

On Site Bristol Pilot Project – Peer Mentoring for Women in Construction

Project Evaluation May 2009

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Introduction

1 The purpose of this document is to evaluate the pilot project for Peer Mentoring for Women in Construction established by On Site Bristol (OSB) in January 2009. This evaluation has been conducted through a combination of interviews and desk based research. The interviews have been held with the Project Manager and one of the Training Officers from OSB. It was hoped that interviews could also have been arranged with relevant stakeholders including a representative from Bristol City Council and one of the potential mentors who participated both in the training and the Learning Skills Council (LSC) Trading Places project. Unfortunately these additional interviews did not occur, so the majority of this evaluation has been conducted through reference to documentation provided and internet research. I would like to thank the OSB Project Manager and his staff for their assistance in conducting this evaluation.

The Evaluator

2 I have worked as an administrator and manager for over twenty years, predominantly in the Public Sector but latterly as a freelance management consultant specialising once again in the Public Sector. I am an experienced project manager and PRINCE 2 practitioner and as both an internal and now external consultant have conducted numerous reviews of organisations and projects over the past ten years. From 2003 to 2005 I was seconded to the Prince's Trust as a Development Advisor. During this time I was responsible for the Business Programme in both Wiltshire and Bath & North East Somerset which aimed to support disadvantaged young people who wished to start their own businesses. This required both supporting the young people themselves as an advisor and mentor and managing a large and diverse group of volunteer mentors who provided ongoing support to the clients.

Women in Construction

3 A research paper¹ published in 2006 by the CIOB highlighted the shortage of skills within the construction industry as a serious issue. Simultaneously the paper details the lack of diversity in the construction workforce with only 10% of the positions held by women. The author suggests that there are three important issues which need to be addressed:

- Attracting more women to the industry by not only focusing on young entrants but also returnees to work following a career break, and those who seek a career change;
- Retention of women in the workforce;

¹ Inclusivity: The Changing Role of Women in the Construction Workforce by Sonia Gurjao

- Understanding the extent of women employed in the whole industry, including the supply chain.

In summary the author states that 'To meet the challenge of the skills gap the recruitment of women is no longer simply a nice thing to do; it has become a necessity'.

4 In a Chartered Institute of Building survey² conducted in 2008 93% of those who responded believed that there was a shortage of skills in the construction industry, whilst construction output is predicted to grow despite the recession. Crafts and trades positions were considered the hardest to recruit and concern was expressed that demand for apprenticeships outstripped supply. The CIOB survey highlighted the extensive use of migrant workers, but also concluded that this workforce was only meeting the demands at the lower end of the skills spectrum, and warned that changes in the world economy could see these workers returning home again in the short term.

5 With an accepted increase in demand coupled with an ageing workforce and a shortage of skills, it would appear that the Construction industry is ready to address diversity and make better use of a section of the UK population previously underutilised. This movement is supported by numerous national organisations driving for change including ConstructionSkills, the Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE), CIOB, Local Authorities, Learning Skills Council (LSC), National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), Women into Science Engineering and Construction (WISE) and many more.

On Site Bristol

6 OSB was established in 1997 to provide assistance to local people seeking work in the construction industry and is fully funded by the Learning and Skills Council. The organisation works to the Economic Regeneration team within Bristol City Council who provide in kind resources in support of the On Site Project including the Project Manager and staff. OSB contribute to the achievement of Service Priority 1: Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion within the relevant departmental Service Plan³. Bristol City Council are one of a number of partner organisations including LSC, City of Bristol College, Jobcentre Plus and local employers. Governance of the project is achieved through a partnership board who meet every six weeks combined with regular reporting to a management hierarchy within Bristol City Council. The partnership board consists of representatives of the partner organisations and the manager of OSB. In addition a number of relevant organisations attend to provide specialist input. The role of the partnership board is governed by an oversight framework and terms of reference, and the meetings are documented. In a recent Ofsted⁴ report On Site were graded as Good, with reference to leadership, provision, support to learners and relationships with partners.

² Skills Shortage in the UK Construction Industry 2008

³ Bristol City Council Economic Regeneration Dept Service Plan 2009-2012 dated March 2007

⁴ Ofsted Inspection 321481 dated 3 October 2008

7 The importance of organisations such as OSB were highlighted in the recent White Paper – New Opportunities Fair Chances for the Future⁵ in which the government recognised the importance of both apprenticeships and mentoring. This includes a number of targets for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) to grow the apprenticeship capability within the UK including:

- Start of roll-out to expand employer-led Group Training Associations to offer Apprenticeships in their sectors;
- Begin introduction of up to 10 new Apprenticeship training associations;
- Start to increase the number of Apprenticeships available within public sector;
- Start piloting new initiatives in the manufacturing sector and, through London 2012, in the construction sector to ensure more employers will have access to workers with the relevant skills.

