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## EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

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### INTRODUCTION

The following eight programmes and initiatives have been identified by the authors as sources of good practice that are either currently active within the East Midlands or could be introduced to help address skills needs:

### AMBITION CONSTRUCTION

The Government launched New Deal in April 1998 as an initiative to get the long-term unemployed back to work. On the whole the scheme has been successful with about 200,000 people between the ages of 18 and 24 taken off the unemployment register by June 2000. However, only 3,424 New Deal places went into construction - less than 2% overall. In a Construction Confederation survey in 2000 of 286 contractors, only 26 had participated in the scheme, and of the 256 New Deal recruits, 222 had been placed with just three firms. As a result of this poor achievement in construction, the Government re-launched a 'new' New Deal tailored to the industry called *Ambition Construction*. The general New Deal involved:

- ❑ After six months' signing on, unemployed people must choose between a subsidised job, a full-time training place, voluntary work or work for an environmental task force;
- ❑ Before the new dealers chose their preferred option they were to undergo counselling and training in basic skills and job seeking techniques on a 'gateway programme' lasting up to four months;
- ❑ Employers were offered up to £60 per week for each New Dealer they took on and a £750 training grant;
- ❑ In 1999, the New Deal was extended to over 25s who had been unemployed for two years who were eligible for a weekly wage subsidy of £75.

Ambition Construction additionally involves:

- ❑ Construction being treated as a specialist sector;
- ❑ The six-month training period of the New Deal is extended to give workers more on-site training rather than insisting on academic qualifications;
- ❑ The programme will be extended to trainees in their 20s and 30s.

The national pilot for Ambition Construction in Nottingham has been successful in attracting the long term unemployed into training. The challenge it now faces is to find the placements with employers to take the graduates of the scheme.

## **CITB CONSTRUCTION CURRICULUM CENTRE INITIATIVE**

The curriculum centre initiative was established in 1990 by the CITB to address the poor image that young people had of the construction industry. Using construction as a context for learning, the initiative aims to introduce young people of all abilities, and their teachers, to the range and variety of skills and opportunities within the industry. The initiative focuses on students aged 5-19 and assists in the delivery of GNVQ qualifications through local networks of schools, colleges and employers.

The CITB employs a full-time curriculum centre co-ordinator in the Midlands area to promote, establish and monitor projects. For example, a successful project has been run for the last ten years with Walsall Education Business Partnership, Walsall College of Arts and Technology, three secondary schools and a special school supported the Walsall Curriculum Centre Project. This project has centred on involving teachers and school children in construction including the delivery of NVQ Units in construction occupations. In CITB Midlands area, 726 schools are involved in the initiative; over half of these are primary schools. In 2000 the following credits were achieved by curriculum centre students: 1,130 NVQ Level 1; 128 NVQ Level 2 Units; 304 Foundation GNVQ and 3 Intermediate GNVQ. In addition to this 646 teacher placement days were organised in industry, 51 in-service training days were run for teachers and 2923 work experience days run for school children in industry.

## **CONSTRUCTION ACTION GROUP OF EMPLOYERS (CAGE)**

CAGE was formed in March 2001 as a sub-group of the North Nottinghamshire Construction Liaison Group, and aims to become the main employer link between education, the employment service and providers of recruitment and training in the construction industry in North Nottinghamshire.

Its main objectives are:

- ❑ To inspire young people to consider career opportunities in Construction;
- ❑ To recruit and train young people and adults developing their skills at all levels;
- ❑ To promote the Investors in People Standard as a culture for development.

CAGE recognised the need for industry action at a local level. Given the above objectives CAGE sees its activities as leading both to better recruitment and retention. This message is delivered by forging links with schools and colleges and Connexions (careers advisory service).

Construction employers are encouraged to adopt a school and in addition take part in career events, mock interviews of students, work experience opportunities and materials to be used as part of the school curriculum. In addition, teachers and students are taken on outings to CITB head office to obtain hands on experience of the sector. CAGE also sees it as important to lobby local MP's on key issues related to their activities.

CAGE is an initiative which is being replicated in other areas. A similar initiative has for example, been launched in Nottingham City and another is being set up outside the region in South Yorkshire

CAGE has recently appointed a part-time co-ordinator for whom funding has been obtained.

Source: Adapted from [www.cage.org.uk](http://www.cage.org.uk)

## **CoVE – CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

In November 2000, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment set out his vision for a modern Further Education sector in Colleges for Excellence and Innovation.

Centres of Vocational Excellence are a key element in meeting this objective. Centres are being developed in colleges based on close links between colleges, business partners, other employment interests and communities allowing colleges to develop, maintain and deliver high quality, specialist provision across a range of new and traditional occupations. They are tasked with addressing the needs of all learners, regardless of background, and with supporting them in enhancing their skills and job prospects. They aim to build on existing excellence and provide leadership in the development of future excellence.

