

**APPENDIX 1**

**BELFAST EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS  
STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

**March 2010**

# CONTENTS

<b>Preface</b> .....	3
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	6
1.1 Belfast City Council .....	6
1.2 Employability & Skills.....	8
1.3 City Strategies.....	11
<b>2 THE CONTEXT</b> .....	16
2.1 Belfast City Economic Profile.....	16
2.2 Demographics.....	16
2.3 The Economy .....	17
2.4 Employment .....	17
2.5 Unemployment.....	18
2.6 Labour Market Structure.....	20
2.7 Earnings .....	21
2.8 Claimant Count .....	21
2.9 Deprivation.....	22
2.10 Economic Forecasts.....	24
<b>3 VISION &amp; STRATEGY</b> .....	25
3.1 Vision .....	25
3.2 Core Purpose .....	26
3.3 Role of the Board.....	26
3.4 Strategic Priorities.....	27
<b>4 ACTION PLAN</b> .....	28
4.1 Priority 1: Connecting people and jobs .....	28
4.2 Priority II: Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities.....	34
<b>5 GOVERNANCE &amp; MANAGEMENT</b> .....	36
5.1 Role of the Board.....	36
5.2 Stakeholder Forum .....	37
5.3 Learning Neighbourhoods Forum.....	38
5.4 Public Sector Employment Forum.....	38
5.5 Delivering the Strategy.....	39

## PREFACE

The purpose of this draft strategy is to inform discussion and negotiation between partners within Belfast in respect to the development of an overarching strategic framework in which to address employability and skills issues. The strategy resulted out of a lengthy development process which was facilitated by Belfast City Council commencing in April 2009. The council brought together key stakeholders to discuss and formulate ideas and plans to develop a 'City Strategy' type initiative for Belfast based upon existing best practice in the United Kingdom.

Belfast City Council invited senior representatives from the following organisations to participate in a Belfast Employment and Skills Board:

- Department for Employment & Learning (DEL)
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)
- Department of Social Development (DSD)
- Department of Education (DE)
- Queen's University Belfast
- University of Ulster
- Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)
- Business in the Community (BITC)
- North Belfast Partnership (on behalf of Belfast Area Based Partnerships)
- Alliance of Sector Skills Councils
- Workforce Development Forum (WDF)
- Confederation of British Industry
- Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce

DSD, WDF, BCI and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce have not participated to date. DE attended the initiation meeting only.

The interim Board met a total of six times. The initial meeting confirmed a support and commitment to consider the opportunities provided through a city strategy approach. The remaining meetings were thematic based, each member being provided with a briefing paper in advance in order to focus on key issues and agreeing recommendations for the way forward. In addition a number of the interim Board attended the 'Welfare to Work Convention' in Liverpool, June 2009 during which a meeting was held with a representative group of the 15 pilot City Strategies currently in the UK. Finally, at one of our meetings presentations were received by two of the City Strategies, namely Rhyl and Glasgow.

The draft strategy presented within this document is an output of the above developmental process. However, it should be recognised as a starting point and not the finishing line! The council are aware of the need to now enter into advanced discussion and stakeholder engagement to consider the attached proposals.

The next stage as agreed with the interim Board is to circulate the draft strategy widely throughout partner organisations for considered and constructive comment. A final meeting of the interim Board has been arranged for Monday 22 March 2010 and we believe that meeting will allow us to gauge initial thoughts and feedback in respect to the draft strategy. At this point, if the consensus remains that this is a worthwhile exercise, council will enter into detailed discussion and negotiation with individual partner organisations. The purpose of these discussions will be threefold:

1. To gain a commitment from individual organisations to fully and actively participate on the new Board at an agreed senior level
2. To consider specific programme proposals within the strategy in order to avoid issues in respect to duplication and competition
3. To consider what resources individual organisations can bring to deliver the strategy.

It is proposed that these negotiations be completed by the end of May 2010.

Our rationale for producing the strategy was to provide an overarching strategic framework which helped address long standing employability and skills needs within the city. We understand there are activities included within the strategy which individual organisations may already be doing or have proposals on the table etc and we wish to make it clear that we do not and will not be replicating what is already being provided. However, we believe there are substantial gains to be made by bringing these initiatives together under the umbrella of the Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy. In addition there may be cost efficiencies to be gained from working in partnership and sourcing additional funding streams to help meet strategic targets.

We believe the employment rate target of 70.8% in Belfast City Council area to be realistic. Again, future discussions and negotiation must focus on how best this can be best achieved, considering policy implications and priorities between benefit groups, for example should young people be a priority group, those on benefits etc. Careful consideration of these

issues at the outset will allow a clear and concise roadmap to be agreed between partners detailing how, who and by what means Belfast will meet its employment rate target.

Finally, we propose establishing a new Board with overall responsibility for the delivery and management of the strategy. Upon advice from DWP and the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion we propose to call the board the 'Belfast Employability & Skills Board' which helps to align the initiative with existing UK initiatives. In addition we propose to establish three sub-groups which will be programme based and will focus on the delivery of particular elements of the strategy. Belfast City Council will lead and administer the Belfast Employability & Skills programme. Delivery of the programme will primarily be through existing channels, therefore the resources required to manage the programme will be kept to a minimum.

We trust that all our partner organisations consider the proposals and ideas included within the strategy in the spirit in which they have been presented. The strategy is a draft and is open to revision and change throughout the remaining development period. We look forward to receiving your feedback. If there any pressing issues which need to be discussed please feel free to contact:

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Belfast City Council

Belfast City Council is the largest of 26 local authorities in Northern Ireland. It is the local democratic institution for the city with 51 elected councillors representing nine electoral areas across the city.

The Belfast district council area sits at the heart of the growing population of the wider Belfast metropolitan area, which also comprises the surrounding district council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn, North Down, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus. 268,323 people live in the city while 650,958 live in the wider metropolitan area.

The Council delivers key services to citizens such as street cleansing, building control, refuse collection, leisure facilities, parks and community development. It also has a remit for some economic and urban regeneration activity in the city. It does not have responsibility for employability and skills. These powers are administered by the devolved administration in Stormont, primarily through the departments of education and employment and learning.

This does not mean that Belfast City Council does not have role to play in respect to the employability and skills agenda. **Belfast City Council's Corporate Plan 2008-2011** articulates a role of civic leadership and partnership building. It advocates the council as providing **city leadership** defined as '*being ambitious and visionary for Belfast and its people*' and building partnerships which '*develop a shared agenda for making Belfast better*'. It also proposes to facilitate **better opportunities for success across the city** as defined by '*creating a city where everyone can benefit from success and employment opportunities*' and '*developing, nurturing and retaining a skilled, flexible workforce and encouraging enterprise and creativity throughout the city*'.