With all of these initiatives planned to commence in April this year this provides considerable support to the role of the OSB and increases the prominence of the Peer Mentoring for Women in Construction project.

8 The purpose of the pilot project was to develop a mentoring and support scheme for female apprentices within construction and building services in the West of England. The project was commissioned to address selected outcomes from an LSC project *Trading Places* with a broader remit of improving access to learning and employment for both men and women. The Trading Places project aimed to address skills shortages across four industries including Social Care (Men), Construction and Engineering (Women) and Retail (Both) both regionally and nationally. A report was published in June 2008⁶. The construction element of this report was based on the work of a group of five women working in the construction industry in the South West, two of whom were already involved in the OSB programme, although this is not highlighted within the report. The report made seven recommendations:

1. Initiate a more flexible approach to construction training courses;
2. Make the role of women working in construction more evident in all marketing materials, including web-sites;
3. Highlight the variety of roles that are part of the construction industry, aside from heavy manual labour, and show women in these roles.
4. Promote and fund apprenticeship opportunities for older women;

⁵ White Paper – New Opportunities Fair Chances for the Future - January 2009

⁶ *Together we can challenge stereotypes for work* dated June 2008.

5. Promote a variety of possible career pathways in the construction industry and promote the rewards.
6. Offer more work experience opportunities to young people of both genders, and emphasise the diversity of jobs available.
7. Create a database of construction ambassadors who work in the industry.

9 The report also highlighted the value of role models and mentors to encourage and support females into this historically male dominated industry. To build on the success of Trading Places the LSC commissioned On Site following a competitive tender exercise in November 2008. The purpose of the tender exercise was to *engage an organisation to deliver a pilot project that would encourage greater participation and success of atypical Apprenticeships and support the need to close the pay gap by encouraging employers to train female and male learners in non traditional careers*⁷. The specification also directed that the successful bidder must address at least one of the following objectives:

- Closing the gender gap in the sectors set out within the SW Equality and Diversity action plan;
- Raising the participation and full framework completion of atypical learners in Apprenticeships.

OSB were successful and the project aims and achievements to date clearly correlate with the original specification. Unfortunately, the contract took a considerable length of time to achieve formal sign off and delayed commencement of the project until the 10th February. The reasons for this delay are due to a combination of the holiday period and the fact that the contract was not issued until 12th Jan 2009 which prevented the Project Manager implementing the programme in accordance with Local Authority rules on financial management. It is recommended that the procurement teams within both Bristol City Council and the LSC liaise to determine if this is a common occurrence and work to improve the efficiency of future contractual processes.

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

10 OSB have selected the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) as the provider of their mentoring programme. MBF were selected following internet research and discussions with organisations who operate MBF mentoring schemes including; Tomorrow's People, Somerset Youth Volunteering Network, Off the Record and Bristol Drugs Project. MBF is a strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector and currently has over 3000 mentoring and befriending projects established across the UK. Approximately 1000 of these projects are situated within the South West of England. The MBF provides guidance and support to organisations and practitioners involved in mentoring and befriending. As the national strategic body, MBF also works to influence policy and practice in the sector and across government.

⁷ South West Equality and Diversity Mentoring Pilot Tender – Schedule B dated Nov 08

11 The MBF has developed a national infrastructure with regional coordinators established in each of the nine government regions with responsibility for engaging with and supporting practitioners in the field. The MBF is committed to promoting voluntary regulation of mentoring and befriending projects through the Approved Provider Standard, the national benchmark for safe and effective practice.

12 To assist programme coordinators MBF produce a series of documents and DVDs and deliver Train The Trainer courses. The Resource Pack for Project Co-ordinators and Trainers was reviewed as part of this evaluation and I was extremely impressed with the standard of the documentation which includes detailed guidance, case studies and examples, worksheets and details of further resources. Used correctly and with adequate resources to conduct the detailed planning, operation and evaluations required for a successful programme, the relationship with the MBF should enhance the proposed OSB mentoring scheme and dramatically increase their chances of success.

Project Aim and Objectives

13 A Project Initiation Document (Annex A) was produced in March in accordance with Bristol City Council project management methodology and stated the following project outcomes:

- Increased promotion of opportunity for female applicants to join OSB scheme;
- Over time improved success and retention rates for female apprentices;
- Linked to NIACE ICT improvement strategy. Improved website;
- OSB staff development within role.

