

Construction and Unemployment Changing the Dublin Narrative



Eastside + Docklands Local Employment ServicesA project of St. Andrew's Resource Centre + Inner City Renewal Group



Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council





2020





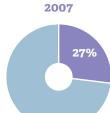
Report on Dublin City Construction Skills Project 2020

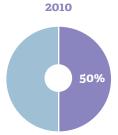


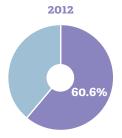
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Employment and Unemployment Trends in Ireland and Impact on Young Workers

Increase in proportion of long-term unemployed







Since 2017 Ireland has continued to experience a strengthening labour market, with further improvements in the number of labour market indicators. In 2017, the unemployment level declined by 37,000, while the unemployment rate declined by 1.7% to an annual average of 6.7%.

The unemployment rate in Ireland is still higher than in the period from 2002-2007.1 In Ireland by 2018, there were 36,000 more people unemployed (and 23,000 more long-term unemployed), than there had been in 2005, with evidence that the employment rate is still far from recovering from the impact of the financial crisis. As is noted by Ciarán Nugent of NERI, this lack of recovery in the unemployment figures is due, for the most part, to the collapse of employment for younger cohorts, particularly for young men. ²

Unemployment amongst young men is a trend that finds its roots prior to the most recent economic downturn. The biggest change in employment rates since 1998 is the sharp fall in the employment rate for the 20-24 year old cohort. Between 2007 and 2012 the employment rate for 20-24 year olds fell by 23%-the largest decline of any age group in this period. Recovery has also been slowest for this group, even from such a low base³ in 2017 the youth unemployment rate stood at 12.2%.

The scale of youth unemployment, and its potential for long-term damage to the employment prospects of individuals, highlights the need for policies to actively address youth and young people unemployed. This report deals with the impact on a specified area and client cohorts. As the thinking about how best to address the issue the youth and Long term unemployment rates in specific communities were considered.

Long Term Unemployed

As the development of the project continued the figures were stark. While the wider unemployment rate has declined by 1.7%, it is of note that the rate for long term unemployed declined by only 0.8% to 2.5% in quarter 4 of 2017.

Indeed the proportion of the unemployed who were long-term unemployed has increased from 27% in 2007, to 50% in late 2010, and reached 60.6% by Q1 2012.4 Statistically, individuals who are long-term unemployed carry a high probability of remaining so for some time.

¹ Ciáran Nugent, Labour Market Trends in the Republic of Ireland 2019, Nevin Economic Research Institute, Dublin

² Nugent, NERI 2019, 3

³ Nugent, NERI 2019, 14

⁴ Micheál L. Collins, 'Retraining and Activating the 'Distant Unemployed'; New Roles and Measures for Locally Based ALMPS' Nevin Economic Research Institute, Dublin, 4



Recently hired in 2017

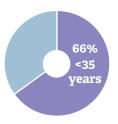
53% were male



65% were hired for full time



65% were hired for full time



Unemployment and Education

Figures from the National Skills Bulletin 2018 indicate that in Q4 2017, persons aged under 25 with less than higher secondary education observed the greatest unemployment rates and had the highest risk of unemployment regardless of education level.

Furthermore, between Q4 2016 and Q4 2017, the unemployment rate decreased for almost all age and education categories with the exception of those with a lower secondary or less level of education (this band increased by 2.5%).

Labour Market Transitions and Recent Job Hires

The National Skills Bulletin notes that in 2017 of those recently hired:

- 53% were male
- 65% were hired for full time position
- 66% were aged less than 35
 - In terms of education
 - > 44% held a secondary education or less
 - > 12% held a post-secondary qualification
 - > 42% held a third level qualification
- The wholesale and retail sector along with the accommodation and food sector accounted for the highest number of recent job hires.

Recognising a Training Need

The statistical analysis of employment trends, as well as first-hand experience in the Dublin labour market, resulted in St. Andrew's Resource Centre identifying in 2015 that an initiative was required to create a suitable training opportunity for unemployed men, who would benefit from an informal education intervention in an area that would better improve their job prospects, remove them from the live register, and break the cycle of long-term unemployment.

