

Investing in local communities for a better future

London's thriving economy is leading to large-scale development across the City. The buoyancy of the construction economy is placing pressures on the industry's employers, 98% of whom face difficulties in recruiting skilled staff to fill vacancies. But many of these areas of regeneration and development are side-by-side areas of deprivation and high unemployment. Many residents, particularly those from ethnic minority and other disadvantaged groups, experience difficulties in finding and sustaining employment.

The Building London – Creating Futures Development Partnership (DP), led by the London Borough of Southwark, was set up to bridge this gap. It aimed to reach out to groups traditionally under represented in the industry, such as women and black and ethnic minority communities, whilst at the same time ensuring that job seekers are suitably qualified and experienced to meet the skills needs of the employers. As Councillor Nick Stanton, Leader of Southwark Council, and lead DP partner said, *"Southwark is a London borough of extremes. In parts, unemployment is four times the national average, yet in others developers have struggled to deliver major construction projects because of severe skills shortages. Building London Creating Futures is bridging this gap"*.

Partnership with a local focus

Building London Creating Futures is a partnership of construction employers, local authorities, regeneration partnerships, training providers and community organisations. Together, partners have developed a sustainable model of cooperation and coordination to ensure that capital investment in an area benefits local people. After a small-scale pilot funded through the London Development Agency, the partnership's innovative model of "intermediary support" has been rolled out across London under EQUAL.

"Building London Creating Futures is a unique employment partnership for the construction industry. Investing in local communities in this way is crucial if the construction industry is to resolve its skills issues."
Bob White, Chairman of construction company, MACE Ltd.

The partnership's activity centres on 'workplace coordinators'. Their role is to help employers meet their recruiting needs, while providing personalised support for local people, particularly the long-term unemployed, to find work in the construction industry. In addition to their mentoring and coaching role, coordinators also organise formal training towards qualifications and industry standard requirements, such as the Construction Standards Certification Scheme (CSCS).

Since the scheme became fully operational in July 2003, over 250 people have found jobs, while around 850 people have completed valuable construction qualifications. EQUAL has funded six workplace coordinators to work with private developers, local authorities and a housing association on six development sites across London.

Businesses give their support

A key success of the scheme has been the high level of private sector buy-in. Three major developers that are partners have chosen to retain and fund workplace coordinators on their sites now that EQUAL funding has ended. David Rowbotham of MACE Ltd explained what makes the scheme so unique: *"It's a good idea that is being effectively delivered in partnership with the private*



Support to women and other underrepresented groups was an important aim of Building London

sector. It's not seen as a government-led initiative which is a refreshing change for us and because workplace coordinators are part of our organisation, the scheme is taken seriously... it's our reputation on the line".

The popularity and effectiveness of the approach has also seen the partnership win significant public sector backing. At least one London borough has firm plans in place to allocate "Section 106" monies raised from private developers through planning approvals towards supporting the scheme's continuance. Furthermore over €435 000 of co-financing funding from the London Development Agency (LDA) and the European Social Fund has already been secured for unemployed jobseekers registered with the Government's Jobcentre Plus agency to receive training through the programme.

A more detailed version and other EQUAL success stories can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equal/activities/search_en.cfm



Unemployment was tackled by matching local people to local jobs

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Innovation

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