Professor **Michael Parkinson's** report '**Where is Belfast Going?**', **July 2007** stated: '*...that Belfast's governance and decision-making system seems at the limits of its capacity. So many changes are taking place - economically, physically, politically - that the institutions are having to try very hard to keep up. Some of the progress that has taken place in the city in recent years is almost*

despite, rather than because of, the governance arrangements. Belfast faces a window of opportunity, but that opportunity could pass it by if the place, the people and the system do not seize them. To improve decision-making performance, Belfast will need to create deeper levels of trust between institutions, communities, people, places and parties than currently exist. Belfast has further to go in achieving partnership working. It also faces capacity problems, with often not enough people with the right skills and experience in the right institutions to manage change successfully. If Belfast is to flourish further, it will need grown up leadership from a whole range of institutions and organisations. Belfast will need more vision, leadership, trust and partnership'

Belfast City Council's **Belfast: Core City report, April 2005** stated: 'The size, diversity and vibrancy of Belfast mark it out as a dominant element of the economy and life of Northern Ireland and conforms the city's role as a 'driver' for the whole Northern Ireland economy.....Belfast must aspire to achieve an economy typified by higher graduate levels, higher wages and a track record in generating service sector exports'.

Under the current **Review of Public Administration (RPA)** proposals the Department of the Environment propose creating a 'vision for the future of local government in Northern Ireland as one characterized by: **Citizens will receive excellent services** – Councils will collaborate both locally with other service delivery partners and regionally with other councils and public sector bodies to ensure that services are effective and efficient. **Communities will be stronger** – Councils will lead the delivery of public services to local communities ensuring that they benefit from a joined-up and structured approach across local and central government. Councils will work with communities to ensure that public service interventions are designed, against an overarching community plan, to deliver vibrant, sustainable, safe, healthy and prosperous communities.'<sup>1</sup>

Under RPA proposals local authorities will be provided with a number of new functions including that of **community planning** and the **power of well-being**. Under Community Planning proposals each of the eleven new local authorities will lead and facilitate a statute-based community planning process: they will act in

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Appraisal Local Government Service Delivery, December 2009.

partnership with private, statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies to respond to local needs and aspirations. Legislative proposals will be brought forward to ensure there is a clear statutory requirement placed on other public bodies to participate and support the community planning process. The new local authorities will also have a new statutory power of well-being to assist them in delivering community planning. This new power will allow them to take any action, not already the responsibility of another agency, linked with the community plan that will improve the well-being of the local community of local area.

There is a compelling case to be made for Belfast City Council to lead the development of an employability and skills agenda which attempts to address stubborn issues in respect to worklessness and poor skills levels which impact upon the economic performance of the city economy and indeed the regional economy. Developing an integrated employability and skills plan would be similar to practice already underway in other parts of the UK through the City Strategy model, yet it would be an innovative development for Northern Ireland and only one of its kind.

## **1.2 Employability & Skills**

In 2007/08 Belfast City Council commissioned two separate pieces of research, one which reviewed issues in respect to employability, the second in respect to skills. The following extracts draw together key conclusions from both documents:

- It is Government policy to assist the unemployed or economically inactive into employment. Being 'in-work' is one of the key measures to addressing poverty. The Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2008-2011 included a commitment to increase the employment rate from 70% to 75% by 2020, in addition to working towards the elimination of child poverty in Northern Ireland by 2020 and reducing child poverty by 50% by 2010.
  
- The employment rate in Belfast has been below that for Northern Ireland almost throughout the period 2000-2008. The 2008 figure of 70.8% is the highest recorded, and above the Northern Ireland figure of 69.7%. For Northern Ireland as a whole, the employment rate continued rising from the 2006 figure of



68.7% (Local Area LFS) to 71.2% in Spring 2008. It fell back to 65.8% in April-June 2009, and has since recovered to 67.3%. The 2008 figures are the peak achieved to date.

- Inactivity remains a very significant problem in Belfast, with the 2008 figures showing 26.9% of the working age population economically inactive. This is very slightly better than the Northern Ireland figure of 27.3%.
- The city centre (Duncairn, Island and Shaftsbury) is predicted to be the 'red hot core' of jobs growth in Belfast creating over three-quarters of Belfast's 13,980 jobs in the next decade. In terms of sectors, over 90% of financial services jobs are expected to be in the city centre and over 70% of business service and hospitality jobs. Outside the city centre South Belfast is forecast to be the second fastest growth area with a number of new jobs assumed in business services, education, health and hotels. Notwithstanding new developments such as IKEA, East Belfast faces perhaps the most challenging future with a high number of manufacturing job losses. If within Belfast commuting patterns remain unchanged, this spatial location of jobs over the next decade would benefit South Belfast most and West Belfast least.
- There is a strong correlation between qualifications of residents and employment rates. Those individuals with no skills or basic skills are more likely to be unemployed or claiming benefits. In Belfast, 19% of the working age population have no qualifications, which is slightly better than the Northern Ireland figure of 22%. For comparison purposes the similar figure for the South East of England is 8.9%, and Liverpool has 19.5% with no qualifications. In Belfast, 33% of the working age population have qualifications at level 4 and above. Again for comparison, London has 38.6% and the South East of England has 31.5%. Belfast has a higher proportion of its population qualified to this level than Liverpool at 21.9%.
- Many areas of Belfast suffer disproportionately from high levels of unemployment, economic inactivity, benefit claimants and educational under achievement resulting in social and economic deprivation. In the 2001 census differences on resident employment rates ranged from 77% in Orangefield to 32% in Falls, while the difference in the graduate share of working age population ranges from 59% in Malone to 2% in

Crumlin. More worryingly by 2015 Oxford Economics forecast that 12 wards will still have a resident employment rate of less than 50%.

- There are much greater numbers claiming benefits as a result of being sick and disabled in Belfast; there are similar numbers of unemployed and lone parents. Current estimates suggest over 64,000 people inactive in Belfast of which over 34,000 are long-term sick or looking after the home. This is more people than are employed in public administration throughout Northern Ireland. The unemployed (measured by Local Labour Force Survey) have been falling as a proportion of the Belfast population since 2002 and in 2008 measured just 2.4% of the population<sup>2</sup>.
- The economically inactive account for 26.9% of the Belfast working age population (in 2008). This is down from a peak in 2004 of 36%. Together with the unemployed, the workless were thus 29.2% of the working age population, before the recession.
- In May 2009, there were 48,140 claimants of 'key benefits' in Belfast, or 29% of the population.
- 59% of all working age claims were for sickness or disability benefits, 17% of the population. There were 28,300 claiming these benefits in May 2009, which was a fall of 7.9% or 2440 since May 2006. However, the proportion of all claimants who claimed sickness and disability benefits had fallen, as claims for other benefits had fallen faster.<sup>3</sup>
- Over half the change in stock of jobs within Belfast in the decade ahead is expected to require graduate qualifications. This is explained by the high proportion of jobs growth in professional services and higher-grade occupations, 'skills creep' across all sectors in occupations and a decline in the number of people working in less graduate intensive sectors.

