BuildForce Independent Evaluation: Skyblue Executive Summary

Key Messages

1. The core offer is valued and valuable for industry. Engaged companies provided an 'excellent' Net Promoter Score. BuildForce has connected 76 firms to a pool of Service Leavers / Veterans.[1] In turn, Service Leavers have accessed real construction industry contacts, mentors, work placement and employment opportunities. 93 have secured jobs since 2016 – contributing to reducing skills shortages in a range of critical roles, and attracting new talent into the Construction sector

2. A key learning point is that greater effort has been required to create training, mentoring and employment outcomes for Service Leavers. Engagement targets for firms and Service Leavers have been significantly exceeded. However, managing supply and demand in an 'all inclusive' model is resource intensive. To ensure consistent quality of support, new vetting and communications protocols are being introduced for mentors and mentees

3. Industry provides support to continue, with 85% (of 40 firms) agreeing or strongly agreeing that BuildForce should continue to match Service Leavers to vacancies, and the same proportion stating they would would choose BuildForce if they were looking to recruit a Service Leaver, rather than the Career Transition Partnership, CITB or a recruitment agency. Three Alliance members (8% from 40) would be prepared to offer direct financial support to BuildForce

4. BuildForce is contributing to tackling the skills gaps and shortages facing the sector. To most effectively respond to these industry challenges going forward, firms and partner organisations would prefer an industry solution; with BuildForce sustained by further CITB funding, again with employer support.

> *"As an ex-serviceman myself, and now a professional in the Construction sector, I recognise the value BuildForce brings not only to my organisation but the industry as a whole. It is a unique organisation that fills a necessary gap in the market. With more drive and vision it could become something very, very special."*

Introduction

- Skyblue Research consultants were commissioned by CITB and BuildForce to undertake an independent, summative evaluation for the period 1st July 2016 to 31st March 2018.[2] The overall level of investment was £835k (comprising £440k from industry (38% more than the original target of £319k) and £395k from CITB Structured Fund grant)[3]

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[1] Hereafter referred to as Service Leavers

[2] There have been three main phases to BuildForce: following initial research and pilot brokerage in 2012. Phase 1 2013-2015); Phase 2 national roll-out 2016-2018; and Interim phase (the funding from CITB ended in March 2018 and BuildForce is currently funded by Lendlease).

[3] Source: Source: BuildForce 2, final project claim to CITB.

- The evaluation gathered feedback from 44 employer representatives from 30 firms and partners[4], 41 sustainability surveys from BuildForce Alliance members and the views of 60 Service Leavers. This primary research has been complemented by a review of all Management Information and contract documentation, together with a knowledge capture process with CITB and the BuildForce Steering Group.

About BuildForce

- BuildForce was a collaborative employer-led programme, designed to reduce skills gaps in the Construction sector by inspiring, engaging and enabling Service Leavers and veterans to understand and pursue careers in construction
- It delivered training and individual support to service leavers to translate their existing skills, gain new ones and access sustainable employment and progression opportunities in construction companies across the UK
- The contract details agreed outputs and expressed an ambitious set of outcomes for different stakeholders including: 50 construction firms (with a subset of Tier 1 and 2 supply chain/SME companies engaged); employees within these participating firms (by fulfilling roles such as Champion, Ambassador and / or Mentor); and Service Leavers (benefiting from a range of support and intermediate outcomes ultimately leading to a sustainable (>26 weeks) job in construction.
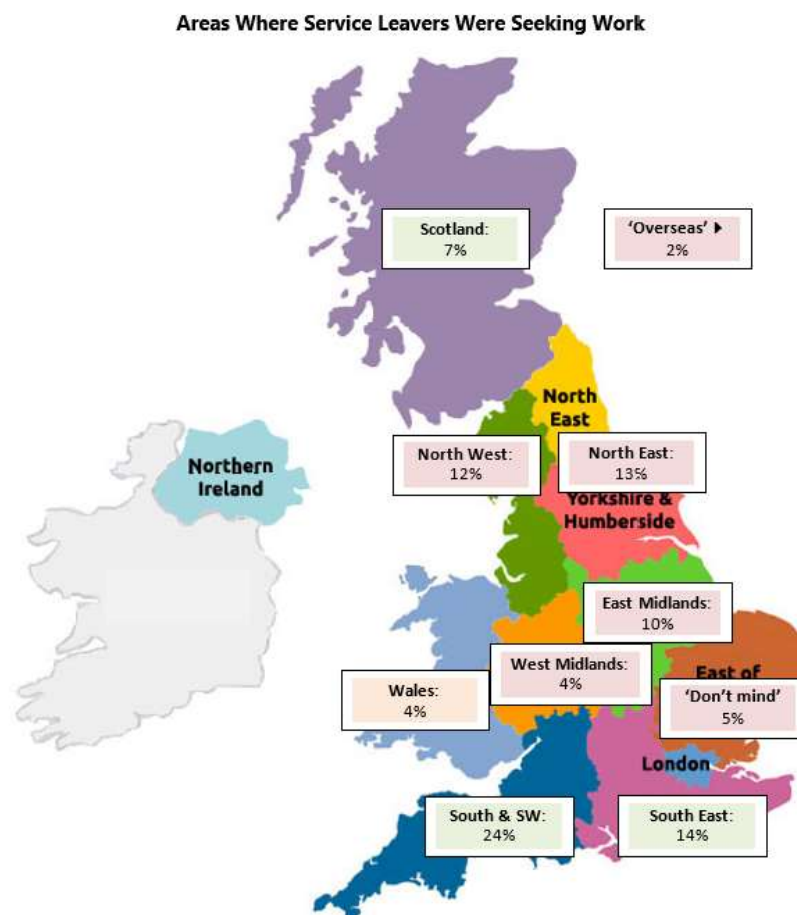
Performance

