduates continuing to this level. Clear progression pathways and flexible approaches have contributed to the value placed on professional and technical training as a credible alternative route in the Netherlands, with over half of the Dutch labour force holding a professional and technical qualification in 2012.⁸⁷ To build on the success in instilling professional and technical learning through this approach, the Dutch government is planning to introduce national exams for literacy and numeracy for all MBO students at level 2 and above.⁸⁸ This follows established practices in other countries, such as Denmark, where the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is integrated into training for each occupational area.⁸⁹

In the United Kingdom the Wolf Review of professional and technical education and training also highlighted the importance of English and mathematics qualifications at level 2. In terms of the qualifications available in England at this level, the review highlighted GCSEs as opposed to Key Skills qualifications as being fundamental to young people's education and employment prospects,⁹⁰ criticising some professional and technical training and funding options for not providing the facility for these qualifications to be delivered. Experts responding to the review, such as Professor Lorna Unwin, went as far to say that in terms of the signalling and sifting function played by qualifications, "there is only one real level 2. [GCSE] Mathematics and English A*–C."⁹¹

87 Ibid., pp. 9, 10, 11, 42, 73 and 75.

88 Ibid., p. 9.

89 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf, p. 28.

90 Wolf, A., Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report, Department for Education (DfE), March 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf, p. 8 and 15.

91 Ibid., p. 32.

This viewpoint reflects research evidence from think-tanks such as the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which identify good GCSEs (grade C and above) in English and mathematics as the minimum expectations of most employers and the foundation for further learning at a higher level.⁹² In England, the response has been to include mandatory English and mathematics qualifications (either GCSEs or functional skills) alongside professional and technical qualifications in study programmes for 16–19 year olds. Only those young people who have already achieved at least a GCSE C grade in these subjects are excluded from this requirement.

In Northern Ireland, both employers and young people have highlighted that many occupational areas will require GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. The requirements of the level 3 progression routes available must also be taken into account. Most further education courses at level 3 require the equivalent of at least 4 GCSEs at grade C or above, or qualifications such as the level 2 Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) diploma, and in many cases require GCSE English and mathematics.⁹³ The Department is currently reviewing its Essential Skills provision, in order to ensure that the literacy and numeracy qualifications delivered at level 2 develop the key functional skills required by young people and are more responsive to the needs of employers. Early findings suggest that academic GCSE English and mathematics qualifications may formulate the preferred literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2 for young people in the future. Employers will play a key role in informing requirements for specific occupations.

92 Lawton K., *The Condition of Britain – Growing up and Becoming an Adult*, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), November 2013, <http://www.ippr.org/publications/condition-of-britain-briefing-2-growing-up-and-becoming-an-adult> , p. 10.

93 *Ibid.*; Belfast Metropolitan College, *Full-time Courses 2014/15, 2014*, <http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/Docs/Courses/fullTimeProspectusweb.pdf> ;South Eastern Regional College, *Full-time Courses 2014-2015*, <http://www.serc.ac.uk/fulltime/Pages/Further-Education.aspx> , p 114.

In line with these findings, we propose that the curriculum should combine professional and technical knowledge and skills with literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2 to deliver a baccalaureate-style award that ensures that key skills are developed by all participants, and that all of those in youth training have a solid foundation of knowledge and skills that enables progression into higher-level training through further education and apprenticeships. The professional and technical award delivered by the youth training system should be recognised for its breadth, depth, quality and transferability by employers and further and higher education providers both in Northern Ireland and internationally.

In clarifying the progression pathways and providing a clear link between youth training and the higher-level professional and technical training pathways available through mainstream further education and apprenticeships, the new system will provide a clear and logical progression route for young people within the wider skills landscape.

PROPOSAL 2

The youth training system will provide a new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2, equating to a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics.

Contextualising learning and developing wider skills: the role of work-based learning

Recent European Commission (EC) attempts to establish best practice in terms of VET focus on the key role of work-based learning. Where a participant is not training while employed, work placements can be effective when combined with wider study curricula, robustly monitored⁹⁴ and supported by written agreement clearly setting out each party's roles and responsibilities.⁹⁵ Combining training with real working environments in a structured manner can help to reduce risks of both poor training content and job substitution.⁹⁶

The OECD recommends all professional education and training programmes should involve work-based learning as a mandatory condition of receiving funding, and that they should be systematic, quality assured and credit-bearing.⁹⁷ Mandatory work-based learning is associated with improving the linkages between educational institutions and employers, for example, in Spain where the introduction of a compulsory 10–20 week workplace training module improved employer engagement and school-to-work transitions.⁹⁸ Integrated work-based learning is widely associated with improved skills in VET teaching.⁹⁹ Where an optional extra, the risk is that a 'lukewarm' approach to VET exists, meaning training is less connected to the needs of the labour market, and placements are difficult to source or unsuited to the needs of the employer or participant.¹⁰⁰ In a recent 'Skills Beyond School' commentary, the OECD identified such a limited integration as a key challenge in Northern Ireland.¹⁰¹ Focus groups with young people undertaken as part of the review, highlighted the key role that a good experience with a host employer can play in boosting self-esteem and confidence. A negative experience, however, may lead to disengagement.

94 Ibid., p. 4.

95 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, pp. 3 and 6. (download required)

96 Ibid., p. 87 (download required)

97 OECD, Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, April 2014, p. 7.

98 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p. 45.

99 Ibid., p. 45.

100 Ibid., p. 44.

101 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf>, p. 27.

Figure 3.2 builds on the benefits of VET identified in the previous chapter by highlighting the specific value of work-based learning. It highlights that some benefits of workplace learning cannot be developed through short taster periods and require a structured approach. Equally, though the EC recognises simulation of workplace environments can play a role in preparing young people for work, some of the lasting benefits of sustained work-based learning require immersion in a real working environment.¹⁰²

¹⁰² EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , pp. 6 and 9.

Figure 3.2:
Benefits of work-based learning (EC)¹⁰³

Benefits of work-based learning (Benefits in italics require substantial duration and a structured approach)	
Learner	<i>Development of craftsmanship and deep professional expertise</i> Builds skills and competences required to operate in a workplace, including transversal ones, such as communication, team work and problem solving More informed careers choices Develops career management skills Improved self-confidence and motivation First working experience which facilitates entry to the labour market
Employer	Positive impact on supply of qualified labour <i>Addresses skills gaps through tailor-made training</i> Positive effect on recruitment and retention <i>Improved productivity and performance</i> Positive effects on employed staff development
VET provider	Improved attractiveness of VET programmes Better quality of VET programmes and of learning outcomes Enhancement of relevance and responsiveness of VET Positive effect on teaching staff competences and development Better cooperation between VET schools and businesses
Society	Skilled labour force which responds better to labour market needs <i>Positive contribution to youth employment</i> Cost-sharing of VET between the state and employers <i>Combined governance of VET</i> Contribution to innovation and creativity Has the potential to strengthen social inclusion and improve equal opportunities

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 8.

Developing employability and entrepreneurial skills

In addition to making the core professional and technical curriculum more relevant and applicable, work-based learning can help cater for the holistic needs of the young person by developing other skills needed for the working world. Research¹⁰⁴ and employer surveys¹⁰⁵ related to training highlight the importance of developing employability skills such as time management, communication, confidence, literacy and numeracy as a key element of any training offer for young people and a key contributing factor to successful employment outcomes.¹⁰⁶ While ‘employability’ often means different things to different stakeholders, an employability skills project carried out by the Department defined employability skills as ‘communication and literacy, team working, business and customer awareness, ICT, problem solving, numeracy, self-management, entrepreneurship/enterprise and leadership, underpinned by a positive attitude.’¹⁰⁷ This definition has commonalities with a hierarchy of employability skills developed by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), summarised in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3:
A hierarchy of employability skills (UKCES, 2010)¹⁰⁸

Positive approach					
Using numbers effectively		Using language effectively		Using IT effectively	
Self-management	Thinking and solving problems	Working together and communicating		Understanding the business	

104 Wilson, T., BIS Research Paper Number 101, Youth Unemployment: Review of Training for Young People with Low Qualifications, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, February 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70226/bis-13-608-youth-unemployment-review-of-training-for-young-people-with-low-qualifications.pdf, p. 9.

105 House of Lords, European Union Committee, Youth unemployment in the EU - a scarred generation, April 2014, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201314/ldselect/lducom/164/164.pdf>

106 Copps J. and Plimmer D. , Inspiring Impact - the Journey to Employment (JET) Framework, May 2013, <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/>

107 DEL, Employability Skills Project, September 2012, pp. 8-9.

108 Ibid., p. 5.

This review's Expert Panel, and employers contributing to the review, highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial skills. A framework-style approach has been used to define entrepreneurial skills by Gazelle, highlighted in Figure 3.4, with attributes grouped under four broad themes, again including key functional skills. While research has highlighted the importance of social and emotional capabilities, such as agency, resilience and communication to young people achieving positive outcomes,¹⁰⁹ some commentators have highlighted that a focus on soft skills can be misleading if skills development in these areas is not matched with a high level of attainment in key functional skills.¹¹⁰ Where frameworks for measuring attainment of soft skills have been developed, such as in measures of locus of control or self-efficacy (measures of agency and capability respectively),¹¹¹ the link between these capabilities and wider attainment or earnings is often dependent on other areas of competence being developed.^{112 113}

109 McNeill B. et al., A Framework of Outcomes for Young People, The Young Foundation, July 2012, <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people-July-2012.pdf> , p. 17.

110 Oates, T., Towards a New VET: Effective Vocational Education and Training, Cambridge Assessment, January 2013, <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf> , p. 10.

111 McNeill B. et al., A Framework of Outcomes for Young People, The Young Foundation, July 2012, <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Framework-of-outcomes-for-young-people-July-2012.pdf> , p. 30.

112 Ibid.

113 Copps J. and Plimmer D., Inspiring Impact - the Journey to Employment (JET) Framework, May 2013, <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/> , pp. 10 and 13.

Figure 3.4:
A framework for entrepreneurial skills (Gazelle, 2013)¹¹⁴

Self-efficacy	Social skills	Functional skills	Enterprise skills
Personal qualities needed for success in new worlds of work	Capabilities to find, make and manage networks and collaborations	Knowledge and abilities in particular business or technical areas	Understanding and aptitudes for driving successful enterprises
Focus and drive	Team-working	Technical competence	Commercial nous
Resilience	Leadership	Technical knowledge	Creativity
Adaptability	Networking	Core skills (3Rs)	Problem-solving
Reliability	Empathy	Academic abilities	Initiative
Reflectiveness	Communication	E-confidence	Risk-taking

114 Gazelle Colleges, Future Possible: Realising the vision for entrepreneurial college, Gazelle Global, May 2013, <http://www.gazellecolleges.com/media/d0d38e188dfd77263e537d18970e643df25c89ca/Gazelle-Future-Possible-May%25202013.pdf&rct=j&frm=1&q=&esrc=s&sa=U&ei=GBvNU-63LceY1AW5q4HIDg&ved=0CBkQFjAA&usg=AFQjCNFJ6qBnhuyjST8jBh7NknmmEwauHg> , p. 16.

In addition to highlighting evidence of a deficit in school leavers' employability skills as an issue, UKCES also highlighted the most effective models of how they can be developed for this age group. Periods of work experience both at school and in training are a proven method of making young people better equipped for the world of work,¹¹⁵ but more widely, there is limited information on the progress and success of employability policy initiatives.¹¹⁶ A study of employability programmes aimed at university leavers compared work experience with both employer engagement in the course design and delivery, and the direct teaching, learning and assessment of employability skills. It found no evidence that the teaching of employability skills had a significant impact on employment outcomes.¹¹⁷ As such, UKCES recommended a focus on experiential action learning in the workplace, to encourage young people to develop and display soft skills in real environments and situations.¹¹⁸

Workplace immersion can also be used to help those young people, particularly those aged 16–17, who do not have a career direction upon leaving school. Exposure to different working environments through short work-tasters can help ensure they are fully prepared for the requirements of their chosen occupational area before committing to a particular course of study. Project-based approaches have been found to be particularly effective for giving young people a clear task to complete while in the workplace and, when combined with shorter work-tasters, to provide a young person with a clear idea of the nature of work in a given sector.

115 Belt, V. et al., *Employability Skills: A Research and Policy Briefing*, UKCES, March 2010, http://aces.shu.ac.uk/employability/resources/Employability_Skills_Policy_Briefing.pdf, p. 39.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

118 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Case study:**The 48-hour initiative**

At the Lillebælt Academy in Denmark, teachers noticed that more extensive work placements (three months or more) tended to focus on well-defined activities that were relatively narrow in scope. The 48-hour initiative was designed to expose students to new forms of work. Young people were given a practical assignment relating to a problem the company was facing, with the level of problem matched to the skill level of the participating students. Repetition of tasks in these tasters was avoided by the college negotiating a different 48-hour 'event' with each employer, based on their specific needs at that time.¹¹⁹

These innovative and immersive approaches can also develop entrepreneurial attitudes by placing the young person in a context where they have to approach and solve problems from the employer's perspective.

PROPOSAL 3

Structured work-based learning, whether through employment or a work placement, will be a mandatory element of the youth training system. It will be the primary method for developing skills, including employability, and will offer short, project-based work tasters for those not yet in employment.

Additional elements

In addition to the core curriculum of professional and technical training, literacy and numeracy qualifications and structured work-based learning, youth training should allow for flexibility based on the young person's interests and the needs of employers. Currently, all participants of TfS must undertake at least one targeted qualification in essential skills, personal and social development, employability, or professional and technical skills.

¹¹⁹ EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p.19.

Some further education courses available at level 3 require qualifications in subjects such as GCSE science as part of their entry criteria.¹²⁰ In addition to the personal development and employability qualifications currently available to training participants, youth training should provide the opportunity for young people to learn whatever skills or qualifications they need to progress to level 3 options in their chosen occupational area.

PROPOSAL 4

Youth training will provide opportunities to study additional qualifications that are relevant to the interests of the individual young person and to the requirements of employers.

Entry criteria and duration

Given the breadth of learning to be delivered at level 2 through the new baccalaureate-style award, and the availability of additional qualifications for some young people in training, it is important that young people have a basic foundation of skills and knowledge at entry level and level 1 before they begin training. Under the current model for training at level 2, training providers must register participants on the Skills for Work Level 2 strand of TfS if they have achieved a full level 1 qualification and have qualifications in literacy and numeracy that demonstrate their capability to complete the qualifications specified on their framework.¹²¹ Enrolment on an apprenticeship at level 2 is less specified, as in cases where the Sector Skills Council has not set specific entry requirements or examinations, the decision is left to the training provider and employer to agree whether the participant has the capability to complete all the elements of the apprenticeship framework.¹²²

120 Ibid.; Belfast Metropolitan College, Full-time Courses 2014/15, 2014, <http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/Docs/Courses/fullTimeProspectusweb.pdf>; South Eastern Regional College, Full-time Courses 2014-2015, <http://www.serc.ac.uk/fulltime/Pages/Further-Education.aspx>, p 114.

121 DEL, Training for Success 2013 – Operational Guidelines for Suppliers, July 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/tfs-publications.htm>, pp. 36 and 37.

122 DEL, ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2/Level 3 – Operational Guidelines 2013, DEL, August 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311520/apprenticeshipsni-level-2-3-operational-guidelines-2013.pdf, p. 13.

There is significant variation in entry criteria for the mainstream further education, the third route through which young people can access professional and technical learning at level 2. Some colleges use a points system for entry, requiring three points for most level 2 courses, where an Essential Skills level 2 or GCSE grade C equates to three points, a grade D equates to two points, and grades E–G equate to one point.¹²³ Other colleges set entry criteria broadly equivalent to the full level 1, but there are courses where there are no formal entry requirements beyond an aptitude test and/or an interview.¹²⁴

Best practice on ensuring progression from entry level and level 1 focuses on tailored approaches to engage and progress individuals with diverse backgrounds and learning needs. In respect of the Dutch MBO system highlighted previously, while only a relatively small proportion of upper-secondary VET students (4%, or 19,000 in 2012) participate in the lowest strand (MBO1), there are concerns around the labour market outcomes of individuals in this strand, as they tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The OECD has recommended a reorientation of this route to address basic skills needs, socialise participants for the world of work and prioritise progression into higher-level professional and technical study rather than employment.¹²⁵ Denmark has implemented a range of initiatives along similar lines, including foundation courses at production schools (*produktionsskole*) that are aimed at young people who are unsure of their professional and technical choices, have learning disabilities or social and personal problems. These schools give priority to learning through experience and practical work over formal examinations. While employment outcomes for these schools are low (with 12% gaining employment in 2009), there is evidence of higher progression rates into further training (37%).¹²⁶

Taking these findings into account, in order to ensure the young person is ready to start training, entry criteria will be set for prior achievement through school or wider Department provision. Current guidance for TfS participants directs young people, to begin training at level 2 once they have attained a minimum of a full level 1 (four GCSEs at grades D–G, including English and mathematics at grades D–F).

