



Northern Ireland
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Programme for Government 2011-15: Areas of Note to the Committee for Employment and Learning

1 Introduction

The following paper discusses the recent PFG 2011-15 and its implications for the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), including strategic priorities, key goals and commitments. The paper also includes a brief discussion of the pertinent points from the previous PFG and what targets have been met.

2 Programme for Government 2008 - 2011

The Programme for Government 2008 - 2011¹ set out the NI government's strategic priorities and key plans for 2008 – 11.

¹ OFMDFM, Programme for Government 2008-2011 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg/pfg-2008-2011.htm>

It was used to determine the NI Budget and Investment strategy. A number of assessments were carried out on Departmental Delivery of the PFG, with the most recent review occurring in September 2010. The assessments were based on a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) scale, with key goals receiving a Red rating considered to be in danger of not being completed, Green as either met or on target, and Amber where some progress has been made but there is significant doubt around the achievement of the target outcomes in the targeted timeframe²

DEL had commitments under two strategic priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Growing a dynamic, innovative economy:
 - Increase by 300 the number of PhD research students at local Universities by 2010 – Green; and
 - Introduce a new programme to increase the commercialisation of University and College research by 2010 – Green.
- **Priority 5:** Deliver modern high quality and efficient public services:
 - Establish an Education and Skills Authority by 2009 – Red.

PFG 2008 – 2011 had the following Key Goals relevant to DEL:

- **KG 2:** Increasing the employment rate from 70% to 75% by 2020 – Amber;
- **KG 9:** Ensuring by 2015 that 80% of the working age population is qualified to at least GCSE level or equivalent – Amber;
- **KG 10:** Increasing the number of adult learners achieving a qualification in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills by 90,000 by 2015 – Green;
- **KG 11:** Increase by 25% the numbers of students, especially those from disadvantaged communities, at graduate and post graduate level studying STEM subjects by 2015 – Amber.

The table in Appendix 1 provides a summary of the areas DEL was responsible for and the progress made in achieving the Public Sector Agreements. Please note the data presented is for up to 30 September 2010 and is the most recent available source³.

² The Northern Ireland Executives Programme for Government 2008-2011 Delivery Report for period 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-delivery-report0809.pdf>

³ OFMDFM, Economic Policy Unit, PFG 2008-2011 Delivery Report as at September 2010 http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/programme_for_government_pfg_delivery_report_as_at_30_september_2010_v1.01.pdf

2 Draft Programme for Government 2011 - 2015⁴

The Draft PFG is guided by three principles:

- **Balanced sub regional growth:** The Government will ensure that all sub-regions are able to grow and prosper whilst recognising the importance of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry as key drivers of regional economic growth;
- **Equality:** The Government will ensure that no section of the community is left behind. Equality of opportunity, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations will be watchwords for all policies and programmes across government; and
- **Sustainability:** Sustainability policy is driven by intergenerational equity – securing a positive quality of life for present and future generations. To realise this, and to make sustainable development a hallmark of 21st Century government in Northern Ireland, the Government will work together, across and beyond organisational and social boundaries to promote and encourage its recognition and acceptance.

The Draft PFG 2011 – 2015 is based around five priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future;
- **Priority 2:** Creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and wellbeing;
- **Priority 3:** Protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities;
- **Priority 4:** Building a strong and shared community; and
- **Priority 5:** Delivering high quality and efficient public services.

In all the PFG has 76 Key Commitments, 4 of which are to be undertaken by DEL. For each of the Key Commitments, the PFG provides milestones/outputs for each year.

Table 1 below lists the Key Commitments for DEL.

Table 1: DEL Key Commitments under PFG 2011-15

Number ⁵	Priority	Key Commitment	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
1	1	Increase uptake in economically relevant STEM places.	180 additional places	360 additional places	540 additional places
2	1	Upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications	105,000 qualifications	53,000 qualifications	53,000 qualifications

⁴ Northern Ireland Executive, Draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/draft-pfg-2011-2015.pdf>

⁵ Number assigned by the Author and not included in the PFG document

Number ⁶	Priority	Key Commitment	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
3	2	Support people (with an emphasis on young people) into employment by providing skillset training.	65,000	89,000 cumulative	114,000 cumulative
4	2	Ensure there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation for NI students studying here.	Apply Policy	Apply Policy	Apply Policy

Please note, 2012/13 includes figures for 2011/12.

2.1 Comments and Potential Committee Action Points

The Committee may wish to note that under PFG 2008 – 11, DEL was responsible for 13 PSAs but under the current Draft PFG it is responsible for 4 Key Commitments. This is a significant reduction in responsibilities for the Department to deliver under the PFG. In comparison, DETI is responsible for delivering 11 Key Commitments for the 2011-15 PFG and had been responsible for 18 PSAs in the 2008-11 strategy.

Of the four KC's, one involves ensuring there is no increase in student fees beyond the rate of inflation during the current mandate (which is Executive policy and has previously been announced).

