

# Case study

Languages and culture at work



## Safety first: innovative programme helps site workers to speak the same language

When construction workers in London can come from different parts of Europe, it becomes all the more important that they can communicate with each other and understand their responsibilities on site. Through a programme of English language training, employers across the Capital made sure that workers who did not speak English as their first language got the support that they needed to create a safe and productive environment for everyone.



### Flexible training reduced the workers' need to travel

“Communications on site can be a matter of life and death, and English language training is critical in improving safety”, said Rebecca Lovelace of Bovis Lend Lease. “The European funded CLASS (Construction Language and Safety Skills) programme proved a great success in delivering this on site.”

Working with Lambeth College, construction project management company St George South London PLC and a range of other partners, basic English was taught to workers – from general operatives right through to team supervisors – on five major sites across London. This training helped with day to day communications, but also gave some workers the knowledge they needed to pass the English language Construction Skills Certification Scheme, their passport for site access.

Trainees were working for sub-contractors, and came mainly from Central and Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary and Germany. At the Bovis Lend Lease Bankside 123 project alone, around half of the workers were Polish. Training rooms were set up on site so that they didn't have to travel to college.

### Technical vocabulary tailored for the industry

Tailored to the needs of Bovis Lend Lease, St George and the trainees themselves, including for example key technical vocabulary, the CLASS project proved a great success. Over 100 individuals completed the 15 week, 30 hour training programme between 2005 and 2007. Project Manager at Lambeth College, Ige Adebari said, “The ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) training gave an immediate boost to workers' confidence, and of course improved their work prospects for the long term. The training seems to have improved site safety and productivity as well.”

Rebecca Lovelace added, “At Bovis Lend Lease, we are providing employer-led training for new entrants through BeOnsite, our not-for-profit organisation to address skills shortages in the construction industry. We continue to provide English classes through partnerships with colleges – and to address immediate needs, we make sure that certain Health and Safety information in particular is available in key foreign languages.”



## Links

**Bovis Lend Lease** [www.bovislendlease.com](http://www.bovislendlease.com)

**BeOnsite** [www.beonsite.org.uk](http://www.beonsite.org.uk)

**Lambeth College** [www.lambethcollege.ac.uk](http://www.lambethcollege.ac.uk)

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