123 Belfast Metropolitan College, Full-time Courses 2014/15, 2014, <http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk/Docs/Courses/fullTimeProspectusweb.pdf>, p.27.

124 Ibid.; South West Regional College, Full-time Courses, 2014-2015, http://www.swc.ac.uk/courses.aspx?f_ModeOfAttendance_s=Full-time ;North West Regional College, Full-time Courses 2014-2015, 2014 http://www.nwrc.ac.uk/our_college/doc/ft1415.pdf

125 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, November 2013, http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/a-skills-beyond-school-review-of-the-netherlands_9789264221840-en, p. 45.

126 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf

Currently, 94.8% of school leavers leave school with five GCSEs A*–G, and 88.6% had five GCSEs with these grades including English and mathematics. Only 1.6% of school leavers leave school with no qualifications, however, there are sub-regional variations in educational achievement across Northern Ireland.¹²⁷ The Department will continue to support those who need qualifications at level 1, or those with wider barriers to engagement, to develop their skills before progressing into the youth training system. This will include a range of targeted interventions, including further education courses at level 1 and specialised projects funded through the European Social Fund (ESF).

PROPOSAL 5

Young people will be supported to attain a minimum of a full level 1 (four GCSEs at grades D–G, including English and mathematics at grades D–F) before commencing youth training.

In terms of the duration of training, currently most young people enrolled in TfS receive an entitlement of 104 weeks of training (encompassing learning achieved at all strands)¹²⁸ A two-year duration for 16 and 17-year-old school leavers entering training falls in line with the raising of the participation age in UK to 18¹²⁹, which is the norm across countries who are members of the OECD.¹³⁰ This duration also falls in line with comparable international examples, such as upper-secondary level 2 professional and technical provision in the Netherlands,¹³¹ however there is variation across countries, such as in Denmark, where training is structured around a college-based course that takes on average 20 weeks, leading on to an apprenticeship programme of around three years in duration.¹³²

127 DE, Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers 2012/2013, 29 May 2014, http://www.deni.gov.uk/qualifications_and_destinations_1213.pdf

128 DEL, Training for Success 2013 – Operational Guidelines for Suppliers, July 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/tfs-publications.htm>, p. 128.

129 Oates, T., Towards a New VET: Effective Vocational Education and Training, Cambridge Assessment, January 2013, <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf>, p.7.

130 Wolf, A., Review of Vocational Education – The Wolf Report, DfE, March 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf p. 24

131 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, October 2013, p. 10.

132 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf, pp.16 and 23.

There is evidence that limiting the duration of training can prevent “lock in” by participants,¹³³ both in terms of the length of the programme, and the length of a work placement, protecting placements against potential abuse through job substitution or displacement. Stakeholders responding to the review’s call for submissions highlighted that the programme duration should be proportionate to the components delivered and allow for flexibility in delivery. For example, a young person working towards a professional and technical qualification and qualifications in literacy and numeracy as part of their baccalaureate-style award should be allocated more time to complete their training than a young person working towards only the professional and technical element of the curriculum.

Taking this evidence into account, youth training will be designed to take a maximum of two years to complete for young people working towards all elements of their baccalaureate-style award. The duration of training will be flexible to take account of those who are working towards only selected elements of the curriculum (e.g. the professional and technical elements) and those who may require additional support to complete their training, such as those with a disability.

PROPOSAL 6

Youth training will be designed to take a maximum of two years to complete.

The following table summarises the proposals of Theme 1:

133 Wilson, T., BIS Research Paper Number 101, Youth Unemployment: Review of training for young people with Low Qualifications, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, February 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70226/bis-13-608-youth-unemployment-review-of-training-for-young-people-with-low-qualifications.pdf, p. 10.

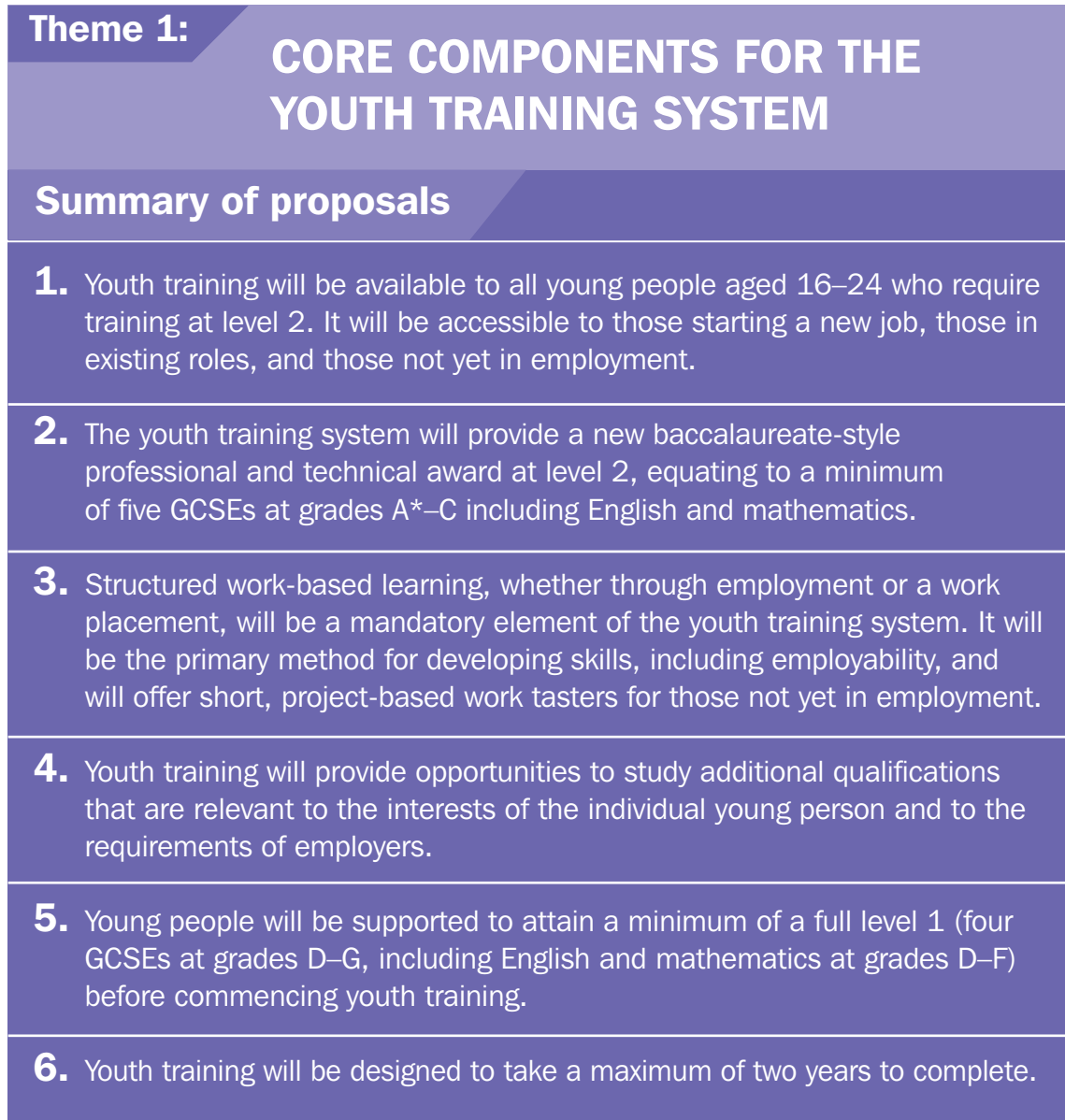
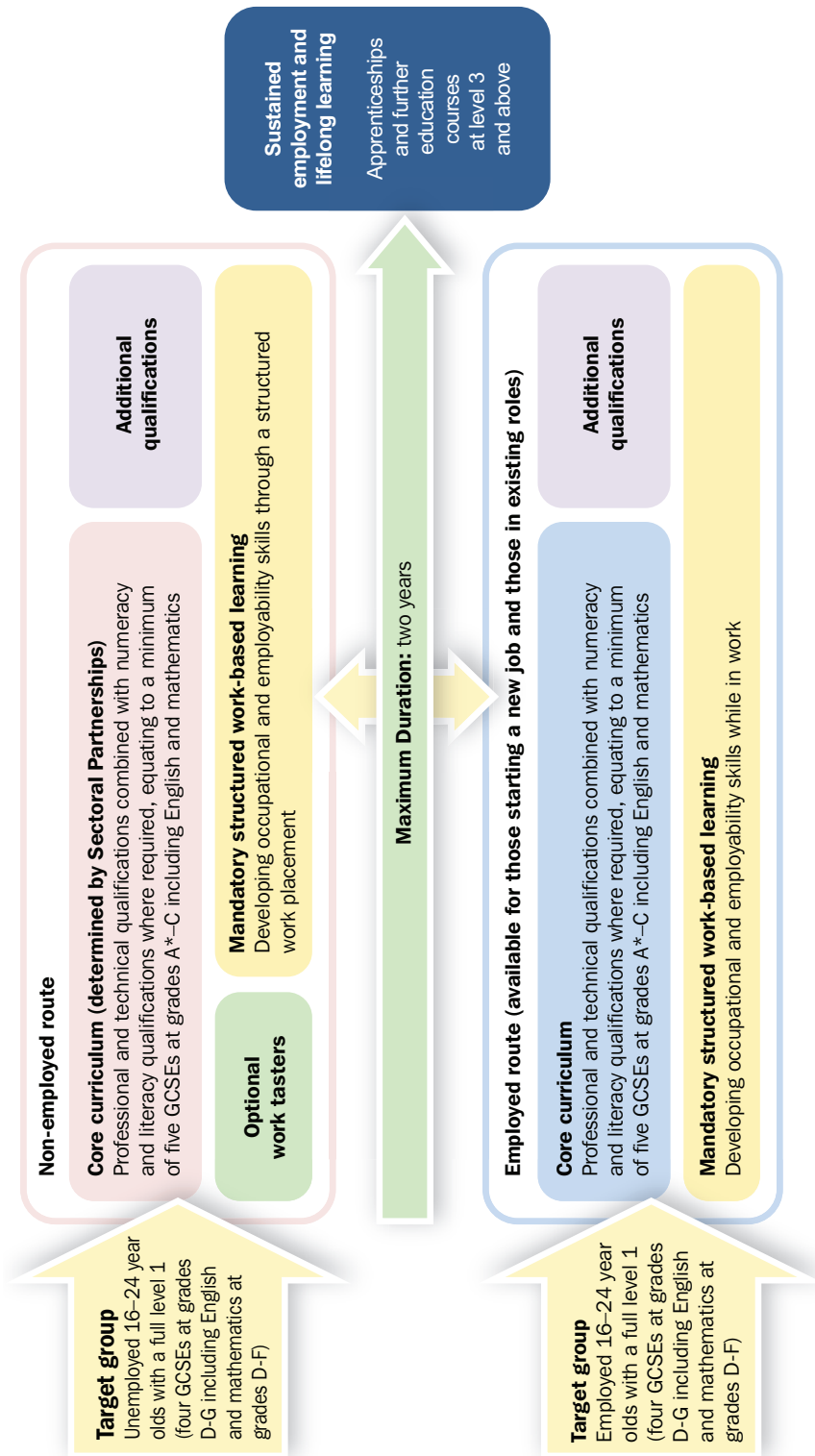


Figure 3.5 illustrates how the following proposals inform the youth training system. This system is further developed through later themes to demonstrate how each set of proposals builds on and contributes to the overall model.

With the core components for the youth training system established, the next theme will outline proposals to ensure that young people are supported to access youth training, achieve at level 2 and progress into employment or further education and training at a higher level.

Figure 3.5:
The youth training system (incorporating proposals 1-6)



Theme 2:

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

This theme highlights support measures to help young people successfully complete their training and progress into employment or professional and technical training at a higher level.

Informing choices

In addition to providing a core curriculum that allows for progression into higher-level options, assisting young people with navigating the wider education and skills landscape is crucial to ensuring positive outcomes. The OECD, in both its reviews of upper-secondary and post-secondary VET,¹³⁴ identifies effective, independent and high-quality careers advice as a key element of any system, effective in engaging young people,¹³⁵ addressing dropout¹³⁶ and steering young people towards choices which align with wider labour market trends. Independent careers advice is also particularly important in countries where VET routes are underdeveloped, as misconceptions about apprenticeships or professional and technical training in general can be challenged from an early age and at key transition points.¹³⁷

134 OECD, *Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training*, April 2014, pp. 11-12.

135 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners*, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 24.

136 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

137 Mann, A. and Caplan S., *Closing the Gap – How employers can change the way young people see Apprenticeships*, 2012, <http://www.pwc.co.uk/government-public-sector/publications/closing-the-gap-how-employers-can-change-the-way-young-people-see-apprenticeships.jhtml>, p. 3.

Case study:**The Traineeships programme in Wales**

In Wales, the Traineeships programme was introduced in 2011, and is targeted at young people between 16 and 18 years old, with a focus on giving young people the skills needed to progress to further education at a higher level, an apprenticeship or employment. A key element of the programme is the role played by Careers Wales, who provide an independent check on the suitability and relevance of the Traineeship for the young person. To start a traineeship, young people need a written referral from a Careers Wales adviser.¹³⁸ Since their introduction traineeships have become a popular choice of work-based learning for young people, accounting for 20% (8,645 of 41,980) of all starts on work-based learning programmes in 2012/13.¹³⁹ The programme has also recorded positive outcomes, with 67% of leavers in 2012/13 having a positive progression to employment (including self-employment or voluntary work) or learning at a higher level.¹⁴⁰

138 Welsh Government, A Simple Factsheet on Traineeships, October 2012, http://www.careerswales.com/prof/upload/pdf/Traineeships_Factsheet_English_Amended.pdf, p. 2.

139 Welsh Government, Further education, work-based learning and community learning in Wales, 2012/13, SDR 53/2014, Statistics for Wales, 26 March 2014, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2014/140326-further-education-work-based-learning-adult-community-learning-2012-13-en.pdf>, p. 5

140 Welsh Government, Learner Outcome Measures for Further Education, Work-based Learning and Adult Community Learning 2012/13, SDR 57/2014, Statistics for Wales, 3 April 2014, <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2014/140403-learner-outcome-measure-fe-wbl-cl-2012-13-en.pdf>, p. 3

The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales have recognised the value of integrating effective and independent careers advice into their VET offer. The OECD points to lessons that can be learned from the Scottish example, where advisors are professionally recognised, and services delivered in schools, colleges and through local authorities are co-ordinated centrally by Skills Development Scotland (SDS).¹⁴¹ This ensures that careers advice avoids the fragmented approach found in other countries. A further tool used by SDS is the Learning Choices Data Hub, which tracks learners aged 16 and over, in terms of their choice of programme and provider. This is similar to the data-based approach used in countries such as Denmark, where all guidance is independent of training providers¹⁴² and municipalities are legally obliged to contact and offer career guidance to young people under 19 years of age who are not working or enrolled in education.¹⁴³

While the current training arrangements in Northern Ireland do require suppliers to agree to work in partnership with independent careers advisers to provide advice to young people on their careers choices, it remains primarily the responsibility of the training provider to guide the young person towards training at a level appropriate to their needs. An independent check on the young person's prior achievement can help prevent cases where young people are engaged in training at level 2 despite having previously achieved professional and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3.¹⁴⁴ The OECD's 'Learning for Jobs' review highlighted the importance of independent and informed guidance for young people, as informal sources of guidance such as family or friends may base advice on restricted information, while careers advice delivered only through education and training institutions may present conflicts of interest when steering decision-making.¹⁴⁵ Careers guidance should be a coherent profession, independent from counselling and informed by systematic labour market forecasts.

141 OECD, *Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training*, April 2014, p. 84.

142 Cedefop, *Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description*, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf, p. 61.

143 Kuczera, M., *OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Scotland*, OECD, December 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnScotland.pdf>, p. 3.

144 DEL, *Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships Leavers Survey*, September 2014 (Annex H)

145 OECD, *OECD reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Learning for Jobs*, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf>, p. 5.

