

FROM THE MINISTER



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**

www.delni.gov.uk

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Dear *Sydney*

FOLLOW UP FROM ORAL 5 – 12 JUNE 2012

I agreed to write to you to provide you with further information in relation to your query on the achievement of targets within the Department's 'Employer Engagement Plan', with specific reference to the projects which contain targets to be met by September 2012. A list of these projects, together with a brief update, is enclosed for your information as Annex A.

Yours sincerely,

DR STEPHEN FARRY MLA
Minister for Employment and Learning

cc: The Speaker's Office
Northern Ireland Assembly Library

ANNEX A

Simplifying the demand side advisory infrastructure

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will develop a streamlined and accessible demand side infrastructure.

UPDATE: Much work is ongoing in terms of improving our customer engagement and signposting of services to employers. However, the wider context of the lack of clarity about the future of the Department for Employment and Learning provides a degree of uncertainty in terms of time frames.

Harnessing Labour Market Information

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will provide improved access to clear and up to date current and future trends, in a way that is meaningful for each specific group of end users.

UPDATE: Initial work has been carried out to identify customer information requirements in relation to career planning. Work is progressing to tailor information, enhance current website provision and explore the suitability of other communication channels. The project is on track for completion by the end of September 2012.

Enhancing management and leadership training

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will have designed and piloted two management and leadership development intervention models for micro-business, across a range of sectors with a view to offering this provision to all micro-businesses

UPDATE: The timeframes for this project were pushed back due to inter dependencies on other work areas. It is now planned to have the pilot

programmes in place by March 2013 and there is considerable interest among micro businesses in working with the department on the project.

- By the end of September 2012, the Department with Invest NI will have in place an integrated framework for management and leadership to improve advice, support and provision for companies.

UPDATE: DEL and Invest NI have been working closely on this project which is now at the stage where mock ups of the online diagnostic tools (including questionnaires and reports) have been agreed. Work is ongoing with regard to the launch and marketing of the tools and the project is on track for completion.

Improving skills utilisation

- By September 2012, the Department will have identified best practice in high performance working and have begun to implement a policy which helps businesses apply best practice in the utilisation of the skills of their workforce.

UPDATE: Work on this project is ongoing and is on schedule to be completed within the timeframe. Desk research has been carried out on international best practice including Australia, Finland, and the Republic of Ireland, and meetings have been held with UK colleagues in both the Scottish Executive and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

Expanding the Skills Solutions Service

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will make contact with 600 employers through its Skills Solutions service and respond to their training needs.

UPDATE: By the end of March 2012, our Skills Solutions service, which works with employers to up-skill their existing employees, had made a total of 737 contacts with companies, exceeding the target of 600 contacts with employers by September 2012.

Undertaking a Review of Adult Training

- By September 2012, the Department will have established a policy and funding position for the training of adults in the workplace.

UPDATE: A review of adult training with the objective of making recommendations on the future policy and funding arrangements for the training of adults in the workplace, including apprenticeships, was initiated last Autumn and is now in its final stages.

Introducing a Higher Level Apprenticeship pilot

- By autumn 2012, the Department will have identified employers and launched a pilot initiative, with a view to wider roll out of best practice in 2013.

UPDATE: Progress on this project is on track. The Department is currently in discussion with relevant stakeholders in order to determine how best to take forward Level 4 apprenticeships in the Engineering and Information and Communication Technology sectors with the aim of having pilots in place by autumn 2012.

Recognising Company Training

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will develop and put in place a mechanism to assist employers to get their in-house training recognised. This will lead to more individuals with no or low qualifications attaining nationally recognised qualifications, which in turn leads to them being more productive and motivated in the workplace. The

Department will monitor the number of employers assisted to do this in 2012/13 to inform target setting in subsequent years.

UPDATE: This project is on track. The Department is working with the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to offer local employers advice and guidance on how they can have their in-house training regulated onto the Qualifications and Credit Framework or how such training can incorporate national occupational standards.

Expanding Assured Skills

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will, subject to the demands of foreign direct investment clients and expanding Northern Ireland businesses, deliver up to six projects under the Assured Skills programme, helping to create in excess of 600 jobs.

UPDATE: Six projects have been approved in the 2011/12 financial year through the joint Department for Employment and Learning/Invest NI Assured Skills initiative which supported the promotion of 726 jobs.

Expanding Placements and Scholarships

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will set out how it, together with other key players such as the business sub group on STEM, will work with employers to increase the number of placements and scholarships available.

UPDATE: This project is on track. A scoping study is being finalised which identifies examples of best practice throughout our colleges and universities. This will be used as a basis by which to inform how the Department will work with stakeholders to increase the number of placements and scholarships.

Focusing on Employability Skills

- By the end of September 2012, the Department will outline detailed proposals on how any gaps in the provision of employability skills in education will be addressed.

UPDATE: This project is on track. A scoping study is being finalised which identifies the range of activity currently being taken forward throughout our colleges and universities and examples of best practice. This will be used as a basis by which to inform how the Department takes forward this project.