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<sup>2</sup> The unemployment rate, as conventionally quoted, would be higher as this is the unemployed as a proportion of the employed plus unemployed (the economically active).

<sup>3</sup> In Northern Ireland, sickness and disability benefits include people who claim Disability Living Allowance without claiming other working age benefits, unlike GB practice. These claimants could be dependants of people claiming other benefits, or could be working, while having mobility or care needs. 14% of all sickness and disability claims were from this group. If this were true for Belfast, this would be 2.6% of the population, reducing the sickness and disability group from 17% of the population to 14.4%.

- Less than 1 in 7 of the change in stock of jobs is forecast to require no qualifications. While jobs growth is predicated for typically low sectors (construction, retail and hospitality), this is largely offset by almost 2,500 job losses in manufacturing.
- Belfast suffers as a result of the fragmentation of service delivery. There are many agencies responsible for the delivery of policy and programmes, but not one single agency with the responsibility for coordinating activity.
- There are a number of interesting models of best practice worth benchmarking Belfast to including 'City Strategies' which aim to tackle worklessness in the most disadvantaged communities in Great Britain – many of which are in major cities and other urban areas.

### **1.3 City Strategies**

In its Green Paper, *A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work*, the Government set out far-reaching proposals for welfare reform aimed at moving towards its national aim of an 80% employment rate for the working age population. A central element of these proposals is a new strategy to tackle the highly localised pockets of worklessness, poverty, low skills and poor health that can be found across the UK, many of them within major towns and cities. A significant proportion of all people on benefits live in these areas, so reducing deprivation and social exclusion within them will be key to the achievement of national employment targets. Ensuring that everyone who can work has the help and support they need to do so will also be critical to the Government's aim of halving child poverty by 2010, and ending it by 2020.

The City Strategy approach is based on the premise that local stakeholders can deliver more if they combine and align their efforts behind shared priorities, and are given more freedom to innovate, and to tailor services in response to local needs. The purpose of the City Strategy initiative is 'to deliver a significant improvement in the working age employment rate, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as benefit claimants, lone parents, disabled people and those with health conditions, older people and people from minority ethnic groups'.

The **Rt Hon James Purnell MP**, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, speaking at the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion Conference, Birmingham, Wednesday 25 June 2008 stated:

*..as the problems of worklessness have become more localised, so the solutions have too. The London Child Poverty Commission identified London's barriers to work. The Greater Manchester councils are pressing us to have targets which focus on long term inactivity, and industrial dislocation. Glasgow are developing a groundbreaking approach guaranteeing all school-leavers an apprenticeship, to make the most of the Commonwealth Games effect in the run up to 2014. Different opportunities. Specific barriers. Which require bespoke solutions".*

There are 15 pilot City Strategy pathfinder areas in the UK. During the course of the development of the Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy, presentations were received by two City Strategy organisations, namely Rhyl and Glasgow. Rhyl and Glasgow were chosen after a Belfast led delegation met with approximately 10 of the 15 City Strategy Pathfinders during the Welfare to Work Convention IN Liverpool, June 2009. Rhyl is a small City Strategy Pathfinder area which focuses on specific programme delivery targets. Glasgow is a much larger City Strategy area facing many similar challenges to Belfast City.

What did we learn from City Strategies?

The approaches are slightly different in that Glasgow's approach is based on attempting to exert influence on the principal budget holders re; employability and skills within Glasgow City. Glasgow Works has three fundamental objectives:

1. Improved decisions and processes,
2. Better Employability delivery, and
3. Targeted services for Employers.

Rhyl is one of two Welsh pathfinders and involves a consortium of over 160 members. The City Strategy programme is managed by an Executive Board of 15 members and was incorporated as a community interest company from April 2008. Strong partnership is at the heart of both approaches, with the recognition that by working together they can help address local and regional issues more effectively.

Both City Strategies established ambitious targets. The ability to meet these targets has been impacted upon by the economic recession. However, considerable progress has been made as highlighted in Table 1 below.

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**Table 1: Targets V Performance, Rhyl and Glasgow**

	<b>Key Targets</b>	<b>Key Outcomes</b>
<b>Glasgow Works</b>	<p>Reduce Claimant Count May 06 - 09</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 617 JSA</li> <li>• 8,748 IB Sick and Disabled</li> <li>• 2,594 IS Lone Parents</li> </ul> <p>11,959 in total</p>	<p>Increased employment focus in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education</li> <li>▪ Social Work</li> <li>▪ NHS</li> <li>▪ Glasgow Housing Association</li> </ul> <p>Better linkages to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DWP</li> </ul> <p>Contracted Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12,918 Active Clients</li> <li>▪ 1,484 Job Entries</li> <li>▪ Projecting 2,750 Jobs by Jun '10</li> <li>▪ Currently fundraising for</li> </ul>
<b>Rhyl</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To halve the gap between the Rhyl employment rate (61.3%) &amp; that of Wales (70%) by 2011.</li> <li>▪ To reduce levels of worklessness within the most disadvantaged wards in Rhyl.</li> <li>▪ To address the opposing forces which prevent many people from getting &amp; keeping a job</li> <li>▪ To contribute to a shared vision of Rhyl which drives co-operation between key stakeholders from the public,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 455 unemployed individuals engaged in work-related activity</li> <li>▪ 299 individuals gained job-specific skills</li> <li>▪ 70 into work</li> </ul>

Supporting Comments

- Rhyl City Strategy has formed a strong and unified strategic focus to increase the rate of employment in Rhyl”
- *“The programme has developed a focus amongst partner agencies towards a common goal, and allowed there to be more of a push towards action.”*
- *“Rhyl City Strategy has acted as a catalyst to generate fresh interest and vigour into the regeneration of Rhyl.”*
- *“City Strategy is the ‘Hub’ for all support in Rhyl -Long Live City Strategy !!!!”*

It was the conclusion of the interim Belfast Employability and Skills Board that Belfast City Council should lead and coordinate the development of a strategy and establish a new employability and skills structure to deliver a City Strategy initiative within Belfast City.

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## 2 THE CONTEXT

### 2.1 Belfast City Economic Profile

Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland. The city, and its wider metropolitan area, is the largest settlement in the region and the second largest city on the island of Ireland. The city lies at the head of Belfast Lough in the lower reaches of the Lagan Valley. The Belfast district council area sits at the heart of the growing population of the wider Belfast Metropolitan Area, which also comprises the surrounding district council areas of Castlereagh, Lisburn, North Down, Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus. 268,323 people live in the city while 650,958 live in the wider metropolitan area. 43.9% of the population is under 30 years of age.