Case study:**The Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (SBB) skills barometer in the Netherlands**

A key case study of the use of labour market forecasts is found in the Netherlands, where the Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (SBB) produces a skills barometer every three months, which details the predicted labour market trends by sector and region using a colour coded “traffic light” system.¹⁴⁶ The barometer is used by careers advisers to provide career direction to young people and ensure their learning choices are well informed.

Taking this evidence of best practice into account, young people seeking to access youth training should be supported with independent and impartial careers advice and guidance that takes account of their abilities and interests, and is based on up to date local labour market information. This process will provide a check on the elements of the training to be delivered, as in some cases, young people may have previously achieved some elements of the curriculum, but not enough to secure progression into higher-level training options. The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, ‘Securing our Success’, included a commitment to establish a skills barometer mechanism to support the better matching of supply and demand in the Northern Ireland economy through an annual report identifying emerging trends and potential shortages. The skills barometer mechanism can also help to inform careers advice, building on existing labour market information, such as the industry fact sheets provided by the careers service, to allow for an accurate and up-to-date analysis of jobs growth on a regional and sectoral basis. This will help to promote increased uptake of economically relevant skills and education opportunities, directing disengaged young people towards clear career pathways.

PROPOSAL 7

Independent careers advice and guidance, informed by the skills barometer, will be provided to young people before starting training and upon completion.

¹⁴⁶ The foundation for Cooperation between Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB), SBB Barometer, March 2012, <http://www.s-bb.nl/corporate-publications.html>, p. 3.

Supporting retention and achievement: the key role of pastoral support

The literature on best practice in delivering education and training to young people also highlights the key role of pastoral support in supporting young people to successfully complete their training. Pastoral support can help to encourage and motivate learners and make them feel safe and secure with both their training provider and at the host employer's premises, allowing them to become more independent, confident and self-aware.¹⁴⁷ The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has identified that among the key aspects of pastoral support are that all members of staff are well informed about the potential issues that face young people, including relationship or family issues and accommodation problems.¹⁴⁸ Staff with specialist training can also assist young people with advice, guidance and if necessary counselling.

Case study:

Pastoral support at Workforce Training

A recent ETI report, carried out in June 2014 for Workforce Training, reported that 'the quality of arrangements for the care, guidance and support of trainees and apprentices is outstanding'. Workforce has significantly higher rates of achievement and success for learners who have not succeeded in the education system. Pastoral care in Workforce is characterised by clear and inclusive organisational values and ethos, and a systemic process designed to identify the learners' holistic needs solicits learner engagement. An informed and structured perspective takes place during recruitment to ensure that learners' expectations are known and that they are aware of what to expect from the training, while engaging parents and/or guardians at an early stage to help develop better support networks for learners. In parallel with the group induction, over the initial six weeks Workforce systematically builds a holistic picture of each young person, through an individualised structured interview process, and with collaboration, where necessary, from parents/guardians, schools, key workers, General Practitioners, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and other organisations involved in a caring role.

¹⁴⁷ The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), Supporting Learners to Succeed,

http://tlp.excellencegateway.org.uk/tlp/psp/resource/resources/guidance_for_pastoral_provision_key_messages.pdf, p. 2

¹⁴⁸ Education and Training Inspectorate, Evaluating Pastoral Care, 2008 <http://www.etini.gov.uk/evaluating-pastoral-care.pdf>, p. 8.

Research undertaken to inform the review has identified a clear need for pastoral support for young people in training. A recent Leavers Survey of former TfS and Programme-Led Apprenticeships (PLA) participants found that of those who left the programme early, the main reason was family or personal reasons (34%).¹⁴⁹ Both employers and providers have highlighted the variety of barriers that young people can face, ranging from a need for childcare support to issues of drug abuse. Not all young people require intensive support, but wider team-building activities can help to sustain a young person's engagement with their course of study.

The provision of pastoral support to the participant with any issues not directly related to their course of study can be a key element of effective training, and often uses a sponsor or case manager¹⁵⁰ to co-ordinate the delivery of support. Interventions such as the Community Family Support Programme (CFSP) have successfully used this one-to-one support to overcome barriers to engagement. Both the case manager and the support itself can originate from a range of sources, ranging from public employment services, to voluntary organisations or the providers of professional and technical training.¹⁵¹ Best practice in delivering this role focuses on having a clear agreement with other key partners (for example, with the host employer) on their roles and responsibilities, and following this up with regular and transparent discussions with the participant to provide opportunities for feedback, chart progress and agree next steps.¹⁵² Some limited job shadowing, where the case manager has a clear understanding of the work of the young person and their integration into the working practices of the employer is also recommended.¹⁵³ Pastoral support can help facilitate the young person's development before, during and after training, encouraging completion, achievement and progression to higher-level training options or sustained employment by providing bespoke support at the transition stage. Support can also be tailored to help young people with specific barriers to engagement and progression, such as those with a disability or young people leaving care.

149 Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships Leavers Survey, September 2014 (Annex H)

150 Wilson, T., BIS Research Paper Number 101, Youth Unemployment: Review of training for young people with Low Qualifications, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, February 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70226/bis-13-608-youth-unemployment-review-of-training-for-young-people-with-low-qualifications.pdf , p.10.

151 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p.17.

152 Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), Good Practice in Involving Employers in Work-Related Education and Training, October 2010, <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/surveys-and-good-practice/g/Good%20practice%20in%20involving%20employers%20in%20work-related%20education%20and%20training.pdf> , pp. 20-21.

153 Ibid.

PROPOSAL 8

Pastoral support will be provided to assist young people to complete their training and progress into employment or higher-level options.

Integrating young people into the workplace

In addition to support from the Careers Service and their training provider, one-to-one support for the young person while they are in the workplace is key. The EC identifies dual mentoring in both work and training as a key ingredient of successful VET schemes. In terms of the company-based mentor, there is a need for them to be clearly designated as the individual with responsibility for the young person's development.¹⁵⁴

In-company mentors and trainers are the key drivers of making work-based learning relevant to the needs of both the young person and the employer,¹⁵⁵ but mentoring within the workplace also has wider benefits for the mentor. A study carried out by Corporate Citizenship in 2010 found that staff who participated in partnership arrangements with schools and colleges used engagement to develop a wide range of skills, including communication, coaching and counselling, influencing and negotiation.¹⁵⁶ This led some VET providers, such as the Albeda College in the Netherlands, to adopt a mentoring chain approach, whereby young people taking part in higher-level training (in the Dutch case, at MBO level 3 and 4) mentor participants at lower levels, developing their own confidence, employability and management skills.¹⁵⁷ Innovative mentoring chain approaches such as this could be used in the Northern Ireland context to connect young people in training with apprentices and improve the experience for both groups of participants. At a minimum, every young person in training should have a named individual in the workplace who is responsible for their development.

154 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p. 28.

155 Cedefop, Learning while Working, Success Stories on Workplace Learning in Europe, 2011, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3060_en.pdf , p. 89.

156 UKCES, Not Just Making Tea – Reinventing Work Experience, February 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299597/Not_just_making_tea.pdf

157 Ibid., p. 7.

PROPOSAL 9

Workplace mentors will be provided by employers to assist young people to develop their employability skills and achieve their learning outcomes.

Providing wider support

A further crucial element is the financial support available to young people. Current funding arrangements for both apprenticeships and youth training provide a range of funding support measures for participants, ranging from a non-means tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £40 per week¹⁵⁸ to additional funding for travel costs, childcare or for individuals with disabilities.¹⁵⁹ Individuals receiving training at level 2 through ApprenticeshipsNI also receive financial support through the wage paid by their employer. The OECD highlights that provided the training is seen as relevant and there is a clear line of sight to progression routes (with higher levels of remuneration), lower wages or allowances for training participants are generally an acceptable cost for the participant.¹⁶⁰

Prioritisation of certain target groups through funding is a key component of other training models, such as the Modern Apprenticeships programme in Scotland,¹⁶¹ which weights funding towards certain groups of young people, such as those with disabilities, in a similar way to the current ApprenticeshipsNI model. These measures are also in line with much of international best practice, which highlights adequate support for young people undergoing training as crucial to ensuring equity of access.¹⁶²

158 DEL, Training for Success 2013 – Operational Guidelines for Suppliers, July 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/tfs-publications.htm> , p. 62.

159 DEL, ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2/Level 3 – Operational Guidelines 2013, August 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311520/apprenticeshipsni-level-2-3-operational-guidelines-2013.pdf , pp. 75-86.

160 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf , pp. 17 and 18.

161 Kuczera, M., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Scotland, OECD, December 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnScotland.pdf> , p. 31.

162 EC, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717> , p. 25.

PROPOSAL 10

Financial support will be provided to help young people complete their training, through a training wage or allowance.

Additional funding for young people with disabilities is only one aspect of the range of flexible support options currently provided through ApprenticeshipsNI and TfS. Under TfS, eligibility is extended to 22 years of age for those with disabilities, the duration of the programme training is extended, and support is available from Disability Support Suppliers (DSSs) that are separately contracted by the Department. The current approach recognises that young people with disabilities may need significant additional support to fully benefit from training, with the nature and level of support tailored to the individual participant, but that not every participant with a disability will require such support. Extended eligibility is also provided to young people leaving care, and support with childcare costs is also provided to young people with caring commitments.

A similar system is in place for young people with disabilities under ApprenticeshipsNI, whereby providers can refer participants with disabilities for specialist support from the DSSs, and are eligible to receive a supplement for any participant requiring significant additional resources.

Case study:**ENABLE Scotland**

Initiatives for individuals with barriers to engagement tend to prioritise comprehensive support delivered on a one-to-one basis. One example of this approach is ENABLE Scotland's Stepping Up service, which assists young people aged 14–19 with learning disabilities to transition into the world of work through Transition Coordinators, who manage and monitor work placements for participants with input from the young person and the employer, and provide feedback to their school, college or training organisation. Where possible, each young person is also matched with a Workplace Champion who acts as their mentor, supports them to develop their skills and facilitates any additional support requirement at the employer's premises. Of the 270 students who progressed from school through this programme up to the end of April 2013, 105 young people (39%) were supported into employment.¹⁶³

The Department is currently developing a Disability Employment and Skills Strategy that will concentrate on identifying and helping individuals with significant disability-related barriers prepare for, get into, and sustain work. The strategy is being developed in partnership with the local disability sector, and will have a particular focus on young people. It is envisaged that the flexibility and specialist support mechanisms currently available under TfS, ApprenticeshipsNI and through mainstream further education will be retained under the new system, and will be augmented by additional pastoral support, in order to help as many young people as possible to make the transition from professional and technical training into work.

PROPOSAL 11

Additional support and flexibility will be provided for young people with additional requirements (e.g. individuals with a disability, caring commitments or those leaving care).

¹⁶³ Wood, I. et al, Education Working For All! – Commission for developing Scotland's young workforce – Final Report, Scottish Government, June 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf>, p. 65.

Encouraging innovation in professional and technical training

In addition to supporting young people to engage, the new youth training system should include initiatives to make the learning experience more dynamic and attractive. Transnational work placement opportunities, supported by EU mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ are one such method and are becoming increasingly common across member states.¹⁶⁴

Case study:

Portugal's Professional Placement Programme for Young Adults and INOV Contacto

Portugal's *Programa Estágios Profissionais* was introduced in 1997, and gained recognition for high success rates (76%) in transitioning young people into employment through transnational placements. Young people complete a work placement lasting 9–12 months designed to help them gain practical experience to complement their professional qualifications. The trainees receive a grant according to their qualification level as well as travel and subsistence allowances. A related programme, INOV Contacto, provides work placements to graduates in sectors of strategic importance to the Portuguese economy. These placements last between six and nine months and take place in over 40 countries, with a special focus on Spain, the UK, Germany, Brazil, the U.S. and China. Between 2005 and 2011 over 2,200 transnational placements were supported, with between 60-80% of trainees being offered a job by host organisations.¹⁶⁵

By preparing young people to a level 2 standard and promoting cooperation between educational institutions and enterprise, youth training will already contribute towards many of the stated goals of the Erasmus programme, but could go further in developing young people's language skills and wider international and cultural understanding in the context of acquiring an experience of other countries and cultures.¹⁶⁶

164 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 6.

165 Ibid., p. 37-38.

166 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, p. 26.

A survey of transnational trainees carried out in 2011 found that in addition to improving language skills and inter-cultural awareness, participants felt better able to adapt to new situations, and that their interpersonal soft skills were improved.¹⁶⁷ Such exchange opportunities can also make use of technology, through video-conferencing and other facilities, to promote awareness and give young people an experience of another culture in which the professional and technical skills they are developing can be put to practical use.

Some further education colleges in Northern Ireland have also used technological solutions to provide an immersive environment to prepare young people for work before they start a placement with a local employer.

Case study:

Immersive technologies and e-learning in South West College

South West College in Northern Ireland has been recognised both by the ETI and through the RSCni awards¹⁶⁸ for its innovative use of technology to facilitate learning. In addition to providing 24/7 access to course materials for training participants through a range of formats, including videos, presentations, podcasts, discussion boards and recordings of guest speakers, the college has invested in technology to create virtual learning environments, which can be adapted to recreate real working locations. Student engagement and immersion in working environments is achieved through the use of avatars, which allow them to interact with other students, employers and lecturers in a virtual environment and become acclimatised to work practices and behaviours. The use of technology has also helped the college to address accessibility issues by students from rural areas, and to export courses and promote exchanges beyond Northern Ireland, most notably to the Fatima High School in Ndola, Zambia. In October 2014, nine students from the school graduated with a level 3 subsidiary Diploma in Information Technology. This first cohort is continuing with their studies to complete the full Diploma in July 2015, and a second cohort of students from Fatima High School started the college's course in September 2014.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁶⁸ Regional Support Centre Northern Ireland, a body set up in 2000 to help promote the use of e-learning and networking by further education colleges.

PROPOSAL 12

Youth training will make use of online technologies to prepare young people for the workplace and facilitate opportunities for international exchange.

With the support mechanisms for young people established, the next theme will outline proposals to ensure that employers in Northern Ireland are engaged in the design and delivery of the youth training system.

