

# GREATER MANCHESTER VCSE DEVOLUTION REFERENCE GROUP

## Inclusive Economy case study: B4Box



B4Box is a construction company that specialises in employing and training people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The majority of B4Box employees and trainees are new to the construction sector when recruited and face multiple barriers to work including long-term unemployment, few or no qualifications, care leavers, ex-offenders, and physical and mental health issues.

B4Box describes itself as a social venture. While its legal structure is a private company (incorporated in 2008), it has been recognised as a social enterprise in terms of annual surplus reinvestment into the organisation and social impact.

B4Box's work is focused on the construction and building maintenance sectors where there are significant skills shortages and employment opportunities available but a lack of pathways for people, particularly from disadvantaged groups, to be appropriately trained to enter the industry and take the jobs. B4Box maximises social value by prioritising working with unemployed people in tough circumstances. It extends elements that are already being offered by other contractors to new levels (such as the levels of local labour and apprenticeships achieved) and doing things never done before (such as setting up a community construction Training Centre delivering industry-accredited qualifications to unemployed local residents).



B4Box makes a positive impact by ensuring the construction pound works harder than ever, delivering trailblazing social and economic value. The public purse has benefited from reductions in rent arrears, welfare payments, justice and NHS costs from participants moving into sustainable employment. Participants have benefited from improved well-being and quality of life, increasing confidence, feeling more in control of life, financial inclusion, and improved overall health.

The challenging austerity environment has dictated that business as usual would not deliver the desired employment and training outcomes. B4Box's partnerships have faced a choice between a 'race to the bottom' through cuts or forming a ground-breaking new style of collaboration that maximises opportunities for local residents. It has been able to use the Social Value Act to overcome procurement and legal barriers that previously limited client aspirations. Patience and resilience have been required to sustain the approach and overcome set-backs and challenges. 'Expect change' has become the motto of B4Box in delivering apprenticeships after experiencing funding cuts, age group restrictions, inconsistent and changing national standards, the apprenticeship levy, and off-the-job training requirements.

B4Box ensures that money that is spent through construction expenditure works harder for employment and training outcomes than ever before. It has developed a sustainable pathway for new talent to embark on construction careers, learn new skills and gain industry-accredited qualifications in its innovative Training Centre, and has helped to address the construction training crisis and reduce skills shortages.

Further details at <http://b4box.co.uk/>