Leicester Onsite Construction HUB

Project Name: Leicester Onsite Construction HUB

Project Duration: 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2026

Delivery Partners: Leicester City Council and Keith Cook Training Ltd

Project Contacts:

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The Leicester onsite Construction HUB was established in March 2021 following successful bid to Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).

Leicester City Council was the lead organisation working in conjunction with key delivery partners which included Futures For You, Keith Cook training Ltd and Construct Training Ltd. These partners were experts in their fields to provide expertise in their roles for the project.

Project Summary

The Leicester Onsite Construction HUB was a recruitment project funded by CITB and Leicester City Council to provide individuals with a greater understanding of Career pathways in the Construction Industry before undertaking a tailored training programme which covered a multitude of topics specific to Construction such as H&S, Working at Height, Asbestos Awareness, Abrasive Wheels and a CSCS Card. Industry awareness, interview techniques and employability skills also formed part of a bespoke induction session.

On successful completion of the training programme, individuals were matched to live employment opportunities across Leicestershire with businesses that were recruiting for their business. Individuals undertook an Onsite Experience in the hope of securing employment

and taking their first step to a career in Construction. Employment opportunities ranged from labouring, apprenticeships and full-time employment in a multitude of roles from Labouring to Site Manager and in an array of occupations from Carpentry, Bricklaying and Plastering to Roofing, Demolition, Groundworks, Plant Operators and Diamond Drilling.

Our focus was ensuring we understood the individuals and business needs, preparing individuals for a career in construction through delivery of our programme and ensuring we matched the right individual to the right business to support sustained employment for the individuals and retain individuals within the Construction Sector. As a result of this 85% of individuals undertaking a work placement secured sustained employment.

Overview

The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) research reports stated anticipated Leicester & Leicestershire sustained spending on new construction projects of more than £1.3 billion per year. To meet this anticipated demand a total construction workforce of around 42,100 people will be required over the next 10 years. The total construction workforce available appears likely to be short of what is required at the moment. With significant demand for workers also anticipated from neighbouring areas there are risks that the Leicester and Leicestershire area may not be able to meet demand for many occupations. With an aging workforce approaching retirement age that challenge may become more acute.

The project originally ran from 1st April 2021 until Mar 2024 and:

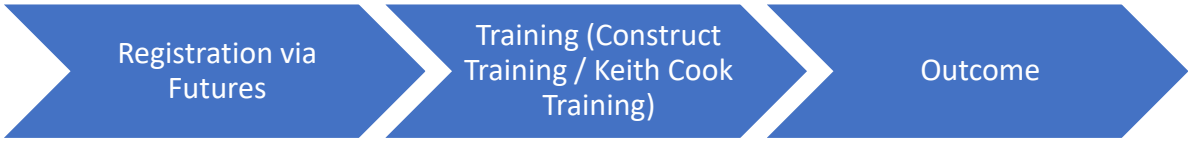
By November 2021, a mobile training facility for construction across Leicester and Leicestershire based at Ashton Green was established. Interim training was delivered online and at construction company sites.

Initial proposed was to train 416 people in construction skills (key employer areas identified labouring, groundwork, plastering, bricklaying and roofing) by 30th March 2023. The project aimed for 35% of trainees (145) to come from groups that are underrepresented in the construction sector (e.g. including women, ex-offenders) and from non-traditional entry routes; 15% (62) trainees to come from people changing careers from other industries including those at risk of redundancy and/or automation in the future; and 50% of learners (208) to move into sustained employment.

The training was designed based on a survey undertaken with 50 construction companies who had confirmed that they would utilise the service once established.

This was achieved by agreeing employment and skills plans with developers through either planning conditions or procurement activities in line with the guidelines set out in the City Council’s Constructing Leicester scheme. This work fed into and built on the delivery of the Employment Hub.

The project created a one stop shop for career opportunities for the construction sector, supporting the recruitment needs of construction companies as follows:



- Individuals register with Futures
- Assessment undertaken by Futures to assess suitability - need to ensure individuals are really wanting career in construction sector
- 1st week, employability training
- 2nd week construction training (labourer, health & safety, manual handling etc)
- Exam / Test for CSCS Card
- 3rd Week Work experience with construction company
- Job Interviews and Job vacancies matching

Aims and Objectives

Based on the research report invested in for the Leicestershire region, the sole aim of the Leicester Onsite Construction HUB was the address the findings of the report and provide local businesses with a pool of Site Ready individuals to recruit from, that have a basic level of understanding on key topics identified by local businesses, such as H&S, Asbestos, Manual Handling, Working at Height, Abrasive Wheels, COSHH and in addition gain a CSCS Card to demonstrate their understanding.