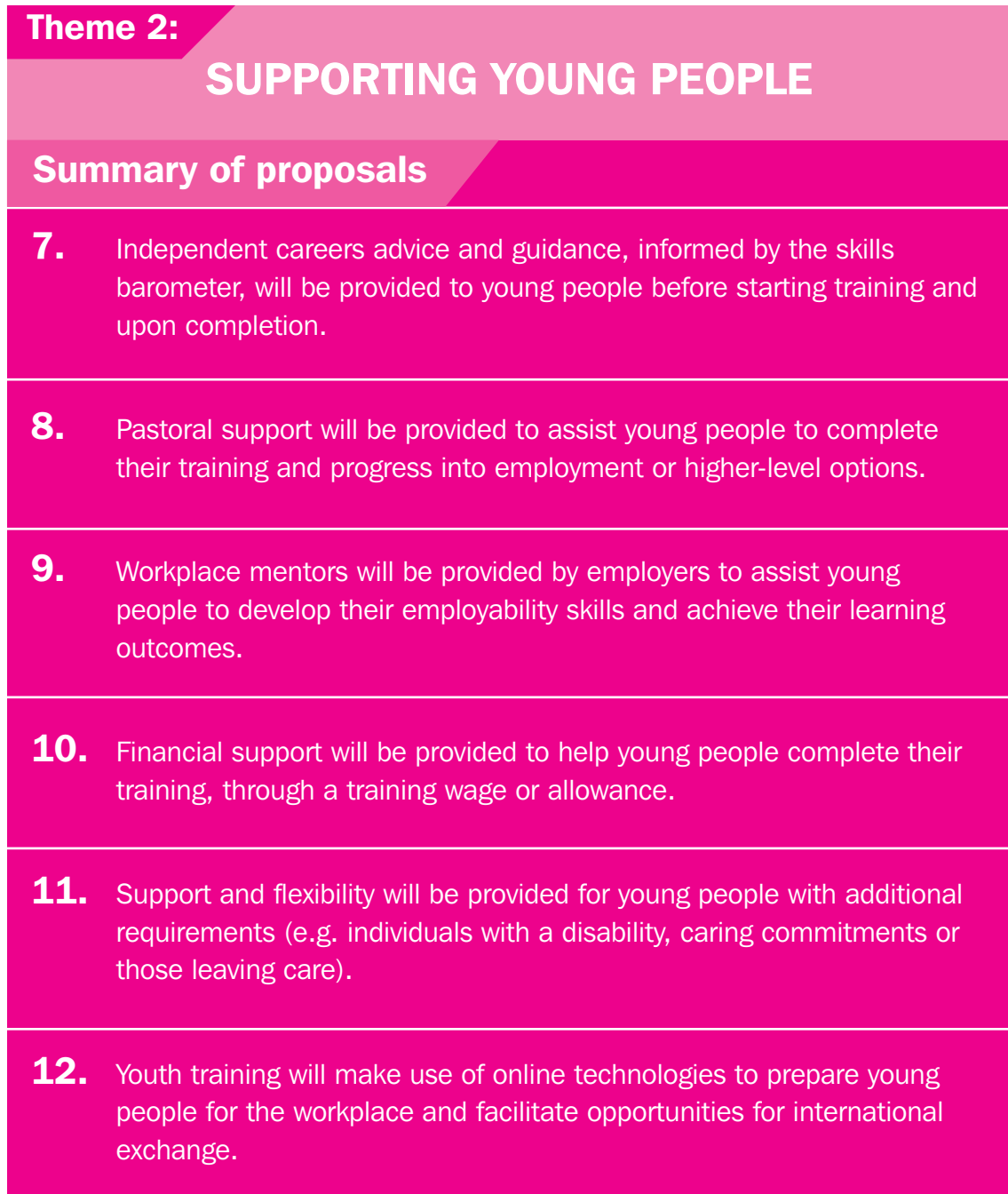
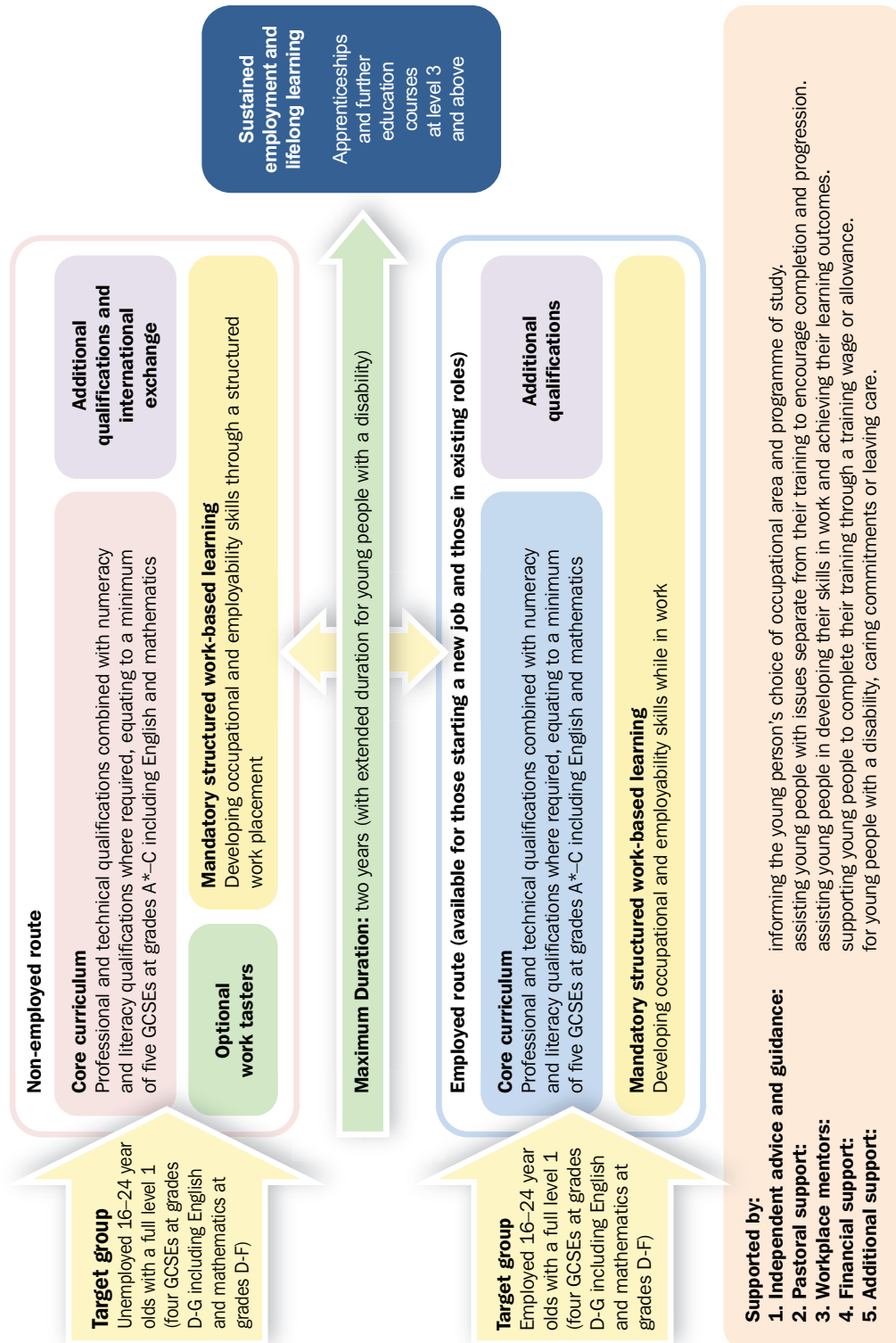


Figure 3.6 builds on the model presented in the previous section, demonstrating how the proposals highlighted above add to the proposed youth training system.

Figure 3.6:
The youth training system (incorporating proposals 1-12)



Theme 3:**DELIVERY AND EMPLOYMENT
ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES**

This theme sets out proposals for delivering the new youth training system, including new structures to allow employers to inform curriculum content for their sector.

Providing strategic direction and ensuring relevance: the key role of employers

Previous themes have highlighted how the youth training system can deliver a new baccalaureate-style award at level 2 alongside structured work-based learning and additional support for the young person. While examples of best practice can guide the components and support measures underpinning the system, it remains only a mechanism for delivering a set curriculum. For training to be relevant, employers must play a key role in determining the content of the professional and technical qualifications delivered through youth training.

Cross-country comparisons of VET systems carried out by both the OECD and the EC highlight the importance of relevant and valued professional and technical qualifications. Qualifications signal to employers the job skills that young people have, provide access to regulated occupations for jobseekers, and play a role in improving quality through demonstrating performance against nationally agreed standards.¹⁶⁹ Clear qualification systems can also help to make different career progression pathways transparent and comparable to all stakeholders.

The OECD recommends that the qualification system itself should ideally deliver a manageable number of qualifications, avoiding proliferation and overlaps, and the content should be nationally consistent, with any local flexibility in design and delivery being limited in scope.¹⁷⁰ Where the qualification system fails to respond to the needs of stakeholders, common issues are a lack of industry engagement, weak assessment practices that restrict practical testing of competencies, and an over-proliferation of similar qualifications.

¹⁶⁹ OECD, *Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training*, April 2014, p.59.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

The relevancy of training and of the professional and technical qualifications currently delivered is an area of concern highlighted by both the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills (NIAES)¹⁷¹ and the OECD, the latter in its recent ‘Skills Beyond School’ commentary on Northern Ireland.¹⁷² While the OECD recognises the substantial efforts made to engage employers in VET, particularly by further education colleges and through initiatives such as higher-level ICT apprenticeships, it highlights the need for employers (SMEs in particular) to be more closely involved in the design and delivery of VET in Northern Ireland.¹⁷³ While survey evidence such as the UKCES’s employer perspectives survey have found that the perception of professional and technical qualifications is improving,¹⁷⁴ stakeholder engagement events with employers have also highlighted that there is a disparity between some professional and technical qualifications and traditional academic qualifications such as GCSEs and A-levels, with the latter type of qualification having greater name recognition, relevancy and respect with employers. The employer survey carried out as part of the review also found that providing more relevant training was a key factor that employers felt would improve the quality of provision in Northern Ireland.

171 NIAES, Identification of Priority Skill Areas For Northern Ireland, March 2011.

172 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf> , p. 27.

173 Ibid., p. 15.

174 Shury J. et al., UK Commission’s Employer Perspectives Survey 2012, Evidence Report 64, UKCES, December 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303157/evidence-report-64-ukces-employer-perspectives-survey-2012-full-report.pdf , p. xvii.

While employers have had input to the content of professional and technical training through the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), many have reported a need for greater engagement. Expanding the role of employers in curriculum design is in line with international best practice, as a literature review carried out to inform this review found a clear emphasis on the value of strong employer engagement in improving the quality, performance and relevance of VET provision.^{175 176 177 178} Strong involvement by employers and other key stakeholders in the design, implementation and quality assurance of VET is a hallmark of the most effective systems, and often this engagement is led by intermediary bodies or professional associations, such as the Chambers of Commerce in Germany, who attract and support new employers and administer apprenticeship contracts and examinations.¹⁷⁹ The role of these representative groups also helps to increase the “moral pressure” to train.¹⁸⁰ In Switzerland, employers have a direct influence on every aspect of an apprenticeship, in terms of curriculum, content, recruitment, qualifications and assessment.¹⁸¹

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- 175 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf , pp. 11-13.
- 176 Gorlich D. et al, Kiel Policy Brief: Youth Unemployment in Europe and the World: Causes, Consequences and Solutions, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, January 2013, http://www.ifw-kiel.de/wirtschaftspolitik/politikberatung/kiel-policy-brief/kpb-2013/KPB_59.pdf , p. 7.
- 177 Ofsted, Good Practice in Involving Employers in Work-Related Education and Training, October 2010, <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/surveys-and-good-practice/g/Good%20practice%20in%20involving%20employers%20in%20work-related%20education%20and%20training.pdf> , p. 13.
- 178 Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL), It’s about work – Excellent vocational teaching and learning, Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), March 2013, <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/26611> , p. 23.
- 179 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf , p. 17.
- 180 Oates, T., Towards a New VET: Effective Vocational Education and Training, Cambridge Assessment, January 2013, <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf> , p. 5.
- 181 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf , p. 13.

Case study:**Apprenticeships and Qualified Vocational Courses in Sweden**

In Sweden, employers are consulted in the design of professional and technical programmes through a range of methods, including through an Apprenticeship Council (*Läringsråd*) comprising representatives of industry, trade unions and schools, which is tasked with ensuring that provision reflects local labour market needs in a municipal area. Beyond apprenticeships, employer engagement has also led to successful outcomes in Sweden's Qualified Vocational Courses (*Yrkeshogskola*, or *YH*) as 74% of students find employment within one month of completion, rising to 90% within six months. Of those finding a job, more than 60% found employment in a role consistent with their education.¹⁸²

While the benefits of employer engagement are clear, successful models also depend on the broader nature of industrial relations in a country. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) distinguishes between actors steering and signalling within a system, where steering involves proactive engagement to reach compromise, and signalling is limited to a transmission of weakly aggregated needs and concerns to government.¹⁸³ In their analysis of models of feedback, only countries with a well-developed and co-ordinated model of social partner engagement, such as Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands, achieved steering by all of the key actors: government, social partners, the labour market and the provider base.¹⁸⁴ In countries with fragmented or oppositional industrial relations, such as the UK, France and Italy, feedback mechanisms were less dynamic.¹⁸⁵

182 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf , pp. 18 and 21.

183 Cedefop Research Paper No. 37 – Renewing VET Provision – Understanding Feedback mechanisms between initial VET and the labour market, Cedefop, 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5537_en.pdf , p. 48.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Nevertheless, countries with less developed models of social partnership can encourage constructive industry engagement. Australia is a key case study in this respect, where employers are assisted and kept informed by Industrial Skills Councils (ISCs), and group training organisations (GTOs) facilitate training for smaller employers with limited capacity to engage.¹⁸⁶ The Wood Commission in Scotland has also recommended putting in place structures to engage employers, promote professional and technical training and support SMEs through Regional Invest in Youth Groups.¹⁸⁷

186 Bewick, T., 21st Century Apprenticeships, Federation for Industry Sector Skills & Standards, 2013, <http://fiss.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/FISSS-international-report.pdf> , p. 38.

187 Wood, I. et al, Education Working For All! – Commission for developing Scotland's young workforce – Final Report, Scottish Government, June 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf> , p. 45-46.

Case study:**Trade committees in Denmark**

The success of Denmark's VET system in encouraging high participation rates at both upper-secondary level (128,238 VET participants compared to 131,505 general participants in 2010) and in adult education and continuing training (the highest in the EU)¹⁸⁸ is in large part due to the strong industrial engagement¹⁸⁹ achieved by sector-based trade committees and a national trade council.¹⁹⁰ Both employers and employees engage in planning, design and steering the VET system through representative bodies (DA and LO respectively)¹⁹¹, which finance the trade committees and their secretariat. All companies seeking to train have to be approved by the appropriate trade committee. Over 60,000 companies are approved to deliver VET training in their workplace, and once approved they do not need to renew accreditation unless they have not been active in the system for over five years. Trade Committees play the key role in designing the curriculum for their sectors (defining learning objectives, examination standards, deciding on duration and the ratio of college and work-based learning) and in quality assurance measures. Employment outcomes are monitored across all of VET programmes by central government, who then enter a dialogue with the relevant trade committee to devise action plans to address poor performance.¹⁹²

188 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf , pp. 1 and 18.

189 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf> , p. 18.

190 OECD, Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, April 2014, p. 61.

191 Field, S. et al, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of Denmark, OECD, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/SBS%20Denmark.pdf> , p. 34.

192 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf , pp. 30, 31 and 49.

Taking best practice into account, a similar approach to the Danish system of a national trade council and sector-based trade committees would help to make youth training responsive to the needs of employers and the wider priorities for the Northern Ireland economy.

As part of the implementation of the apprenticeship strategy, a new Strategic Advisory Forum will be established to advise government on apprenticeship provision at a system level. A common forum for both apprenticeships and youth training can also help to ensure the two systems are aligned, however the forum's roles and responsibilities with respect to youth training will be shaped around the particular needs of this system.

PROPOSAL 13

A Strategic Advisory Forum will advise government on the youth training system.

For the youth training system, it is proposed that the Strategic Advisory Forum's responsibilities will include:

- providing strategic oversight of youth training provision;
- advising on supply and demand issues;
- advising on 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;
- contributing to the effectiveness of the system through analysing the progression and recruitment levels of young people from training;
- promoting youth training to employers and encouraging work-based learning opportunities;
- promoting the linkages between the youth training system and progression opportunities available in the UK and internationally; and
- advising on the balance between the specific training required for preparation for employment in a given sector and broader transferable skills that can be developed by all young people in training.

Future-proofing the youth training curriculum

The strategic context chapter and the first theme also highlighted the key role that literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2 play in ensuring that young people have transferable skills across occupational areas. At a national level, individuals with qualifications at level 2 in numeracy and literacy have higher levels of wages and employment than those with comparable level 1 qualifications.¹⁹³ Individuals with low skills in numeracy (entry level and level 1) are more than twice as likely to be unemployed, and more likely to have restricted career prospects once in employment.¹⁹⁴

Literacy and numeracy skills can currently be developed at level 2 through either Essential Skills or GCSE qualifications in Northern Ireland. Stakeholder engagement with employers carried out to inform the review highlighted that while some felt that Essential Skills qualifications suited the needs of their sectors, for others, GCSEs were more desirable. In addition to the Strategic Advisory Forum, Sectoral Partnerships are being established through the apprenticeship strategy to define the new apprenticeship awards/qualifications delivered for each sector. These Sectoral Partnerships could determine both the professional and technical knowledge and skills, and the literacy and numeracy qualifications required for youth training in their sector.

193 DEL, Review of Youth Training: Background Evidence , October 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>, pages 61-62.

194 Copps, J. and Plimmer, D., Inspiring Impact – the Journey to Employment (JET) Framework, May 2013, <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/>

Designing a quality work-based learning experience

The work-based learning delivered as part of youth training must also reflect both the learning outcomes required by the young person and the working practices of different occupational areas. Best practice points to strong industry engagement in the design of work-based learning opportunities, as well as curriculum content. Evidence from a cross-country comparison by the European Union identifies that while work placements vary by the programme which they are a part of, they typically last between three and six months and are undertaken towards the end of the young person's studies¹⁹⁵, so that the skills and knowledge acquired through training can be put to practical use. Examples of this approach can be found through programmes in Denmark¹⁹⁶, Greece,¹⁹⁷ Spain¹⁹⁸ and in higher professional and technical education in Sweden, where workplace training is obligatory in two-year programmes and accounts for approximately a quarter of the total duration.¹⁹⁹ Some variations on this approach can be found, however, in Germany (where the duration of the work placement on progression programmes to apprenticeships are between 6 and 12 months),²⁰⁰ and in the Netherlands, where work-based training is incorporated throughout, accounting for at least 20% of the time spent on the school-based BOL track.²⁰¹ While, as has been established, work-based learning should be substantive enough to support the learning outcomes of the young person, and structured in such a way as to make use of their knowledge and skills in a real working environment, there are opportunities for flexible approaches to be applied through the Sectoral Partnerships to suit the needs of different occupational areas.