### 2.2 Demographics

Belfast's population has been in gradual but persistent decline from a historic high of over 400,000 before World War One. According to mid year estimates for 2008, Belfast has a population of 268,323, which represents 15.1% of Northern Ireland's total population of 1,775,003. After a period of sustained population loss Belfast's population has recently begun to stabilise. Between 2004 and 2008 the city lost only 0.6% of its population compared to a loss of almost 12% in the previous 20 years. The population density of Belfast is 2,447 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The population of the wider Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) is 650,958.

**Table2: Age Profile for Belfast**

Age Group	Belfast Total	Belfast percentage	Northern Ireland Total	Northern Ireland
Under	52,448	19.5%	381,070	21.5%
16-59	162,888	60.7%	1,035,785	59.4%
60 plus	52,987	19.8%	340,148	19.1%
TOTAL	268,323		1,775,003	

Source: Mid-year population estimates 2008. NISRA

### 2.3 The Economy



Until the recent economic downturn, Belfast was one of the fastest growing regional economies in the UK. The city experienced over a decade of sustained investment and economic growth following the end of thirty years of community conflict and had reduced unemployment to historically low levels. During this period of increased political and social stability, generous European funding support and a favourable global economy both combined to revive Belfast's wealth.

Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita provides a good comparative measure of productivity. GVA is defined by the Office for National Statistics as 'the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the United Kingdom.' GVA per capita for Belfast is £28,522. Between 2000 and 2006 GVA per capita in Belfast increased by 45.9%. In 2006 £7,626 million GVA was generated in the Belfast council area – 28.5% of Northern Ireland's GVA<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.4 Employment

Belfast has almost 28% of the total employment in Northern Ireland (this figure rises to almost 46% in the Belfast Metropolitan Area). However, as with many other European industrialised regions, traditional manufacturing industries, that were once the lifeblood of the economy, have now decreased in importance. Reduced employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector have been offset by a considerable increase in those employed in other areas such as the public sector and business services sector. The public sector plays a huge role in Belfast's economy. Almost two out of every five jobs are in public administration, education and the health sector

The total number of jobs in Belfast was 198,796 in 2007. When the economy is broken down, the largest industrial sector in Belfast is 'Real estate, renting and business activities', employing 35,596 employees. Table 2 shows that in most recent years, the biggest increase has been in this sector. 'Health and social work' is the second largest sector in the city with 32,786 employees.

### **Table 3      Belfast Industrial Sectors**

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<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, 12 December 2008

<b>Description</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
Manufacturing	15,828	10,279	-35.06%
Electricity, gas and water supply	899	1,058	+17.69%
Construction	4,864	5,691	+17.00%
Wholesale and retail trade and repairs	25,401	26,557	+4.55%
Hotels and restaurants	10,617	11,814	+11.27%
Transport, storage and communication	9,331	10,038	+7.58%
Financial intermediaries	9,411	10,510	+11.68%
Real estate, renting and business activities	26,786	35,596	+32.89%
Public administration and defence	27,029	26,854	-0.65%
Education	14,650	16,597	+13.29%
Health and social work	27,381	32,786	+19.74%
Other services	10,199	10,826	+6.15%
<b>TOTAL %</b>	<b>182,576</b>	<b>198,796</b>	<b>+8.88%</b>

Source: DETI Census of Employment, December 2008

## 2.5 Unemployment

'Belfast's labour market has been experiencing rising levels of unemployment and redundancies since the start of 2008. However, the latest monthly data suggest that the economy may have experienced the worst of the recession. Claimant unemployed peaked in August 2009 at 10,855 before contracting slightly in September and October. Although the recent data shows a marginal rise in November to 10,804, the unemployment rate has remained at 6.4% since August 09.

However the labour market remains weak...

Recruitment agencies reported that the labour market performed 'extremely poorly' in Q3 2009 with permanent placements at an all time low. It was also reported that those in employment were reluctant to seek out and commit to other job opportunities, over fears regarding the stability of new roles and a "last in, first out" attitude.

Youth unemployment down but cyclical....

In 2009 claimant youth unemployment rose from 3,860 in July to 3,950 in August coinciding with young people leaving education. Latest data reveal that claimant youth unemployment fell between August and November 2009 by 375. Regardless of this fall, youth unemployment remains a particular problem. Any recovery in the general economy will take time to translate into better labour market conditions (possibly not until 2011). As a result, many of Belfast's youth face the prospect of unemployment as their first experience of the labour market

Long term unemployment – long term legacy...

Long term unemployment (those unemployed for 12 months or more) in Belfast has increased consistently since July 2008. Indeed the number of long term claimant has risen by 20% between July and November 2009 and is at its highest level since June 2004. Looking forward with the lack of employment opportunities, it is likely that the number of long-term unemployed in Belfast (as in NI) will continue to increase over the short term. In addition, this trend of rising long-term unemployment is likely to be exacerbated as the increased competition for jobs mean that those who have been unemployed for relatively longer periods of time find themselves less attractive against other job candidates. Finally, given the shift in sector activity and associated higher level skills demanded in the economy, without the necessary skills or re-training, it seems long term unemployment is going to be this recession's legacy for many<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Quarterly Economic Indicators, Oxford Economics, Winter 09

**Table 4: Claimant count unemployment by usual occupation**

	Jan-09	Feb-09	Mar-09	Apr-09	May-09	Jun-09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09	Nov-09
Managers & Senior	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%
Professional Occupations	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%	2.4%	2.4%	2.7%	3.4%	3.8%	3.4%	3.1%	2.8%
Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	5.0%	4.9%	4.8%	4.8%	4.8%	5.0%	5.3%	5.5%	5.5%	5.3%	5.4%
Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	8.2%	8.1%	8.5%	8.5%	8.5%	8.4%	8.8%	8.9%	8.7%	8.5%	8.5%
Skilled Trades Occupations	16.0%	16.1%	16.2%	16.3%	16.7%	16.5%	15.9%	15.2%	15.5%	15.9%	15.9%
Personal Service	3.8%	3.9%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.9%	4.2%	4.3%	4.4%	4.3%
Sales & Customer Service Occupations	12.8%	13.3%	13.5%	13.9%	13.9%	14.0%	14.6%	14.5%	14.5%	14.2%	14.2%
Process, Plant and	11.9%	12.3%	12.5%	12.5%	12.2%	12.2%	11.5%	11.5%	11.6%	11.8%	12.0%
Elementary Occupations	38.2%	37.7%	36.7%	35.9%	35.7%	35.6%	34.6%	34.5%	34.7%	34.9%	35.2%

Source: Quarterly Economic Indicators, Oxford Economics, Winter 09

## 2.6 Labour Market Structure

**Table 5: Labour market structure (seasonally adjusted -% of working age population)**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Economically Active	71%	68%	67%	65%	68%	72%	69%	75%
Employment	65%	62%	61%	60%	65%	67%	67%	73%
Full-time employment	50%	46%	45%	44%	51%	50%	50%	52%
Part-time employment	16%	16%	16%	15%	16%	16%	16%	19%
Unemployment	5%	6%	6%	5%	3%	5%	2%	2%
Inactive	57%	63%	64%	65%	64%	58%	57%	55%
NVQL4	24%	21%	22%	23%	25%	30%	29%	33%
Below NVQL4	49%	49%	49%	48%	51%	45%	46%	45%
No Quals	27%	29%	29%	28%	23%	23%	24%	19%

Source: Quarterly Economic Indicators, Oxford Economics, Winter 09

Employment rates are still fairly low. In 2008, just over two thirds (68.7%) of the city's working age population were employed or self-employed<sup>6</sup>.