Budget

2021 – 2024 Contract #1

We secured £517,736 to enable us to deliver the programme to 570 individuals over a 3 year period from April 2021 to March 2024.

The total project cost is £925k, with a CITB grant offered of £518k and match funding contributions of £300k from Leicester City Council and £107k from Futures.

2023 - 2025

Two variation to contracts secured a 12 month extension to the contract and additional £407,225 (£258,868 + £148,357) of CITB funding, to deliver the programme to an additional 360 individuals.

2025 - 2026 Contract #2

We secured £225,493 to enable us to deliver the programme to 165 individuals over a 1 year period from April 2025 to March 2026.

Project Approach

To ensure the identified needs based on the research report and aims of the project were met, a consortium of 50 local businesses along with key stakeholders, partners and decision makers was set up. The purpose of this consortium was to understand exactly what businesses would need for individuals to become Employment and Site Ready. It was also

vital to gain commitment from partners and organisations from across Leicestershire to provide a flow of individuals registering for the programme.

Once the programme was up and running, we held open days and invited referring partners to our facility to discuss the programme in more detail, the referral process and answer any questions they had. This was the same with businesses also to support with the number of employment opportunities we had available. We also gained commitment from businesses to promote with site hoardings and deliver talks to our cohorts.

In terms of the programme itself, we promoted this as a 3-stage programme as outlined below:

Stage 1 – Induction

This was individual's introduction to Construction, where we would discuss the breadth of careers available across the industry, deliver industry related activities such as Myth Busting and the Programme of Works, plus additional activities around setting expectations, interview techniques, CV writing and Mock CSCS Tests.

Stage 2 – CSCS Training

Once individuals were committed to the programme and agreed construction was for them, they progressed to our Training stage. This is when they would undertake 4 days of Construction related Training covering topics outlined by the consortium of Construction Businesses. This included units outlined below:

Health & Safety Awareness

Working at Height (including Ladders)

CSCS Touch Screen Test (to gain a Green CSCS Card)

Asbestos Awareness

Handheld Power Tools and PPE

Underground and Overhead Awareness

Risk Awareness

Abrasive Wheels

COSHH

Manual Handling

Stage 3

Individuals undertake a 1-week Onsite Experience to confirm they are Employment and Site Ready. Individuals are matched to employment opportunities based on their interests and business needs in the hope of securing employment on completion of the Onsite Experience. During the period April 2021 – March 2025 we had over a 90% success that individuals gained employment with the business they undertook the Onsite Experience with.

Extensions

During our initial contract, we delivered a high proportion of the employment outcomes and so applied for additional funding to deliver additional starts and employment outcomes. This increased our profile

Description	Original Profile Numbers	Contract Variation #1 Numbers	Contract Variation #2 Numbers
Starts	570	730	930
ESR	416	518	568
Employment	208	350	500
Sustained	208	345	495

Contract 2

Description	Original Profile Numbers
Starts	165
ESR	123
Employment	111
Sustained	89

Challenges

During the delivery of the project we experienced a number of challenges, both delivery and site based challenges. From an individual point of view, at the start of the project there was always a concern about not having enough individuals coming through to meet the set targets and so we were accepting everyone and anyone so long as they met the basic eligibility and criteria. This caused us to have a high number of individuals that struggled to get through the 1st CSCS test and required additional support post training for a number of weeks and months. We overcame this by introducing a more robust induction by introducing mock CSCS tests where individuals would need to score 35 or above to progress through the 1st stage from registration to training stage. We also met with referring partners to discuss our criteria again as we were getting so many referrals and so many were either not fully interested in construction or ready for employment. We also had a few let us down

when it got to stage 3 which was disappointing as it was affecting employer relationships too. The other major factor which was causing us issues was individuals inability to travel

In addition to the challenges we had with individuals, we had several site challenges. These included: 1) Diesel Thefts which caused us to have no power on site, which meant we had courses cancelled. This also had cost implications as fuel had to be replaced several times. 2) Vandalism: We have vandalism with regards to fencing and fuel which led to additional security measures and costs; 3) Horses: Due to the site location as it was a development site it was not fully being utilised and was used by Gypsies for their horses which on occasion led to wild horses being on the compound which posed a risk to individuals on the course. 4) Weather: During the winter, being on an actual construction site, cold weather also caused issues on several occasions freezing pipes and leaving us with no running water.