195 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 6.

196 Ibid., pp. 50-52.

197 EC, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, p. 85.

198 Alvarez-Galvan, J., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Northern Ireland, OECD, January 2014, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnNorthernIreland.pdf>, p. 29.

199 OECD, Skills Beyond School: A Review of Postsecondary Vocational Education and Training, April 2014, p. 34.

200 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, pp. 63-67.

201 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, October 2013, p. 8.

Taking the evidence into account, Sectoral Partnerships will define the qualifications delivered as part of the youth training curriculum, and also the duration, structure and timing of work placements.

Depending on the skills needs of the sector, Sectoral Partnerships may be shared between apprenticeship or youth training provision, or established to carry out this specific function for youth training.

PROPOSAL 14

Sectoral Partnerships will define the qualifications to be delivered as part of the youth training curriculum for their sector, and also the duration, structure and timing of work placements.

For the youth training system, it is proposed that a Sectoral Partnership's responsibilities will include:

- defining the literacy, numeracy and professional and technical qualifications to be delivered as part of the youth training for their sector;
- defining the duration, structure and timing of work placements for young people undertaking training in their sector;
- building capacity within their sector for the increased provision of work-based learning and recruitment opportunities for young people;
- supporting small and micro businesses to engage with youth training and absorb young people into their workforce;
- developing interventions within sectors to increase, where appropriate, participation numbers; and
- achieving the necessary balance of skills between the needs of particular employers, those of the wider sector, and the broader transferable skills required by the young person.

Building capacity

A further key aspect of effective VET systems is a strong focus on employer engagement to generate work placements and trainee vacancies. This is particularly important in Northern Ireland as, of the current level 2 training options detailed in the previous chapter, the majority of young people are in options for those not in employment, such as Skills for Work level 2 , PLA and mainstream further education at level 2, as opposed to apprenticeships at level 2.

Sourcing the required amount of placement opportunities for young people to train will be one of the key challenges in delivering the new system. The Review of Youth Training Employer Survey highlighted the capacity of most employers to offer either long-term work placements or in-work training opportunities. Most employers estimated that their capacity to offer placements was limited to around 1–5 places per year (73% of those offering work placements, and 58% of those offering in-work training).²⁰² When asked what factors would be most important in helping them to engage with training in future, employers cited the need for reduced bureaucracy and red tape, improved support to engage with training, and improved financial incentives as some of the key areas for improvement.

202 DEL, Review of Youth Training: Employer Survey, September 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training> , pp. 14 and 21.

Case study:

Aalborg Technical College in Denmark

An example of the use of a facilitation service is the Aalborg Technical College in Denmark, which developed an in-house work placement service to ensure a better match between supply and demand for apprenticeship places. The college employs a number of consultants who engage with industry to source places for students. The consultants receive bespoke training for their roles, are assisted through a handbook of best practice developed by the college, and often have a professional background in the sectors they work with.

A particular focus is placed on helping micro businesses and companies that are taking on an apprentice for the first time, and the college runs training sessions with new host companies to explain their role and the benefits of training. Working from a digital registry of approved companies, the consultants can monitor the progress of participants, and identify participating companies with no current apprentices. The college's system of employer engagement and support proved to be particularly useful following the global economic downturn, as in 2010 Aalborg Technical College experienced a 28% growth in apprenticeship places, and in 2011 the college topped national league tables of apprentice place creation and matching of supply and demand.²⁰³

Case study:

The Youth Employment Scheme

First implemented in 2012/13, the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) sought to address high youth unemployment through a mix of work placements and employment subsidies. By March 2014, YES had met its targets for both short work-tasters and extended skills-development opportunities. Effective employer engagement to source these opportunities and support employers has been identified as one of the key successes of the scheme.

203 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p. 18.

Taking these case studies into account, a central service for youth training would help to remove key barriers to engagement faced by many employers and in particular small and micro businesses. This service can provide efficiencies,²⁰⁴ and support for employers across all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy to advertise and manage employment and placement opportunities for young people through a central database. A central service can also help young people to engage with the youth training system, targeting support towards individuals with barriers to engagement, such as young people leaving care or with a disability. In addition, a central service will facilitate a registration process for participating employers, helping to cut down on red tape for employers and underpin the quality of all work-based learning. Further detail on employer registration is detailed under the next theme.

PROPOSAL 15

A central service will facilitate the sourcing and advertising of work-based learning opportunities.

This proposed central service will be a shared service for both apprenticeships and youth training. It will assist in the delivery of the youth training system while delivering the benefits for apprenticeships established in the apprenticeship strategy, 'Securing Our Success'.

For the youth training system, it is proposed that the central service's responsibilities will include:

- centrally advertising training opportunities for young people;
- providing a matching service between employers, training providers and young people;
- administering subsidies and other support;
- co-ordinating independent careers advice and guidance for young people before accessing and upon completing training; and
- managing a central register of participating employers.

204 Cedefop, Keeping young people in (vocational) education: what works?, December 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9084_en.pdf p. 3;

While a central service can help to facilitate the effective delivery of youth training, further assistance is needed to help with both the sourcing of work-based learning opportunities, and with encouraging employers to recruit young people from the youth training system. Employers responding to the review’s online survey cited the time costs of supervision by full-time staff and the availability of better-quality staff through alternative recruitment channels as some of the key factors influencing their decision not to offer work placements or other training opportunities. Drawing from the case studies outlined previously, a dedicated resource to help support businesses could help overcome these barriers to engagement, and encourage more employers to recruit from the youth training system and absorb young people into their workforces. In this way, the youth training system could contribute to both higher skill levels and improved employment rates within the 16–24 age group.

PROPOSAL 16

Dedicated industry consultants will source and manage work-based learning opportunities and encourage employers to recruit young people from the youth training system.

Engaging all sectors of the NI economy

Local engagement with stakeholders is key to engaging a wide range of employers. A recent report by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce recommended local economic development as the priority for the next stage of reform, through targeting of Modern Apprenticeships towards growth sectors, continuing with the use of regional outcome agreements, and establishing industry-led engagement groups.²⁰⁵ This example provides a case for local engagement, since it can encourage positive outcomes. Where there is successful variety at a local level in other VET systems, such as the Netherlands,²⁰⁶ it is often underpinned by national standards, regulations, and a wider appreciation of the value of professional and technical training. Professional and technical colleges in the Netherlands (known as *regionaal opleidingscentrum* or ROCs) for example, have extensive autonomy with regard to the delivery of programmes, and can adapt up to 20% of the curriculum to meet local and regional employer needs.²⁰⁷

205 Wood, I. et al, Education Working For All! Commission for developing Scotland’s young workforce – Final Report, Scottish Government, June 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf> , pp. 8, 10-15.

206 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, October 2013, p. 11.

207 Casey, P, Vocational Education and Training System in the Netherlands, UKCES, August 2013 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303481/briefing-paper-vocational-education-system-netherlands.pdf , p. 12-13.

The example of the YES programme referenced previously also demonstrates the key role that the wider public sector can play in providing work placement opportunities for young people. The public sector is particularly important in Northern Ireland, as public sector employees account for 27.6% of the total workforce.²⁰⁸ In sourcing opportunities for work-based learning for young people in training, the new youth training system should make use of the opportunities available in the public sector for both the employed and non-employed training routes.

PROPOSAL 17

Work-based learning opportunities for young people engaged in training will be sourced through engagement with all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, including local councils and the wider public sector.

Incentivising engagement

Research has indicated a number of ways in which incentives can be used to support participation. These include:

- support for specific groups of employers, particularly small and micro businesses;
- subsidies and incentives to encourage employment outcomes; and
- funding models aligned to economic priorities.

208 DEL, Review of Apprenticeships: Interim Report and Consultation Document, January 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/interim-report-review-of-apprenticeships.pdf>, p. 41.

SUPPORT FOR SMALL AND MICRO BUSINESSES

Stakeholders highlighted the need to ensure that small and micro businesses are incentivised to engage, as often they lack the time or infrastructure available to large businesses. The employer survey undertaken as part of the review included a special focus on small and micro businesses, highlighting the importance of reducing red tape and improving financial incentives to engaging this key group, as well as making training more relevant to their needs. Smaller businesses face particular challenges in engaging with VET in many countries, but their engagement can be encouraged through intermediary organisations offering expertise, information and support.²⁰⁹ Group training arrangements, such as those delivered in Australia, are particularly useful in engaging and supporting small and micro businesses to deliver VET,^{210 211} as they can absorb some administrative burden. Financial incentives can also be used, such as recruitment subsidies, support with costs, or social clauses.

In terms of social clauses, in December 2011 a new minimum clause was agreed between the Department and the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to introduce placement opportunities for Training for Success (TfS) clients through social clause requirements. This requires contractors to provide eight weeks of work placement for every £500,000 of contract labour value. The weekly requirement within this clause reflects the requirements of the trainee's personal training plan, and is flexible to provide either one individual placement or several shorter placements for a set of trainees. The TfS clause has begun filtering into government contracts, along with the other established clauses already available for use in public sector contracts, to increase the availability of work placements, apprenticeships and student placements.

While the tax system can also be used to encourage employer engagement, the EC highlights that minimising red tape and assisting the integration and training of the participant can be equally effective.²¹² Stakeholders during the review process highlighted that where financial incentives are used, they should be aligned with wider provision to minimise competition between programmes.

209 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, p. 14.

210 Ibid., p. 17.

211 Cedefop, Learning while Working, Success Stories on Workplace Learning in Europe, 2011, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3060_en.pdf, p. 71.

212 EC, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 19.

SUBSIDIES AND INCENTIVES: ENCOURAGING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Positive employment outcomes are equally important to the success of the system. For those on the non-employed route, incentives would encourage host employers to convert these placements into permanent posts, allowing the young person to continue and complete their training knowing their skills are valued, recognised and rewarded. Such subsidies to employers must endeavour to avoid deadweight or substitution,²¹³ ideally through targeting incentives at specific employer groups or adding certain stipulations for subsidies to be provided. For example, in Denmark, the Youth Package initiative, introduced in 2011, tripled the subsidies available to employers, but employers had to give young people permanent remunerative employment.²¹⁴ Reflecting this approach, and stakeholder feedback highlighting particular costs to small and micro businesses in terms of employer's liability insurance, consideration will be given to employer incentives focusing on engaging small and micro businesses and supporting transitions into employment through youth training.

FUNDING MODELS: ALIGNING TRAINING TO WIDER PRIORITIES

A further key aspect in ensuring labour market relevance will be to align funding and incentives with wider economic priorities, in terms of key growth sectors. While a young person's choice of sector in which to undertake training should be based on their own interests, with independent advice and guidance illustrating comparative labour market prospects in different sectors, the OECD highlights that modified incentives can steer young people towards particular options.²¹⁵ Some countries, for example, use quota systems to restrict access to programmes and align the number of young people to local labour market needs.²¹⁶ In developing the funding model for youth training, the potential use of these levers will be explored to align youth training fully with the likely job opportunities available both now and in the future.

213 OECD, OECD reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Learning for Jobs, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf> , p. 16.

214 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p.14.

215 OECD, OECD reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Learning for Jobs, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf> , p. 9.

216 Cedefop, Vocational Education and Training in Denmark – Short Description, 2012, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4112_en.pdf , p. 27.

PROPOSAL 18

Consideration will be given to funding mechanisms and a range of incentives, to promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training, and align the youth training system with the priorities of the Northern Ireland economy.

Building a brand

The proposals detailed in this section can help to ensure the relevance of youth training to employers, and secure greater engagement through incentives and local initiatives. Employers and training providers who responded to the review’s call for submissions and attended discussion events also highlighted that a further key aspect to delivery is improving the image of youth training in wider society, and the image of professional and technical training overall. Young people who are currently on training have reported that too often, they are perceived as being engaged in the lowest rung on the education ladder, in training because they have no other options. Often, this perception by others runs counter to their own personal experience, as their training directly links into the workplace in a way that is not possible through traditional schooling. To redress this misperception of training, a sustained effort is needed to brand and market youth training, and wider VET provision to employers, and to engage young people and parents/guardians with similar initiatives tailored to their interests. This can be achieved through effective marketing that makes use of a range of channels.

A key part of building an effective brand for youth training is recognising and rewarding best practice. The report by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce highlighted previously also proposed a national Youth Accolade for participating employers who distinguish themselves through an investment in training young people.²¹⁷ Beyond employers, the group training organisations in Australia provide a potential model for marketing training, as they develop separate marketing materials to engage and inform employers, young people and parents/guardians. The branding of the youth training system may also reflect the flexibility found in Australian programmes such as the Youth Employment and Training Initiative, which was known by its full title by employers and the government, but marketed as “Yeti” to participants.

²¹⁷ Wood, I. et al, Education Working For All! – Commission for developing Scotland’s young workforce – Final Report, Scottish Government, June 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf> , pp. 8, 10-15.

Effective branding and marketing of the youth training system, will be a key issue to be explored through the consultation process, to ensure support for all stakeholders for the new system, and promote the accessibility and attractiveness of the system for all young people. Effective branding will be required to distinguish and promote both the employed and non-employed routes, to ensure all key stakeholders have an understanding of their purpose and linkages, and that young people, employers and parents/guardians are encouraged to engage.

PROPOSAL 19

Youth training will be supported by clear branding and marketing to employers, young people and parents.

With the core components, support mechanisms and delivery structures established, the next and final theme will outline proposals to ensure that a high standard of quality is maintained across all aspects of the youth training system.

