



**BUILDING
SKILLS
TOGETHER**

Building Skills for Construction Project Report

A New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project



**Clackmannanshire
Council**



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Background

Using local ESOL partnership funding, in 2018 Dundee City Council delivered a pilot project for Syrian Refugees resettled to Dundee and Angus to support them to learn the English required to pass the CSCS green operative's test. Thereafter, Dundee City Council staff carried out research in 2019 which highlighted similar projects across Scotland and duplication of effort in researching qualifications and pathways and translating and creating materials. Most organizations had not pursued this work further as, at that time, most candidates had not managed to overcome the language barrier posed by the CSCS test. Inequalities existed in terms of access to additional time or translators depending on where people live or access learning.

Building Skills for Construction was a New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery project developed in response to the challenges identified above. It was led by Dundee City Council, in partnership with Fife and Clackmannanshire Councils and WEA Scotland (the Workers Educational Association), which aimed to help skilled refugees gain the certification they need to work in the construction industry. WEA Scotland employed a part-time development worker and were responsible for developing materials.

£65450 of funding was used to develop two training courses for beginner and intermediate students, aiming to give non-native speakers the language and knowledge they need to pass the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) operatives test.



Successes

- Forming a project team across local authority and geographic boundaries and between public and third sector agencies allowed us to develop materials which are responsive to Scotland's different communities and work in different organisational settings.
- To test out the materials, seven pilot projects were carried out in Dundee, Fife, Clackmannanshire and online (with candidates from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Perth and Aberdeen City and Shire).
- 50 skilled refugees from Syria, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Turkey and Yemen participated.
- 41 people gained Health and Safety certification and 8 people were able to gain CSCS Green Operative Cards enabling them to work on UK building sites.
- The resources developed by WEA Scotland are available [free of charge](#) to those working with New Scots and other adult learners to help them certify their skills to work in the UK construction industry and promote wider integration.
- Clients enjoyed learning about something that they had experience of. They demonstrated a high level of commitment and motivation as they felt they were learning something practical that would help them and their families.



- Partners identified a number of excellent training providers who understood the barriers faced by these candidates – we would particularly like to mention IED Training Solutions and Raeburn Training.
- As a result of this work Dundee City Council’s construction department are keen to develop a partnership which would allow New Scots resettled in the city and who have relevant skills the chance to have their skills recognised and the

opportunity of a work placement and employment with the council. We have been encouraged to hear of similar partnerships developing through the Capital City Partnership in Edinburgh for Ukrainian citizens.

- Participants were from diverse backgrounds and communities and had different visa status allowing them different freedoms and levels of support. It was unusual to have the funding to work with them all equitably, based on their needs, regardless of circumstances. Core funding does not usually allow this type of work to take place and although we have tried to future proof the delivery by identifying funding for Health and Safety training, those with asylum status will not be able to avail themselves of it as they will not be eligible for an individual training account.
- Partners were told by colleagues working in employability, criminal justice and community-based adult literacies programmes that the materials would be of assistance to native speakers with literacy and numeracy barriers to their learning.

Barriers

- Processes around booking and taking the CSCS test
 - CSCS tests are delivered at both private test centres and in colleges. Tests are administered in English, but, for some languages, there is the option to have a voice over of the test questions and multiple choice answers translated. Fourteen different voice overs exist (English , Bulgaria, French, Czech, German, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Welsh). Despite being Scotland’s third language, an Arabic voice over is not currently available.
 - We found that the terms and conditions for booking and cancelling varied depending on how and when you book the test thus disadvantaging candidates seeking to request special assistance.
 - Candidates can access a translator free of charge on their first sitting for the cost of the test – any re-sits using a translator cost £165. Candidates using a voice over in one of the 14 languages can re-sit as many times as they like using this facility for the test fee of £21. Booking a test with a translator incurs a long wait, whereas a voice over test can be readily booked.
 - Some candidates using the translator reported only being able to hear the question once and not being allowed to have it repeated. Candidates using the voice over can press to repeat the question as many times as they like.



