Final Project Report Template

Reporting Period: September 2022 - September 2026
Report Date: September 2026
Lead Organisation: Abbey Access Training CIC
Programme: England Construction Opportunities (ECO)
Funded by: CITB
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2. Project Summary

Abbey Access Training delivered the England Construction Opportunities (ECO) programme across Lincolnshire between September 2022 and September 2026, supporting individuals furthest from the labour market to enter and sustain employment in the construction industry.

The project was established in response to ongoing construction skills shortages, employer recruitment challenges and the barriers many individuals face when trying to access construction careers. Through a combination of employability training, industry qualifications, site-ready preparation, work experience, employer engagement and workplace mentoring, the programme created clear pathways into employment for new entrants and career changers.

Delivery centred around Abbey Access's "Get into Construction" programme and a structured mentoring model that provided ongoing support during the first six months of employment. This approach helped participants overcome workplace challenges, build confidence and improve long-term retention.

Across the life of the project, Abbey Access supported 141 individuals into employment, achieved 139 three-month sustained employment outcomes and 123 six-month sustained employment outcomes, achieving 100% of its contracted six-month target.

The programme developed strong partnerships with local employers and demonstrated how early intervention, practical experience and tailored mentoring can significantly improve both recruitment and retention outcomes within construction.

The ECO project has now successfully concluded, leaving a legacy of strong employer relationships, effective delivery models and a proven approach to supporting new entrants into sustainable construction careers.

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3. Introduction

The construction industry continues to experience significant recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in attracting new entrants and supporting individuals to remain within the sector long enough to establish sustainable careers.

Across Lincolnshire, Abbey Access identified a growing need for practical support to help unemployed individuals, career changers, young people and underrepresented groups access construction employment opportunities. While employers reported difficulties recruiting suitable candidates, many potential entrants lacked industry qualifications, work experience, confidence or awareness of available career pathways.

Abbey Access designed its ECO project to address these challenges through a structured pathway combining training, work experience, employer engagement and sustained mentoring support.

The project built upon Abbey Access's existing expertise in employability, vocational training and employer engagement, working closely with local construction employers to identify recruitment needs and match suitable candidates into vacancies.
Throughout delivery, Abbey Access adapted its programme in response to employer feedback and labour market conditions, including redesigning its construction programme into a six-week model to improve learner engagement, skills development and progression into employment.
The project also sought to address workforce sustainability by focusing not only on job outcomes but also on retention, recognising that supporting people to remain employed is equally important as helping them secure employment in the first place.

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4. Project Aims and Objectives

The project aimed to:

- Support unemployed individuals and new entrants into construction employment.
- Develop work-ready individuals through training, qualifications and work experience.
- Address construction skills shortages in Lincolnshire.
- Increase employment retention through structured mentoring support.
- Strengthen relationships between training providers and construction employers.
- Support underrepresented groups and those facing barriers to employment.
- Create sustainable career pathways within the construction sector.

Project Delivery Approach
Abbey Access delivered a comprehensive programme consisting of:
Get into Construction Programme
Participants attended a structured programme covering:

- Employability skills
- Health and Safety
- CSCS preparation
- Site readiness
- Practical construction activities
- Employer engagement
- Industry awareness
    - Work Experience
    - Learners participated in practical work experience, predominantly through partnerships with Lindum and local employers, providing exposure to:
- Bricklaying
- Joinery
- Groundworks
- Paving
- General construction activities
    - Employer Engagement
    - Abbey Access developed strong relationships with construction employers across Lincolnshire, including SMEs and larger contractors, creating employment opportunities and direct recruitment routes for participants.
    - ECO Mentoring Support
    - A key feature of the project was ongoing mentoring support during employment.
    - Mentors:
- Conducted regular workplace reviews.
- Maintained contact with employers.

- Supported participants through workplace challenges.
- Assisted with progression and training opportunities.
- Intervened early where retention risks were identified.
  This element proved crucial in sustaining employment outcomes.