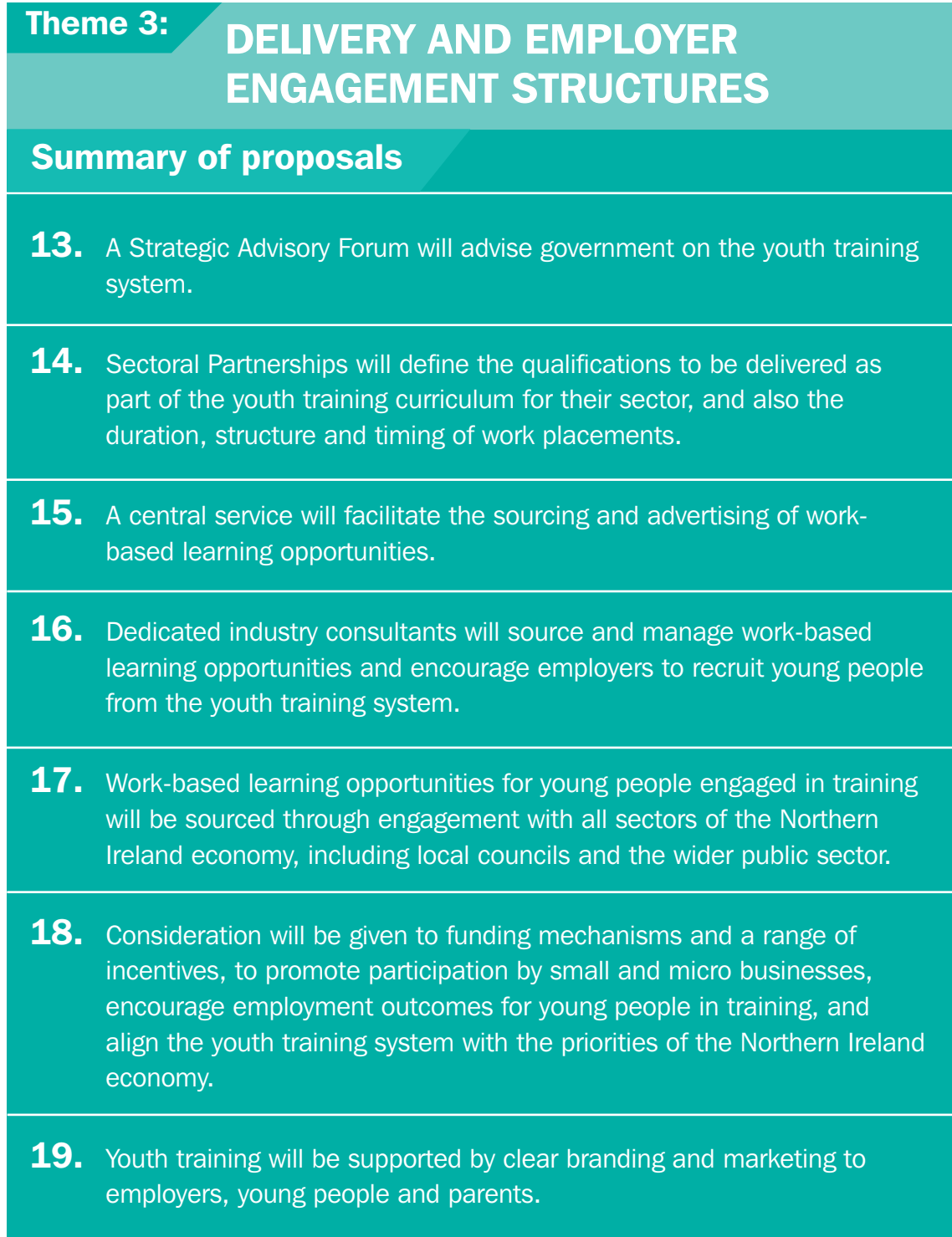
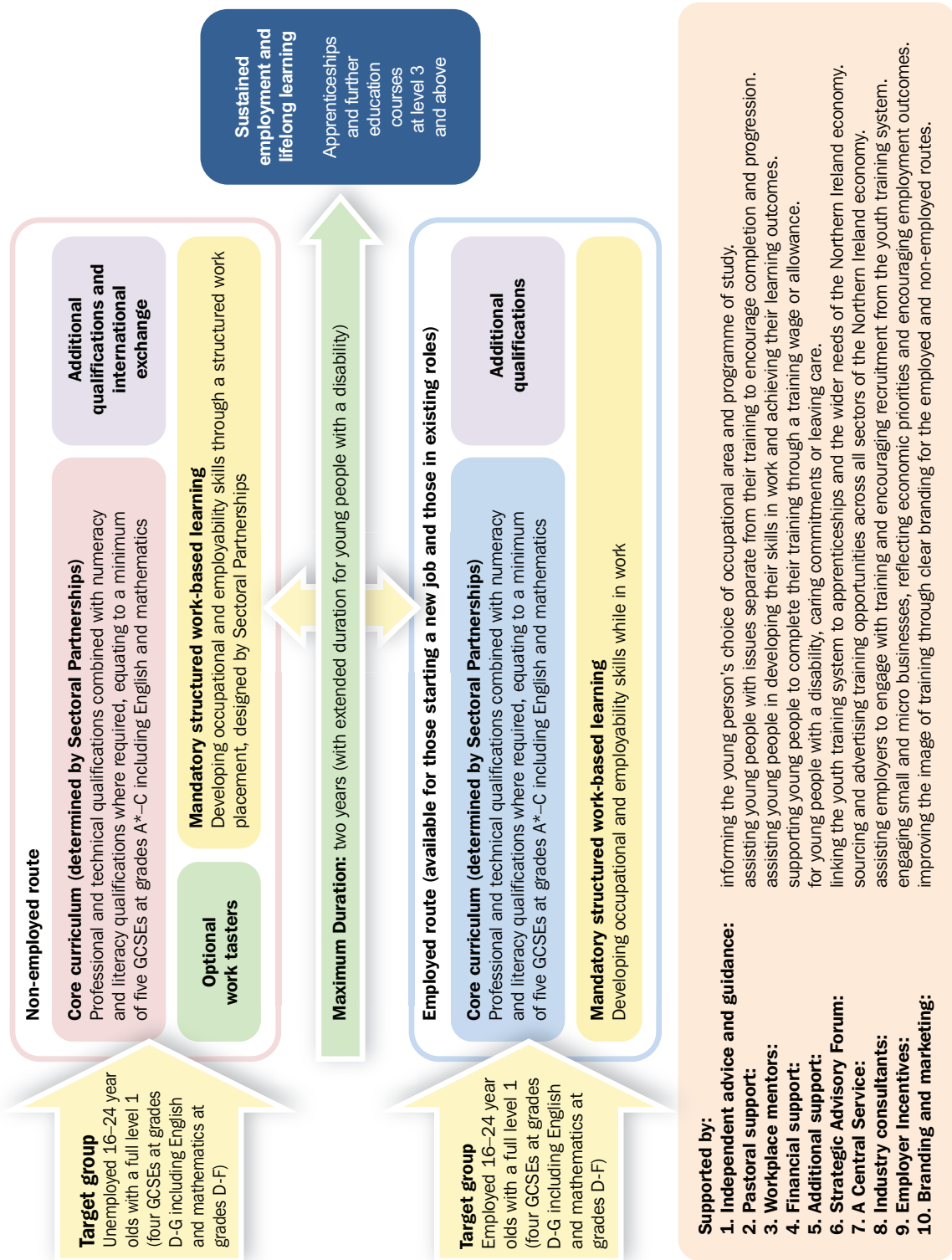


Figure 3.7 builds on the model presented in the previous section, demonstrating how the proposals highlighted above add to the proposed youth training system.

Figure 3.7:
The youth training system (incorporating proposals 1-19)



Theme 4:

ENSURING QUALITY

This theme sets out a range of measures designed to ensure that the highest standards of quality for training are maintained.

Quality work-based learning

The previous themes highlighted a range of measures to generate work-based learning opportunities by providing additional support services and incentives to employers. For both young people in employment and those on work placements, however, the quality of the learning experience while in the workplace will be key.

One method of ensuring that work-based learning delivers for the young person is through a registration process for participating employers. Accreditation and registration acts as a check on quality of provision, but also bestows a benefit to those employers who are recognised through this process, highlighting both their investment in training young people and their status as high-quality employers in their own right. The UKCES notes that this public acknowledgement can lead to increased brand loyalty and profile,²¹⁸ and in turn greater profits.²¹⁹ While careful screening of host organisations is becoming increasingly widespread as a quality assurance tool for VET systems,²²⁰ the Netherlands, once again, provides the key case study in this respect, as accreditation is required through the Dutch *Adult Education and Vocational Training Act*, and is achieved with a minimal additional burden on employers.

218 Hasluck, C., Why Businesses Should Recruit Young People, UKCES, February 2012, <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13758/1/why-businesses-should-recruit-young-people.pdf> , p.8.

219 UKCES, Not Just Making Tea – Reinventing Work Experience, February 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299597/Not_just_making_tea.pdf , p. 8.

220 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf , p. 23.

Case study:

Registration and accreditation of employers in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the Foundation for Cooperation between Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market (SBB) in conjunction with local colleges, recruits, accredits and monitors firms in relation to the quality of the work placements delivered through VET. Participating employers are assessed every four years on the basis of specific quality criteria relating to the safety of the working environment, the experience and competence of in-house supervisory and training staff, and the capacity of the employer to generate sufficient training opportunities. Companies achieving accreditation are advertised on a public website (*Stagemarkt.nl*), allowing learners to search for placements with approved employers.²²¹

The registration process can be supported by the proposed industry consultants, and can combine required administrative processes such as checking for employer's liability insurance with an opportunity to highlight to the employer the benefits their engagement should bring. This process can also help to deal with wider issues in terms of Health and Safety legislation that may prevent employers from taking on young people on placements.

221 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf, pp. 22 and 23.

PROPOSAL 20

A registration and approval system will be introduced via the central service for employers participating in the youth training system.

The use of a contractual agreement to underpin the roles and responsibilities of an individual participant, employer and training provider is also a key element of best practice in work-based learning identified by the EC.²²² While the current guidelines for apprenticeships²²³ and training placements²²⁴ in Northern Ireland require a delivery agreement to be signed between the training provider and the employer, individual agreements are best underpinned by guidelines or regulations produced at a national level, or in some cases, by legislation.

Case study:

Traineeship agreements in the Netherlands

The high levels of approval for work placements from employers and participants in the Netherlands is attributed in part to the clear definition of roles and responsibilities for VET participants and employers in the *Adult Education and Vocational Training Act*. The act underpins the standard ‘traineeship agreement’ (*Praktijkovereenkomst*) which employers are required to sign when taking on trainees as part of an educational programme. This agreement specifies the aims and objectives of the work placement as well as its scope, focus and learning content, including the tasks to be undertaken by the young person, the supervision and evaluation mechanisms, the young person’s social security and insurance coverage and rights for compensation in terms of expenses.²²⁵

222 Ibid., p. 7.

223 DEL, ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2/Level 3 – Operational Guidelines 2013, DEL, August 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/311520/apprenticeshipsni-level-2-3-operational-guidelines-2013.pdf, p. 30.

224 DEL, Training for Success 2013 – Operational Guidelines for Suppliers, July 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/tfs-publications.htm>, pp. 46-48.

225 EC, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, May 2012, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=6717>, pp. 4-5.

PROPOSAL 21

Work-based learning will be underpinned by a clear contractual agreement between the young person, the host employer and the training provider.

Recognising quality

In addition to setting clear standards for the quality of work-based learning for the young person, high-quality standards for professional and technical training must be maintained. The review process has highlighted that Northern Ireland has a range of training providers who currently deliver high-quality training that would meet the requirements of the proposed youth training system, in terms of engaging young people in a programme of study that is tailored to individual needs, integrating their programme to the local labour market, and incorporating relevant work-based learning.

At a system level, the internal and external quality assurance of the different aspects of the current training provision is shared between the Department and the ETI respectively. The existence of a robust institutional framework for quality assurance is a hallmark of countries both with well-developed VET systems and high-quality academic institutions. However, given the more diverse range of potential delivery partners for VET compared with academic institutions, and the key role of employers in facilitating work-based learning, formal inspections often need to be combined with other measures. For example, Hillary Steedman argues that the measurement and assessment of outcomes should be the key method of checking the quality of training.²²⁶ This framework of outcomes measurement should be common to all delivery partners,²²⁷ transparently linked to funding arrangements²²⁸ and based on local conditions and labour market priorities.²²⁹

226 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf, p. 15.

227 Cedefop, Keeping young people in (vocational) education: what works?, December 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9084_en.pdf, p. 4.

228 Copps, J. and Plimmer, D., Inspiring Impact – the Journey to Employment (JET) Framework, May 2013, <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/>, pp. 6 and 26.

229 Wood, I. et al, Education Working For All! – Commission for developing Scotland's young workforce – Final Report, Scottish Government, June 2014, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf>, p. 28.

In terms of oversight, a comparative study of the Group of Five (G5) countries by Tom Bewick recommended placing overall responsibility for quality with a single organisation, and establishing an independent body to carry out assessments and testing of participants of VET.²³⁰ Clear lines of responsibility can work in tandem with wider branding efforts to encourage greater trust in the quality of VET, and lead to greater engagement by participants and employers.

The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, ‘Securing Our Success,’ includes a commitment for the Department to establish a new quality model to ensure high-quality apprenticeship provision, and that only those providers who meet the minimum quality standards determined through this model would be funded to deliver apprenticeship training.²³¹ Youth training, as the key mechanism that will enable young people to progress to an apprenticeship, should require a similar standard of quality from providers.

Based on advice from Disability Action, quality monitoring of providers should include checking their achievement of equality of opportunity in terms of equal access, reasonable adjustments to training delivery, and equality of outcomes for young people with disabilities. Providers should also commit to giving their staff appropriate training around disability awareness, potential reasonable adjustments, and teaching strategies for engaging with young people with disabilities.

230 Bewick, Tom, 21st Century Apprenticeships, Federation for Industry Sector Skills & Standards, 2013, <http://fiss.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/FISS-international-report.pdf> , p. 32.

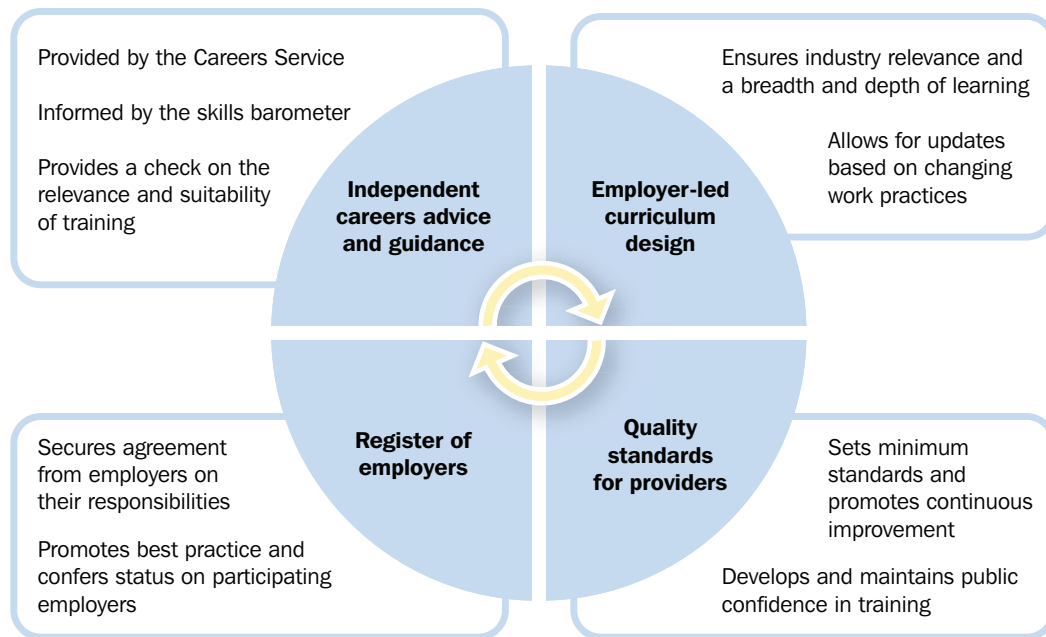
231 DEL, Securing our Success, The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, June 2014, <http://www.delni.gov.uk/securing-our-success-the-ni-strategy-on-apprenticeships.pdf> , p. 45.

PROPOSAL 22

Only those providers who achieve prescribed quality standards will be eligible to deliver youth training.

The proposed quality model will provide an independent check on the provider base, and will combine with both the contractual agreement and other proposals detailed in previous sections to promote quality across all aspects of the youth training system. Figure 3.8 shows how independent careers advice and guidance, employer-led curriculum design, and registration and approval of host employers interact with the new quality model to provide a robust check on all of the key delivery partners in the system, encouraging positive outcomes for the young person.

Figure 3.8:
Locking in quality of guidance, curriculum, work-based learning and training provision



In this context, the contractual agreement between the young person, the employer and the training provider can reiterate the responsibilities that all of the key stakeholders in the system should already be aware of, but applies them to the training to be delivered for an individual young person.

Ensuring quality teaching

Beyond a robust institutional framework, the importance of clear standards for teachers of VET is important. This includes high-level initial teacher education, professional and technical qualifications and expertise and ongoing continuous professional development. Ideally, tutors of VET should spend time working in industry, with the OECD recommending regular interchange opportunities²³² to allow teachers to update their skills. This can be achieved through incentives or through specific requirements. In China for example, VET tutors are required to spend one month a year with a relevant employer.²³³

232 OECD, OECD reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Learning for Jobs, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf> , p. 5.

233 Field, S. et al, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of Denmark, OECD, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/SBS%20Denmark.pdf> , pp. 8 and 84.

Case study:

Industry exchange in Finland

The Telkkä programme in Finland has been highlighted by the OECD as a successful example of knowledge exchange between VET colleges and industry. The programme facilitated a two-month placement for teachers, where they were paired with individuals in the workplace who acted as their workplace trainers. Learning outcomes were identified prior to the placement and feedback was encouraged upon completion. A positive evaluation by the Economic Information Office in Finland noted that participants of the programme reported a wide range of benefits, ranging from increased knowledge of their specialism to improved self-esteem and confidence.²³⁴

Case study:

Requirements for work-based trainers in Austria

In Austria, teaching staff in colleges are required to have appropriate pedagogical qualifications and have three years of professional practice. Work-based trainers are also required to have specific qualifications, either through passing an examination which forms part of the requirements for master craftsperson status, or to complete a 40-hour training course and occupation-specific interview. Further requirements are also placed on host employers, as each one delivering VET in the workplace has to have a sufficient number of qualified trainers to cater for the students they are hosting.²³⁵

234 OECD, OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Review of the Netherlands, October 2013, p. 38.

235 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf, p. 24.

PROPOSAL 23

Tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training will be required to have recent experience of their industry and relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications.

