

# Bovis Lend Lease Ltd

## The Manchester Joint Hospitals Project

### Worker engagement case study 10

*This case study is part of a series of case studies, which give examples of best practice when engaging workers to improve health and safety in the workplace.*

#### The challenge

From the start in 2005, Bovis (as principal contractor) was determined that this project should be an example of good practice in construction management. To achieve this, the Bovis Incident and Injury Free (IIF) programme was implemented.

The key feature of the IIF programme is a determination and belief that no one should be injured, suffer ill health or worse in the course of doing their work. IIF requires a commitment from everybody involved – clients, designers, contractors, subcontractors and suppliers – to create an environment that is incident and injury free.

Running such a big project over a five-year period gives Bovis managers a real opportunity to build a project culture to improve the ways in which contractors work together, to innovate new ways of working, and to sustain real improvements in safe methods of work.

#### Partnership with UCATT

In late summer 2005, John Hyne, Bovis Project Director, met with Billy Baldwin, North West Region (Regional) Safety Adviser for UCATT, to agree measures to give new impetus to the IIF campaign. The agreed aim was to increase the level of worker engagement right across the site. The new approach depended on developing the mindset where every worker is valued, and given full opportunity to contribute to health and safety on site.

'My initial reaction to the prospect of union involvement on this site was caution. But after six months experience of the Safety Committee, the safety representatives and the full-time convener, I have come to value their presence on site very highly. My attitude has been turned around by the personalities and style of engagement of all those involved. My main concern is to ensure that managers do take action promptly on the concerns raised by operatives on this site.'

Ivan Gethin, Project Superintendent

#### Development of a Safety Committee

From the start of the project, safety advisers invited operatives to a regular Operatives Safety Forum, but this was often poorly attended. In Autumn 2005, this forum was changed into a formal Safety Committee with a written constitution. The transition to a formalised committee was a

#### Project fact file

The Manchester New Hospitals Development on the site of the Manchester Royal Infirmary is the largest single healthcare investment ever in Greater Manchester. The scheme creates five new state-of-the-art hospitals: Women's, Eye, Adult, Children's and new provision for Mental Health users.

In total, 150 000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space will be provided in 15 new buildings. The project started in 2005, and is scheduled for completion in 2010. Total cost is budgeted at £383 million.

Early in 2006, the project is employing on average 900 workers on site every day, under the control of 60–70 subcontractors. Bovis Lend Lease Ltd, the principal contractor, estimates that in total around 8.5 million man hours will be required to complete the work.

The project has its own job shop, making it easier for local people to find employment on the site.

gradual process, as members of the forum gained experience. The Committee now meets on a monthly basis, and currently has around 16 members from across the range of subcontractors. To encourage non-unionised contractors to participate, Billy Baldwin took the unusual step of inviting employers to appoint representatives under the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996, meaning that employers did not have to formally recognise UCATT to appoint representatives to participate in the Committee.

#### Stop Work Procedure and Respect for People

An example of the Committee's work is the Procedure for Stopping Work Due to Imminent Danger, and agreed rules promoting Respect for People.

The Stop Work Procedure contains the simple instruction that if any operative feels they are in imminent danger, they must stop work immediately and report the circumstances to their supervisor. The supervisor then assesses the situation to determine the validity of the concern, and if necessary referring back to relevant method statements and risk assessments. If supervisors do not deal with the concern adequately, operatives have the further right to refer the matter to a project manager or safety adviser. The procedure contains the up-front statement: 'Operatives will not suffer any detriment by following this procedure'.

The Committee also signed up to a set of simple agreements designed to prevent verbal abuse on site. A particularly strong line is taken over racist abuse, with the statement: 'Racist abuse and language is never acceptable and will result in people being removed from site permanently'.



**Figure 1** The Safety Committee

### Safety representatives' training

In a groundbreaking move, safety representatives are currently being trained on site. Stage 1 training consists of ten day-release units, covering the role of the safety representative, the law, health and safety on site, and basic meeting skills. Training is provided by the TUC Trade Union Education Unit based at City College, Manchester. It is particularly important that training in meeting skills is given to operatives who want to participate in committees and management decisions. The confidence and ability to speak up, to follow an agenda, present an argument in a reasonable way, and to work in a supportive way with others, are skills that do not always come naturally to construction workers.

The training at Manchester includes representatives from other projects, and is delivered in a construction environment to representatives working in construction. Training is being given both to union-appointed safety representatives and to representatives appointed by consultation with workers and their employers.

### Full-time UCATT convenor on site

Lawrence Hunt is the full-time Union Convenor on the project. Lawrence is a Safety Representative with eight years' experience. He personally provides an example of enthusiasm and commitment to safety to the workers on site, as well as directly providing support to the safety representatives. Lawrence has an office on the hospital site but also looks after three other sites in Central Manchester. He is responsible for co-ordinating the Safety Committee meetings and acts as Chairman.

In a typical day, Lawrence will spend about half his time dealing with health and safety issues. Most of the contact is out on site, talking to workers and their representatives. Lawrence represents and offers advice to all operatives,



**Figure 2** Lawrence Hunt, Union Convenor, with a site worker

regardless of whether they are self-employed or whether their employers have formal links with a union. A particular role agreed on the Manchester project is that Lawrence acts as a central contact point for all complaints referred to the local HSE office, and is often asked by the Principal Contractor to collect information about these concerns.

### Leading by example

From board directors down, Bovis senior managers all tour the site when they visit and take time to talk to the workforce. The provision of a Health Centre on site, with qualified nurses, demonstrates a commitment to the health and well-being of workers.

John Hyne, Project Director for Bovis, sums it up: 'Our vision of IIF can only be successful if we can capture the hearts and minds of all our people on site. When Billy Baldwin of UCATT approached us last year with his thoughts and aspirations in support of the IIF goal, we knew then we had found a partnership that we could all work with, this close collaboration with the workforce would not only benefit this project but other projects as well.'

We are very privileged to have brought together a group of like-minded people who clearly want and can make a difference to way things are done on our sites. I am confident that we can build on these early initiatives and achievements with even greater reward in the future. I would encourage all project teams to embark on this approach now.'

### The results

- The project is less than a quarter complete, but already demonstrates a better-than-average safety record with over two million man hours worked. The Bovis accident frequency rate for the site shows a 40% improvement for the first 12 weeks of 2006.
- The project has become the employer of choice in the North West for many subcontractors – it has not been affected by the national skills shortage.
- Productivity and build quality are excellent, with significant parts of the project already completed early.
- Other projects in the North West are recognising the change, and following the example.



**Figure 3** Work on the site