

FROM THE MINISTER

Mrs Sandra Overend MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Adelaide House
39/49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD
Tel: 028 9025 7791
Fax: 028 9025 7919
email: private.office@delni.gov.uk

Our Ref: SUB/481/13

14 **November 2013**

Dear *Sandra*

FOLLOW UP TO ORAL QUESTIONS ON 5 NOVEMBER 2013 – ASSURED SKILLS

I undertook to write to you to set out the split of Assured Skills support between existing companies and potential foreign investors for our current projects.

There are currently ten Assured Skills Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects supporting the creation of 2,067 potential jobs. The nine companies (there are two projects with one company) are:

- **Heritage** – Heritage Group Limited is an independent provider of administration services to the private equity, pensions and insurance sectors. Assured Skills support is being used for induction training for new staff and continuing professional development of existing staff.
- **CVS Caremark** – One of the largest pharmacy health care providers in the United States, CVS have established an Information Development Centre in Belfast. The support offered to CVS by Assured Skills consists of delivery of pre-employment training programmes and funding for University and College collaboration.
- **Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME)** – CME is the world's leading and most diverse derivatives exchange and is headquartered in Chicago. Assured Skills is helping to support internal training within the company and support was also offered for collaborative activity with the higher and further education sectors to design and deliver bespoke training programmes.
- **Cowen Group** – Cowen Group are a globally diversified financial services firm based in New York. The support offered to Cowen by Assured Skills consists of

the delivery of up to three pre-employment training programmes and funding for University and College collaboration.

- **Axiom Global** – Axiom is a professional legal services firm who have established a centre of excellence in Belfast. Assured Skills support to Axiom consists of delivery of training in the practicalities of working in commercial legal practice and specific training based around clients business needs. Also included are pre-employment training programmes to assist Axiom in identifying and training suitable candidates for employment.
- **Andor Technology** – Andor is based in Belfast and operates at the high value end of the global scientific digital optics market. Andor was set up in 1989 as a spin-out company from Queen's University, Belfast. The Assured Skills programme will ensure that the skills needs of the senior management team within the company are met.
- **Caterpillar** – The company's main business activity is the manufacture of a range of diesel and gas powered generators. The company also operate a shared services centre in West Belfast. Assured Skills have made two offers of support to Caterpillar. The first offer was for the delivery of pre-employment and up-skilling training programmes for the shared service centre in West Belfast and includes an amount for University and College collaboration. The second project will support the creation of material handling posts by assisting with up-skilling costs.
- **BT** – BT is one of the world's largest providers of communication solutions and services. The assistance offered by Assured Skills to BT included the design and delivery of training programmes for new staff.
- **Stream/LBM** – Stream is a Minnesota-based global business process outsourcing company. The support offered to Stream by Assured Skills consists of the delivery of pre-employment training programmes and also up-skilling existing or newly recruited staff.

You will note that Andor, Caterpillar, BT and Stream/LBM are all companies which have been long established in Northern Ireland in one form or another and, hence, half of the current Assured Skills projects are with existing employers in Northern Ireland.

Alongside our colleagues in Invest Northern Ireland, we are continuing to speak to companies, both potential new investors and existing companies hoping to expand, about the support on offer to help them. I am confident there will be further announcements of new FDI projects in the not too distant future.

I should mention the other strand of our work under Assured Skills, where we work to enhance the capability of Northern Ireland to respond to the needs of potential FDI companies. We have, for example, worked with the University of Ulster to upskill over

300 unemployed graduates with qualifications of interest to financial services companies. We have also up-skilled lecturers in both further and higher education sectors in areas we anticipate will be required by future investors.

In response to your question on the floor of the Assembly, I mentioned the academy model that we are using across sectors to re-skill potential employees to enhance their employability. With just the Software Testers' Academy, we have worked with a range of local companies to meet their needs. These have included large companies such as Citigroup, Allstate and Liberty IT, but also smaller businesses such as Tascomi, Core Systems, Fluent Technologies and Texthelp, to name a few.

The aim of the Assured Skills programme to support companies to create new jobs in Northern Ireland, that includes companies who are thinking of coming here, or those who are already established.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen Farry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DR STEPHEN FARRY MLA
Minister for Employment and Learning

cc: The Speaker's Office
NIA Library