The successful achievement of these outcomes will be measured using the following Key Performance Indicators (KPI):

Ser	KPI	Target Date	Comment
1	Research opinions and facts behind low take up of jobs in construction by females – use existing publications, survey, interview and seminar as appropriate – produce a report of findings and draw up an implementation strategy by 31 Mar 09	31 Mar 09	This evaluation report will form the basis for the report detailed. Delays have been experienced in gaining access to required information hence the late delivery of this product.
2	Train a minimum of 2 OSB staff as mentor coordinators by 31 March 09	31 Mar 09	Revised target 27 May 09
3	Recruit and train 4 peer mentors and commence programme by 31 Mar 09	31 Mar 09	Revised target 27 May 09
4	Publish new literature and/or update website by Apr 09	April 09	Revised target 30 Jun 09
5	Increased take up of apprenticeships by	Sep 09	Ongoing.

When the timings for the outcomes is compared to those specified in the original bid document it is clear that the timing of the KPIs have slipped as a result of the lengthy contractual process. However, the provision of information to enable this evaluation (KPI 1) was delayed because the Project Manager had insufficient resources to dedicate to the review.

The slippages in KPIs 2 – 4 have resulted from:

- Unforeseen difficulties in recruiting peer mentors. OSB originally expected that the initial group would be drawn from within their trainees and partners. This has not materialised although Bristol City Council have agreed to the involvement of a key member of staff who also participated in the Trading Places project. Further work is now in hand with key stakeholders to recruit both mentors and ambassadors for the project;
- The decision to gather additional information through telephone interviews to enhance the results from the surveys;
- The detrimental impact on the achievement of the objectives due to insufficient human resources, based upon the assumptions made at the time of the original tender and pressures resulting from the current economic downturn. Additionally, OSB originally profiled the project as a shared piece of work amongst the team but with hindsight it would have benefitted from a designated training officer to carry forward the interaction with OSB learners.

14 Finally, whilst it is understood that this is a pilot project and has no precedent from which to extrapolate any definite measures, it is expected that more measurable targets will be introduced for KPI 5 once sufficient data has been captured. Comprehensive guidance on the evaluation of mentoring schemes is provided in the resource pack⁸ provided by the Mentoring & Befriending Foundation including:

- Programme Monitoring & Review;
- Evaluation;
- Quality Assurance & Standards.

Detailing what data and information should be collected, how to collect it and advice on what to do with it when you have it is included. OSB may wish to aim towards achievement of either the MBF Approved Provider Standard and/or the Volunteering England Investing in

⁸ Setting up a Successful Mentoring or Befriending Programme – A Resource Pack for Project Co-ordinators and Trainers 2008

Volunteers standard. These would provide nationally recognised accreditation of achievements but would require a robust approach to ensure evidence was readily available to us in the applications.

Project Structure

15 The OSB staff are considered the Project Team with the OSB Project Manager taking the lead. Although there is an existing organisational structure within OSB which is being used to regularly report progress including the Partnership Board and the management team within the Economic Regeneration team within Bristol City Council, this was not specified within the PID. This gives a false impression of a lack of sponsorship and governance. Although this is a relatively small project it would still benefit from the appointment of a Project Sponsor or Executive and an appropriate number of representatives from the stakeholder community to act as Senior Users. As these individuals are likely to be executing these roles for OSB already this should be a formality rather than an onerous task. This approach is supported within the Bristol City Council project management guidance.

16 The OSB team are specified as the project team for the purposes of the pilot, and I am aware that three of the Training Officers attended the first mentor training sessions. However, despite fortnightly team meetings and attendance at the first training session the team member interviewed showed little awareness of the background to the pilot. The Training Officers core role is to provide support to the learners and a greater level of awareness would be expected which may have provided the Project Manager with the extra resource he required to achieve the project outcomes. The Project manager has confirmed the findings of the interview in his opinion are not reflective of the whole Team's level of awareness or involvement, however, at the next stage all OSB staff will be involved in the training. The lack of resource was identified as a risk within the PID and is also identified by Bristol City Council as a key risk within the relevant departmental service plan.

Risks

17 The PID identified only two potential risks to the pilot which were:

- Information not forthcoming from females to inform next steps;
- Insufficient resources to implement project.

I would have expected a greater analysis of risk to include: an incompatible mentoring framework, a lack of support from local construction employers, lack of suitable mentors, insufficient new entrants from chosen demographic, changes in relevant Government policy, the impact of the recession on the construction industry and hence the project and a lack of support from partners. The majority of these risks are detailed within the Bristol City

Council Economic Regeneration Service Delivery Plan but should not have assumed in the PID.