- BuildForce has achieved or exceeded all targets, with the exception of jobs created (93 of 100), which has taken longer to achieve than anticipated.[5] Relationship management requires 'constant nurturing' which is intensive to deliver
- Analysis of the performance data reveals that the conversion rate of jobs to Service Leaver registrants and inducted is 1:3, in line with original expectations. The learning has been that is was necessary to engage with nearly 700 Service Leavers in order to identify suitable candidates to then induct and support. With greater in-kind contributions from firms and 93 roles created, the level of investment per job start was higher, c£9k rather than the c£7k set out in the original bid (for 100 job starts)
- The higher than expected demand for mentoring (1:2 rather than the predicted 1:5) has led to a situation where not all mentors report being utilised effectively
- The over-achievement of Service Leavers (692 compared to a bid target of 300) and firms engaged (76, target: 40) created more demand for BuildForce services than could be serviced by the operations resource deployed by the delivery partner
- As well as employment outcomes, BuildForce is also contributing to additional 'cognitive' (awareness and knowledge) and 'affective' outcomes for Service Leavers (for example perceptions of the sector, and willingness to work in construction).
- There was divergent feedback from Service Leavers, but an overall 'good' Net Promoter Score.

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[4] Partner organisations include other charities supporting Service Leavers (such as Building Heroes), and professional bodies (for example the Chartered Institute of Building).
[5] The programme was granted a three month extension to continue until 31st March 2018. Job creation is influenced by a range of factors that BuildForce cannot control, most notably the fortunes of the Construction sector generally. In practice, BuildForce has continued, with Lendlease's support, beyond that time.

Geography

A sample of 615 Service Leavers was asked where they were seeking employment.[6]

Areas Where Service Leavers Were Seeking Work

Scotland: 7%	'Overseas' ▶ 2%
North West: 12%	North East: 13%
Wales: 4%	West Midlands: 4%
East Midlands: 10%	'Don't mind' 5%
South & SW: 24%	South East: 14%

Benefits for construction firms

"The Construction industry is not the first or most obvious choice for the Service Leaver. BuildForce, acting as a conduit to engage with and support Service Leavers specifically into construction, is a huge advantage to the industry." Tier One BuildForce Alliance member

- Firms that have become members of the BuildForce Alliance consist of Tier Ones (19%), Tier Twos (68%), Supporters (6%) and Institutions (7%).[7] Subsidiary and joint venture companies linked to these firms have also been engaged, together with supply chain companies referred by an Alliance member
- The 93 jobs created include a range of critical roles in the sector (e.g. Site Managers)[8]
- BuildForce is seen as the most construction-friendly route to recruit Service Leavers, and is supporting the development of organisational maturity.[9]

