

HARLOW CONSULTING

Home Building Skills Partnership Brickwork Masterclasses: Evaluation Further Education (FE) report

June 2020



In partnership with



About the Home Building Skills Partnership and the brickwork masterclasses

The Home Building Skills Partnership (HBSP) was set up by the Home Builders Federation in 2016 (initially funded by CITB) to work in collaboration with home builders and supply chain organisations to attract and develop the workforce of the future and in doing so change the culture of the home building sector.

The HBSP team leads on and supports work to help tackle skills gaps and shortages and ensure sufficient capacity and capability within the workforce to deliver the supply of good quality new homes the country needs. This includes working with Further Education (FE) and the British Association of Construction Heads (BACH) to ensure College leavers on construction courses are fully prepared for work in the industry by facilitating employer collaboration and home building insight. By identifying gaps in provision, highlighting industry best practice and new methods of construction, HBSP is raising awareness through upskilling tutors within FE provision and enhancing the student skillset with the ultimate aim of reducing common defects on sites.

Why were the brickwork masterclasses developed?



Growing need for bricklayers, but skills shortage persists

The current level of skilled bricklayers in the UK is almost a quarter of the size needed to meet government targets for building new homes. The 2018 Letwin review estimated a need for 15,000 more trained bricklayers by 2023.

Demand far outstrips supply, but this is not the only concern. Main contractors report difficulties finding bricklayers who are sufficiently skilled. Employers have questioned whether Further Education (FE) training equips learners with the requisite practical and work readiness skills and knowledge.



HBSP and warranty providers identified need to tackle common site defects

HBSP working with warranty providers and NHBC Construction Quality Review (CQR) data identified the most frequent defects year-on-year: DPCs and trays, cavities, weep holes and insulation, fire stopping and sound proofing. The brickwork masterclasses were designed specifically to tackle these issues and build learning around them into the curriculum.

The Masterclass programme aims to raise awareness of common issues and defects on home building sites and provide guidance as to best practice to raise standards. The dual objective is to change behaviours thus contributing to the eradication of common defects on home building sites and warranty claims arising as a result.

HBSP, NHBC and the Association of Brickwork Contractors (ABC) developed in conjunction with industry the initial brickwork masterclasses delivered on site to bricklayers and at college venues for FE tutors, in the form of three main programmes:

- 90-minute upskilling programme delivered on-site to bricklayers (subsequently further developed into a 4-hour blended learning approach, see below)
- 3-day and 1-day defects prevention programmes for Site Managers, Assistant Site Managers, Engineers and Quantity Surveyors
- Half-day Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for FE tutors

Further funding was also allocated to develop the blended learning to include additional video content, reading material and further development into a CITB Training Standard, enabling a sustainable, long-term solution.

About the evaluation

This independent evaluation of the masterclass programme was commissioned to assess its impact and effectiveness. Since the work started, the global pandemic Covid-19 has had a severe and immediate impact on the construction sector, the wider economy and society.

As of 16th March, NHBC was compelled to postpone all scheduled training either on site or at FE colleges. Shortly afterwards, the UK entered a phase of lockdown, closing the colleges and many construction sites. As a result, the evaluation for site managers has been postponed, until such time when construction sites re-open, enabling the masterclasses and evaluation activity to resume.

By mid-March, 13 masterclasses had taken place at FE colleges (Table 1). Against a target of 216 delegates, 124 had attended by this point, equating to 57% of the target.

12 of these delegates were employers (site managers and bricklayers) who were unable to attend on-site masterclasses, and thus came to a college venue instead.

Although this was unplanned, it had a beneficial outcome of bringing representatives from education and industry together.

This report focuses on FE masterclasses only. The evaluation of the on-site masterclasses will be a separate report.

Of the 124 FE masterclass delegates, just over 50% (64 respondents) completed a survey providing feedback, and telephone depth interviews took place with a fifth of delegates (27).

Impact and effectiveness have been assessed against four main indicators:

- Increased effectiveness/quality of FE curriculum content
- Increased knowledge of FE trainers and assessors
- Number of masterclasses delivered
- Delegate satisfaction

Table 1: Further Education seminars and attendees to date

Host college	Region	Date	Total delegates	College staff delegates	Employer delegates	# of colleges attended	# of employers attended
Bedford College	Eastern	25/06/2019	8	8	0	2	
Hartlepool College	North East	02/07/2019	15	15	0	7	
Stephenson College	East Midlands	03/07/2019	23	12	11	5	1
College Cumbria	Wales	05/09/2019	3	3	0	1	
Bristol	South West	16/10/2019	5	5	0	3	
College Gwent	Newport South Wales	17/10/2019	5	5	0	1	
South and City College, Birmingham	West Midlands	24/10/2019	9	9	0	5	
Bishop Burton	Yorks & Humber	28/10/2019	5	5	0	1	
Calderdale College	Yorks & Humber	21/11/2019	9	9	0	2	
Walsall College	West Midlands	10/12/2019	14	13	1	6	1
Wales College	Wales	19/12/2019	5	5	0	1	0
North Lindsey College	Yorks & Humber	16/01/2020	13	13	0	1	0
Kingston Maurward College	South West	12/03/2020	10	10	0	1	0
TOTAL (to date)			124	112	12	36	2

