

**Jobcentre Plus**

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The logo for Jobcentre Plus, featuring the text "jobcentreplus" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font on a bright green rectangular background.

1<sup>st</sup> July 2009

To whom it may concern.

I am writing to support Blackpool Build Up in their application for the National Training Award.

I am the Customer services operation manager for Jobcentre Plus. My area of responsibility covers St Annes, Blackpool and Fleetwood.

My staff have an excellent working relationship with Build Up. We have worked together on the workless agenda to help make a difference to the lives of customers in Blackpool.

I know that since 14th January 2008, 248 people have found full time, sustainable work as a result of attending Blackpool Build Up. Staff in Blackpool Build Up have supported Jobcentre Plus staff in a variety of our initiatives and projects.

One of our main initiatives this operational year is Local Employment Partnerships. These are a deal between government and business to tackle the increasing recruitment and skill challenges of our labour market and economy. Blackpool Build Up were one of the first organisations to sign up for LEP in Blackpool, they have acted as a role model for other partners and employers.

A project to mention is "Bloomfield 67". This ran from October 2008 to March 2009. The aim was to work with 67 long term unemployed customers living in one of the most deprived Wards in Blackpool, hence the name, Bloomfield 67. Our target was to reduce the number by 50%. These were customers who had been claiming Job Seekers Allowance for over 12 months, some of them had been unemployed for up to 6 years. They all had significant barriers that prevented them from starting work.

Roberta and Louise were the main reason why the project was so successful. They guaranteed to give priority to our Bloomfield customers, once we contacted them and explained our aims and objectives.

They attended monthly meetings with Jobcentre staff and other partners. Their enthusiasm and commitment was an example to other partners. Roberta and Louise were always fully informed of the customer's progress. They liaised daily with my staff in order to help us change the lives of these customers. As a result of the project, my unit achieved the top results in Cumbria and Lancashire District., 23 customers started the Build Up course and 11 went into work..

Blackpool Build Up have worked with a full range of customers across the diversity agenda. We have records of success stories about customers with health conditions, ex

prisoners , drug addicts and those from different gender and sexual orientation. This confirms that Blackpool Build Up are working with our hardest to help customers.

Our staff have seen the excellent results from Blackpool Build Up, this is why they have full confidence in recommending it to our customers. Customers are trained across a range of skills, but they also receive support and help to raise their confidence and self esteem. We recently nominated a good news story from Build Up to be broadcast on local radio. This was to promote the services of both Jobcentre Plus and Blackpool Build Up.

Blackpool Build Up specialise in tailoring training courses to meet local employer needs. Customers are treated as though they are in work from day one. All customers have to complete work placements after the course, they do this via a Work Trial, which is one of our initiatives. My unit is top performer in Work Trials, this is largely due to the close working partnership we have with Blackpool Build Up. During 08/09, we had 82 work trial starts via Build Up, of these 52 customers started work and all of them are still there.

Another success story worthy of mention is Tangerine Confectionery Factory recruitment. Build Up assisted Jobcentre staff to find 21 suitable employees . They also provided manual handling/health & safety/Level 2 food hygiene training for all of these people, the employer was delighted with the quality of service he received.

I have been so impressed by the quality , detail and flexibility of the training that I have recommended the Build Up model to my District Manager. In turn he has promoted the model at meetings of the Local Strategic Partnerships . As a result of this , additional funding has been sought and won. We now have the Blackpool Build Up model operating in St Annes and Fleetwood. Roberta and Louise are always willing to help, whatever the request. An example of this is how they have recently agreed to let us use their premises to hold events for some Lone Parent Group sessions .

I would just like to end by saying that in 25 years of service with Jobcentre Plus, Blackpool Build Up is definitely the best training provider I have worked with.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Freeman  
Coastal Unit Customer Service Operations Manager