## 2.7 Earnings

The average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Belfast increased by 3.87% between 2006 and 2008. The average gross weekly earnings of full time employees in Belfast is £525.90 in comparison to £675.20 for Northern Ireland. *Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: Average Gross weekly earnings by NI Local Government District 2006 - 2008*

## 2.8 Claimant Count

Claimant count measures those people who are claiming unemployment related benefits known as 'Jobseeker's allowance'. The number of people claiming Jobseeker's allowance in the city increased from 3.4 percent in December 2007 to 6.7 percent in January 2010. The claimant count rate in Belfast in January 2010 was also higher than in all the other councils in the metropolitan area.

**Table 6: Claimant count rates January 2010**

District Council area	Claimant count rates Dec 2007	Claimant count rates January 2010
Belfast	3.4%	6.7%
Carrickfergus	1.6%	4.4%
North Down	1.5%	3.4%
Lisburn	1.6%	4.2%
Newtownabbey	1.8%	4.0%
Castlereagh	1.0%	3.1%

*Source: DETI*

## 2.9 Deprivation

<sup>6</sup> Official figures count those on Employment and Training Programmes as 'in employment', making the difference between this figure and the employment rate of 70.8%.

According to the Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation (2005):

- Belfast is the most deprived out of the 26 Local Government Districts (LGDs);
- Belfast has eight of the 10 most deprived wards in Northern Ireland;
- Belfast has nine of the 10 worst wards in the region in relation to health deprivation;
- There are 82,986 people in Belfast experiencing income deprivation and 30,119 people experiencing employment deprivation;
- Belfast has 150 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in total and 34% of these SOAs fall within the most deprived 10% of all SOAs in Northern Ireland;
- 6.5% of the city's population live in 10% of the most deprived SOAs in Northern Ireland.

Belfast has a high level of benefit dependency. In 2006:

- 13.3% of the population were claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA);
- 7% of the population were claiming incapacity benefit;
- 15.7% of the population were claiming housing benefit;
- 15.5% of the population were claiming income support.<sup>7</sup>

Successive studies of deprivation in Northern Ireland also highlight the extent to which large swaths of Belfast have been categorised as deprived over long periods of time. Mike Morrissey, Queens University Belfast, produced 'Poverty in Belfast', for Belfast City Council in 2009. Morrissey's report includes a list of the most deprived wards in Belfast in four deprivation studies over a fifteen year period. One report was undertaken by a prominent academic, the others were commissioned by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency from units in Manchester and Oxford Universities. Over this period, despite one set of boundary changes and different methodologies for measuring deprivation, the same wards appear over and over again – two wards appear in all four (Falls & Shankill) and eight wards appear in three of the studies (Ardoyne, Crumlin, Duncairn, New Lodge, St Annes, Upper Springfield, Woodvale, Whiterock). If the recent income data in Belfast are similarly ranked,

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<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2005 (NISRA) and Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service

the same wards appear as having the highest percentages of households in relative poverty.

**Table 7: Wards of greatest deprivation in Belfast 1991-2005**

<b>Townsend 1991</b>	<b>Robson 1991</b>	<b>Noble 2001</b>	<b>Noble 2005</b>
Ardoyne	Ballymacarett	Ardoyne	Ardoyne
Clonard	Clonard	Ballymacarett	Ballymacarett
Crumlin	Duncairn	Crumlin	Crumlin
Duncairn	Falls	Falls	Duncairn
Falls	Island	New Lodge	Falls
Glencollin	New Lodge	Shankill	New Lodge
New Lodge	Shaftesbury	St Annes	Shankill
Shankill	Shankill	The Mount	The Mount
St Annes	St Annes	Upper Springfield	Upper Springfield
Upper Springfield	The Mount	Whiterock	Whiterock
Whiterock	Woodvale	Woodvale	Woodvale

*Source Mike Morrissey, QUB 'Poverty in Belfast', 2009.*

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## 2.10 Economic Forecasts

**Table 8: Economic Forecasts, Oxford Economics (Belfast)**

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Demography</b>											
Total Population (000s)	270.0	271.9	273.7	275.6	277.4	279.3	281.2	283.1	285.1	287.1	289.1
Total working age population (000s)	173.3	174.5	176.1	177.1	179.1	180.6	181.9	183.1	184.3	185.5	186.8
Total migration (000s)	0.77	0.91	0.82	0.88	0.82	0.93	0.95	0.95	1.00	1.06	1.13
Natural increase	0.94	0.97	0.99	0.99	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.92	0.89
<b>Employment (000s)</b>											
Agriculture	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Extraction	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.06
Manufacturing	9.65	9.45	9.31	9.13	8.95	8.75	8.57	8.38	8.19	8.00	7.79
Utilities	0.84	0.82	0.80	0.77	0.75	0.73	0.72	0.70	0.69	0.68	0.66
Construction	6.4	5.8	5.8	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.2
Retail & distribution	27.5	27.6	28.0	28.4	28.7	29.1	29.6	29.9	30.2	20.4	20.6
Hotels & restaurants	11.6	11.9	12.1	12.3	12.5	12.7	13.0	13.2	13.4	13.6	13.8
Transport & comms	10.6	10.7	10.8	10.9	10.9	10.9	11.0	11.1	11.2	11.3	11.4
Financial intermediation	10.7	10.9	10.9	10.9	10.9	11.0	11.2	11.4	11.5	11.7	11.6
Business Services	38.3	38.6	39.3	39.4	39.9	41.2	43.0	44.8	46.3	47.6	48.8
Public Admin	26.8	27.2	26.6	25.6	25.0	24.7	24.5	24.3	24.1	24.0	23.9
Education	18.1	18.4	18.3	18.1	17.9	17.8	17.9	18.0	18.0	18.1	18.2
Health	34.1	34.8	34.9	34.7	34.3	34.3	34.6	35.1	35.5	36.0	36.4
Other personal services	12.0	12.2	12.2	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.1	12.1	12.2	12.3	12.3
Total	208.0	210.1	210.9	209.8	209.8	211.4	214.4	217.4	220.1	222.4	224.7
<b>Economic Activity</b>											
Resident employment (000s)	106.5	107.2	107.4	106.8	106.8	107.5	108.9	110.3	111.5	112.6	113.5
Resident employment rate (%)	63.1	63.1	62.6	61.7	61.2	61.1	61.5	61.8	62.1	62.3	62.4
Unemployment (000s)	10.2	10.9	10.9	11.0	11.2	11.1	10.8	10.5	10.3	10.2	10.0
Unemployment rate (%)	4.7	4.9	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.3