Key headlines

“ This wasn't 'just another course', it was genuinely useful and focused on raising standards. In FE we are years behind what industry wants. We need to get the front line (tutors) upskilled and prepared to teach what industry wants
Very valuable content we've not seen anywhere else ”

Data shown below represents the views of surveyed delegates

85%

Say the masterclass updated their knowledge for teaching

94%

Plan to make, or have made changes to teaching as a result

83%

Have already put changes in place

87%

Believe changes to teaching are very or totally sustainable

100%

Say the length, breadth and depth of the content was about right

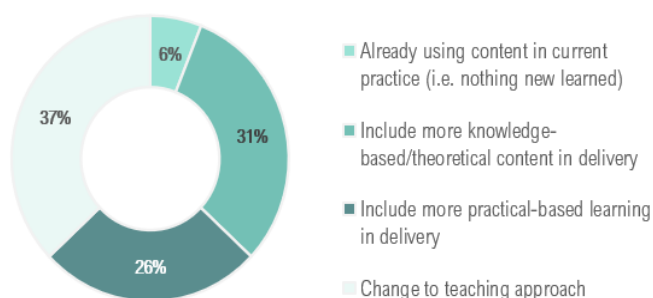
96%

Would recommend the masterclass to a colleague

Use and impact of the masterclasses

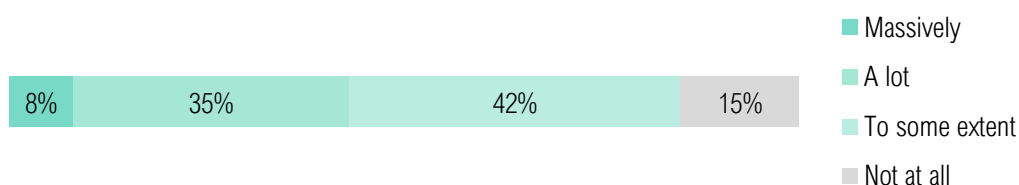
“ It did update my knowledge a lot, yes - I've been in the trade a long time and you forget things I still actively work as a joiner so keep abreast of building regs and so on - others probably learned a bit more than I did. Tutors are mainly in classrooms - for those people something like this is invaluable ”

How, if at all, will you use what you learned?



- 37% of delegates surveyed either plan to or already have changed their teaching approach after attending the masterclass.
- 26% will include more practical learning, such as a greater focus in the workshop on precision of measurements and quality checking.
- 31% will incorporate more knowledge and information to share with learners – notably common types of defects experienced on site and the wide-ranging impacts: costs incurred to rectify problems, risk of reputational damage as a bricklayer, and quality concerns of consumers buying new homes.

To what extent did the training update your knowledge for teaching brickwork?



- 85% of delegates say the masterclass updated their knowledge. Several delegates welcomed the fact that seminars like this can be counted towards CPD hours.
- The 15% of delegates who said the masterclass did not update their knowledge at all, had all been in the trade for 20 years+, had been teaching for over 10 years and have regular opportunities to engage with employers on site. These delegates found the masterclass interesting but suggested the content would be far more useful to less experienced tutors/assessors, particularly if they do not interact regularly with industry. Some delegates acknowledged they have lengthy trade experience gained over many years, but that they still learned new information from the masterclass.

Implementing changes arising from the masterclasses

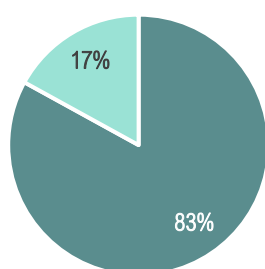


We put changes in place straight away – we updated drawings and notes for the training for learners which we hadn't realised were out of date

I shared the information very easily with the learners, pulled resources into lessons - just slotted in a slide and had a quick discussion about it. The true cost of mistakes came as a shock to them. They seem more conscious of the quality of their work now

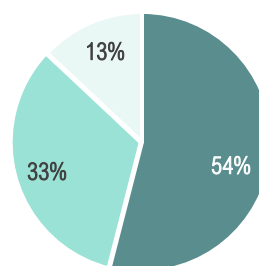


Have you already put changes in place?



