

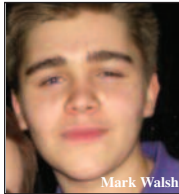
Westminster Lad Thrives in Building Firm's Employment Initiative IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION COLLEGE, CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYER ACCORD AND GTS



PADDINGTON lad Mark Walsh is thriving in a trainee role as part of construction company Bouygues UK's employment initiative to recruit unemployed adults from the communities in which the building firm operates.

Mark was selected for permanent employment by Bouygues UK after a rigorous recruitment process designed to train and recruit local talent from Westminster, Brent and Waltham Forest; three of the London boroughs where the company is building schools and other social infrastructure.

Mark started work in December 2009 at Pimlico Academy in Westminster where Bouygues UK is undertaking a complete rebuild as part of the government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.



Bouygues UK is a subsidiary of Bouygues Construction - a global construction services group. The company works across a broad range of sectors with a particular focus on education, health-care and housing. In 2007, Bouygues UK was appointed to design and refurbish four schools under Westminster's BSF programme: Pimlico School (now Academy), St Marylebone School and Westminster City School. In June 2009, works started on two further schools in Westminster: St Augustine's CE High School and St George's Catholic School.

Mark's appointment comes after his role with a London plumbing firm was suddenly cut short as a result of the recession. Mark was mid-way through a plumbing apprenticeship and associated City and Guild qualifications, when his employer went into liquidation, leaving him unable to complete his apprenticeship and secure funding to finish his plumbing qualifications. Speaking of this period, Mark says:

"I spent months looking for work with other

plumbing companies but found I was competing with lots of other people in similar situations. It was really disheartening, particularly as I was so close to completing the qualifications I'd been working towards for the last three years, and which would have put me in a better position to gain employment."

After months of searching, Mark was alerted to the scheme being run by Bouygues UK - in partnership with the National Construction College, Construction Employer Accord and employment agency GTS - to select young unemployed adults interested in a construction career for a six week training programme to assess their practical skills and suitability for construction work.

In partnership with the employment organisations where the initiative was being run - Brent into Work, Westminster Works and the Waltham Forest Job Centre - Mark was one of 12 potential recruits selected to undergo the initial training programme. This comprised Employability, Health and Safety Training and Formwork Training with the National Construction College, Bouygues-specific formwork training and a three week trial on a Bouygues UK construction site. At the end of the training period, Mark was one of five successful applicants that was offered a permanent role with GTS, Bouygues UK's main partner labour agency, to continue their training and development on a Bouygues UK construction site.

GTS spokeswoman Laura Adams says: "By helping to equip local candidates with the skills required to get back into the workplace, the successful candidates have benefitted not only from the knowledge gained but a credible work placement."

Andy Walder, Director of the National Construction College says: "This is an example of a proactive and positive working partnership that has invested in young people and helped them to become valuable members of the construction industry."

Mark worked closely alongside the site team at Pimlico Academy from December 2009 to March 2010, helping to construct state of the art sports and performing arts facilities and a new community library and adult education centre, designed to put the school at the heart of the community.



Pimlico Academy - The Bouygues UK site where Mark began his training

During his three months at Pimlico Academy, Mark learnt about the foundations of a complex structure and being trained on the digging and concreting techniques used to create it. "The site at Pimlico Academy is huge, with a busy programme of construction work taking place so it was a steep learning curve for me but the best way to gain an understanding of the organisation involved in a project of this scale. I feel very lucky to have started my training here because I learned a lot about the processes involved in construction and a lot about teamwork."

After three months at Pimlico Academy, Mark moved to St Augustine's School which is being completely refurbished and remodelled as part of the BSF programme, including the addition of a new sports hall and the construction of a new block between the existing buildings to unify and the school and provide a new 'heart' to the campus. Speaking of his experience with Bouygues UK to date, he says:

"I always did well at practical subjects at school like Carpentry and Design Technology so having the opportunity to develop my skills with a construction company has been brilliant and I've already learnt so much. I feel very lucky to have found employment in an industry that offers so many different roles - particularly after being made redundant as a result of the recession - and I look forward to continuing my development with the company."

David Myerscough from Bouygues UK, who was part of the team that launched this initiative, says:

"Mark has proved to be a real asset to the company, being bright, motivated and adept at learning new skills. Launching this initiative has been a fantastic opportunity to cultivate talent in the communities where we work and Mark is a great example of the positive benefits such a scheme can bring to the individual and to the company involved."

Laura Hayfield, Construction Employer Accord Manager says: "It's great to see such genuine benefit for unemployed people arising from the BSF projects Bouygues UK has undertaken. This innovative programme means that those recruited now have meaningful work experience and training and have excellent prospects in their future career."

Bouygues UK has successfully delivered 12 schools in London and the surrounding regions, with over 40 schools due to be delivered under the company's BSF partnership with Westminster, Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets.
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