Source: Quarterly Economic Indicators, Oxford Economics, Winter 09



### 3 VISION & STRATEGY

#### 3.1 Vision

The vision proposed for the Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy to address economic disadvantage and child poverty is:

***To create a vibrant local economy where employment rates are aligned to the Northern Ireland average, where employers can find the skills and aptitudes they need and where work is the route out of family poverty and the way to close the gap between prosperous and disadvantaged communities.***

Belfast City faces a five-fold employment challenge in its commitment to achieve economic transformation with social inclusion:

1. To increase the employment rate in Belfast City Council area to return to the 2008 level of 70.8% by 2015<sup>8</sup>
2. To narrow the gap between neighbourhoods and communities with the highest and lowest employment rates
3. To provide high quality support to employers to help them recruit effectively and to train their workforce
4. To increase significantly the employment rates of those residents who lag behind in jobs and skills with a particular focus on the 10 most disadvantaged communities within Belfast
5. To reduce child poverty, particularly through supporting into work lone parents and the partners of employed adults in low-income households

We shall, through the Employability & Skills Strategy, address the constraints that inhibit our partners from being able to make further inroads into these issues. We want to accelerate the process by which we can inspire the most disadvantaged communities with the aspiration and motivation, and equip with the necessary skills to benefit from the opportunities derived from economic growth.

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<sup>8</sup> The Northern Ireland employment rate fell by 3.4 percentage points in the year to December 2009. If this applied to Belfast, a 2009 average would be 67.4%. If (as is possible) the 5.2 percentage point rise to the 70.8% figure in 2008 was exaggerated by statistical survey factors, then a more cautious Belfast 2009 employment rate estimate would be 64.1%. Given these estimates, we feel a return to the 2008 measured figure by 2015 will be challenging. Northern Ireland took eleven years to achieve an increase from 64.1% to 70.7% from 1996, though this was interrupted by periods of downturn.

### **3.2 Core Purpose**

The purpose of the Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy is to deliver a significant improvement in the working age employment rate in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, but particularly for disadvantaged groups such as:

- Long-term unemployed;
- Incapacity Benefit claimants, including those with mental health, drug or alcohol problems;
- Lone parents;
- Families with children living in low income households;
- Adults with low skill levels;
- Ex-offenders;
- Recent migrants to the city; and
- Recent graduates attempting to access the labour market.

We need to ensure that more of these people are helped to find and remain in work, and to improve their skills so that they can progress in employment, beginning with areas with the highest concentrations of disadvantage.

### **3.3 Role of the Board**

In brief, Belfast must assemble the relevant “partners” and “stakeholders”, to come together to develop a concerted programme to address these issues with a focus upon results and tangible impact on the ground. The role of the board is to:

- Develop an overarching strategic framework covering the breadth of the worklessness and skills agenda in Belfast, which informs and shapes partner organisation’s business plans
- Mobilise mainstream and discretionary funds to deliver the city employability and skills strategy
- Address gaps in provision and barriers to delivery, that hinder the city’s progress in achieving its strategic priorities
- Provide a means for local partners to respond swiftly to new and emerging government policies e.g. City Strategy
- To develop and manage new Management Information Systems (MIS’s) which support enhanced labour market intelligence

### **3.4 Strategic Priorities**

In Belfast, our two priority areas and associated objectives are as follows: -

#### **Strategic Priority 1: Connecting people and jobs**

##### **Objectives:**

- ***Linking workless people and vacancies to improve the employment rate***
- ***Tackling barriers to work***
- ***To assist workless people particularly those on incapacity benefit claimants access employment opportunities across Belfast***
- ***Making effective use of social clauses in public procurement***
- ***Supporting Social Enterprises which address barriers to employment***
- ***Supporting graduates access employment opportunities in the Belfast economy***

#### **Strategic Priority 2: Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities**

##### **Objectives:**

- ***Tackling the lack of basic skills and qualifications to improve employability and reduce worklessness***
- ***Meeting the skills needs of sectors and growth opportunities essential to support economic expansion***

Please note we will give consideration to 'cost' and 'bodies responsible for delivery' when we have reached an agreement on the overarching strategic priorities and objectives of the Board.

## 4 ACTION PLAN

### 4.1 Priority 1: Connecting people and jobs

To achieve the vision, Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy will focus on the following objectives:

- ***Linking workless people and vacancies to improve the employment rate***
- ***Tackling barriers to work***
- ***To assist workless people particularly those on incapacity benefit claimants access employment opportunities across Belfast***
- ***Making effective use of social clauses in public procurement***
- ***Supporting Social Enterprises which address barriers to employment***
- ***Supporting graduates access employment opportunities in the Belfast economy***

These objectives are expanded into specific actions in the tables following with key activities essential for their delivery highlighted. These activities will be regularly updated in response to changing need and circumstances.

## Priority 1: Connecting people and jobs

Action		Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility
<b>Objective: Linking workless people and vacancies to improve employment rate</b>					
1	Provide a client facing and employer facing intermediary which will assist those furthest from the labour market to access employment opportunities	Targeted support to employers is needed to ensure vacancies are accessible to people from disadvantaged communities. Intensive work with these individuals is needed to ensure they are aware of and have the skills to access those jobs through bespoke training, career guidance and pre-employment training support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To support / develop a city wide network of community based employment centres which provide access, support and referral services for those furthest from the labour market</li> <li>2. To provide bespoke training and further support for individuals to assist in their progression towards employment</li> <li>3. To provide pre employment programmes based on employer engagement and market intelligence gathered at the Belfast Employability &amp; Skills Board</li> <li>4. To provide a city wide employer facing intermediary to facilitate strategic and operational exchange between</li> </ol>		
2	Develop innovative employment first approaches including intermediate labour market activities, to engage and motivate the long term	Many of those furthest from the labour market require appropriate support to develop their confidence and skills set in order to re-enter the labour market. Successive evaluations have shown 'In work' programmes to be extremely successful in securing employment for the	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a specification for a Belfast ILM programme</li> <li>2. Promote ILM programme widely assisting both community and private sector organisations develop ideas</li> <li>3. Procure ILM programme (2 x 2 year cycles)</li> </ol>		