■ Yes ■ No

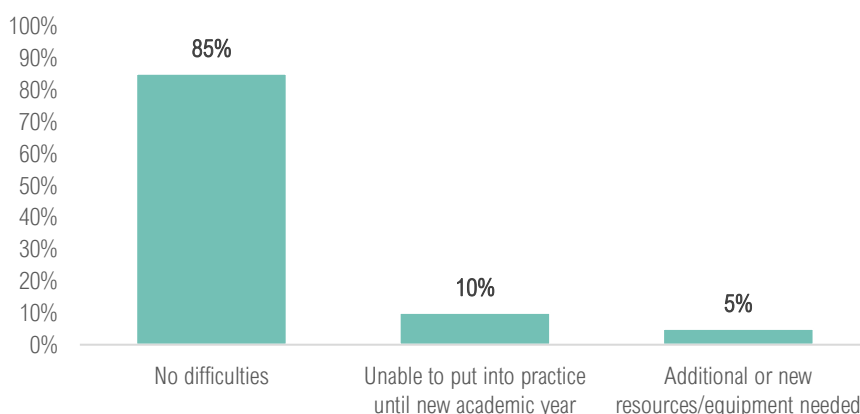
How sustainable are the changes?



■ Totally sustainable ■ Very sustainable
■ Quite sustainable

83% of delegates surveyed have already implemented changes, and 87% consider these changes to be very or totally sustainable. Even in the context of the pandemic, only 10% say they are unable to put any changes at all into place until the new academic year. 69% of delegates have shared what they learned with colleagues and have continued to communicate good practice internally and externally.

Did you experience any difficulties putting changes in place?



How can the impact and value of the masterclasses be enhanced? (1)

“ *The content was absolutely relevant for trainers. It was interesting as an employer, to hear from the FE tutors what they are teaching learners. On the back of it, we invited the tutors to visit us on site and get a better insight into processes and practices. They learned some of the content they teach is archaic and not relevant for industry. Some must be taught regardless, as it is in the curriculum, but tutors will give it less emphasis and focus more on the site-specific information. Tutors have been able to better prepare students for the real world. All very positive* ”

- Delegates are extremely positive about the length, content, and relevance of the masterclasses. Several suggested CPD certification could be shared at the end.
- Around a third of surveyed delegates raised concerns about the core curriculum content after attending, stating that not everything on the syllabus appears directly relevant for what employers want on site.
- FE tutors expressed a strong desire for change in the curriculum for it to directly align with employer needs - otherwise a perceived disconnect between education and industry will persist - and potentially worsen.



“ *It would be good to involve awarding bodies to incorporate this best practice into future qualifications. There's a real disconnect between what we teach and what employers want on site* ”

- Around a third of the delegates interviewed suggest the masterclasses should also be offered to tutors and assessors in other construction trades (notably plastering, painting & decorating and carpentry & joinery) and multi-skills.
- Delegates attending masterclasses where employers were present, emphasised the value of having the 'site perspective' to provide valuable context and inform the debate. Several delegates suggest future masterclasses should be attended by a mix of FE staff and employers as well as awarding bodies - in their guise as the bodies setting the standards and defining the curriculum.

“ *This is a great opportunity to share with other trades tutors. A lot of us teach multi-skilling so we're expert in one trade, with a working knowledge of the others. It would be good for us to explain to learners how the trades interact on site, how poor-quality work has an impact on all trades*

We need more like this - and for all trades, not just brickwork. It would be good to renew the session and repeat it every year ”

How can the impact and value of the masterclasses be enhanced? (2)

- Many delegates independently praised the style of delivery, and the interactive structure. Over a half-day, this is deemed an optimum length of time to keep the delivery engaging and allow time for networking with other attendees. However, several delegates pointed out that with travel time, the seminar was effectively a full day out.
- Nearly all delegates interviewed strongly agree that the seminar could be delivered just as effectively online – which would eliminate travel time while still giving attendees chance to interact and ask questions via virtual platforms.
- One delegate said a shift to online would be particularly welcome in the current climate, as some tutors are struggling to find fresh content to share with learners at home during lockdown.

“

The person who delivered it was very good. It was well delivered. The length felt about right, people didn't get bored as there was a good mix of slides and interaction. The trainer was clear and easy to understand, and he had a good depth of knowledge

It was a nice, small informal group session – people felt comfortable to ask questions”

Really well delivered, can't speak highly enough of the trainer

”

Actions to further strengthen the masterclasses intervention

1

Make masterclass places available to tutors and assessors in other construction trades and multi-skilling, and over time, expand the scope of the masterclasses to include other trades

2

Work with the Department for Education, Federation of Awarding Bodies, and other relevant organisations to influence change in the FE curriculum, so that content is more closely aligned to industry needs

3

Encourage on-going networking and sharing of best practice, for example via a dedicated LinkedIn group to maintain discussions and momentum about raising standards

4

Invite a mix of delegates to future masterclasses, bringing together employers, FE tutors, assessors, and awarding organisations

5

Offer the masterclasses online while colleges remain closed (due to the pandemic), to maintain momentum and to take the opportunity to potentially reach more participants