The Committee may wish to consider the following Action Points which consider the outputs and milestones of the PFG. Each comment states which of the DEL related Key Commitments it is referring to:

- **Key Commitment 1:** The Committee may wish to ask the Department what actions it will be taking to encourage people to take on STEM places and at what level these subjects will be taught (whilst it mentions the number of places, it does not make it clear if the places are in Higher Education or Further Education);
- **Key Commitment 2:** The Committee may wish to ask the Department what qualifications, and at what level, will be delivered under this Key Commitment;
- **Key Commitment 2:** The Committee may also wish to ask the Department how many qualifications this amounts to than is currently achieved in NI (for example, in 2009/10 7,275 people completed degrees, 13.7% of the PFG target for all qualifications); and
- **Key Commitment 3:** The Committee may wish to ask the Department what type of support will be provided through skill set training, including what type of training will

⁶ Number assigned by the Author and not included in the PFG document

be provided, will it include qualifications and if so is this figure included in the “upskilling qualifications” key commitment;

- The Committee may wish to note that a number of actions that had been attributed to DEL in the last PFG are not included in the 2011-15 PFG. This includes areas such as Priority 4 PSA 16 “*To enhance student learning and research excellence and maintain the competitiveness of the HE institution*”⁷. The Committee may wish to ask the Department why this and other areas were not included in the draft 2011-15 PFG (as, for example, this may be a result of targets having being met or a shift of Departmental or Executive priorities); and
- Given the wide remit of the Department for Employment and Learning (for example Higher Education, Further Education, skills training and research and development at Higher Education Institutes⁸) and these areas importance as economic building blocks, it should be noted that the actions to be taken by DEL under the PFG are limited. The Committee may wish to ask the Department what input it is having in other areas within the PFG especially in light of its remit and the importance these areas have on the NI Economy.

⁷ OFMDFM, Programme for Government 2008-2011 <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg/pfg-2008-2011.htm>

⁸ For further information on the Departments remit please see <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/about-the-dept.htm> for details on its areas of activity