Action	Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility	
<b>Objective: Linking workless people and vacancies to improve employment rate</b>					
3	Enhancing the employment rate in Belfast through innovation and enhancement of mainstream welfare to work provision.	<p>There is already a significant amount of work being carried out throughout Belfast to assist workless people into employment. It is important that this work continues and is supported and enhanced when and where possible. It is also critical that the focus remains on the 10 most deprived wards with the lowest employment rates and steps which could be taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that Steps to Work providers, Pathways to Work providers, Training for Success and the 40 plus ESF projects operating within the city focus their services on the 10 most disadvantaged wards of Belfast.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Steps to Work, Pathways, Training for Success and other providers to discuss provision and targets for period 2011-2013</li> <li>Establish a Belfast Employability &amp; Skills Stakeholder Forum comprising main welfare to work providers, ESF providers and others. The role of the Forum will be to review performance and their contribution towards meeting vision and core strategy objectives, identify areas for collaboration and investment, and areas of best practice / knowledge transfer</li> <li>To test and evaluate new approaches / innovation in respect to mainstream provision</li> </ol>		
<b>Objective: Tackling Barriers to Work</b>					
4	Deliver 'better off in work' campaigns	For individuals and families work is the best route out of poverty and to achieve economic independence. We know that work enables family aspiration, fosters greater social inclusion and can improve the health and well being of family members. However, many people remain unaware of the financial support available to them, both in and out of work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In conjunction with DSD, Citizens Advice, Credit Unions and local partners develop approaches which increase awareness of people's earning potential through work, which promotes the take up benefit and money/debt advice.</li> </ol>		

Action	Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility
<b>Objective: Tackling Barriers to Work</b>				
5	Review and develop childcare initiatives as appropriate, and raise the importance of childcare with employers	Overcomes childcare as a barrier to employment / training and helps to reduce the gap between the availability of childcare provision in the UK and NI.		
6	Develop a driving license scheme which helps address mobility issues amongst job	Lack of mobility remains a key barrier for job seekers. The provision of driving lessons for job seekers can help address mobility issues in addition to developing confidence and		
<b>Objective: To assist workless people particularly those on incapacity benefit claimants access employment opportunities across Belfast</b>				
7	Public Sector Employment Partnership	The public sector is one of the largest employers in Belfast and annually recruits people at all levels. In the current economic climate the public sector must provide a lead in respect to working with and supporting those furthest from the labour market into employment. The Belfast Health Trust has recently tested new and innovative approaches to engagement and recruitment through a pilot programme coming to an end in West Belfast and Shankill. There is potential to build on this		

Action	Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility
<b>Objective: Supporting graduates access employment in the Belfast economy</b>				
8	Graduates into Employment Programme	Graduates have been particularly hard hit by the current economic recession. According to a study by student-employer matchmaker <a href="http://www.studentgems.com">www.studentgems.com</a> more than a third of NI graduates are considering a move abroad in a bid to beat the lack of jobs for graduates at home. Yet the Belfast Skills & Demand Study identified that over half of the net new jobs in Belfast over the next decade will require graduate qualifications. Graduates need to be retained and integrated into the Belfast		
<b>Objective: Making effective use of social clauses in procurement</b>				
9	Develop skills and procurement initiatives, connect jobs with people and influence government policy to embed social clauses in all key public expenditure programmes.	Effective use of 'social clauses' in public and private procurement to enhance community benefit through training and job opportunities for local people (in particular those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods). There are obvious 'quick win' opportunities in respect to planned developments at the Titanic Quarter, North Foreshore, Girdwood, Crumlin Road Gaol, Gaeltacht Quarter.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To develop a 'social clause' initiative based on existing practice in the UK</li> <li>2. To promote and showcase the 'social clause' across Belfast highlighting the potential benefits for disadvantaged communities</li> <li>3. To ensure that all new development opportunities coming through Belfast City Council's Planning Committee are encouraged to participate in the 'Social</li> </ol>	



Action	Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility
<b>Objective: Supporting Social Enterprises</b>				
10	Supporting the growth of social enterprises to contribute to job creation and the economic regeneration of Belfast.	Significant evidence already exists to support the role social enterprises play in terms of helping people back into work. Local examples include child care provision at both the Ashton Centre and Shankill Women's Centre – 2 examples of successful social enterprises. The provision of affordable child care facilities is a major barrier for some entrants to the labour market and therefore there is a need to	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To support the development of 1 new childcare facility per annum which primarily service job returners from the 10 most disadvantaged wards in Belfast</li> <li>2. To provide the resources to develop the skills of child care professionals through training and upskilling programmes</li> </ol>	

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## 4.2 Priority II: Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities

To achieve the vision, Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy needs to focus on the following objectives:

- ***Tackling the lack of basic skills and qualifications to improve employability and reduce worklessness***
- ***Meeting the skills needs of sectors and growth opportunities essential to support economic expansion***

These objectives are expanded into specific actions in the tables following with key activities essential for their delivery highlighted. These activities will be regularly updated in response to changing need and circumstances.

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**Priority II: Enhancing the level of skills in our most disadvantaged communities**

Action	Rationale	Description of Activities	Costs	Responsibility	
<b>Objective: Tackling the lack of basic skills and qualifications to improve employability and reduce worklessness</b>					
1	Develop a learning neighbourhood programme in the 5 most deprived wards in Belfast	It is officially recognised that a lack of basic skills is a major impediment to securing employment and thereby moving out of poverty. This inter agency approach will target its intervention on the 5 wards with the lowest employment rates and highest rates of working age population without qualifications or with low qualifications.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a learning neighbourhood programme team to include DENI, DEL, DSD, BMC and key community interests from the 5 wards</li> <li>2. Establish the level of basic and vocational level of skill amongst the working age population in the targeted wards</li> <li>3. Develop bespoke action plans that target improvements in basic and</li> </ol>		
<b>Objective: Meeting the skills needs of sectors and growth opportunities essential to support economic expansion</b>					
2	Deliver the skills required by priority sectors, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Leisure, recreation and hospitality</li> <li>• Health &amp; care</li> <li>• Public Administration</li> <li>• Construction</li> <li>• IT</li> </ul>	Developing appropriate skills for priority sectors is essential to support growth.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Working with employer organisations, sector skill councils, BMC, WDF and others to develop training routes to employment that develop the skills required by employers and which lead to job outcomes</li> <li>2. Develop training provision to overcome skills disparities experienced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term unemployed</li> <li>• Lone parents</li> <li>• Disabled people</li> <li>• Older workers</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		

## 5 GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 Role of the Board

In order to deliver the strategy set out within this document Belfast must assemble the relevant “partners” and “stakeholders”, to come together to develop a concerted programme to address these issues with a focus upon results and tangible impact on the ground.