18 It is also proposed that the risk register would benefit from the identification of both an Owner and a Manager for each risk. This provides the Project Manager with support from an appropriate member of the project team with sufficient seniority to assist in either the mitigation or management of the risk. For example, whilst it is accepted that the Project Manager is the manager of the two risks identified, it is proposed that the potential for insufficient resources should be owned by the Project Sponsor as it is only at that level that such a decision could be made. Comprehensive guidance on the creation and management of a risk register is available through the Bristol City Council project management methodology.

Project Finance

19 The financial schedule for the project is included at Annex B. The project delivered at almost £900 under budget, with the savings generated predominantly within Support Costs. The experiences from the pilot should be reviewed and incorporated into the financial plan to continue delivery of this capability within OSB. Particular emphasis should be given to staffing and the costs of operating a mentoring scheme.

Project Approach

20 To date OSB has conducted a survey of females in construction and held one Train the Trainer training courses. Details of each of these packages of work follows.

21 **Survey.** A survey was designed and issued to women working in the construction industry in the South West. Of the 107 surveys issued OSB received 31 responses representing a return of 29%. The survey was distributed to thirteen current and ex On Site apprentices, 75 City of Bristol College apprentices and staff and a further 19 were distributed via industry contacts including ConstructionSkills, Women in Construction group, Leadbitter Construction and Bristol City Council. The survey was distributed through a combination of email and hard copy. To achieve a higher return OSB would need to dedicate resource to following up on the individuals who were issued a survey. Experience in this area has produced an increase in excess of 30% which could have increased the sample to almost 60% which would have strengthened the evidence on which to base development of the mentoring scheme. The OSB Training Officers could have made significant contributions to raising the profile of the survey amongst their clients, but they were not fully utilised. It is recommended that in future exercises of this nature they are more fully involved. An example of the survey is attached as Annex C to this document.

22 The survey results suggested that:

- 74% of those who responded cited Interests/School subjects as the key factors in their choice of career;
- 100% believed that role models had given them Encouragement and Inspiration;
- 23% felt that they could have listened more to their role model with a further 15% indicating that greater benefit would have been gained from a female role model;
- 48% of those who responded felt that they had experienced negativity linked to their gender;
- 25% believed that careers talks for girls in schools was a factor in making construction a better career option for females;
- 65% cited Role Models/Ambassadors and 52% access to female ambassadors or mentors as the most effective methods of encouraging females to join the industry.

The survey also asked respondents to provide details of their Trade/Profession which revealed that 28 of the 31 who completed the survey were professionally qualified which highlights that the majority of those who responded were not female apprentices. The results of the survey combined with the subsequent individual sessions arranged by OSB, support the findings of the Trading Places report and justify the need for the mentoring scheme this project aims to implement.

23 Training Courses. As previously mentioned OBS has selected the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) to provide the framework for the mentoring scheme. The MBF has conducted two training seminars aimed at establishing a group of trainers within OSB who can then conduct further training as required. The first of these courses was run on 19th March when MBF facilitated a session which both provided an insight into mentoring, whilst simultaneously gathering the views of the attendees on the needs of women in construction to inform the proposed mentoring scheme. The stated aims of the course were:

- To introduce delegates to the peer mentoring model and the various methods of delivery to aid setting up a peer mentoring programme;
- To enable delegates to formulate aims, objectives and outcomes for the peer mentoring programme;
- To provide delegates with an understanding of the key processes required in managing a peer mentoring programme;
- To enable delegates to apply operational processes to an On Site Peer Mentoring Action Plan.

24 The invite to the seminar in March was coupled with the survey, and the Project Manager contacted a number of organisations and individuals personally to promote the event and ensure a diverse group of delegates on the day. In total seventeen delegates attended the initial seminar held in OSB on the 19th March. Of these delegates:

- Three were OSB staff and potential programme coordinators;
- Five were potential mentors;
- Three represented partner organisations (Bristol City Council / LSC);
- Six were women working or training in construction.

None of the six women training in construction were existing OSB apprentices, and there was some concern expressed that perhaps this stakeholder group were not accurately represented by those that attended. Better use of the relationships between the OSB Training Officers and their apprentices in future could improve the quality of this group. OSB have already taken steps to address this and conducted one to one interviews with all six of their current female apprentices working in construction four of whom are plumbers and two electricians. These interviews were conducted by the OSB Training Officers.

Findings include:

- ALL believe OSB Training Officer helped early transition into career and not sure if mentor would add value;
- ALL felt a mentor could be either male or female;
- None able/willing to take on mentor role.

