

## Reaching Out in the Workplace and the Community at Manchester City Football Academy Learning Centre

UCATT's Union Learning Fund (ULF) project, *Reaching Out in the Workplace and the Community*, runs until March 2015. Through this union-led learning project, UCATT is helping to transform the lives of its members, their work mates and their local communities through lifelong learning opportunities.

The union's work at BAM Construction's Manchester City Football Academy (CFA) site shows how UCATT is working with its partners to break down educational and financial barriers to learning and employment by developing new training and skills opportunities not only for the workforce, but also people living in the local community.

BAM Construction is building the Manchester City Football Club youth development and first team training facility for up to 400 young players on an 80-acre site adjacent to the Etihad Stadium. The new Academy will provide:

- classrooms for 200 youngsters;
- on-site accommodation for junior and senior players;
- 16.5 football pitches, 12 of them dedicated to players aged from 8 to 21;
- a state-of-the-art first team building with changing rooms, gym, refectory and injury and rehabilitation centre,
- a 7,000 capacity stadium for youth matches;
- staff offices and a dedicated media centre; and
- a bridge linking the site to the Etihad Stadium and the rest of the campus.

Work began in October 2012 and is due to be completed by the beginning of the 2014/15 season. Around 3,000 construction workers are expected to work on the site over the life of the project, with around 800 on site at any one time.

### Organising to Learn

Chris Clarke is UCATT's On-Site Learning Organiser (OSLO). In addition to carrying out health and safety inductions with new workers, he also co-ordinates workforce and community learning in the Learning Centre.

The on-site, multi-purpose Learning Centre is kitted out with 10 laptops and operates as an induction room in the morning and a workplace learning centre in the afternoon. Chris is on hand to help people living nearby to access training and gain qualifications in order to get back to work. He provides structured health, safety and environmental training to help prepare them for a mock Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) test. Once they have reached a competent level, they take the health, safety and environment 'Touch-Screen-Test' in order to gain their CSCS cards.

*"We use the official CITB CD Rom and I am on hand if anyone needs help,"* explains Chris. *"For example, I explain what silicosis and Weil's disease are, how workers could be exposed to silica dust and come into contact with rat urine on a construction site, and what precautions should be in place to ensure that they don't contract these illnesses."*

In September and October 2013 alone Chris helped around 40 local operatives to gain NVQ qualifications through the On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) process and gain fit-for-purpose CSCS cards. Like many construction workers, these skilled craftspeople did not have up-to-date vocational qualifications.

*"A lot of older building workers left the industry when the recession hit. Many are no longer working in construction or are not working at all. They are often skilled workers, but they don't have up-to-date qualifications that include a vocational element, and they face financial and educational barriers,"* says UCATT North West Learning Organiser Lol Hunt. *"Through initiatives like this, UCATT is breaking down those barriers and getting people back to learning and back to work."*

### Working in partnership

UCATT works with its partners in the project through a steering committee with representatives from BAM, Manchester City Council, Manchester College, Skill Solutions and the Greater Manchester Construction Group Training Association (GTA). The group meets regularly to plan activities to promote the learning opportunities on offer, particularly to "hard-to-reach" learners, develop training courses and encourage contractors working on the project to take on apprentices.

For example, Chris brokered an agreement with the managing director of supply chain company McCrory Brickwork, Paul McCrory. The company has taken on two apprentices and several bricklayers working for the company are working towards vocational qualifications in bricklaying through the OSAT route with Preston College. *"They have six months work and will have a qualification at the end as well,"* says Lol.

Manchester College and local training provider Skill Solutions helped to set up apprenticeships on site for learners in the supply chain.

And UCATT and BAM ran a stall together at the Manchester City Council Back to School/Back-to-



UCATT Onsite  
Learning Organiser  
Chris Clarke

Work event in the Town Hall in September 2013. Around 70 people including many former construction workers came to the stall and took away information about the learning opportunities on offer at the learning centre.

*"Our approach at CFA has been to involve local people in the project as much as possible. The Learning Centre run by Chris has allowed us to extend what we offer to a wider number of people, making a real difference to people's lives,"* said BAM North West Education and Community Co-ordinator Penny Anderson. *"It has been a great success so far and continues to develop as word gets round the community that BAM and UCATT can assist with training, advice and guidance".*

Over recent months:

- Nine people – including three from the local community have taken part in a three-day first aid training course and gained a recognised qualification;
- 12 workers are currently enrolled on a five-day site manager's health and safety training (SMSTS) course; and
- 53 workers have taken part in "face-fit" training.

In addition, Chris provides informal information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions in the canteen, telling workers about the training courses on offer and the opportunities to upgrade their CSCS cards and gain computer skills. He also helps with CV writing and job application forms.

*"If someone comes on site with a basic, general operatives CSCS card, but is a skilled tradesperson, we work with Preston College to allow them to gain a skills card through the OSAT route,"* explains Chris. *"This allows skilled and competent but unqualified construction workers to turn their existing skills and experience into a nationally recognised qualification such as an NVQ. It confirms their existing skills and tests what they can do in the workplace without them having to leave the job."*

Chris also holds advice surgeries in the learning centre on a daily basis and signposts learners to courses on offer in local colleges. *"Holding advice sessions in the learning centre means that workers can see other people working on their CVs or using laptops and it encourages them to do the same,"* he says.

In addition, he points workers and local residents who want literacy and numeracy courses in the direction of the nearby Northwards Housing Association Learning Centre. BAM has existing links with Just Life and Lifeshare. Both these organisations help local homeless people to rebuild their lives and ultimately to find housing and work. Having worked with Lifeshare for a number of years, BAM was keen to try to help homeless people to gain employment at the CFA. Two are now working on the site. BAM also works with the Greater Manchester Police Spotlight programme for ex-offenders and other organisations that help 'hard-to-reach' people gain employment. Chris works with these organisations to offer advice and training and has also built links through Breakthrough. It supports disabled people into employment and training. Two people from the group are currently coming into the Learning Centre and working towards obtaining CSCS cards. This has been so successful that Breakthrough has asked Chris to look at running literacy and numeracy courses for four of their learners.

*"The UCATT training centre that has been set up by BAM as part of MCFC's new Training Academy provides real added value and opportunities for local residents to speak with an industry professional and undertake additional training,"* said Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council Cllr Sue Murphy. *"This is a real priority to ensure as many of our residents locally are given as many opportunities as possible to develop their skills and get back into work."*

### Back to work through learning

Several people who came to the Learning Centre when they were unemployed are now working on the site.

*"One of our best success stories is Edward McKenna,"* says Chris. *"He came into the learning centre to do CSCS training. With a young family to support, he was desperate to get back to work. He passed his CSCS test and will be working on the site for around nine months."*

Next on the agenda is a new Site Supervisors Safety Training Scheme (SSSTS) course beginning in January 2014 and there are also plans for an Open Day to formally launch the Learning Centre in February.

Manchester City Football Club Head of Infrastructure Pete Bradshaw commented: *"With Bam, UCATT and local colleges, the Club is excited and pleased to see local young people engaged in robust and substantive training and skills development that could transfer to future work and life opportunities. Joint working with various partners ensures that people gain high quality, practical skills for the future and the Club is pleased to work with all its site partners in realising the potential of people in our community."*



**UCATT Learning Organisers Lol Hunt and Marie O'Mara with BAM Construction Community Engagement Assistant Tracey Book**



**Chris is on hand to give advice and support in the Learning Centre**

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