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[6] BuildForce MI. Multiple choices were available. Based 785 responses from 615 Service Leavers (February 2018).
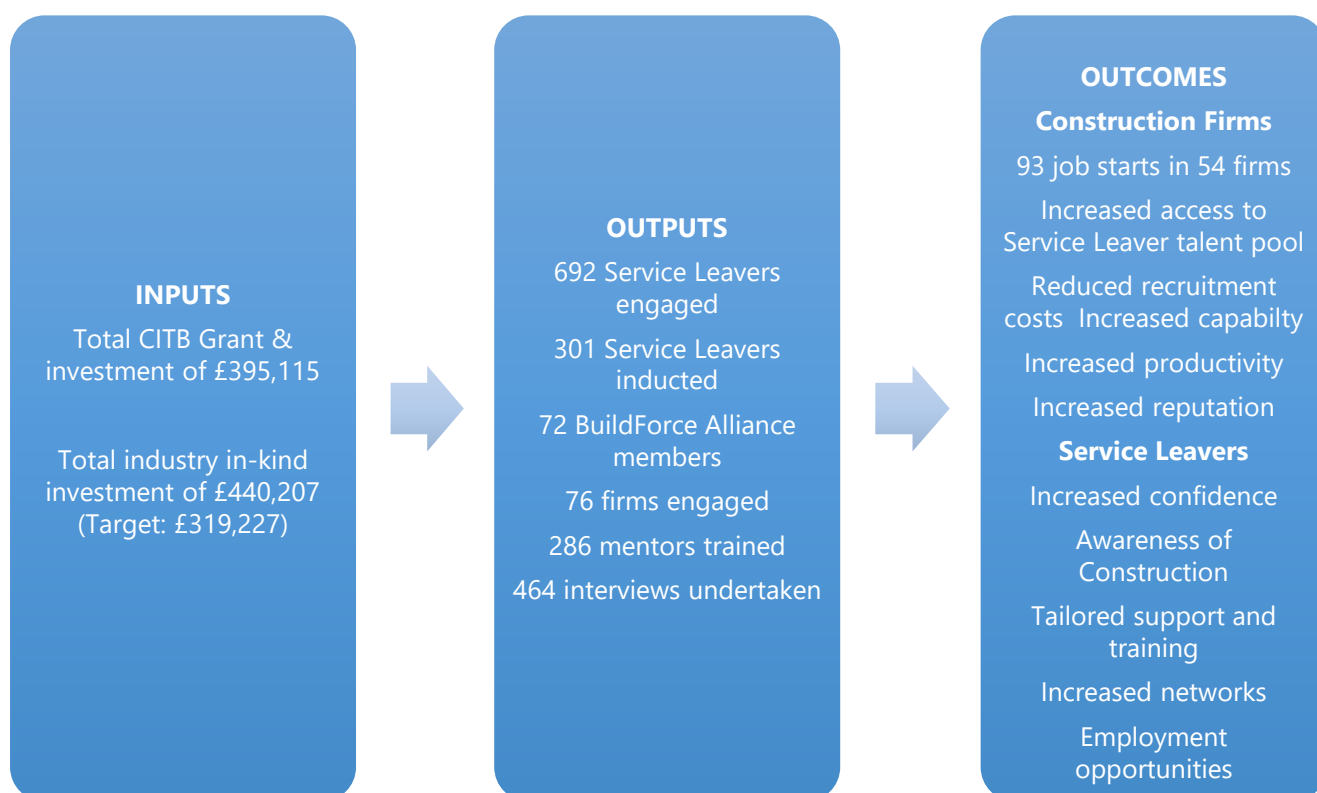[7] Analysis of 72 Alliance Members.
[8] If a full ROI is undertaken at a later point, it may be useful to utilise the median proxy of Value Added Per Employee (VAPE), of £63.2k identified in the 'UK Industry Performance Report' (2017, p19). The 93 jobs have created potential productivity for the sector valued at £5.9 million.
[9] See Maturity Matrix developed for this Programme in the full evaluation report.

- Firms are moving from no or ad-hoc engagement with the Armed Forces towards a planned and managed approach to recruiting Service Leavers
- At least five firms (23%)[10] had not previously recruited Service Leavers before
- Service Leavers recruited are considered at least as productive as other employees. There is emerging evidence that for those firms with more developed systems (and with former Service Leavers in the workforce who are in turn 'giving back' and mentoring others[11]) are seeing returns on this (no cost) investment
- 87% of industry representatives (13 from 15) who had interviewed Service Leavers agreed that, compared to other candidates, they had attributes that were especially attractive. The values and qualities that Service Leavers have developed – for example leadership and a 'can-do' attitude' are being applied and increasingly amplified in the workforce to create both productivity and reputation gains

"I think there's just something in Service Leavers' DNA, you don't need to ask them twice. They've got a very can do attitude, it's all about how they can help."

