

Apprenticeship recovery package announced for the construction industry

CONSTRUCTION employers are being urged to support both new and retained apprentices and claim up to £11,700 of funding in the process.

The funding available is a combined financial offering from CITB NI training grants and the Department for the Economy's new Apprenticeship Recovery Package.

The Apprenticeship Recovery Package focuses on retaining or recruiting apprentices into the industry. It was launched last month by the Department for the Economy, in a move to help the apprenticeship system respond to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The widely established CITB NI grants scheme has supported more than 400 young apprentices who have joined the industry in the last four years. Due to the successful uptake of the apprenticeship grant in recent years, CITB NI has maintained this grant which means that £6,500 can be claimed for a fully employed apprentice over a three year period.

In CITB NI's last training year, which incorporated five months of lockdown, the organisation paid local construction employers over £500,000 to support apprentices.

CITB NI Chief Executive, Barry Neilson said: "The Government has recognised that apprentices are a casualty of COVID-19. With many contracts paused or closed; some

construction employers had no option but to furlough apprentices or make them redundant. The combined funding now available from both the CITB NI grants scheme and the Government Apprenticeship Recovery Package is a great incentive to help construction employers plan their training, develop their business and play an active role in moulding their future workforce. There are many benefits to employing an apprentice including filling initial skills gaps, benefiting from fresh thinking, boosting staff retention, reducing recruitment costs and helping the economy. Apprentices are good for business overall and both CITB NI and the Government see the potential for all sectors including construction."

At the launch of the Government Apprenticeship Recovery Package Economy Minister, Diane Dodds said: "I want to minimise apprenticeship job losses, maintain and grow the supply of apprenticeship opportunities and support apprentices who have been displaced and lost their apprenticeship. I am committed to doing everything within my power to ensure the continued development of an effective skills pipeline which will support the needs of both employers and our economy whilst also providing valuable employment for our young people."