

## Welcome to the Northern Ireland Newsletter March 2010

Welcome to SkillsActive Northern Ireland newsletter for The Outdoors sector.

This newsletter is an update on current developments, initiatives and skills news relevant to your sector.

For further information and to find out how you can contribute to workforce development in Northern Ireland please contact Siobhan Weir, SkillsActive's Northern Ireland manager on 02843751006 or [siobhan.weir@skillsactive.com](mailto:siobhan.weir@skillsactive.com)

### Outdoor Introductory Award



Receiving certificates towards the Outdoor Introductory Award are members of staff from the Share Holiday Village, Fermanagh with Oliver Wilkinson, Director (left) and Simon Hamilton of The Open College Network Northern Ireland (right)

SkillsActive, supported by funding from the Department for Employment and Learning (DELNI), has been working with outdoor employers across Northern Ireland, trialling the new Outdoor Introductory Award.

This exciting new award, developed by SkillsActive and employers groups such as IOL and BAHA, is currently at the very final stage of becoming a fully accredited national award on the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). The award provides a systematic framework for a quality induction and initial period of work for new starters in outdoor organisations. The award compliments all that an employer currently does, including use of other national/NGB guidelines.

**Next steps:** SkillsActive has applied for further funding to refine the award and to run an awareness workshop in Northern Ireland, which will be of interest to those organisations unable to participate in the initial pilot.

### What's new?

Update on the Outdoor Sector Award pilot.

Is there a demand for Outdoor Sector Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland?

Graduation Acceleration Programme (GAP) - new initiatives and opportunities.

Activepassport – a limited number of free vouchers for the Northern Ireland Outdoors sector.

UK skills news – an update on SkillsActive UK wide skills news

### Outdoor Sector Apprenticeships

There are more opportunities for career development with two new apprenticeships developed by SkillsActive for the outdoors sector.

The new apprenticeships are:

- Activity Leadership Apprenticeship Level 2
- Outdoor Development Apprenticeship Level 3

Based on the 'earn while you learn' principle, apprenticeships provide a package of subsidised training and qualifications, that can be tailored to the needs of the employer and the interests and aspirations of the employee. Some of the most successful outdoor organisations in other parts of the UK use apprenticeships to great effect and strongly believe in their worth – in both the areas of business development and staff development.

SkillsActive has been working alongside registered training providers to help support them in applying to deliver apprenticeships for the outdoors sector, when the next DELNI contracting programme is released in 2011.

**Gauging demand:** SkillsActive will be contacting local employers later in the year to seek their views on the need and demand for apprenticeship programmes in Northern Ireland.

## Free activepassport vouchers available now!

SkillsActive still has activepassports available from our recent outdoor award consultation project. This online resource gives an individual a verified record of qualifications, training, and skills that benefits both the employee and the employer.

Employees have a transferable and secure record of achievements, giving mobility within the sector while employers gain access to a clear record of an employees' capabilities, helping to support recruitment selection and training.

Available on a first come first served basis, we have a limited number of **free** activepassport vouchers, to be claimed before the end of April 2010. Vouchers will entitle individuals to start their own online skills profile and also help managers to begin identifying any skills gaps and training needs.

To claim a voucher and gain free access to activepassport for one year call us on 028437 27667 or apply to [judith.smyth@skillsactive.com](mailto:judith.smyth@skillsactive.com)

For more information on activepassport visit the website [www.skillsactive.com/activepassport](http://www.skillsactive.com/activepassport)

## And... for innovation vouchers

Innovation vouchers are designed to enable small Northern Ireland registered enterprises, to access knowledge and expertise in order to help them develop innovative solutions to business issues.

The programme provides a voucher, up to the value of £4000, to enable small enterprises to engage with one of the 38 universities, colleges and other publicly funded research organisations throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

For example, The University of Ulster offers sports specific advice.

The key benefits of the scheme for small enterprises include:

- Increased profitability
- Better informed business decisions
- Improved processes
- Business model development
- Improved service delivery
- Efficiency savings
- Increased market share
- A fresh source of ideas

To find out more information about the voucher scheme visit [www.innovationvouchers.com](http://www.innovationvouchers.com)

## UK skills news

### UK outdoors survey

Last year a wide range of employers completed the on-line SkillsActive outdoors survey, which was designed to give the sector some much-needed information about the sector, employers, activities and participants. SkillsActive would like to thank all those in Northern Ireland who completed the survey questionnaire. A summary of the main outcomes will be available on the SkillsActive website in April.

### Developing outdoor occupational standards across Europe

SkillsActive is currently leading a European outdoors project with 19 partners (employers and training providers) from 12 countries. The main objective is to develop a common view of occupational standards for a basic level outdoors instructor ('animator') and a framework of learning modules which different countries can use to benchmark their own training and qualifications.

The potential benefits of this project are numerous: a better understanding for employers of different opportunities for developing the outdoors in different countries; a common approach to what the job of basic instructor is so that young people can access jobs in other countries; employers and training providers able to share and develop best practice in terms of training and qualifications...and many more.

Further information on this ground-breaking project can be found at [www.clo-2.eu/home](http://www.clo-2.eu/home)

## Mind the GAP!

Across the UK graduate vacancies have fallen drastically. In response to this situation, Queen's University and the University of Ulster have worked alongside Business in the Community to create a programme, centered on giving Northern Ireland's graduates meaningful work experience and a valuable qualification.

GAP – the Graduate Acceleration Programme, is supported by DELNI through Steps to Work and provides businesses with access to a UK graduate for 26 weeks.

For further details on the programme please visit the GAP website [www.gapni.com](http://www.gapni.com)

Visit [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com) to see all the work we do across the UK