Based on a wider analysis of employment trends in Dublin in 2015, the construction sector was identified as an area that was actively seeking skilled tradespeople, and where structured educational intervention could benefit the job prospects of the long-term unemployed. The investment by the state of some €2 billion in the small Dublin Docklands area encouraged the organisation to pursue an effective intervention, putting aside some of the tokenism that had been experienced in previous local labour initiatives.

Construction and Employment Trends



The impact of the property crash of 2008 is clear in the sharp decline in the share of employment in Skilled Trades in 2019. Between 2007 and 2012 close to 160,000 jobs were lost in the construction sector. 66% of those employed in the construction sector were listed as 'skilled trades' prior to the crash, compared to 20.6 of the economy as a whole. In 2018 there remained 80,000 fewer skilled trades' jobs in Ireland compared to 2007. This is of particular concern due to the current recruitment problems in the construction sector and in the face of the ever-deteriorating housing crisis.

According to the National Skills Bulletin 2018⁵ (the most recent publically available version), employment growth in construction in 2018 related predominantly to skilled trades and operative/elementary occupations. Growth for professional roles has been smaller. Despite this employment growth, there remains over 11,000 job ready job seekers who had previously worked in the construction sector, although most of these are in the lower skilled occupations.

2017 Construction Figures

In 2017, 60% of overall employment was concentrated in the construction sector, with approx. 131,600 people employed in construction (of which 94% were male). This represents 6.2% of the national workforce.

It is important to note that between 2012 and 2015, the construction sector grew on average by 5.1%, compared to 3.1% nationally. The strongest rate of employment growth was observed for painters and decorators 16.2%). The 25-54 age group accounted for the majority of persons employed, at 76%, with just 17% employed in construction over the age of 55 (this is in line with the national average for this age group). In terms of education, 46% of those employed in the construction sector had attained higher secondary/FET qualification, above the national average of 36%, while those who had attained a third level qualification was just 26%, compared to the national average of 48%.

Over 88% of construction workers were in full time employment, with non-Irish workers accounted for 15% of the workforce, a figure in line with the national average.

In terms of unemployment by sector between Q4 2016 and Q4 2017 the construction sector experienced the greatest decline in terms of numbers of person unemployed.

Demand for Construction Workers

The identification of the construction sector in 2015 as an appropriate area for up-skilling/re-skilling has proven fruitful and resulted in

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Without this course, I wouldn't have had the confidence or skills to apply for a job



Building and Construction volumes increase Q3 2017 - Q3 108



a 70% placement rate in 2018 for all course participants more details of this will be set out later in this document. The demand for skilled and semi-skilled construction workers was highlighted in a recent survey carried out by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) in February 2019, 89% of CIF member companies indicated that they were experiencing difficulties in recruiting workers. ⁶ This figure incorporates both qualified/experienced workers, as well as entry-level workers. The CIF report highlights that across the board qualified tradespeople are most in demand, particular those in the wet trades such as block laying, plastering, tiling and painting/decorating. A severe lack of foremen, general operatives, ground workers and apprentices was also noted.

According to CIF, 74% of those surveyed said that recruitment issues were having a direct affect on their companies' ability to deliver project on time, while 79% responded that difficult in recruiting was negatively affecting their business.

As early as 2017 the National Skills Bulletin highlighted that there were specific shortages within the construction sector for:

 Professional; civil engineers, construction project managers, quantity surveyors
 6 https://cif.ie/2019/02/26/constructioncompanies-experiencing-severe-difficultiesin-sourcing-workers/

- Trades: shuttering carpenters, shift managers, glaziers, steel erectors, curtain wallers
- Operatives: scaffolders, pipe layers.