The role of the board is to:

- Develop an overarching strategic framework covering the breadth of the worklessness and skills agenda in Belfast, which informs and shapes partner organisation's business plans
- Mobilise mainstream and discretionary funds to deliver the city employability and skills strategy
- Address gaps in provision and barriers to delivery, that hinder the city's progress in achieving its strategic priorities
- Provide a means for local partners to respond swiftly to new and emerging government policies e.g. City Strategy
- To develop and manage new Management Information Systems (MIS's) which support enhanced labour market intelligence

The Board aims to meet or exceed the targets set out in this Strategy by delivering:

- Real action on worklessness by increasing the employment rate in Belfast to 70.8% by 2015
- Reductions in child poverty
- High, quality, effective and responsive employability services

Membership of the Board should include senior representatives from key agencies including:

- Funders & Planning Bodies including Belfast City Council, Department for Employment & Learning, Department of Education Northern Ireland, Department of Social Development, Invest Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Employability & Skills Board, Sector Skills Councils
- Employers including Belfast Health Trust, Federation for Small Business, representative from the Workforce Development Forum

- Education providers including both universities and Belfast Metropolitan College
- A nominated representative from each of the three forums
- Unions – representatives of main unions operating within Belfast

The Board should have an established staff support team, funded through contributions from key partner organisations. The Board should meet at least 8 times a year to review and manage progress.

It is proposed to review the Strategy and Action Plan on a yearly basis through the production of an Annual Report. The Board will appoint an external evaluator to provide concurrent evaluation services throughout the duration of the programme.

In order for the Board to deliver its strategy it is proposed to establish a number of additional sub-structures which will have responsibility for the delivery of particular elements of the programme. Each of the proposed fora will report to the Board as illustrated below.

***Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy Organisational Chart 2010***



**5.2 Stakeholder Forum**

The Stakeholder Forum will comprise of delivery bodies with responsibility for the key welfare to work programmes across the city

including Steps to Work, Training for Success, Pathways and Lemis. In addition it is important that ESF project promoters are represented. The stakeholder forum will have a particular role in play in terms of supporting and developing innovation in respect to mainstream delivery in addition to the collection and analysis of data pertaining to programme performance.

### **5.3 Learning Neighbourhoods Forum**

The Learning Neighbourhoods Forum will comprise of government, community and education interests. This will include DENI, DEL, DSD, Belfast Health Trust, Belfast City Council and key community representatives and local education providers (schools, Sure Start etc) from across the five wards targeted by the Learning Neighbourhoods initiative. The Learning Neighbourhoods Forum will be tasked with developing an action plan which addresses the persistent problems of poor educational performance and under achievement, poor skills levels and high levels of worklessness at a neighbourhood level in the 5 most disadvantaged wards in Belfast City Council area.

### **5.4 Public Sector Employment Forum**

It is proposed to develop the Public Sector Employment Forum upon the existing West Belfast & Greater Shankill Health Employment Partnership model which is built upon the following three pillars:

1. Employers (Public Sector Human Resource Departments),
2. Unions, and
3. Community.

It is proposed to focus upon those public sector organisations which employ large numbers of people within Belfast. This will include the Belfast Health Trust, Belfast City Council, DOE, DEL and DSD to commence with. The Forum will be tasked with developing a programme which facilitates access for level entry jobs into participating employer organisations. The second element of the programme will focus on how to provide career progression opportunities for those at level entry bands through training and upskilling interventions.

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## 5.5 Delivering the Strategy

In order to deliver the strategy the Belfast Employability & Skills Board will seek to:

- ***Establish and develop the Belfast Employability & Skills Board as the recognised forum for dealing with employment and skills related issues in the city of Belfast***
- ***Resource the Belfast Employability & Skills Board as required***
- ***Establish and manage an IT based Management Information System (MIS) which allows the collection and analysis of data pertaining to the delivery of employability and skills programmes across the city***
- ***Diversify and increase Belfast Employability & Skills Strategy funding***
- ***Inform and influence relevant government policy and services***
- ***Regularly consult with the public to ensure effective service delivery***

These tasks are expanded into specific actions in the tables below:

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Establish and develop the Belfast Employability &amp; Skills Board as the recognised forum for dealing with employment and skills related issues in the city of Belfast</i>	Michael Parkinson's 2007 'Where is Belfast going?' report identified fragmentation as one of the key factors affecting the ability to deliver regeneration benefits across the city. The Review of Public Administration identifies an enhanced role for local authorities and a lead role in respect to regeneration and urban renewal within the city. The UK City Strategy model has proven successful and worth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belfast City Council with external advice to draw up a list of those organisations (and establish at what level) to be invited onto the new Employability &amp; Skills Board.</li> <li>2. Invites to be extended to those bodies identified and one to one briefings provided clarifying the way forward</li> <li>3. Interim secretariat structures established</li> <li>4. Belfast Employability &amp; Skills Board</li> </ol>
<i>Resource the Employability &amp; Skills Board as required</i>	Although delivery of the strategy will be primarily through existing channels there is a need to establish a resource to manage and monitor the programme, in addition to servicing the Board and its sub structures.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Belfast City Council to provide an options paper to the Employability &amp; Skills Board on way forward</li> <li>2. Following agreement recruitment or secondments to Board to commence immediately</li> </ol>
<i>Establish and manage an IT based Management Information System (MIS) which allows the collection and analysis of data pertaining to the delivery of employability and skills programmes across the city</i>	Currently there is no single access point to review the performance of employability and skills interventions in the city of Belfast. The Belfast Employability & Skills MIS will connect data between key partner organisations enabling public reporting and interrogation, data capture, transfer and sharing, whilst being auditable and informative.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To review existing systems developed through the UK City Strategy programme</li> <li>2. To enter into negotiations with partner organisations to ensure commitment to MIS programme</li> <li>3. To procure new system, install in host organisations, train staff members etc</li> <li>4. Review on quarterly basis</li> </ol>
<i>Diversify and increase Belfast Employability &amp; Skills Strategy funding</i>	Within the current climate of reduced public expenditure it is more important than ever for better coordination of limited resources. The Belfast Employability & Skills programme can help partner organisations meet their commitments through enhanced co-financing arrangements, by sourcing a mixture of government, local authority, EU and private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To consult widely within partner organisations to identify programmes within the strategy which they already provide or partially support</li> <li>2. To consider how best to pool resources</li> <li>3. To consider drawing up a Belfast city wide ESF bid</li> <li>4. To seek private sector funding for</li> </ol>

<b>Task</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Inform and influence relevant government policy and services</i>	It is important that the Belfast Employability & Skills Board informs the policy debate as it impacts upon the city and the employability and skills agenda. This will be carried out primarily through the presentation of results from the Belfast programme, utilising the learning from a new and innovative approach to service delivery.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regular briefings of ministers and their advisors</li> <li>2. Regular briefings of city councillors</li> <li>3. Regular briefings of organisations across the city including other government bodies, private sector organisations and key community / voluntary sector agencies.</li> <li>4. To publish findings and promote the work of</li> </ol>
<i>Regularly consult with the public to ensure effective service delivery</i>	Services delivered to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities require a mechanism for taking stock and community feedback. This helps to embed the service within the community, whilst ensuring that services remain relative and responsive to local	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To build in an effective monitoring system to programme delivery</li> <li>2. To appoint an external evaluator to conduct a concurrent evaluation of the programme</li> <li>3. To hold area based focus groups with</li> </ol>

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