From an outcome point of view, we have been lucky in that from the start of the project we have continued to deliver good numbers across all outcomes and surpassed the employment target very quickly. This enabled us to secure additional funding to deliver further outcomes. Employer by in has been very good and the generation of 3 filmed case studies was testament to their support for the programme and allowed us to demonstrate the positive impact we were having on individuals' lives.

At times we have fell short of the ESR Target on a number of quarters but overall, I feel we have had a strong delivery throughout. A big challenge on the outcome side of things has been the capturing of the required information from individuals. This has caused big delays in claiming these as individuals have verbally confirmed their employment but then not followed through on providing these details in writing for us to progress with paperwork. We introduced vouchers as an incentive for individuals to provide these to us in a more timely manner which was a success.

Challenges from the 2025/26 contract:

From an individual point of view, with the change of eligibility now being solely for new entrants, it was important we identified these and ensured they met the set criteria and this was made clear at the start to all referring partners.

From an outcome point of view, we have seen a decline in the number of employment opportunities available. We believe this is due to a number of factors which include NI changes, a delay with planning applications and a slow down of construction sites over the past 6 months. This has meant that businesses have been focusing on their existing employees and maintaining the same levels over recruiting new individuals. What we have tried to do is utilise the CITB offer of funding and grants to support the recruitment of individuals which has supported with the recruitment of a number of individuals.

Results

We believe the results of the Leicester Onsite Construction HUB have been very positive. We have changed individuals lives for the better and created a pool of individuals that are Site Ready for the Leicestershire area. We have supported individuals from a number of

under-represented groups and backgrounds and facilitated and enabled individuals to take a positive step into starting or progressing in their careers in Construction.

We have delivered:

Contract 1: April 2021 – March 2025:

Profile	Target	Delivered/ Claimed	% Achieved
Starts	930	918	98.7%
Site Ready	568	559	98.4%
Job Start	500	511	101%
Sustained Job - Under Represented	121	79	84%
Sustained Job	374	400	100%

As you will see from the above we have overachieved on people moving into employment and have achieved 100% sustained jobs which we believe are the key targets required for the construction training delivery as the main focus is about supporting people into the construction industry and sustaining them into employment.

Contract 2 – April 2025 – March 2026

Profile	Target	Delivered/ Claimed	Conversion %
Starts	165	121	
Site Ready	123	75	62%
Job Start	111	70	93%
Sustained Job - Under Represented	9		
Sustained Job	80	62	89%

The above highlights the challenge we have experienced over the past 12 months with a reduction in the number of opportunities, however individuals have played a part in this also. We have had a number of individuals let us down at the Site Ready stage and not attend work trials which has impacted ESR and Job Start outcomes. We have also had individuals withhold information from us that have secured employment with the fear of HMRC and Tax implications and businesses due to GDPR regulations.

Case Studies

You can see the real impacts from the case studies listed in the last section and through the link below:

leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/job-seekers/construction-hub/

Project Review

A key factor which enabled us to deliver the outcomes and project so efficiently were the key delivery partners and relationships we had with businesses and referring partners. Whilst there has been challenges, we have been able to deliver a programme which is highly thought of in the region that delivers what it says it will deliver, that has great benefit to individuals and that has supported businesses of all sizes and from varying sectors within Construction across Leicestershire. The foundation of this was the consortium of businesses, partners and decision makers at the start which informed the programme on what should be included which helped gain buy in from delivery and referring partners.

Towards the end of the project, we utilised a texting service to contact individuals for employment information. This was a great success and saved hours of phone calls to individuals to have no response and we found people would not answer calls all of the time. The texting service resulted in instant responses or responses within a day which helped capture additional outcomes.

What has not worked so well was our initial referral process, as we were inundated with people not fully committed to the programme or a career in construction, which caused extra work so we streamlined the process throughout the delivery which has may have helped to target and support those who have real interest in the sector. The other big challenges were transport and individuals willingness to provide employment information. Whilst we secured additional budget for transport and used incentives for the employment information this could have been done sooner or included from the start to eradicate these issues.