According to the CIF, data available for Q3 2018 indicates that on an annual basis the volume of output in building and construction increased by 12% when compared with the third quarter of 2017. Output volumes increased in civil engineering work (27.3%), nonresidential building work (17.9%) and residential building work (7.8%). By 2020 the volume of construction output is forecast to reach 25 billion (in 2017 prices) or €30 billion in current prices, which is equivalent to around 8.8% of GDP.

Having identified an appropriate sector for job prospects, as well as a cohort of unemployed client types that would benefit from upskilling/re-training, St. Andrew's Resource Centre set about to identify the best way to prepare clients to undertake full time work in the construction industry.

Construction Skills Project: A process



Once candidates have been selected St. Andrew's Resource Centre continue with the philosophy of 'no barriers'.

The Role of St Andrew's Resource Centre

In 2015 St. Andrew's Resource Centre Local Employment Service (Eastside Docklands) identified a labour shortage that was developing in the construction sector in Ireland. More specifically, given the size of the SDZ in the Docklands area, St. Andrew's recognized that this particular labour shortage was likely to become magnified in the Docklands. This presented an obvious opportunity to exploit the labour shortage for the economic benefit of the local unemployed residents in Dublin's Docklands area. St. Andrew's Resource Centre was uniquely placed to capture and analyse local labour market intelligence and set about designing the most appropriate intervention. With this objective in mind, St. Andrew's Resource Centre began to explore with state agencies the viability of a short 'General Operatives' course that would provide an opportunity for employment and ultimately the potential for decent wages for an extended period.

St. Andrew's had previously pursued a similar course of action with regard to placing local Docklands residents in employment on the construction of the Covanta Incinerator site. In what might be considered a pilot scheme to the Construction Skills project. St. Andrew's placed 74 local residents on the Covanta site with the majority of those placed now employed in the wider work force.

As the Docklands SDZ was developing St. Andrew's made a strong and persistent case that percentage targets for local labour were not necessarily a positive force in the argument to be made with employers for the employment of local residents. The case was made that percentage targets could have the opposite effect to that intended, alienating employers thereby making placement more difficult. Instead, a business case was put forward that highlighted the advantages for the employer of hiring local residents. Among the advantages cited was residents' proximity to the SDZ sites and therefore no issues with transport. Couple this with a cohort of people who are ready and willing to work and whose employment would boost the local economy and the outcome would be a positive one for both employer and employee.

Fundamental to the success of the strategy was the involvement of a local agency that could be tasked with and trusted to identify those individuals who met the requirements that determined eligibility for local labour schemes. Following considerable debate this strategy was adopted and St. Andrew's Resource Centre began the task of persuading state agencies that some flexibility was required in order to progress the project.

Flexibility is arguably the most important facet of an operation, in this instance the construction skills project, that operates outside of the bounds of civil and public sector constraints. This flexibility allows clients to be advocated for by a small group of people with a nuanced understanding of their needs and an acute awareness that unemployed people are not a homogenous group. From the employers' point of view they need only engage with a small, friendly and knowledgeable team who work to fulfil their requirements efficiently.

This approach benefits both employer and jobseeker in that employers do not find

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I have never had skills like this before, doing the course gave me confidence to apply for jobs. I now have skills that I can put on my CV. The course makes me feel like I have achieved something and prepared me for long term employment





themselves frustrated by bureaucracy in their efforts to hire and in so far as it is possible jobseekers do not encounter any unnecessary barriers to employment.

Recruitment

The project operates an open recruitment process whereby unemployed people are invited to undertake a short course – it is important to note that this process is an access to work project rather than a training or education programme. The project encourages those that are distant and very distant from the workforce to apply. It may be worth noting at this point, that the project has not received any applications from women. There is no vetting procedure for candidates, what so ever. The application process is simple, the only requirement is that the candidate must supply St. Andrews Resource Centre with their name and mobile phone number. Subsequent to this initial interaction two group meeting are set up. The first of these meetings is an early morning meeting and takes place in St. Andrew's Resource and is essentially an information session and candidates are given the opportunity to ask questions. The second group meeting takes place on site in Dublin Port and is an afternoon meeting. No more than 24 hours notice is given for each of the meetings and this procedure is effectively an early test of a candidate's willingness and commitment to the project. Anybody who attends both meetings automatically meets the criterion for selection to participate in the project.