This is a valuable exercise when added to the information already gathered using the survey and the seminar and OSB are to be commended for taking this initiative.

25 It is also noted that there was no attendance from City of Bristol College staff who would likely have made a valuable contribution to the discussion as a key delivery agent and partner. With increased planning and involvement of the wider OSB team and partners future events should more accurately represent the project stakeholders.

26 The seminar was successful in gathering a diverse range of views and inputs on the issue of mentoring, women in construction and the need, scope and design of a potential OSB driven peer mentoring scheme. Key outcomes included:

- Interest from potential mentors to participate in the scheme;
- Discussions on the potential benefits of mentors;

- Further development of the Trading Places work to gauge the experiences and needs of women in the construction industry;
- Discussions on the potential mentoring methods and their suitability for OSB.

Delegates were invited to complete evaluations following the training but these results are not available for inclusion in this evaluation.

27 **Future Plans.** A second day of training is planned which will concentrate on training those who will setup and manage the mentoring scheme. MBF would once again run the event and a proposed outline includes:

- Defining mentoring;
- The mentoring cycle;
- Ground Rules;
- Interpersonal Behaviour & Communication Skills;
- Evaluating your training programme;
- Preparation before running your training.

This should provide the relevant personnel including wider OSB staff, Bristol City Council and City of Bristol College with the information and initial skills they require to plan, implement and evaluate the mentoring scheme including recruiting and training their volunteer mentors. It is therefore essential that this training includes all necessary personnel, is conducted early enough and prior to any commitments to the operation of the scheme or engagement with mentors or mentees and is followed up with adequate resources to ensure staff are able to carry out the role.

Conclusions

28 In conclusion I believe that the proposition by OSB to setup a peer mentoring scheme for women in construction:

- Aligns with industry research conducted over the past five years identifying skills shortages and the greater potential for employment of women;
- Contributes directly to Government targets related to apprenticeships and mentoring;
- Contributes to the success of the Economic Regeneration Department within Bristol City Council and consequently the council's Corporate Plan priorities;

- Has the potential to deliver a number of key recommendations highlighted in the LSC Trading Places review;
- Is relevant to women within the construction industry;
- Is a natural addition to the existing capability of OSB and would build upon existing relationships and expertise.

29 However, my evaluation of the operation of the pilot project to date coupled with research into the MBF programme and personal experience of managing a mentoring programme suggest that OSB must change their approach if they are to make this work and deliver the potential benefits. Specifically:

- a. **Resources.** Appropriate resources must be identified and secured prior to the commencement of each stage. This includes providing sufficient managerial commitment, involvement of partner organisations, involvement of the existing OSB staff and subsequent development of their role and administration. Volunteers require careful management to ensure their expertise is used to best effect whilst meeting their personal needs for engaging in the scheme, and this requires commitment from all to achieve. Clearly the resourcing for the pilot was insufficient and the assumption of a low/nil cost scheme for the future has highlighted:
 - That the MBF scheme requires greater human resource to establish and operate than OSB originally thought;
 - Enthusiasm from within the group of existing trainees to act as peer mentors is less than anticipated.
- b. **Framework.** OSB must adhere to the process defined by MBF in the establishment, operation and evaluation of such a scheme. Whilst it is acknowledged that the MBF programme has been designed as a flexible framework which an organisation must adapt to their needs, there are minimum standards which OSB must meet for the scheme to have a chance to succeed.
- c. **External Support.** Support from partner organisations must be secured and relevant terms of reference updated as required. This includes involvement in information gathering through seminars and surveys or any other method, publicity and governance through the OSB Partnership Board.

- d. **Publicity and Marketing.** It is essential that OSB publicise the scheme both through their website, literature and road shows/presentations. As this target has already slipped urgent action is required to ensure that the target audiences have timely and relevant information to inform their choices as either potential trainees, mentors or supporters. This should be linked into the activities in development with Bristol Education Partnership for year 9 to 11 pupils, the planned interactive sessions in schools in partnership with major employer Skanska and the addition of a forum to the OSB website. All examples of good practice which will need supporting marketing campaigns and materials to succeed. OSB should also build upon their good working relationship with ConstructionSkills and fully utilise their 'Ambassadors' scheme.

30 There is clearly an appetite for the outcomes of this project both within the target audience, the Construction industry and within Local and National Government. With the necessary resource managed in accordance with the MBF framework and governed by the OSB partnership board this project clearly has the potential to deliver the stated outcomes. Once these benefits have been achieved the OSB delivery model could be considered for adoption in other areas of the country supported by the DIUS to meet Government targets and address the issues of skills shortage within the Construction industry.