

# Business and Networking Services

January 2007

## Sector Profile

### Overview

#### Summary

Over the past 10 years Northern Ireland has established itself as one of the leading locations in Europe for business services operations. Invest NI has been successful in attracting both single and multi-channel contact centres, back office processing, internet support, shared services and technical support centres. Many of these are in key verticals such as financial services.

Labour supply is plentiful with saturation levels of only 2.5% of the working population currently employed in contact centres compared to an average figure of 4.3% in the UK as a whole.

Northern Ireland now has over 70 contact or shared service centres – 30 of which employ more than 50 people each.

The sector contributes over £200m annually to the local economy in salaries and services.

#### Employment

Current employment in the sector is more than 10,000 and this is forecast to grow by around 2,000 over the next two years.

Northern Ireland based companies enjoy relatively low staff turnover rates (15%) compared to other regions.

#### Inward Investment

The sector has been developed by a mix of inward investment and indigenous companies and contains many major international investors including:

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- **financial services sector companies** such as [Halifax](#), Abbey, HML and Northbrook Technology, Citigroup
- **outsourcers** including MM Teleperformance TeleTech, and [HCL](#), and
- **technical support** companies such as [Stream International](#) whose customers include Microsoft, Dell and Hewlett Packard.

Key recent inward investment successes include:

**HCL Technologies** – the first Indian company to establish a composite onsite/offshore IT-enabled services operation in Europe and the only evidence of “reverse investment” from an Indian company into the UK.

**LBM** - the UK's largest owned direct marketing company set up a new contact centre in Belfast that is expected to create up to 750 jobs.

**ICICI OneSource**, one of India's largest business process outsourcing (BPO) companies, is expected to create 1000 new jobs at two sites in Northern Ireland over the next two years.

**Polaris Software Lab** - will open a banking and financial application certification centre in Belfast, creating up to 158 jobs over the next three years.

Local Companies

Notable home-grown companies that have succeeded in international markets include Anderson Manning Associates and gem.

Communications  
Infrastructure

Northern Ireland is the first European region to have 100% broadband availability.

It will also be the first part of the UK to have a fully self-contained network with the introduction of the BT21CN network - a converged, multimedia platform where customers can access any communications service from any device, anywhere – and at broadband speed.

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## Our approach to the sector

The business services sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in Northern Ireland in terms of employment. In order to maintain this growth and to counteract potential job losses to lower cost regions in Eastern Europe and Asia, we provide advice on moving up the value chain by focussing on high-end multi-channel centres.

## Business Development Solutions

Invest NI offers an extensive portfolio of advice, assistance and support. This covers areas such as strategy development, people development, research and development, exporting, energy management and e-business. Full details of our programmes and services are available from the [Business Development Solutions section](#).

## Initiatives

Contact Centre Forum for Northern Ireland

Contact Centre Benchmarking

For more information contact John McAllister e-mail: [john.mcallister@investni.com](mailto:john.mcallister@investni.com).

## Sector Events 2006 / 07 –

- Call Centre Expo – Birmingham, October
- Economist BPO Conference - September
- Irish Contact Centre Awards – Dublin, November
- National Outsourcing Awards – London, October
- CCA Annual Convention – Edinburgh, November

See [Invest NI's Event Planner](#) for more events, and see also the [Trade Events Programme](#) for trade missions in your sector.

## Sector Associations and Useful Links

Shared Services and Business Process  
Outsourcing Association SBPOA  
Shared Services and Outsourcing Network

[www.sharedxpertise.org](http://www.sharedxpertise.org)

[www.sharedservicesnetwork.com](http://www.sharedservicesnetwork.com)

Call Centre Focus

[www.callcentre.co.uk](http://www.callcentre.co.uk)

CM Insight

[www.cm-insight.com](http://www.cm-insight.com)

National Outsourcing Association

[www.noa.co.uk](http://www.noa.co.uk)

Call Centre Association

[www.cca.org.uk](http://www.cca.org.uk)

CCMA

[www.ccma.org.uk](http://www.ccma.org.uk)

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ContactBabel

[www.contactbabel.com](http://www.contactbabel.com)

Off shoring Digest

[www.offshoring-digest.com/index.html](http://www.offshoring-digest.com/index.html)

## Publications

The UK Contact Centre Industry: A Study – UK Department of Trade & Industry

[www.dti.gov.uk/ewt/contactind.pdf?pubpdfload=04%2F1053](http://www.dti.gov.uk/ewt/contactind.pdf?pubpdfload=04%2F1053)

Labour Market Bulletin - Department for Employment & Learning NI

[www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/Labour%20Bull%2017.pdf](http://www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/Labour%20Bull%2017.pdf)

Sector factsheets produced by Invest NI -

[www.investni.com/index/locate/lc-publications/promotional\\_uk\\_ire\\_-\\_sectoral\\_profiles.htm](http://www.investni.com/index/locate/lc-publications/promotional_uk_ire_-_sectoral_profiles.htm)

Guides to the market research sources which are available from Invest NI's Business Information Services can be downloaded from the Publications A – Z section of the website (under S for Sector Guides).

## Company Information

Gem Case Study - [www.investni.com/gem\\_fact\\_sheet\\_final-6.pdf](http://www.investni.com/gem_fact_sheet_final-6.pdf)

Stream Case Study - [www.investni.com/stream-4.pdf](http://www.investni.com/stream-4.pdf)

HCL Case Study - [www.investni.com/hcl-5.pdf](http://www.investni.com/hcl-5.pdf)

## Contacts

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