Once candidates have been selected St. Andrew's Resource Centre continue with the philosophy of 'no barriers'. At the start of the course participants are required to complete a simple single sided A4 form and are provided with assistance in completing the form. It is important to acknowledge that participants may have difficulties other than, or as a consequence of, their length of unemployment. With this in mind St. Andrew's Resource Centre provide administrative support with, for example:

- Setting up email to access company web portals.
- Working through job applications with each individual following completion of the course.
- Working with housing associations and hostels to deal with issues around accommodation.
- Liaison with Probation and Welfare services and the Prison Service.



I'd highly recommended the course to any man looking to better themselves. Thank you, Alex, Dave and Jim.

Training

The open recruitment process is linked to a short 3 week course that includes skills that the construction industry has asked the project to provide to General Operatives. These skills include but are not limited to

Local Labour – Dublin Docklands Construction Skills Course

Details of Course:

The course will be broken down into the various modules outlined below.

SOLAS Safe Pass

This is a one Day course required for all candidates working in construction covering all aspects of Health and Safety.

Manual Handling

This half day course is a legal requirement for all construction workers. The course that will be delivered to candidates attending the Docklands GO programme will focus heavily on construction related lifts. The tutors delivering the 6 Day GO Construction Skills module are QQI qualified Manual Handling Instructors and as such will be ensuring good Manual Handling practice is adopted and used throughout the programme.

Abrasive Wheels

This half day course is also a legal requirement for all construction workers. The minimum legal requirement is for a theory only course. Our course however will include practical modules where candidates will measure and cut a variety of materials with both an angle grinder and consaw The tutors delivering the 6 Day GO Construction Skills module are fully qualified Abrasive Wheels Instructors.

Working at Heights

This is a half day course required for all candidates working in construction. The course will also cover safe us of harnesses.

Vehicle Banksman/Spotter

This half day course is designed to instruct the vehicle banksman in the correct methods of controlling, directing, loading unloading and parking of vehicles.

General Operative/Labourer Basic Training

This six day course will equip candidates with the basic skills required of any General Operative or Labourer on-site. The following areas will be covered:

House Keeping

- Measuring / Ratios
- Laying Out
- Use of Hand Tools
- Use of Power Tools
- Levels
- · Basic Fabrication
- Loading, Unloading and Moving Materials

As with all previous modules, this element of the course will be heavily weighted towards practical learning and each candidate will be required to demonstrate proficiency in the above modules.

Emergency First Aid Course

Mobile Elevating Work Platform – MEWP

This one day course will cover use of both scissors and boom type MEWP.

Job Application Workshop

This half day Job Application workshop will cover job application and interview preparation. Upon completion of this workshop each candidate will receive a folder containing an up to date CV, letter of job application and copies of certificates and course outlines. Digital copies of these documents will be distributed by email to each candidate.

The relatively short duration of the course coupled with knowledge of the local labour market allows for a flexible approach to the course content. For example, when an employer required General Operatives with an additional skill that was not part of the original course content then that element can be incorporated into the course.

Participants are monitored throughout the duration of the course and are made aware that they have to show an appropriate commitment to the course, this includes good time keeping

and attendance. Participants who are unable to show the appropriate level of commitment do not proceed to the placement phase of the project.

Placement

The placement process introduces those who have met the necessary criterion of attitude, attendance, application and aptitude for placement to contractors and sub contractors in the construction industry. At this stage CIT and St. Andrews mediates between the parties with the aim of finding a placement that suits both participant and employer. At the same time, St. Andrew's works with developers to ensure that they are made aware of the advantages of being seen to be considerate and engaged with the local community through voluntarily using Labour graduating from the project. There are additional benefits for the developers in that they are able to use their interaction with the project to further their own aims in procurement processes going forward.

There are **key elements** of the above process that are worth examining in further detail.