- Analysis of 93 job starts created shows circa 30 types of role within 54 firms (mainly Tier 1 and Tier 2). In summary, (and with notable exceptions), Service Leavers who left as officers were likely to secure supervisory, managerial or professional roles – for example in project management, logistics, engineering or site management. Privates were more likely to take site based, trade positions; for example groundworkers.
- 40% of firms had offered construction training to Service Leavers.[12]

INPUTS		OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES
Total CITB Grant & investment of £395,115		692 Service Leavers engaged		**Construction Firms** 93 job starts in 54 firms Increased access to Service Leaver talent pool Reduced recruitment costs Increased capabilty Increased productivity Increased reputation
Total industry in-kind investment of £440,207 (Target: £319,227)		301 Service Leavers inducted 72 BuildForce Alliance members 76 firms engaged 286 mentors trained 464 interviews undertaken		**Service Leavers** Increased confidence Awareness of Construction Tailored support and training Increased networks Employment opportunities

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[10] Out of 22 firms responding, with 8 unsure and 9 already recruiting. This finding is different to feedback from BuildForce that closer to 80% of firms are recruiting a Service Leaver for the first time.

[11] 40% of Ambassadors, Champions and Mentors taking part in the evaluation had an ex-military background.

[12] The base number answering these questions varied from 34-36.

Learning

"The USP of BuildForce is the individual tailored support." Steering Group member

- Greater numbers of Service Leavers and firms were required in order to identify suitable candidates and opportunities. This was achieved through greater effort, but led to more mixed experiences being reported by Service Leavers. Support and communication to firms appears to be well regarded.
- Out of the mentors that rated their performance 4 or 5 ('Effective' or 'very effective'), the most common response of time dedicated to the role was 2 to 3 days, highlighting that more time invested is beneficial to both mentor and mentee. New protocols and guidance will reflect this.
- This learning programme has provided insight to refine the BuildForce model. It has underlined the importance of effective communications (particularly between Service Leavers and mentors), and the delivery partner resource required to manage Service Leaver supply and industry demand. The BuildForce model has become sufficiently versatile and known that it can be adapted to meet a range of industry needs.

Using the evaluation insight we plot activity against an effectiveness matrix.[13]

	Inefficient	**Efficient**
Effective	• Tailored events • 1 to 1 bespoke support • Supporting Service Leavers with additional needs • Service Leavers with little or no knowledge of construction	• Firms who can support larger volumes of Service Leavers • Firms with Service Leavers in workforce • Firms with a commitment to support Service Leavers • Service Leavers with prior awareness and experience in construction
Ineffective	• Inactive Service Leavers, mentors or employers • Service Leavers with little or no transferable skills or knowledge of construction	• Generic web-based support • Generic events

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[13] Derived from: https://akinjidepetersdotcom.wordpress.com/2015/09/17/effectiveness-and-efficiency-for-business-growth

Sustainability

- The programme partners are seeking to sustain BuildForce through further co-investment between industry and CITB to contribute to the skills gaps and shortages facing the Construction sector
- To respond to this shared sector challenges, 76% (31 from 41) of firms favour 'an enhanced BuildForce model', enabled with CITB funding and employer support, and 15% (6 from 41) 'a mixed funding model, combining CITB, employer and other funding support'
- Nearly two thirds of Alliance members (63%, 26 from 41 firms) would offer further sustainable employment opportunities in future
- 85% (34 from 40 firms) agreed it was important or extremely important that BuildForce continues to connect Service Leavers to the Construction sector
- Based on the evidence available, there will need to be a period of transition (April-June 2018) during which time Lendlease financially supports BuildForce, while the Steering Group agrees a plan to achieve further investment.

Recommendations

The evaluators make three SMART recommendations in the main report to BuildForce and CITB, designed to create the conditions where future co-investment can harness a refined BuildForce model towards critical industry needs.

1. BuildForce to create a transition plan for BuildForce
2. BuildForce to undertake a review of processes and all existing relationships, and develop protocols to ensure a consistently high quality service
3. CITB to confirm which industry challenge BuildForce could best connect Service Leavers to, and potentially galvanise wider support for a Structured Fund bid in 2018.

Skyblue is a research consultancy with expertise in the fields of skills, employment, training, learning and careers. We provide consultancy to clients in the construction and built environment sector to help them improve their business performance and productivity.

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Disclaimer: The information in this executive summary is presented in good faith and is thought to be accurate at time of publication (31th May 2018). However, the authors cannot accept any responsibility for errors or omissions.