The last year of the project has seen a continuation of the project delivery from our permanent training centre, which has supported the continuation of the programme. We had to go through a recruitment process to replace Futures that were one of the delivery partners for the previous years. The rationale behind this was mainly due to the budget we secured for this period. This took longer than we expected as we had to do this twice and so we did not have an individual in post until late July which caused delays with our delivery plan. This has impacted the number of starts we have been able to deliver, which in turn may have enabled earlier and additional outcomes. The programme ran on schedule once we had the team in place and we explored additional opportunities to run a 1 day programme with business approval which has enabled a number of additional outcomes. Overall, whilst we have seen a reduction in the number of recruitment opportunities, we have a high conversion rate from ESR to Employment and Sustained employment which is a success. Businesses still value the support offered by the Construction HUB, which is supporting funding decisions for 2026, whilst trying to enhance the offer further with additional training. We have also worked with partner organisations that have been able to support individuals when we have not been able to for varying reasons, whether this is eligibility or course availability, which in turn will support our work over the coming year.

A constant challenge for individuals has been the ability to travel to and from site locations, with there not being a solution for due to budget restraints. This is something that needs to be looked at and considered more from a business point of view. Expectations at times is that businesses are needing skilled, qualified and experienced individuals but a young individual, which is not viable and so meeting business need is challenging. There needs to

be some form of additional investment to support businesses further with the recruitment of new entrants into the sector.

During this period and with Futures no longer responsible for the registration process, we made a decision to explore digital solutions to automate and monitor eligibility of individuals via an expression of interest. Whilst we implemented this process, we quickly found that information was inconsistent with data requirements around qualification levels and eligibility questions, which in turn was causing additional steps and so we resorted to a manual process on a collective and individual basis as necessary.

Overall, the project has been a great success which has given us the opportunity to support individuals from varying backgrounds and businesses from across Leicester and Leicestershire from all sectors of Construction. We have learnt that it is vital to have a strong network of delivery and referring partners and good connections to businesses of all sizes to meet as many individual and business needs as possible. This widens the scope of the project and makes a big difference to the outcomes you can deliver.

To Summarise:

Positives:

- Consortium of Construction Businesses, Delivery Partners and Referring partners
- Tailored Training programme to meet business needs
- Demonstrating ability to deliver impactful outcomes
- Adaptability and flexibility to tailor support to local need
- Ability to identify additional opportunities to create new training opportunities

Negatives:

- Initial Referral process caused influx of less committed individuals
- Identification of technological solutions sooner to address challenges

In terms of whether we would do anything differently, the programme was tailored to local business needs and so the duration of the programme was sufficient to cover all the required aspects so we would not change the programme in anyway. In terms of processes and support within the programme, as mentioned previously having a budget for transport makes a big difference as typically the target audiences do not have any means of transport and having a tighter referral process from the start may have helped in not having so many people that have just dropped off the programme.

In December 2023, we moved from the Ashton Green Site to the Bishopdale Adult Learning Centre. This was due to a number of reason, 1. Cost of the Ashton Green Site 2. Issues with Theft and Vandalism 3. Sustainability. The Bishopdale Adult Learning Centre provides us with a more secure facility and a more sustainable venue for delivery of the programme. There are additional programme delivered at this facility so it also provides a pathway for referral to other programmes which may be of benefit to individuals.

Products

During the duration of the project we have developed a number of videos which include individuals that have undertaken the Onsite HUB Programme, the project team and a portfolio of imagery which we use for promotional work. We have also developed a tailored RAMS Course based on feedback from Businesses for new Site Supervisors. This is a course which has been sent to CITB for approval for funding, which we are waiting for a decision on.

Recommendations

During our delivery since April 2021, there was several challenges from delivery to site issues along with individuals all coming with a variety of personal challenges also. We have found having a network of key partners and stakeholders that offer additional support plays a key part in being able to signpost individuals to other organisations that can offer any necessary support which we may not be able to offer e.g. we have links to a charity that provide funding to individuals for additional training they may require or wish to pursue.

In addition, it is important to highlight that the Construction Industry is a very mobile sector and so having a facility outside of the city centre allows us to filter individuals based on their ability to travel to our centre. Our initial site was based on an actual Construction Site, this gave us a facility to demonstrate and show individuals what they could expect to see on Construction Sites and increase the individuals understanding. This also gave us the opportunity to offer and deliver a bespoke groundworks course which included training in drainage, kerb laying and Plant related tickets to name a few.