Training Company procurement:

It is essential to have a training company that understands both the goals and the ethos at the heart of this project. In procuring CIT we were clear in our demand for the provision of an end to end and consultancy service. The process is not simply pouring skills in at this end and getting workers out at the other. The positive interaction with often challenging clients and engagement at a professional level with the construction industry is essential. Our trainer was sourced through a simple Google search and interview process. Following a formal procurement process CIT were contracted.

The location and Role of Dublin Port:

A decent strategically located place to run the course is essential. In the initial thinking the group considered using a local building site close to inner city flat blocks. On reflection however it was thought better to make the clients journey to the training centre, not to far but awkward enough to satisfy

employers that some effort had been made by the trainees. The project opted for a site in Dublin Port that replicated the often difficult conditions on building sites and used a porta cabin as a classroom. Since then the premises have developed and changed location twice, our current location has two classrooms a meeting space small kitchen toilets and extensive external space where the practical skills are taught.

Role of DEASP:

DEASP have been central to delivering this project. Whilst financial support has been limited by the constraints of the Department the support in terms of allowing the LES Staff latitude to organise and develop the course have been considerable. In addition, the Department allowed the project to put the client at the centre of the process. This meant that Job Path Department of Justice LES and INTREO clients were all allowed to attend and keep their social welfare payment whilst on the course and any engagement, Activation meetings etc. were deferred during the client's engagement with the project. Without this latitude the course would not have started nor progressed in the way that it did.



I had no construction experience before this course. I felt at ease on the course, no judgement. It was fun and not all just serious. At the same time, we got the work done. The lads (instructors) showed me how to do things in the correct way. Dave and Alex couldn't have been more helpful and professional. I always felt I could ask them something and not look stupid for doing so.

Stakeholder Engagement



Initial target

The construction skills project is an access to work project rather than a training course – it brings together business, state and community assets to make a real difference to families that have lived for many years on the margins. For the course to succeed the voice of the Long Term Unemployed had to be heard.

A series of meetings mainly 1-1s were held with a range of clients but mainly those who were long term unemployed and very long term unemployed. There were a number of key findings. They were prepared to work under the correct conditions and circumstances, a course for them was between two and four weeks and they wanted to know there was a reasonable chance of getting work. They were prepared to do the course for just their Jobseekers payment but a number of them made the point that they needed the "Gear" many had trainers and jeans only.

These meetings provided a platform for St. Andrews to pitch for a different process in the docklands.

Docklands:

Dublin Docklands Strategic Planning Scheme or SDZ is formally called the "North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme" The intention of this plan is to fact track planning in the assigned areas attracting large scale investment new jobs and in the first phase construction work into the area. The task facing St. Andrews was to find a way to make real the ambition in the area for local labour in both short and long term.

In partnership with other community groups the organisation pressed for a realistic response to the investment opportunities. On many occasions in the past local communities were promised a simple and straightforward 10% "Local Labour" clause that had rarely if ever actually worked. Rather than this bland non-working approach the organisation was successful in inserting ER11 and ER12 into the SDZ.

ER11: To liaise with agencies and organisations working in the docklands to maximise educational opportunities and support access to employment for local residents of the Docklands Area.

ER12: To facilitate agencies and organisations, in particular those engaged in employment and training initiatives in Docklands to work together in a coordinated manner in order to maximise employment, volunteer and training opportunities for residents of all ages in the Docklands Area.

When the SDZ was published St. Andrews then worked on the process of delivering the above commitments. High on our list of engagements were what the local communities termed "early wins" which in effect meant construction work. St. Andrews were successful in bringing the ER11 and ER12 the local community and the idea of the construction project to the table of Dublin Docklands who agreed to fund a pilot initiative of the program. The success of that program gave the impetus for the development of the project to a more sustainable and funded project.



DCC:

DCC have been a consistent supporter of the project and were approached to support the project, not only because of the SDZ but also because of the extensive house building program being developed by the City Council. The discussions with DCC were fruitful and the engagement with local communities and local housing initiatives were developed from that point. St. Andrews also met with the Department of Housing to secure their support which was also successful.

