



Hampshire
County Council



WILLMOTT DIXON

SINCE 1852

T.R.P

The Training & Recruitment Partnership Ltd

Constructing Futures

Cliff Santos joined the Construction Skills Fund course in Winchester in July 2019. Aged 47, Cliff had been unemployed for two years. He had trained and worked previously as a kitchen fitter and joiner, but after 30 years of on-off substance misuse he ended up in hospital for a lengthy period. On getting out he went to live at the Nightshelter in Winchester, and they were the ones who referred him to the CSCS card course. "I decided to do the training because I wanted to go back to work. Time is getting on, and it's the right thing to do. You can't be on benefits all your life." Cliff also came with the support of the Trinity Centre, which is a day centre in Winchester supporting vulnerable people. This support would prove invaluable later in Cliff's story when it came to settling into work.



The course was hosted at the Willmott Dixon Building Lives Academy at their offices in Bar End, Winchester. Willmott Dixon, who are building a new leisure centre for Winchester City Council, are one of five main construction partners in the HCC CSF project. TRP, the training provider, offered learners the chance to study for and take their CSCS card, as well as a level 1 qualification in basic construction skills and the traffic marshal (vehicle banksman) card. The courses are always oversubscribed and Cliff nearly didn't make it on to the course, but took the place of a learner who didn't show up on the first day.

"The training has given me something to look forward to – to get up every morning and go to work"



Cliff settled quickly into the three-week part-time course and attended every day. During the site tour, he met and impressed the sustainability manager from Willmott Dixon, Ben Silsby, who could see his potential. He said he would like to get Cliff employed by Willmott Dixon if possible.

Soon after that at the end of July 2019, Cliff was offered a role as a general labourer at the Willmott Dixon site in Chandler's Ford, Hampshire, where they are building a Village Hotel. Cliff turned up on day one but left very quickly as he didn't think he would be able to get back to Winchester after the end of the working day in time to collect his daily methadone prescription. With the help of the Trinity Centre and Inclusion Hampshire, it was arranged that he could collect enough medication every few days, and Willmott Dixon were happy for him to flex his day if he needed to so that he could pick it up. Cliff went back on day two and has been going ever since. Senior build manager Malcolm Downton says Cliff has never been late and is getting on very well.

Cliff's job is to keep an eye on the site - if anything needs fixing, moving or tidying up, Cliff does it. Cliff's also responsible for making sure the fencing on and around the site is secure. He is the only labourer on site and is happy to respond to anyone in need. Malcolm says that Cliff's training prepared him well, but it's Cliff's attitude that makes all the difference:

"We like Cliff because he's reliable, he's always on time, and he's got a very good nature as well, which is important. He's got the right character to work on site"

Malcolm added: "Cliff is very good at doing what we ask him to do and doing things without us asking – we give regular jobs like litter picking the car park and the site and he just goes off and does it without any prompting."

Cliff is enjoying the work, and the structure and interactions it gives him. He'd like to stay in the role for the rest of the build – another year. He's moving into his own flat soon, and the stability of the job will help him with that: "Things weren't good before, not at all – same thing every day, getting up doing nothing. Now it's so much better. I'm moving into a new flat and getting on with my life."

But Malcolm has seen Cliff's potential and wants to train him as a handyman. The site handyman is a critical role on site – as the build progresses the handyman has to make all sorts of temporary items like covers, steps and boxes. Cliff has made a start already by building a cover for the hazardous waste bins.

"I learned more than I expected to learn on the course"

"I knew others who'd done the course who'd not bothered to work afterwards. I went in with a positive attitude – I'm glad I did it. Now there are other people from the Nightshelter who want to do the course and change their lives."

Cliff's experience has had an impact on other people too. Niamh Penman, learning coordinator at Winchester's Trinity Centre who has been working with Cliff since 2014, said there was a real buzz about Cliff's course and his new job among the other clients at Trinity. It has encouraged others to think about whether they can make the same change to their lives. "If Cliff can do it, maybe I can."