Project Performance and Results
Final Outcomes Achieved

Outcome	Achieved	Target	Achievement
Job Starts	141	170	83%
3-Month Sustained Employment	139	157	89%
6-Month Sustained Employment	123	123	100%

Key achievements include:

- 141 individuals supported into employment.
- Strong retention outcomes, with 123 participants sustaining employment for six months.
- Significant numbers progressing into apprenticeships and further qualifications.
- Strong employer engagement across the Lincolnshire construction sector.
- Consistently positive employer feedback regarding participant preparedness and mentoring support.

Case Study - Jamie's Journey into Construction
Jamie joined Abbey Access seeking a complete career change from the care sector into construction.
After enrolling on the Get into Construction programme, Jamie completed 69 hours of training and achieved qualifications including:

- CSCS Card
- Site Safety
- Asbestos Awareness
- Fire Safety
- Manual Handling
- Employability Skills

Jamie then completed work experience at the Lindum training site, developing practical skills in bricklaying, joinery and block paving.
Following completion of the programme, Jamie secured employment with Ultimate Demolition and Construction Services (UDCS) as a Demolition Labourer. Initially recruited on a three-month probationary period, Jamie quickly impressed his employer and was subsequently offered a two-year apprenticeship.
Throughout his employment journey, ECO mentoring support helped Jamie settle into work, build confidence and successfully navigate the transition into a completely new industry.
Employer feedback was highly positive, consistently recognising Jamie's work ethic and willingness to learn. He remains in employment, continues to develop his skills and has established a long-term career pathway within construction.
Jamie's experience demonstrates the value of combining training, employer engagement, work experience and mentoring to create sustainable employment outcomes.

Review of the Project

What Worked Well

- Strong employer engagement and partnership working.
- Effective mentoring support contributing to high retention outcomes.
- Practical work experience opportunities.
- Flexible learner-centred support.
- Close monitoring and intervention where individuals faced barriers.
- Positive employer confidence in Abbey Access referrals.

Challenges

- Labour market fluctuations and reduced recruitment activity during some periods.
- Staff turnover resulting in some historical paperwork being unavailable.
- Loss of several external funding streams impacting wider support activities.
- Economic uncertainty affecting employer recruitment intentions.

Mitigation

- Additional employer engagement activity.
- Regular review meetings with CITB.
- Programme redesign to improve conversion into employment.
- Robust audit processes and removal of unsupported claims.
- Increased outreach to employers through networking and recruitment events.

Lessons Learned

- Mentoring significantly improves retention outcomes.
- Early employer engagement increases successful job matching.
- Practical work experience is vital for learner confidence.
- Ongoing contact with both employers and participants reduces early attrition.
- Flexibility in programme design supports improved learner outcomes.

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5. Products

The project generated a range of resources and delivery models including:

- Get into Construction training programme.
- Employer engagement model.
- Participant mentoring framework.
- Employer Support Plan (ESP) processes.
- Case studies and learner success stories.
- Site-based work experience model delivered in partnership with employers.

These resources have informed Abbey Access's ongoing construction delivery programmes and wider employability provision.

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6. Recommendations

Based on delivery experience, Abbey Access recommends:

1. Continue investment in mentoring programmes linked to employment outcomes.
2. Increase support for employer engagement activity, particularly with SMEs.
3. Embed work experience opportunities within all employability pathways.
4. Recognise retention outcomes as being equally important as job starts.
5. Provide longer-term funding certainty to enable sustainable delivery and employer relationships.
6. Continue targeted support for underrepresented groups entering construction.
7. Share effective mentoring models more widely across the industry.

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7. Acknowledgements

Abbey Access would like to thank:

- CITB for funding and strategic support throughout the ECO programme.
- The numerous construction employers across Lincolnshire who provided employment opportunities, work experience placements and ongoing support to participants.
- Lindum Group and partner organisations for supporting practical training and work experience opportunities.
- The Abbey Access delivery team, tutors, mentors and support staff whose commitment contributed to the success of the programme.
- The participants who engaged with the programme and demonstrated determination in pursuing careers within construction.
- Most importantly, Abbey Access would like to recognise the achievements of every participant who took the opportunity to begin, return to or progress within a career in construction, helping to strengthen the future workforce of the industry.