NEIC Task Force:

The task force has been a constant source of support for the project. Their recognition of the challenges faced in getting the client group engaged and working has proven to be something that the course organisers were able to lean on frequently.

Impacts for Community:

Positive impacts of the project locally:

- Engagement with local job seekers providing a new way to access to opportunity to get work not previously available.
- Stakeholder engagement between community service provider and the industry, a gateway where the project has acted as a broker between communities, jobseekers and industry.
- · Leveraging additional investment into disadvantaged areas.
- Individual benefits of course participants. More than one
 participant has approached the course organiser and stated
 that the course gave him his dignity back, he was working
 with men again and was no longer on anti-depressants. One
 homeless man described the course as saving his life.

Statistics:

Total Outcomes from course (September 2017 to September 2019)





Other Service provider's views:

I am a Training and Employment Officer with the Linkage Service, which is part of IASIO (Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities). We work with offenders who are referred by the Probation and Prison service, for exploring training, education or employment options. The ultimate objective is desistance from crime and full integration into the community.

I have found the Construction Skills Course to be a lifeline for my clients. Most of my clients have had very little employment history and come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The feedback from clients who attended has been extremely positive. They have gained skills and self-belief in themselves. They felt supported both during and after the course from the instructors. Most importantly, the course led to employment and a belief that they were properly trained to work onsite in a safe and competent manner.

Cameron Glynn Training & Employment Officer

Impacts for the Individual: A few case studies:

This project is about the people, so far all men, who have trusted the organisers to do their very best for them and provide them with what they need to work whilst knowing that the they have about a 60-65% chance of getting employed. It is appropriate therefor to complete this report with some of their histories:

David is a 43 year old father who was unemployed for 15 years. He spent 6 years in prison and has had a number of addiction issues. At the time of writing (December 2019) he will be clean of alcohol and drugs for two years. Since completing the Construction Skills course he has been working part time and plans to be working full time in the New Year. He credits his engagement with the addiction services and his completion of the Construction Skills course and subsequent employment opportunities with "turning his life around and allowing him to be a father again".

Mark is a 49 year old Somalian man who came to Ireland in 1996, he worked for approximately 11 years and then was let go during the recession. He was unemployed between 2007 and 2017. He completed the first Construction Skills course in late 2017 and started work

immediately. He has remained in this job to date December 2019. He said "when I began work after the Construction Skills course my life started again, I am very thankful for this" Denis is a 30 year old man who left school when he was 14. He has been involved with State care services from the age of 6. He has struggled with addiction between the age of 12 and 29. During this period he was in prison numerous times. He was unemployed for most of this period. He is now 1 year clean of alcohol and drugs and has been working since he completed the Construction Skills course having missed his graduation ceremony to start his new job. He says "it was great to be around positive people who wanted to help both professionally and personally, I have been working continuously since the course ended, I am now renting my own place, I've been on holiday for the first time in 20 years and have Christmas sorted months in advance".

Derek is a 29 year old man who was unemployed for 12 years before attending the Construction Skills course. During this time he served a long prison sentence and was engaged with addiction services. He started work within a month of completing the Construction Skills course for a Contractor building Dublin City Council social housing project. He recently won Employee of the Month where his employer said "his work ethic and attitude to work is exceptional".

The view from employers:

Designer Group:

Designer Group are delighted to be involved with the Dublin City Construction Skills project. We have successfully employed a number of graduates from the programme in 2017 who have worked out very well and are still with us two years later.

The training programme prepares the graduates for work in the construction sector in various skills and provides all necessary certificates of training completed upon completion.

Brendan Kearns – Training Director Designer Group

Carys:

At our O'Devaney Gardens Project, Dublin 7, we have currently a number of candidates that have passed through the Construction Skills Project. The guys that are working with us on site have a

great attitude and a strong work ethic. We have been so impressed this system is our go to place for entry level construction operatives.

