

DWP Jobcentre Plus roll-out Occupational Health & Safety

Public and private sector in partnership – making a difference

This case study describes DWP's adoption of best practice as advocated by OGC through its Achieving Excellence in Construction initiative, with a focus on the approach taken to Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) and the Environment, and the benefits it has brought for the Jobcentre Plus (JCP) project.

The DWP's Jobcentre Plus project, launched in October 2002, is one of the largest government construction programmes undertaken in the UK in recent years. The aim of this ambitious £750m programme was to redesign, rebrand and refurbish over 1,000 former Jobcentre and Social Security offices in Great Britain and make the job-seeking and benefit-claiming experience less sterile and more like that encountered in the banking and retail sector.

Achievements – improved OH&S performance, cost, quality and timeliness

The work to improve OH&S and Environmental standards has produced some impressive results, in particular in the area of reducing lost-time accidents.

The average accident frequency rate (AFR) over the life of the JCP project has been reduced from **1,145** in 2001/02 to **723** in 2002/03, and to **208.7** in 2003/04. This was further reduced in 2004/05 to **171.5**, with over 1.6m working hours without a RIDDOR accident. This equates to potential project cost savings of between **£4.0m** and **£8.5m**, based on the JCP £150m project tender price. This major achievement on high-risk occupied premises has been recognised with a number of awards, including the *Building Magazine* Integrated Project Safety Award for both 2004 and 2005.

The integrated team approach has made people more willing and more confident to report and record near-miss incidents, so that others can learn and benefit from such experiences. As a result, the project created a positive culture, which led to better quality and improved timeliness. For the last permanent phase of the project **86%** of all projects were completed on time and **89%** of all projects met target costs. This success has also been borne out in testimonials received from all sides, and many in the supply chain are incorporating the OH&S initiatives and lessons learned into their own internal procedures.

DWP's ambition

JCP is intended to be a 'project exemplar', delivering exceptional performance in OH&S and Environmental standards by integrated team working in a partnering environment through:

- Selecting the right people
- Setting clear objectives
- Establishing relationships
- Changing the culture
- Investment in training
- Measuring achievements
- Motivating and recognising success.

This approach arose from the need to implement a health & safety culture that utilised and built on the knowledge and experience of the entire team, including designers, consultants and the supply chain.

Principal challenge

Construction projects are inherently hazardous particularly when the facilities remain operational during the construction phase. 95% of the JCP construction work was undertaken in occupied buildings that provide services to the general public. In this context, the importance of OH&S and the Environment was a paramount consideration.

A robust Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) management system was developed as part of the project contract. DWP's principal aim was to deliver a 'step change' in normal construction industry standards and therefore be a 'project exemplar'. It sought to achieve this by incorporating the guiding principles set down by the HSE best practice guidance and Office of Government Commerce AE10 – Health and Safety Achieving Excellence in Construction guidance.



Occupational Health & Safety

Making a difference

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Setting clear objectives

Key to the strategic delivery plan was how DWP could work to significantly improve OH&S standards, incorporating experience gained from the first phase of the project. It was essential that everyone working on the project had a common understanding of the objectives and how success would be delivered.

The aim was to introduce initiatives, such as the Health & Wellbeing Campaign, Focus on Falls Initiatives and trained workforce (CSCS), that would not only change the way OH&S and Environmental awareness was delivered but would also influence the behaviour and attitude of the recipients.

Selecting the right people

From the outset, the importance of OH&S to the project was explained to each tendering company and it was emphasised that their submissions and expertise would be judged against defined criteria to ensure the targets would be achieved. The DWP supply chain team regarded the appointment of the supply chain as the beginning of the process rather than an end in itself. The team continued to work with the whole supply chain to foster partnering, share best practice, and drive health & safety initiatives and value for money through re-engineering products and processes as well as managing OH&S and Environmental risks.

Establishing relationships

Construction can be extremely disruptive and stressful for those trying to maintain business as usual. The JCP team placed considerable emphasis and effort on limiting the amount of disturbance and disruption to the DWP business and making the construction process as smooth as possible.

Close liaison with the DWP operational staff and user representatives was essential to ensure the business was kept aware of the activities and changes that were to take place within their building, especially during the construction works. The JCP programme also involved working in buildings of varying age, design and condition, which created a number of health & safety

challenges requiring careful planning, communication and team solutions, combined with detailed risk assessments to ensure the OH&S and Environmental (E) standards were maintained at all times.

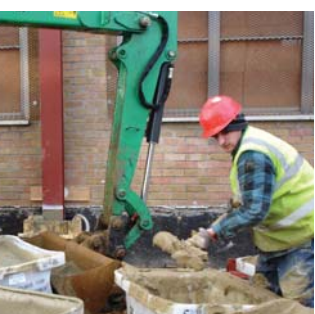
The OH&S regime was not only confined to those directly involved with DWP or the construction works, as a majority of the buildings under refurbishment were located in busy high streets or larger buildings with multi-occupancy. The messages and safeguards needed to be clear and accessible to anyone who came into contact with the works using the nine Cs (Communication, Consultation, Cooperation, Coordination, Collaboration, Competence, Culture, Control and Commitment). A variety of methods were used to keep DWP staff advised of progress and changes to working areas, including presentations, handouts and notice boards.

