



Roberta Austin
Blackpool Build Up
5-7 Princess Street
Blackpool
FY1 5B

Direct Line: (01253) 477333

E-Mail: Peter.legg@blackpool.gov.uk

Date: 1st July 2008

Dear Roberta,

National Training Award Nomination

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the story and evidence in support of your nomination for a national training award.

Blackpool Build Up forms part of a Blackpool's Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI), a government funded programme that aims to pilot new ways of boosting enterprise and employment within some of the most deprived communities in England. Blackpool is one of only 20 areas to have been awarded this resource.

One of the objectives of Blackpool's enterprise programme is to find ways of connecting local people to the employment and training opportunities arising from regeneration in particular the many construction projects that are helping to transform Blackpool into a 21st century resort destination.

The concept behind *Build Up* was a fairly simple one; to create a construction training facility in the heart of the town centre that offered a range of entry level construction skills for unemployed adults who were interested in accessing employment in the construction industry, especially public funded regeneration whereby contractors had to demonstrate that they were providing local labour opportunities. A clear gap existed in terms of providing construction training for unemployed adults wishing to get a foothold in this and related industries.

Blackpool & the Fylde College have a long history of providing good quality construction training, indeed they are a centre of excellence. However, the client group that *Build Up* deal with are very different to the young people they are used to training in the confines of the College campus.

Build Up trainees are in the main long term unemployed, with low levels of confidence and self esteem, unstructured daily routines, limited skills, and hail from neighbourhoods where the welfare benefit culture is an inter generational norm. *Build Up* had a very big mountain to climb when it set up its facility in January 2008 in the heart of one of these communities – Foxhall Village.

At this time relations with contractors were minimal, the training facility (a former industrial unit in poor repair) needed transforming, and yet even then Build Up took on its first cohort of trainees to work around the refurbishment process.

It is quite remarkable what *Build Up* and its dedicated team of staff have achieved in such a short space of time. *Build Up* has created a solid reputation with employers and public agencies such as Jobcentre Plus for being an invaluable provider of good quality employer led training. If an employer needs a crane operator, a roofer, a tiler, a paver, a bricklayer, a kitchen fitter, an industrial cleaner ...the list goes on, *Build Up* will endeavour to find a way to train and match someone to that opportunity and work with the employer to access further in-work support. Flexibility has been the key that has unlocked a wide range of job opportunities, developed trust and credibility with contractors, and helped around 150 people into jobs in only 15 months, far exceeding any original targets. *Build Up* has attracted national attention for the work it is doing, and the 'can-do' attitude which it instils into all its trainees.

Build Up has already won a regional construction award in conjunction with Blackpool Coastal Housing – and arms length housing company responsible for investing around £70m in Blackpool's social housing. *Build Up* makes it easy for sub-contractors to fulfil their social inclusion clause. Contractors can no longer say they cannot find anyone to fill a position, but more than this, they are impressed at the level of skills *Build Up* trainees arrive with. It makes the next stage of on-the-job training that much easier to plan.

Many areas have tried and failed to develop a training facility as successful as *Build Up*. It is a shining beacon of hope for regeneration in Blackpool. *Build Up* no longer needs to promote its service to unemployed residents; the waiting list alone is testimony to its reputation for helping people find meaningful and rewarding work. But a future *Build Up* trainee knows he or she is not in for an easy ride. From day one the rules are set and adhered to.

It is time *Build Up* was recognised at a national level for the work it does in one of the most deprived authorities in the country. Blackpool has an extremely challenging local labour market where opportunities are limited but *Build Up* continues to buck the trend and spot opportunities that others miss, and long may it continue to do so.

Whenever I see a construction site in Blackpool it brings a smile to my face because I know there will be some *Build Up* trainees involved, helping to literally re-build Blackpool.

I can only wish you and your team the best of luck in winning a deserved national award.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



Peter Legg
Head of Enterprise & Employment