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- The team in Dundee were advised to book the mobile testing unit but discovered that booking was not actually possible.
 - For some candidates the format and language of the test itself is a barrier.
 - Despite acknowledging the need for a skilled workforce, concerns about immigration status and language were a barrier to employing New Scots for many in the industry with whom we engaged. Much could be learned from other sectors who have managed this well such as food processing, health and social care, and agriculture.
 - Public bodies have community benefit clauses built into contracts with local developers for capital building projects. We were told by one industry officer that these clauses focus on training for school and college pupils, community engagement and not new starts.
 - There are, for New Scots, a lack of realistic pathways into the industry: without full-time employment and thousands of pounds of funding it is virtually impossible for skilled migrants to have their skills recognised in the UK construction industry. Certification exists through OSAT (On-site Assessment Tests), but it is costly, requires a guaranteed work placement and geographical inequalities exist in accessing such certification. The examiner for Raeburn training, with whom one client completed a wheeled loaded shovel course, expressed surprise that the participant was on the course given that he was clearly experienced and highly skilled - unfortunately, without UK certification, there was no other way to help him become qualified to do the job.
 - We were advised by those inside the industry to tell clients to register with recruitment agencies rather than seek a full-time contract. This would mean giving up benefits to move into a temporary job and could put people at risk of poverty if the contract was not renewed.
 - Becoming a self-employed tradesman may be the best route into the industry but registering as a sole trader, organising public liability insurance and managing a self-assessment tax return is extremely challenging for non-native speakers of English, many of whom have had limited education from their home countries.

Recommendations:

To promote inclusion and reduce barriers for people from ethnic minority backgrounds we recommend that:

- Standards around plain English ([Example: re-writing the test in plain English](#)) should be applied to the CSCS test and language should match descriptors for corresponding SCQF levels. This would benefit both native and non-native speakers.
- Industry certification costs and procedures should be the same regardless of whether a CSCS test is booked in English or with an interpreter. Providers should seek to reduce booking times for candidates seeking a test with an interpreter and geographical inequalities must be considered.
- Translators must have the correct dialect for the candidates they are supporting and specialist vocabulary for construction. We advise that a glossary of terms is produced.
- Voice overs should be allowed in all languages or none. It is an inequality that levels of service vary between languages, nationalities and ethnic groups. It would be fairer to

remove all voice overs, ensure that everyone takes the test in English and has the language to work safely on a building site.

- Those consulted within the construction industry told us that there is skills shortage in the UK and this is supported by industry data. To address this, conditions need to be created so that skilled migrants can enter the industry.
 - A framework needs to be created to ensure that skills can be recognised, foreign qualifications accepted, and crucially funding needs to exist to ensure certification.
 - We need to promote an awareness that refugees are allowed to work.
 - Community benefit clauses should be targeted to those who most need the opportunities, including those from New Scots communities.
 - Only through building relationships and breaking down barriers on the ground will any real progress be made. Initial guidance and mentoring from inside the industry would be very helpful for these candidates.

Conclusion

The Building Skills Together Project Team feel that we have delivered a project and created a resource that contributes to the aspirations of Scotland's [Adult Learning Strategy 2022 - 2027](#). By building an ESOL classroom around the skills, knowledge and understanding of those involved we were able to achieve many of the projects aims. While we have not successfully managed to address many of the barriers that refugees face when entering the construction industry, we have been able to identify what these barriers are and suggest ways that they might be addressed in future.



To support New Scots to build new lives in Scotland, we need to ensure that the conditions are created for them to do so. We believe that *The Building Skills Together Programme* can help refugees access further learning opportunities, enhance their employability, empower them to progress within the workplace and ultimately become better integrated into Scotland's communities.

- 60 Minute webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A94Bb14opYE>
- 10 minute project overview: <https://youtu.be/bxWWnabzoMc>



For more information about this New Scots Refugee Integration Delivery Project please contact: Kirsty.forrester@dundeecity.gov.uk



Appendices:

Appendix 1: Pilot projects (client demographics)

Delivered by English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, seven pilot projects were carried out in Dundee, Fife, Clackmannanshire and online to test out the materials with highly skilled individuals from a construction background, all of whom have the right to work in the UK, but not necessarily the correct qualifications, professional registrations, or knowledge about how to enter the Scottish Construction Industry.