I would recommend any contractor in the country to give it a try and I'm sure you will be as satisfied as Careys at O'Devaney Gardens.

Brian O'Regan – Senior Contracts Manager Careys Building & Civil Engineering

SISK:

I have been working with Jim and Alec over the last number of years assisting them in gaining employment for the graduates on the construction skills course. The vetting by the team and the subsequent training and mental preparation by Alec bode well for the future prospects of employment for the candidates on building sites.

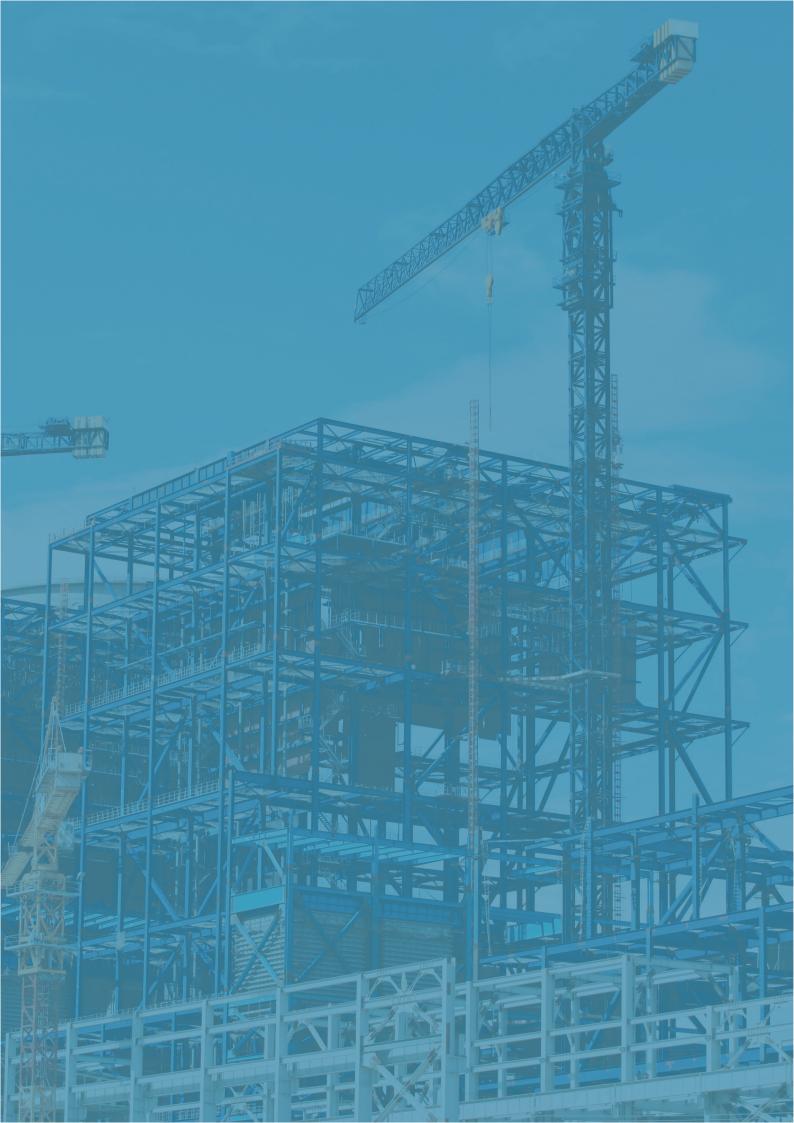
Our clients expect engagement; we are willing participants who have delivered on their expectations with the co-operation of our Sub-contractors. I have witnessed first-hand the pride and joy of the candidates receiving their certificate on completion of the course, and the jubilation of being offered employment which can be a life changing event for the individual. This is what Corporate Social Responsibility is all about.

Joe Lambe Senior Manager SISK



I learned things I never learned before. I can drive a cherry picker and scissor lift! I learned the basic construction skills. I learned about safety which I never knew before onsite. They thought me how to do things in the safest possible way









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