We will be retaining a tighter referral process to ensure individuals that get to the Training stage are fully committed to a career in Construction and have the best chance of passing the tests they are required to undertake. Having a Transport budget will also remain to be able to support as many people as possible to access Onsite Experiences and gain employment. All referring partners are also being made aware of limited spaces and the importance of ensuring the most suited individuals are registered and progress through the programme to give us the best chance of achieving the required outcomes.

In our final year of delivery, construction seems to be a sector with expected growth, however Construction has a number of challenges including delays with planning, economic challenges, expected growth against live work and the ability to forecast effectively to make informed decisions on recruitment to address the skills issues. There also need to be investment in the right areas to support recruitment of new entrants into the sector whilst providing individuals with the right skills and knowledge to take the first step into construction. There does seem to be a disconnect between funding, provision and employer need with no 1 size fits all solution which makes it difficult to address the issue across the board in a more collaborative approach.

From an individual's point of view, it needs to be seen as a positive step to gain employment, the benefits this can bring to an individual, whilst understanding the commitment needed to sustain employment and a build a career. At times, it is advised that the effort needed to start employment is not as attractive as other options and so there needs to be a shift in this mindset and any reforms or funding to reduce the number of NEET's and unemployed individuals.

It would also be of great benefit for more joint collaboration with CITB and funded organisations, which may support and generate more employer engagement for projects. The showcasing of case studies for examples played a key part in our promotional work, providing a messaging template for individuals and business to understand evidence requirements and local engagement with CITB Teams to provide a collective offer of support to business.

From a sustainability point of view, the construction hub will continue post CITB Funding, however without CITB Funding the Onsite HUB may not have happened but this has had a positive impact and is impacting other funding decisions for the region via Bootcamp.

Acknowledgements

Firstly a big thank you goes the our delivery Partners, Futures for You, Keith Cook Training Ltd and Construct Training Ltd. Within each of these organisations we have worked with a number of key individuals that have enabled individuals to benefit from the programme and supported their personal development from start to finish our programme and provided additional support post training. Personal thank you would go to:

Graham Dawson – Futures for you

Priyesh Patel – Futures for you

Pete Illson – Futures for you

Kelvin Goode – Construct Training Ltd

Mel Goode – Construct Training Ltd

Amy Moore – Construct Training Ltd

Paul Pownall – Construct Training Ltd

George Walton – Keith Cook Training Ltd

James Cook – Keith Cook Training Ltd

Janet O'Keeffe – Keith Cook Training Ltd

Lindsay Weaver – Keith Cook Training Ltd

Simon Leech – Keith Cook Training Ltd

Michael Halliday – Keith Cook Training Ltd

Richard Thorpe – Leicester City Council – leading on this project

Caitlin Baker – Leicester City Council – providing administration support to the project in particular chasing up evidence requirements as necessary.

All the above have had a direct impact on individuals that have benefited from the Leicester Onsite Construction HUB. In addition to our direct delivery partners, we would like to thank all of the supporting organisations that have provided support and provided the pool of individuals that have undertaken our programme. These include all DWP Offices across Leicestershire, Princes Trust, Alderman & Newton, Leicester College, SMB Group, NWSLC and all of the other support organisations that have referred individuals to us or provided advice and guidance.

It is also important to say a big thank you to all of the businesses that have worked with and supported in committing to working with us, providing Onsite Experiences and offering employment opportunities to our individuals, delivering talks to our groups, sponsorship and providing case studies and supported us throughout the project.

Feedback

For Leicester City Council, the project has so far been a success and so the consideration for CITB is to review the successes of this and invest in such hubs where there is a demonstrated ability to deliver a diverse, impactful and tailored programme that can meet local needs.

It is also important to consider the nature of lead applicants and access to a network of relevant support organisations and in particular to local SME as these are key to the success of this type of project.

Case Studies

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGg1fYEKZbk – Joinery case Study – Daniel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed30FgU4dWw – Demolition case Study – Emmy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrCbXhAAe7E – Groundworks case Study – Archie

leicesteremploymenthub.co.uk/job-seekers/construction-hub/

Report by Richard Thorpe: Construction Hub Manager