

Delivering lasting impact: Our Building Opportunities Programme



Building Opportunities Programme cohort, CEMC, Nottinghamshire, UK

As part of the Abraham Moss Library and Leisure Centre project in Manchester, our social value team recently delivered Laing O'Rourke's inaugural Building Opportunities Programme. Designed to support individuals with multiple barriers to employment, it's an employability programme with a difference.

About the programme

Laing O'Rourke worked with the local authority, specialist partner ANTZ and community groups to design a programme that delivered practical skills and tangible outcomes within the region, while also supporting client KPIs and local planning requirements. Focused on an area of Manchester with high unemployment levels, a cohort of 15 people undertook a three-week course that included time in real-life working environments, practical employability skills, health and wellbeing support and an insight into the range of roles available in construction.

A person-centric approach

Our UK social value strategy is to deliver £2bn of social impact and enrich the lives of 2 million people by 2030. We're serious about those goals and making sure that our work delivers genuine, lasting impact rather than some kind of 'tick-box' activity.

The Building Opportunities Programme embodies that. Not only did all 15 participants that completed the course receive their Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, we also held a networking event with potential employers, providing an opportunity for participants to put their skills into practice and access immediate employment opportunities.

Within weeks two participants had secured jobs and two more were in recruitment processes. This is a significant success when considering the backgrounds of the cohort and the often long-term unemployment they had experienced.

Unlike many employability programmes, our support doesn't end there. The reality is that not all individuals are work-ready at the end of the course, so we're continuing to support them into employment through business mentoring, wellbeing support and further development of employability skills. Individual needs vary, so we're tailoring that support on a person-by-person basis.

"The Building Opportunities Programme represents a really progressive approach to delivering social value. The people we're supporting simply don't have the same employment access as so many of us. The practical elements of the programme are vital. They're really designed to help participants overcome some of the primary employment barriers. I'm especially proud that we continue to support cohorts longer-term. We're truly committed to enriching lives within the communities we operate in, and that long-term view is essential. The feedback we received at the end of the programme was really inspiring – and quite emotional."

Mark Cottam, Social Value Leader, UK

"Laing O'Rourke has taken an industry-leading approach to shaping a programme that delivers legacy. It creates a long-term impact that enables a shift change for communities. We're proud to be working with the team as the programme is rolled out more widely and to provide the longer-term support needed by the programme's participants."

Jen Pemberton, CEO, ANTZ