Steedman also highlights minimum standards of training for the workplace mentors provided by host employers as a further key element of best practice.²³⁶ Adequate training and support is also required to help the mentor with the interlinked tasks of developing the young person’s practical skills²³⁷ and their wider knowledge of work practices and behaviours.²³⁸ Best practice recommends taking appropriate measures to “train the trainer”, which is often led by the training provider to ensure the mentor is engaged in their role and has a clear understanding of the learning outcomes required by the programme.²³⁹ Specifying previous experience in their field before they can train a participant is also recommended, as is stipulating a maximum number of participants that can be assigned to a supervisor.

236 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf , p. 15.

237 Ibid.

238 EC, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors – A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners, December 2013. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/apprentice-trainee-success-factors_en.pdf , p. 23.

239 Ofsted, Good Practice in Involving Employers in Work-Related Education and Training, October 2010, <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/surveys-and-good-practice/g/Good%20practice%20in%20involving%20employers%20in%20work-related%20education%20and%20training.pdf> , p. 17.

PROPOSAL 24

Workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training will be required to have appropriate experience of their industry, hold relevant occupational qualifications and undertake training as mentors.

Measuring outcomes

A final key element of quality assurance concerns data collection and analysis. A study by Cedefop in 2013 highlighted that data collection on student retention and attainment is often lacking, with only some countries²⁴⁰ making use of registration and tracking systems. Both Steedman and Oates argue that high-quality data, including on progression, is essential for steering the system to ensure it delivers on the needs of the local economy, providing early warnings for when intervention is necessary.^{241 242} In Scotland, the OECD praised the Modern Apprenticeships programme, drawing on evidence of positive results for job outcomes for participants six months after completion. For other professional and technical programmes in Scotland, however, outcome data was limited, and a focus on evidence of work-based learning and job outcomes was recommended as the key indicators to assess quality going forward.²⁴³

Structured data collection across all aspects of VET will enable both rigorous evaluations of individual interventions and comparisons between delivery models, providing a robust evidence base to inform policymakers in the future.²⁴⁴ The Australian National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) is an international exemplar of this approach, alongside European examples such as

240 Cedefop, Keeping young people in (vocational) education: what works?, December 2013, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9084_en.pdf , p. 2

241 Steedman, H., Overview of Apprenticeship Systems and Issues – ILO contribution to the G20 Task Force on Unemployment, International Labour Organisation, November 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_190188.pdf , p. 15

242 Oates, T., Towards a New VET: Effective Vocational Education and Training, Cambridge Assessment, January 2013, <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/122543-towards-a-new-vet-effective-vocational-education-and-training.pdf> , p.14

243 Kuczera, M., OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training – A Skills Beyond School Commentary on Scotland, OECD, December 2013, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/ASkillsBeyondSchoolCommentaryOnScotland.pdf> , p 8

244 Wilson, T., BIS Research Paper Number 101: Review of training for young people with Low Qualifications, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, February 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70226/bis-13-608-youth-unemployment-review-of-training-for-young-people-with-low-qualifications.pdf , p. 30

the Federal Institute for VET (BIBB) in Germany.²⁴⁵ Data collection and monitoring should highlight how interventions are working for different groups, including young people who may face barriers to engagement and progression, such as individuals with a disability or those leaving care.

PROPOSAL 25

The youth training system will be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation.

Beyond quantitative data measuring completion, achievement and progression, more qualitative analysis of the youth training system can help to ensure that it is delivering for participants. Young people should have the facility to provide feedback to the training provider, the employer and ideally an external body on their experience of training both in and out of the workplace. Stakeholders attending a forum to discuss the review proposed a range of methods to give young people a way to rate the quality of their work placements, including through an online service, text messaging, one-to-one feedback sessions or group meetings. One example of constructive feedback such as this is found in VET programmes in Austria, where all learners are required to maintain a work diary documenting details of activities they have participated in throughout their placement. Combined with regular contact between the participant, the employer and the training provider, this diary becomes an active tool to link the work-based training to their wider studies.²⁴⁶

PROPOSAL 26

Feedback mechanisms will be put in place for participants to report their experiences of training and work-based learning.

245 OECD, OECD reviews of Vocational Education and Training – Learning for Jobs, OECD, May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/LearningForJobsPointersfor%20PolicyDevelopment.pdf> , pp. 19 and 33.

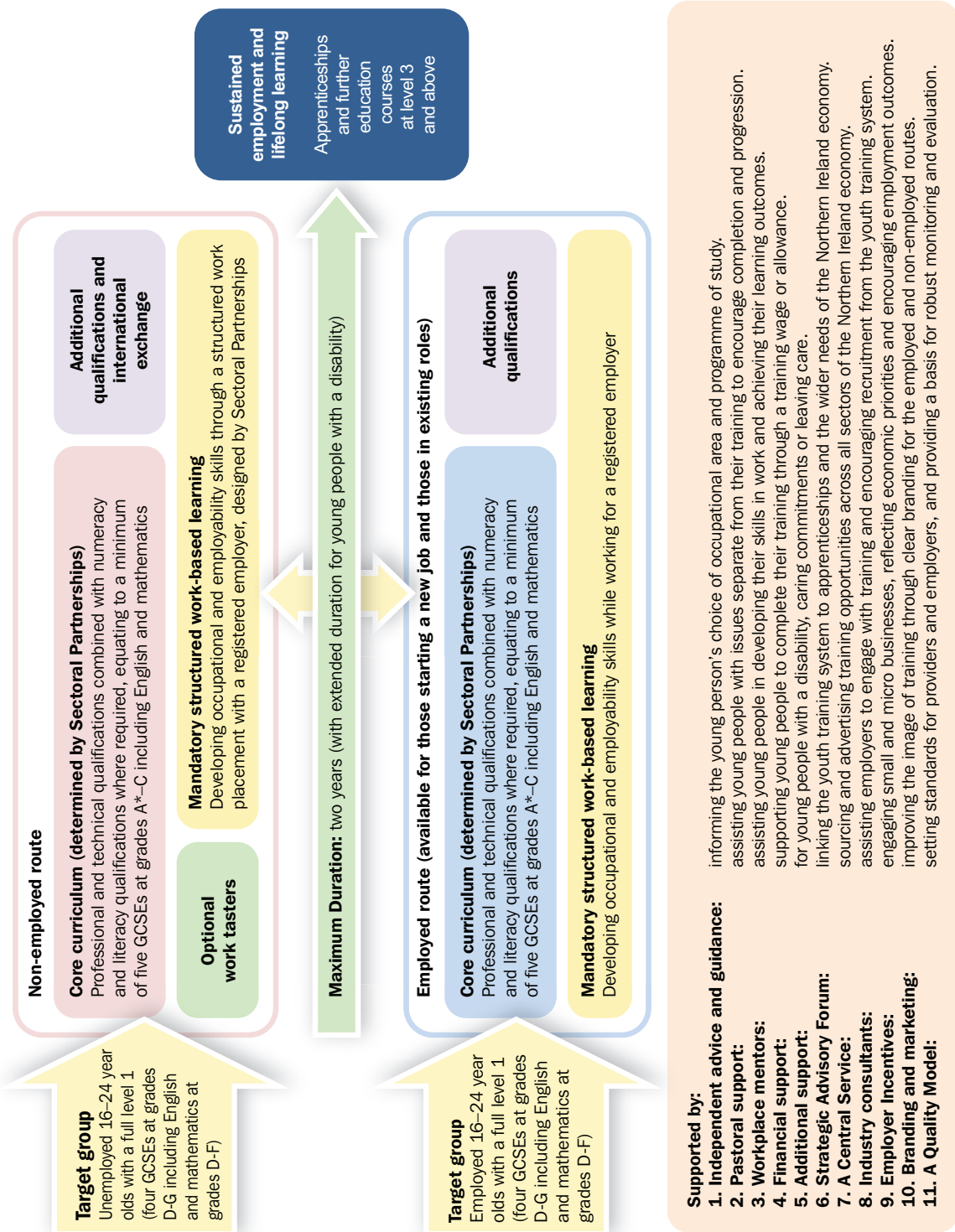
246 EC, Work-Based Learning in Europe: Practices and Policy Pointers, June 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf , p. 30.

Theme 4:**ENSURING QUALITY****Summary of proposals**

- 20.** A registration and approval system will be introduced via the central service for employers participating in the youth training system.
- 21.** Work-based learning will be underpinned by a clear contractual agreement between the young person, the host employer and the training provider.
- 22.** Only those providers who achieve prescribed quality standards will be funded to deliver youth training.
- 23.** Tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training will be required to have recent experience of their industry and relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications.
- 24.** Workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training will be required to have appropriate experience of their industry, hold relevant occupational qualifications and undertake training as mentors.
- 25.** The youth training system will be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation.
- 26.** Feedback mechanisms will be put in place for participants to report their experiences of training and work-based learning.

Figure 3.9 presents the completed youth training system, demonstrating how the proposals highlighted in this section combine with proposals from previous sections.

Figure 3.9:
The youth training system (incorporating proposals 1-26)



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Supporting Initiatives

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SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

The youth training system outlined in the previous chapter cannot be achieved in isolation, and sits within the wider landscape of professional and technical training provided by the Department. Beyond the youth training system, young people will require access to qualifications at entry level and level 1; high quality careers advice and guidance; professional and technical qualifications which are valued by participants and employers; support to develop good relations and citizenship; employability support and assistance with additional requirements.

The key initiatives that will support the proposals outlined in this report include:

- Securing our Success: the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships;
- the Review of Careers Education and Guidance;
- the Professional and Technical Qualifications Strategy;
- the further education strategy – vision for further education;
- the United Youth programme; and
- the Disability Employment and Skills Strategy.

This chapter outlines further detail on each of these initiatives.

Securing our Success: the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships

While apprenticeships will be a key progression route from the youth training system, the key role that apprenticeships will play from levels 3 to 8 in the future skills landscape has enabled this review's focus on level 2 provision. The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships, 'Securing our Success', sets out a series of policy commitments to be delivered through a range of projects to deliver the future apprenticeship model. Youth training will provide the main conduit for young people to get the skills and experience they need to progress into an apprenticeship (now to commence at level 3). The new apprenticeship model is expected to be fully tested and operational by September 2016.

The Review of Careers Education and Guidance

A critical component of the proposed youth training system is that young people's choices be informed through independent careers advice and guidance before starting, and upon completion of training. The Department, together with the Department of Education, is currently undertaking a review of careers education and guidance. This review aims to ensure that provision reflects the needs of a modern, vibrant and dynamic 21st century economy in which all individuals regardless of age, aspiration or ability, as well as key influencers such as parents and teachers, have access to independent, high-quality advice to help maximise their potential and contribute to their community and the Northern Ireland economy. It will have a particular focus on the role of careers education and guidance in balancing skills supply and demand in the current and future labour market.

Professional & Technical Qualifications Strategy

The proposed youth training system will provide a mechanism to transition young people into higher-level professional and technical training at level 3 and above through delivering recognised and relevant professional and technical qualifications at level 2 through a new, baccalaureate-style award. For this new curriculum to have value, it is essential that the professional and technical qualifications delivered in Northern Ireland are robust, highly relevant to employers' needs, take account of future job opportunities, are based on national occupational standards to ensure portability for learners, are of high quality, enable progression, and are valued by those who use them, including employers and other educational institutions. The professional and technical qualifications system across the United Kingdom has become fragmented in recent years, with policy decisions impacting upon the nature of qualifications developed by awarding organisations. The Department is, therefore, developing a professional and technical qualifications strategy to identify the nature and design of such qualifications, consider how they should be developed and awarded, and consider how qualifications should be regulated within Northern Ireland.

Further Education Strategy – vision for further education

Further education colleges are a key delivery partner for youth training. The new further education strategy aims to develop colleges which will be recognised locally, regionally and internationally for their delivery of high-quality and economically relevant education and training provision. This provision will be delivered by highly skilled staff who understand employers' skills needs, who are at the forefront of developments in education and training, and who will maintain this high level of competence and industrial knowledge through continuous professional development and employer placements. The strategy will ensure that further education is focused on achieving excellence in delivering the skills needed for the economy of today and tomorrow and is ambitious for its contribution to lifting the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy. The strategy will be built around a number of core themes comprising: curriculum content and delivery; economic engagement; quality and performance; internationalisation; and social inclusion.

The United Youth programme

By preparing young people for the requirements of jobs both now and in future, the youth training system will form part of a wider set of provision designed to develop all aspects of a young person's development, including through opportunities to foster good relations and enhance citizenship. The United Youth programme, which the Department is leading in designing and developing, is a major commitment of the Northern Ireland Executive's Good Relations Strategy, 'Together: Building a United Community'. It is aimed at young people aged 16–24 to build their capacity, prepare them for leadership, and improve community relations. It will provide a distinctive role in supporting young people to achieve their full potential, building upon the capabilities of young people across all levels to help them overcome challenges and prepare them effectively for the future with suitable routes for progression. The youth training system will be a key progression route for young people engaged in the United Youth programme.

Disability Employment and Skills Strategy

One of the proposals for the new youth training system is that additional support and flexibility is provided to those young people that would benefit. The Department is currently developing a new 'Disability Employment and Skills Strategy', to ensure that disability support, and associated resource, is focused on those people with more significant disability-related barriers to work, and who therefore need additional specialist, flexible and personalised support. The strategy is being produced in conjunction with the local disability sector, who have a significant role to play in helping achieve the key objective of the proposed strategy, which is to assist as many disabled people as possible to find, sustain and retain paid employment, or to start up their own business. The strategy will focus on young disabled people who are participating in the range of transitions services that the Department has lead responsibility for, including vocational, professional and employability skills training programmes, and further and higher education.

The proposed strategy presents an opportunity to take a collaborative and cohesive approach to creating a clear pathway from education through to sustained employment for those young people who have significant disability-related barriers, but who want to work and are capable of doing so. A period of public consultation on the strategy proposals is due to commence in the early part of 2015.

The key supporting initiatives detailed above and the wider work of the Department will assist in the delivery of the youth training system, and in so doing, contribute to improved skills and labour market integration for all young people in Northern Ireland.

Next Steps

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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 youth training system in Northern Ireland. We will publish the way forward in early 2015.

In the interim, we will continue to develop proposals to examine how we can:

- link the proposed approach with ongoing pilot testing activity being taken forward through the implementation of the NI Strategy on Apprenticeships;
- pilot elements of the proposed approach, including methods of securing high-quality work-based learning opportunities for young people;
- brand and market the youth training system to engage young people, employers, parents/guardians and other key stakeholders; and
- begin to scope out development of the new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2.

ANNEXES

- A. Qualification levels
- B. Expert Panel membership
- C. Current provision
- D. Consultation questions
- E. Shared Future proofing

ONLINE ANNEXES

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>

- F. Terms of reference
- G. Background evidence
- H. Leavers survey
- I. Employer survey
- J. Equality screening

ANNEX A QUALIFICATION LEVELS

Level	National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Examples	Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Examples	Framework for Higher Education (FHEQ) Examples
8	City and Guilds Institute Fellowship	Diplomas in strategic direction	Doctorates
7	Post-graduate certificates and diplomas	Advanced professional certificates	Masters Degrees
6	National Diploma in Professional Production Skills	BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas	Bachelor Degrees
5	Higher National Diplomas	Foundation Degrees	Diplomas of Higher Education
4	NVQs at level 4	BTEC Professional Diplomas	Certificates of Higher Education
3	A-levels	BTEC Nationals	
2	GCSEs at grades A*-C	BTEC diplomas at level 2	
1	GCSEs at grades D-G	BTEC certificates at level 1	

ANNEX B

EXPERT PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Name	Organisation
Ann McGregor	NI Chamber of Commerce
Barry Neilson	CITB Construction Skills
Bill McGinnis	Skills Advisor
Brian Doran	SRC
Bryan Keating	Matrix
Carol Phillips	Bombardier
Dennis Murray	Impact Training
Gavin Killeen	Nuprint
Gerry McGrath	Workforce Training
Glyn Roberts	NIIRTA
Gordon Parkes	NIE
Ian Jeffers	Prince's Trust
Kirsty McManus²⁴⁷	CBI
Liam McNeill	Bryson
Marie Mallon²⁴⁸	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
Malachy McAleer	SWC
Marie-Therese McGivern	BMC
Mark Huddleston	ESP limited
Mark Langhammer	ATL
Roisin McKee	People 1st
Ronnie Moore	Energy and Utility Skills
Wilfred Mitchell	FSB
Roseann Kelly	Women in Business Ltd.
Peter Dixon	Phoenix Group
Conor Nellis	The Link Works
Judith Compton²⁴⁹	UKCES
Andrew Brownlee	Development and Innovation at Institutes of Technology

247 Left organisation in June 2014.

248 Retired from organisation as of November 2014.

249 Retired from organisation as of November 2014.

ANNEX C

CURRENT PROVISION

A summary of the Department's current provision for differing age groups is shown below.