PFG 2008 - DEL Areas of action and outcomes

	Priority	PSA	Objective	Action	Target	Target Outcome
1	1	1	4. Promote higher value-added activity through innovation and the commercial exploitation of R&D	Implementation of the FE Strategy for Northern Ireland, in particular the direct support that FE colleges can provide to employers in areas such as innovation, productivity, design, and business development and incubation.	By December 2008 to have established baselines and monitoring arrangements to measure the volume of direct support that further education colleges provide to employers, and to measure the level of employer satisfaction with the support provided.	Completed
2	1	1	5. To develop and sustain a Higher Education research sector that holds a strong position within the UK and beyond and makes a major contribution to economic and social well-being	Support MATRIX, which will co-ordinate business, Government and academia and develop a more effective relationship between industry and the R&D/science base. DETI/DEL/Invest NI to work with DFP to secure the necessary resources for permanent "Third Stream" funding in Northern Ireland's universities to increase knowledge transfer and co-operation between the tertiary education sector and local industry.	1. Measurable improvements in research quality as measured by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (DN: no direct comparison between 2001 and 2008 RAE, will be possible due to changes in output, i.e. - the results being produced as a graded profile rather than a fixed seven point scale). 2. Increase by 10% the key Knowledge Transfer indicators as measured by the Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) Survey for Academic Year 2010/11 (HE-BCI 2011 survey published 2012). (DN: DEL's current metrics based NI HEIF 2 allocations run from AY 2007/08 to AY 2010/11. The key HEBCI metrics inform these funding allocations)	1. Completed 2. Green
3	1	1	6. Increase the level of skills to aid productivity improvements in manufacturing and tradable services	Delivery of actions outlined under PSA 2	Delivery of targets outlined under PSA 2	
4	1	2	1. Understand the current demand for skills and assess the future skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy and businesses at a local and regional level	Publication of a report of a review of Labour Market Information in NI by 2008 Skills Expert Group develop, regional Employment and Skills Action Plans. Sector Skills Councils develop Sector Skills Agreement	1. A better match between skills demand and skills supply 2. Action Plan developed by March 2009. 3. All Agreements in place by December 2008	2. Completed 3. Completed
5	1	2	2. Improve the skills level of the workforce	Implementation of Success through Skills: the Skills Strategy for NI by 2015 Improve opportunities for adults to update their essential skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT through implementation of the Essential Skills Strategy. Implementation of the Further Education (FE) Strategy for Northern Ireland, in particular increasing the proportion of college provision that is at Level 2 and Level 3 Increase Apprenticeship training completion rates under Training for Success (and residual Jobskills).	1. To have all current component projects of Success through Skills launched by 2010/11. 2. A review of Success Through Skills will be completed during 2008 for publication in Spring 2009 3. By March 2011, 42,000 adult learners will have achieved a recognised qualification in Essential Skills 4. Increase the proportion of the working age population who are qualified at skill level 2 and above to 80% by 2015. 5. Increase the proportion of Further Education enrolments at Level 2 from 29% in 2005/06 to 32% in 2010/11. 6. Increase the proportion of the working age population who are qualified at skill level 3 and above to 60% by 2015. 7. Increase the proportion of Further Education enrolments at Level 3 from 57% in 2005/06 to 60% in 2010/11. 8. Increase Apprenticeship training completion rates under Training for Success (and residual Jobskills) to 44% at Level 3 by 2009/10.	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Completed 4. Amber 5. Amber 6. Amber 7. Green 8. Completed
6	1	2	3. Improve the quality and relevance of education to the economy	Strategy and framework for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (DE/DEL) in place Introduce Learning for Life and Work into the School Curriculum by 2011 Support schools to secure access to the wider range of courses required under the Entitlement Framework (needs some development/clarity) (DE) Implementation of the FE Strategy for Northern Ireland, in particular the provision of an economically focused curriculum in FE colleges that will support the Northern Ireland economy by meeting the identified skills needs of individual employers. Development and implementation of a HE strategy.	1. After consultation to launch Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy CEIAG and an implementation plan by June 2008. 2. Increase in the quality of FE and training provision as assessed by ETI 3. Increase the proportion of Further Education enrolments in Northern Ireland's priority skills areas from 25% in 2005/06 to 28% in 2010/11. 4. Increase the proportion of Further Education enrolments that are on NQF courses from 91% in 2005/06 to 95% in 2010/11. 5. Increase the proportion of Further Education enrolments that are on professional and technical courses from 82% in 2005/06 to 90% in 2010/11 6. Increase the quality of higher education provision as assessed by QAA	1. Completed 2. Completed 3. Red 4. Green 5. Green 6. Completed
7	1	2	4. Increase skills and career choices in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects	Take steps to increase uptake in stem subjects Increase links with local industry to promote STEM	1. Increase by 5% the numbers studying STEM subjects in post 16 cohort by 2011. 2. By 2011, to have implemented a joint DE/DEL strategy to address the shortage of skills in science, technology and mathematics disciplines.	1. Amber 2. Amber/Green
8	1	3	1. Tackle the skills barriers to employment and employability	Implementation of the Further Education (FE) Strategy for Northern Ireland, in particular ensuring that sufficient emphasis is placed on college activity that supports social inclusion and lifelong learning. Implementation of strategy and framework for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Development and implementation of a regional strategy to widen participation in Higher Education by groups who are currently under-represented, in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds, minority ethnic communities and students with learning difficulties and disabilities	1. Increase the proportion of FE enrolments from the more deprived Northern Ireland regions, as defined by the Northern Ireland multiple deprivation measures, from 22% in 2005/06 to 24% in 2010/11. 2. By 2011, make progress, year on year, towards fair access to higher education. 3. By 2015, increase the proportion of working age population in Neighbourhood Renewal areas qualified to level 2 (including qualifications on the NQF).	1. Amber/Green 2. Amber 3. Amber
9	1	3	2. Deliver a high quality employment service, providing support for employers and helping people return to work	Evaluation of Steps to Work pilots to address barriers to employment and introduction across NI including to New Deal clients. Availability of Pathways to Work for IB clients and new Employment and Support Allowance clients and support for Lone Parents Introduction of a modernised front line employment service Implementation of Employment Service Employer Engagement Strategy. Availability of specific Disability Employment Programmes.	1. Assist 70,000 working age benefit clients to move into employment by March 2011, subject to economic conditions. 2. Increase by 25% use of e-vacancy by employers by March 2011. 3. Deliver a modernised employment service by March 2011.	1. Completed 2. Red 3. Green
10	2	6	3. Improve the life chances of children leaving care	Develop effective referral processes between HSS Trusts and NI Careers Service	1. By 2011, increase by 50% the proportion of care leavers in education, training, or employment at age 19.	1. Amber
11	2	10	2. Reduce the gap in educational outcomes by addressing the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people	Implementation of Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and School Improvement Policy. Review the Education and Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme to access its impact on student retention and attainment in post compulsory education and training.		
12	2	12	2. Regenerate disadvantaged urban areas	Work across Government to close the gap in quality of life for those living in Neighbourhood Renewal areas and the rest of Northern Ireland	In line with targets outlined in PSAs 3, 9 and 11 Achieve measurable long-term reductions in health, educational and employment differentials for those living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.	Amber
13	4	16	5. To enhance student learning and research excellence and maintain the competitiveness of the HE institution Take forward a programme of £134m during 2008-2011 to develop and enhance the infrastructure of the HE and FE sectors	Through joint Area Planning with the Department of Education, ensure that the FE estate is developed in a way which meets the needs of learners in the six new college areas. Support the strategic development of HE infrastructure to enhance student learning and research excellence and maintain the competitiveness of the HE institutions,	1. The provision of a quality, sustainable and fit for purpose FE estate. 2. The provision of a quality, sustainable and fit for purpose HE estate	No details on either provided in 2011 monitoring report