Changing the culture

The aim was to challenge the traditional approach, through partnering and teamwork, to deliver exemplary Occupational Health & Safety standards through:

- Senior management commitment, support and cooperation
- A partnering ethos based on openness, transparency and trust across the whole team
- Creation of an 'integrated team' to deliver national and local business objectives
- Establishment of Strategic Alliances and Framework Agreements with key specialist contractors and suppliers
- Challenging 'custom and practice'.

Teambuilding was placed high on the agenda and the DWP EHS team held regular national and regional workshops for senior managers to communicate and share new ideas, best practice and any problems, incidents or near misses that required further research. The supply chain was encouraged to run internal workshops and include members of their 'domestic' supply chain.



Investment in training

DWP recognised and accepted its responsibility for the OH&S and Environmental training and education of not only the construction workforce, but also its own staff and seconded consultants.

The health & safety team wanted to move beyond the standard training regimes and, in consultation with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), devised a series of bespoke safety initiatives focusing more on individual responsibility and commitment. These drew on the principle of Achieving Behavioural Change (ABC), which is based on the Bovis Lend Lease 'Incident & Injury Free' (IIF) Initiative. Key to the project was the mandatory ABC/IIF Passport Scheme (behavioural programme) aiming to help participants plan for tasks to be carried out safely. More than 7,500 have attended and passed the course exam.

Occupational Health & Safety in design

From the outset, Lewis & Hickey, the concept designers of the JCP vision, placed the highest priority on providing an environment that was safe for staff. Ergonomics was an important element of the design, ensuring the

working environment was comfortable and any bending or stretching was kept within acceptable limits.

All products were prototyped and tested, in some cases to destruction, to ensure they were compliant with the required standards. These activities combined to produce a modern, safe and comfortable environment for staff and visitors.

Enhanced planning supervisor role

In consultation with the HSE, DWP developed an enhanced, more proactive role for the planning supervisor, as an EHS coordinator. Rather than engaging companies to carry out the role, individuals were seconded who remained involved throughout the surveys, design and construction process.

JCP decided to place a greater emphasis on the practical measures that could be developed and employed to raise best practice and be of value and benefit to the project. The EHS coordinator on JCP now has a cradle-to-grave involvement on projects and the role forms an integral part of the entire design and construction process, with a greater contribution to delivering best practice across the roll-out programme.





OGC Case Study

“If you are not keeping score, you are only practising.”

Benchmarking and performance measurement

It was crucial that JCP could see how it was performing and compare results against national construction industry standards, particularly with regard to health & safety.

“If you are not keeping score, you are only practising.”

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) designed for the project provided feedback on how the supply chain was performing as well as an assessment of how each contractor and supplier was meeting the required standards across a range of criteria.

The EHS Audit Toolkit for benchmarking projects and constructors' site management performance was developed from the 'Respect for People Toolkits' and linked with the Environmental Health & Safety Code of Practice. The KPI data was fed back and formed part of the incentivisation scheme and the OGC measurement system.

The HSE stated that 'Accidents in construction can account for 3–6% of total project costs'^(a). In accordance with this, for the JCP project, which has a tender price of £150m, accidents would cost between £4.5m and £9.0m. However, the total cost of added resources and involvement with all accidents on the project was approximately £528,000, therefore the JCP project had a potential cost saving of between £4.0m and £8.5m.

Summary

Thinking about safety has become second nature to management, staff and operatives. OH&S improvement required commitment, investment, support and, above all, a belief that the DWP could change the way it was perceived and how it delivered health & safety across the project.

The work on Jobcentre Plus demonstrates that improvements to OH&S can be achieved on government construction

projects when the client is willing to create working partnerships with open communications, proactive risk management, trust and proven OH&S and Environmental management techniques. This was also enabled by seconding individuals from the private sector. It also shows the influence each individual can have by taking a proactive approach to OH&S. DWP has been effective towards the creation of a clean and tidy environment where accidents and incidents on site have been reduced. This has resulted in a positive culture, increased productivity and better-quality standards, thus reducing unnecessary waste.

DWP is leading by example by showing that OH&S and Environmental risks can be factored into projects at all levels, by dispensing with tradition, introducing innovative solutions and, most of all, by ensuring everyone is on the same journey – a true demonstration of ownership, leadership and partnership.

Note:

^(a) *Costs Overview, The costs of accidents and ill-health at work, Examples, Health & Safety Executive, 25/02/2005.*

http://www.hse.gov.uk/costs/costs_overview/costs_overview.asp

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