The Government target is that by 2003-04, half of all colleges will have developed at least one Centre of Vocational Excellence.

Within the East Midlands, a group of four colleges comprising Derby College, South East Derbyshire College, New College Nottingham and West Nottinghamshire College have jointly applied as a partnership for CoVE status for programmes in Plumbing, Gas and Electrical Installation. This is awaiting approval from the LSC's. The four colleges are already working together to establish a sub-regional OSAT Centre with four outlets at the colleges.

## ENGINEERING AMBASSADOR SCHEME

Science and Engineering Ambassadors, or SEAs, were launched by the DfES and DTI in January 2002. The aim is to encourage more young people to understand the opportunities that a science, engineering or technology based career can offer them. Scientists, engineers and other technical people will be working with schools on a voluntary basis.

Ambassadors build on existing initiatives to provide schools with access to high quality resources and exciting activities.

Science and Engineering Ambassadors are people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills employed in a variety of occupations at all levels. They may be employed as scientists, engineers or mathematicians, or they may be using those skills in other environments. Ambassadors are managed nationally by SETNET and locally through the network of 53 SETPOINTS - the approved agents of SETNET, run by people who are specialists in helping bring schools and others together to provide exciting experiences for children in STEM subjects.

The type of work an Ambassador may become involved in may cover a whole range of activities. For example, they may :

- Support out-of-school activities such as clubs, awards and competitions;
- Offer mentoring and career guidance to groups;
- Act as role models;
- Help provide industrial experience for teachers and students.

## **NOTTINGHAM CONSTRUCTION FORUM – “BUILDING A BETTER NOTTINGHAM”**

The forum was established in 2001 with the aim of assisting “the development of Nottinghamshire Construction Companies – to create a climate in which the industry can successfully develop a well-trained workforce and management – efficiently provide clients with quality services – grow their businesses and prosper”.

Their objectives are to:

- ❑ Help develop a vibrant, multi-skilled, growing and prosperous Nottinghamshire Construction Industry.
- ❑ Actively encourage local companies to work together to maximise the volume of business that can be retained within the Nottinghamshire and East Midlands Regions.
- ❑ Work proactively with the CITB, the Nottinghamshire LSC the Nottinghamshire Business Link, emda and local colleges, to continually attract new entrants and develop the current workforce and management.
- ❑ Work proactively with representative organisations such as the CITB, M4I, FMB and the NFB and RIBA, and to encourage their involvement in the Forum.
- ❑ Encourage local and national initiatives which will assist member companies e.g. the CAGE initiative in North Nottinghamshire, which strives to attract the future workforce, by developing and maintaining close working links with schools and colleges.
- ❑ Develop a strong industry voice locally, by involving all relevant companies.
- ❑ Share and disseminate Best Practices and help access funding.

To these ends the forum meets bi-monthly to facilitate networking and provide expert speakers, share experiences between themselves, provides links between problems and those who can help solve them, works towards creating a single voice for the Industry locally, examine access to funding streams to support the aims and objectives and provide a mechanism for closer working together. Together, these activities help to improve quality, address skills needs and raise people management standards.

Source: [www.fmb.org.uk/fmbmembers/regionalinfo/yorkshire&trent/jul02.asp](http://www.fmb.org.uk/fmbmembers/regionalinfo/yorkshire&trent/jul02.asp)

## **POSITIVE ACTION TRAINING IN HOUSING (PATH)**

The Positive Action Training in Housing (PATH) schemes operate in ten areas of the country, to address the under-representation of managers from black and ethnic minority communities in social housing. Using the positive action legislation of the Race Relations Act 1976, the schemes have trained people full-time for between one and three years through placements with housing associations and local authority housing departments, supplemented by day-release college attendance and short training courses. Of the 1,000 trainees in the past 15 years over 80% obtained the jobs they were trained for. PATH offers a tried and tested model that could be adapted for other construction industry occupations.

## **VALUABLE SKILLS**

Research has revealed that time and funds are the main barriers that employers face to training low-skilled employees. The Derbyshire Valuable Skills Employer Training Pilot is one of the six pilot programmes set up around the UK, to test whether paying employers while employees are on training leave will address these issues. Funding is available to give employers the opportunity to develop employee's basic skills levels or training up to NVQ Level 2 and equivalent vocational qualifications.

The key features of the pilot are:

- ❑ The scheme compensates businesses for wages whilst employees train.
- ❑ Employees get free training and achieve recognised qualifications from quality-assured providers.
- ❑ Employees get an entitlement of 35 hours training leave.
- ❑ Both employers and employees receive personalised information, advice and guidance.

To be eligible for the scheme the company must be Derbyshire based and employ more than 3 people. Employees must be aged 19 + and have 4 or less 'O' Levels/GCSE's. The pilot allows up to 12 months for the individual to achieve their chosen learning. The pilot started in September 2002 and runs until December 2004.