

Policy and Operational Context

The Department is currently implementing major reforms of Northern Ireland's professional and technical training system as articulated in '[Securing our Success](#)': *the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*, and '[Generating our Success](#)' *the Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training*. The aims of both strategies are key to underpinning the wider economic ambitions articulated in the draft Programme for Government and the Northern Ireland Industrial Strategy.

The overarching goal of the reforms is to build on the current system of professional and technical training to provide Northern Ireland with a skills base capable of improving competitiveness, compelling growth and innovation in the economy and to support and meet the ambitions of our young people through high quality learning and skills provision.

The aims of the strategy '[Securing our Success](#)': *the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*, are to introduce an apprenticeship system that will:

- i. provide Northern Ireland with a skills base capable of improving competitiveness, propelling growth and innovation in our economy; and
- ii. support and meet the ambitions of our young people through high quality learning and skills provision.

The apprenticeship strategy provides for a reformed system of apprenticeships, responsive to employer needs and available across a wider range of levels and sectors. This includes widening apprenticeship opportunities to include further and higher education pathways through Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs). HLAs are apprenticeship opportunities at Level 4/5 (Foundation Degree) to Level 8 (Doctoral level), delivered through the Further Education College network and Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland.

This factsheet forms part of the evidence base informing the implementation of the youth training strategy, and will help shape the Department's future policies, in particular, the development of an enhanced professional and technical training system in Northern Ireland.