Programme title	Programme Overview	16-17	18-24	25+
Training for Success (TfS)	<p>TfS provides training to give participants the tools and skills they need to get a job. TfS (2013) is delivered through four options – Skills for Your Life, Skills for Work Level 1, Skills for Work Level 2 and Skills for Work Level 3.</p> <p>* Extended eligibility – under 22 years for those with a disability, and under 24 years for those who qualify under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002).</p>	✓	X*	X
ApprenticeshipsNI	<p>ApprenticeshipsNI provides participants with the opportunity to take part in a Level 2/Level 3 Apprenticeship where the apprentice, in paid employment, works towards achieving an industry-approved Level 2/Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework.</p> <p>** Conditions apply.</p>	✓	✓	✓ ^{***}
Further education	<p>Further education delivers a wide range of professional and technical education and training.</p>	✓	✓	✓
Steps 2 Success	<p>Steps 2 Success is designed to help unemployed adults, who have been receiving Jobseekers Allowance for a period of time, build the skills and experience needed to find and keep a job, providing a personalized service tailored to meet individual need.</p>	X	✓	✓

Programme title	Programme Overview	16-17	18-24	25+
<p>Youth Employment Scheme (YES)</p>	<p>YES helps young unemployed people find permanent work, by giving them the opportunity to develop skills through practical workplace experience during work placements. Opportunities range from short to longer-term options, with placements of between two weeks and several months available.</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>X</p>
<p>Bridge to Employment</p>	<p>This programme offers bespoke recruitment and pre-employment training designed to get new recruits job ready from day one of their employment.</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Skills Solutions</p>	<p>Provides employers with a learning and skills service which identifies and meets their training needs by providing information, support and signposting to the most appropriate solution.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>Customised Training</p>	<p>Designed to enhance the skills base within a Small to Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) this programme looks to create tailored projects for businesses where no other training product exists at Level 2 or above.</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>

Programme title	Programme Overview	16–17	18–24	25+
<p>Pathways to Success</p>	<p>Pathways to Success is the Northern Ireland strategy for those young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). It was developed to help young people who face barriers to participation and introduces a number of new initiatives within the context of existing and developing programmes of intervention to tackle youth unemployment.</p>	✓	✓	✗
<p>Northern Ireland European Social Fund (NIESF)</p>	<p>NIESF aims to help reduce economic inactivity and increase workforce skills. It contributes to social protection and social inclusion by supporting actions to extend employment opportunities to people at a disadvantage in the labour market.</p>	✓	✓	✓

ANNEX D

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Review of Youth Training: A summary of Proposals and Consultation Questions

The consultation will be open for submissions from 18th November 2014 to 10th February 2015. The consultation response booklet can be downloaded from the DEL website at <http://delni.gov.uk/review-of-youth-training>

Theme 1:	CORE COMPONENTS FOR THE YOUTH TRAINING SYSTEM
1.	Youth training will be available to all young people aged 16–24 who require training at level 2. It will be accessible to those starting a new job, those in existing roles, and those not yet in employment.
2.	The youth training system will provide a new baccalaureate-style professional and technical award at level 2, equating to a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A*–C including English and mathematics.
3.	Structured work-based learning, whether through employment or a work placement, will be a mandatory element of the youth training system. It will be the primary method for developing skills, including employability, and will offer short, project-based work tasters for those not yet in employment.
4.	Youth training will provide opportunities to study additional qualifications that are relevant to the interests of the individual young person and to the requirements of employers.
5.	Young people will be supported to attain a minimum of a full level 1 (four GCSEs at grades D–G, including English and mathematics at grades D–F) before commencing youth training.
6.	Youth training will be designed to take a maximum of two years to complete.

Theme 1 (Part A)

Question 1a: Do you agree that youth training should be available to all young people aged 16–24 requiring training at level 2?

Question 1b: Should level 2 youth training be accessible to those starting a new job?

Question 1c: Should level 2 youth training be accessible to those in existing job roles?

Question 1d: Should level 2 youth training be accessible to those not yet in employment?

Question 2a: Do you agree that youth training should deliver a breadth of learning through a new, baccalaureate-style award, equating to a minimum of five GCSEs at grades A*–C, including English and mathematics?

Question 2b: Do you agree this breadth of learning for youth training at level 2 will be sufficient to progress to level 3 apprenticeships or further education at level 3?

Question 3a: Do you agree that structured work-based learning, whether through employment or a structured work placement, should be a mandatory element of youth training?

Question 3b: Do you agree work-based learning is the best approach to develop skills, including employability?

Question 3c: Do you agree that youth training should facilitate opportunities for short, project-based work tasters for those who are not in employment before they commence a programme of study in a given occupational area? How best could work tasters be delivered?

Question 4a: Do you agree that youth training should provide opportunities to study additional qualifications?

Question 4b: What additional qualifications would be most relevant to integrate into the youth training curriculum?

Question 5a: Do you agree that a full level 1 (four GCSEs at grades D–G, including English and mathematics at grades D–F) is a suitable entry minimum requirement for the youth training system?

Question 5b: How can government best support learners who have not acquired the minimal level?

Question 6: Do you agree that the duration for youth training should be two years?

Theme 1 (Part B) General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 1–6.

Theme 2:

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

- 7.** Independent careers advice and guidance, informed by the skills barometer, will be provided to young people before starting training and upon completion.
- 8.** Pastoral support will be provided to assist young people to complete their training and progress into employment or higher-level options.
- 9.** Workplace mentors will be provided to assist young people to develop their employability skills and achieve their learning outcomes.
- 10.** Financial support will be provided to help young people complete their training, through a training wage or allowance.
- 11.** Support and flexibility will be provided for young people with additional requirements (e.g. individuals with a disability, caring commitments or those leaving care).
- 12.** Youth training will make use of online technologies to prepare young people for the workplace and facilitate opportunities for international exchange.

Theme 2 (Part A)

Question 7: Do you agree that young people should receive independent careers advice and guidance, before starting training, and upon completion?

Question 8a: Do you agree that pastoral support should be provided to assist young people in their training?

Question 8b: In your opinion what forms of pastoral support would best engage and assist young people and encourage progression?

Question 9: Do you agree that employers should provide workplace mentors to assist young people to develop their employability skills and achieve their learning outcomes?

Question 10a: Do you agree that financial assistance should be provided to support young people to complete their training?

Question 10b: What form of financial assistance would best support young people to complete their training?

Question 11a: Do you agree that young people with additional requirements (e.g. individuals with a disability or those leaving care), should be given additional support to engage with youth training?

Question 11b: What support in your view would help young people with additional requirements (e.g. individuals with a disability or those leaving care) to engage in youth training?

Question 11c: In your view how best might additional support be delivered for these young people?

Question 12a: Do you agree that online technologies should be used to facilitate opportunities for work preparation or international exchange?

Question 12b: How might online technologies best be used to support opportunities for work preparation or international exchange?

Theme 2 (Part B) General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 7–12.

Theme 3:

**DELIVERY AND EMPLOYER
ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURES**

13. A Strategic Advisory Forum will advise government on the youth training system.

14. Sectoral Partnerships will define the qualifications to be delivered as part of the youth training curriculum for their sector, and also the duration, structure and timing of work placements.

15. A central service will facilitate the sourcing and advertising of work-based learning opportunities.

16. Dedicated industry consultants will source and manage work-based learning opportunities, and encourage employers to recruit young people from the youth training system.

17. Work-based learning opportunities for young people engaged in training will be sourced through engagement with all sectors of the Northern Ireland economy, including local councils and the wider public sector.

18. Consideration will be given to funding mechanisms and a range of incentives, to promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training, and align the youth training system with the priorities of the Northern Ireland economy.

19. Youth training will be supported by clear branding and marketing to employers, young people and parents.

Theme 3 (Part A)

Question 13a: Do you agree that a Strategic Advisory Forum should advise government on the youth training system?

Question 13b: How best could a Strategic Advisory Forum fulfil this role?

Question 14a: Do you agree that the Sectoral Partnerships should define the curriculum for youth training for their occupational area?

Question 14b: Do you agree that the Sectoral Partnerships determine duration, structure and timing of work placements?

Question 14c: Please provide your views on what measures would help young people be ready for the working environment.

Question 15a: Do you agree that a central service would facilitate the sourcing and advertising of work-based learning for the youth training system?

Question 15b: How could a central service fulfil this role?

Question 16a: Do you agree that an industry consultant should support the delivery of work-based learning and encourage recruitment of young people from the youth training system?

Question 16b: How best could the industry consultant best fulfil this role?

Question 17a: Do you agree that local councils and the wider public sector should facilitate work-based learning opportunities for young people engaged in training?

Question 17b: How could local councils and the wider public sector best fulfil this role?

Question 18a: Do you agree that funding and incentives would promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training, and align the youth training system with the priorities of the Northern Ireland economy?

Question 18b: How best could funding mechanisms and incentives promote participation by small and micro businesses, encourage employment outcomes for young people in training, and align the youth training system with the priorities of the Northern Ireland economy?

Question 19a: Do you agree that clear branding and marketing can help to engage employers, young people and parents/guardians in youth training?

Question 19b: Please comment on how you believe youth training can be best branded and marketed to employers, young people and parents/guardians.

Question 19c: In your opinion what should the proposed employed route, non-employed route and youth training system as a whole, be called?

Question 19d: In your opinion what should participants of youth training be called?

Question 19e: How could the youth training system best support participation by both genders across all occupational areas?

Theme 3 (Part B) General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 13–19.

Theme 4:

ENSURING QUALITY

- 20.** A registration and approval system will be introduced via the central service for employers participating in the youth training system.
- 21.** Work-based learning will be underpinned by a clear contractual agreement between the young person, the host employer and the training provider.
- 22.** Only those providers who achieve prescribed quality standards will be funded to deliver youth training.
- 23.** Tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training will be required to have recent experience of their industry and relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications.
- 24.** Workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training will be required to have appropriate experience of their industry, hold relevant occupational qualifications, and undertake training as mentors.
- 25.** The youth training system will be underpinned by robust data collection, analysis and evaluation.
- 26.** Feedback mechanisms will be put in place for participants to report their experiences of training and work-based learning.

Theme 4 (Part A)

Question 20: Do you agree that a registration and approval process would promote quality?

Question 21: Do you agree that there should be a clear contractual agreement between the young person, the host employer and the training provider? What should it include?

Question 22: Do you agree that providers be approved to deliver youth training only where they meet prescribed quality standards? What standards should be applied?

Question 23a: Do you agree that tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training should have relevant occupational and pedagogical qualifications? If so, what level of qualification is required?

Question 23b: Do you agree that tutors delivering the non-work-based elements of training should be required to have recent experience of their industry? If so, what breadth and depth of experience would be suitable?

Question 24a: Do you agree that workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training should be required to have appropriate experience of their industry? If so, what breadth and depth of experience would be suitable?

Question 24b: Do you agree that workplace mentors delivering the work-based elements of training should have relevant occupational qualifications or training as a mentor? If so, what level of qualification or training is required?

Question 25a: Do you agree that robust data should be collected, analysed and evaluated to ensure the quality of youth training?

Question 25b: What data should be collected, analysed and evaluated to ensure the quality of youth training?

Question 25c: In your view what mechanisms would be the best way to collect such data?

Question 26a: Do you agree that young people should have access to feedback mechanisms to report their experiences of youth training?

Question 26b: What feedback mechanisms would be most useful to allow young people to report their experiences of training?

Theme 4 (Part B) General Comment: Please provide any additional comments on proposals 20–26.

ANNEX E

SHARED FUTURE PROOFING

1. Does the proposed policy promote individuals from different religious, political, racial or other Section 75(1) backgrounds sharing or engaging together?	
Impact: Positive/ negative/ none	Positive impact.
Qualitative Evidence	<p>Under Priority 1, Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future, of the NI Executive’s Programme for Government 2011–15, there is a commitment to “support people (with an emphasis on young people) into employment by providing skills and training”.</p> <p>The proposed youth training system will be open to young people throughout Northern Ireland regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, marital status and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Youth training is designed for young people aged 16–24. However, this provision is an element of DEL’s wider support for all age groups.</p> <p>Structured work-based learning will be a mandatory element of youth training. This will allow young people to engage earlier with shared workplaces.</p> <p>Youth training will be offered across a wide range of occupations to ensure appeal to both male and female participants.</p> <p>Incentives will be designed to promote engagement with small and micro businesses which will encourage diversity in the workforce and boost shared workplaces.</p> <p>Specialist support and flexibility will be integrated into the proposed youth training system for individuals with disabilities and those with dependants.</p> <p>The provision of training will be in an integrated setting, both in the workplace and in the training provider’s premises.</p>

Quantitative Evidence	By helping young people transition into sustained employment, youth training will help to promote engagement and sharing by individuals from different backgrounds. Research from ECNI points to increased numbers of people working in integrated workplaces ²⁵⁰ and increased public support for employers taking steps to engage with sections of the community currently under-represented in their workforce. ²⁵¹
Possible Mitigating Measures	None required.

2. 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?

Impact: Positive/negative/none	Positive impact
Qualitative Evidence	<p>Access to the proposed youth training system will be open to young people 16–24 years old and inclusive of: religious belief; political opinion; racial group; marital status; sexual orientation; disability; those with dependants; and men and women.</p> <p>Additional support will be provided to individuals with barriers to engagement (e.g. young people leaving care, those with caring commitments or those with a disability).</p>

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

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

<p>Quantitative Evidence</p>	<p>Currently, only 38% of people with a disability are in employment, compared to 76.4% of those without.²⁵² 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).²⁵³</p> <p>ECNI survey 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.²⁵⁴</p>
<p>Possible Mitigating Measures</p>	<p>None required.</p>

252 Department of Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey, January–March 2014
http://www.detini.gov.uk/lfs_quarterly_supplement_january-march_2014.pdf?rev=0

253 Department of Finance and Personnel, Client Group Analysis – Summary of Statistics: February 2013, Department for Social Development, 2013

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

3. Does the proposed policy remove or address any barriers to people sharing?	
Impact: Positive/ negative/ none	Positive impact.
Qualitative Evidence	<p>The proposed youth training system will have additional support and flexibility for individuals with disabilities and those with dependants.</p> <p>Youth training will be offered across a wide range of occupations to ensure appeal to both male and female participants.</p>
Quantitative Evidence	<p>The proportion of total employment in Northern Ireland with low skills (below level 2) is set to fall from a level of 29% in 2005 to 16% (baseline) or 12% (aspirational) by 2020.²⁵⁵ By helping young people to achieve at level 2 and progress into higher-level options, youth training will promote greater integration into the labour market for all young people.</p>
Possible Mitigating Measures	Not applicable.

4. Does the proposed policy inadvertently erect any barriers to people sharing?

Impact: Positive/ negative/ none	No impact
Qualitative Evidence	The eligibility criteria for the youth training system is restricted to 16–24 year olds. This is part of a wider range of interventions to help people enhance skills and gain employment.
Quantitative Evidence	There is evidence that the challenges faced by young people are different from other unemployed groups, and require a primary focus on skills development rather than immediate transition into employment. ²⁵⁶
Possible Mitigating Measures	Provision for alternative age groups such as Steps to Success, mainstream further education and customised training.

256 Gorlich D. et al, Kiel Policy Brief: Youth Unemployment in Europe and the World: Causes, Consequences and Solutions, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, January 2013, http://www.ifw-kiel.de/wirtschaftspolitik/politikberatung/kiel-policy-brief/kpb-2013/KPB_59.pdf, page 2.

GLOSSARY

AppsNI	ApprenticeshipsNI
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CFSP	Community Family Support Programme
DE	Department of Education
DEL/ Department	Department for Employment and Learning
DfE	Department for Education (England)
EC	European Commission
ESF	European Social Fund
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
EU	European Union
Executive	Northern Ireland Executive
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
JET	Journey to Employment
MBO	Dutch upper-secondary system (<i>middelbaar beroepsonderwijs</i>)
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NIAES	Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PLA	Programme-led Apprenticeships
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
SBB	Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market in the Netherlands
SME	Small to medium-sized enterprise
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TfS	Training for Success
UKCES	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YES	Youth Employment Scheme

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