All participants had construction experience from their home countries and the pilots included civil engineers, architects, quantity surveyors, town planners, repair men, plasterers, tilers, tapers, electricians, joiners, panel beaters, decorators, mechanics, finishers, plumbers, HGV drivers and ropes access technicians.

- 7 Pilot projects were held
- 4 staff delivered the courses
- 50 people took part
- 6 Nationalities: Ethiopia, Turkey, Hong Kong, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen
- 14 people **completed and passed** REHIS
- 27 people **completed and passed** IOSH
- 8 people **passed the CSCS operative test**
- 2 people **failed** the operatives test
- 4 people have their tests booked and are waiting to sit the CSCS operative's test
- 8 CSCS green cards have been applied for.
- 2 Courses have been developed
- 13 people accessed additional training such as plastering, PAT testing, etc.
- 10 clients withdrew because they got work, went to college or moved away.

Appendix 2: Plain English

The Green Operatives CSCS card is a SCQF level 4 qualification. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) require candidates working at this level to 'Produce and respond to **simple** but detailed written and oral communication in **familiar** contexts'. Staff found that the CSCS test was not written in [plain English](#) and, even for fluent native speakers, language is unfamiliar to everyday speech, often the grammar did not make sense and posing questions in the negative makes the assessment unnecessarily confusing.

<p><i>What is regarded as the last resort in the hierarchy of control for operatives' safety when working at height?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Safety harness</i> <i>B. mobile elevating work platform (MEWP)</i> <i>Mobile access tower</i> <i>Access tower scaffold.</i> 	<p>The phrasing of this question is confusing. Simple sentences are clearer, easier to follow than complex ones, and translate better, so they should be used whenever possible.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p><i>When working at height, there are a few safety measures which can be used. Some are better than others. What is the LAST one that should be used?</i></p>
<p><i>If warnings about how to work with a hazardous substance are not followed, what is a likely consequence for workers?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Good health</i> <i>Increased fitness levels</i> <i>Decreased fitness levels</i> <i>Ill health</i> 	<p>The phrasing of this question is complicated. Using a negative phrasing is confusing and may have the opposite meaning when translated.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p><i>There are warnings about how to work with hazardous substances. If these warnings are ignored, what might happen to the workers?</i></p>
<p><i>What does it mean if a run of coloured marker tape is found when digging?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The excavation now requires side supports</i> <i>There are buried human remains and you must tell your supervisor</i> <i>There is a buried service and further excavation must be carried out with care.</i> <i>The soil is contaminated and you must wear respiratory protective equipment (PPE).</i> 	<p>"A run of tape" is not commonly used English. Active Voice should be used whenever possible.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p><i>If you are digging and find coloured marker tape, what does it mean?</i></p>

<p><i>If a person is struck by a falling object, what could be the negative consequence?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) They get fired b) They get injured c) They get a promotion d) They get compensation. 	<p>This question does not make it clear who would be negatively affected by the action.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p><i>“If a person is struck by a falling object, what could be the negative consequence for them?”</i></p>
<p><i>If you need to reach above your head to place a load or lower a load to the floor, which of these is not true?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The load will be more difficult to control b) You can safely handle more weight than usual c) It will be more difficult to keep your back straight d) You will put extra stress on your back and on your arms 	<p>Expressing the question in the negative is confusing for both native and non-native speakers.</p> <p>Suggested:</p> <p><i>“Imagine you need to reach above your head to place a load or lower a load to the floor. In this situation, which answer is FALSE?”</i></p>



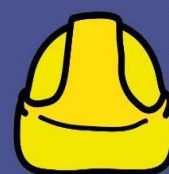


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Building Skills Together is a New Scots Refugee Integration Development Project and is a partnership between WEA Scotland, Dundee City, Fife and Clackmannanshire Councils.



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