

The gold standard: safety pays off for GMG

As a result of winning ten consecutive RoSPA Gold Awards, Glasgow-based GMG Contractors received the prestigious President's Award. The company's commitment to the welfare of its workers and its passion for training are a shining example to all in the construction industry

THE outstanding health and safety credentials of Glasgow-based multi-discipline business GMG Contractors were recognised last year with a RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) President's Award.

This accolade is reserved for companies that achieve ten consecutive RoSPA Gold Awards, with winners having to demonstrate well-developed occupational health and safety management systems and is also an endorsement of the ethos developed by GMG over the past three decades. Health and safety is at the heart of everything they do, with a safety first culture ingrained within all operatives, from the firm's many apprentices all the way through to senior management.

For founder and CEO, Gerry McGinn, the number one priority on any project is to get workers home safely to their families at the end of each day.

To mark the RoSPA success, GMG were invited to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace. The event highlighted how far GMG has come since being founded in the east end of Glasgow in 1987.

Given the nature of GMG's business, impeccable safety practices are of critical importance.



L-R Kevin McManus (technical director), Gerry McGinn (CEO) and Keith Alexander (health and safety) receive the President's Award. Right - receiving the first RoSPA Award back in 2007

"The first thing we do with apprentices is make sure they're aware of issues when working at height," Gerry explained. "We get them into that safety first way of thinking from day one and nobody is allowed to go onto a site until they're ready."

"Our apprentices go to college, where they get their CSCS cards and undertake health and safety modules. They are also taught by

our experienced tradesmen never to take anything for granted. A lot of it is common sense stuff."

Safety education at GMG is not restricted to apprentices. Continuous professional development (CPD) training is rolled out across the board up to and including senior figures within the business.

GMG would have no hesitation in turning a job down if any safety-related aspect wasn't to the relevant



standard (OHSAS 18001).

When asked how things have improved within the Scottish construction sector since the 1970s when he was learning his trade as an apprentice slater and plasterer, Gerry said, "The industry has gone through a transformation in health and safety. Things started to change when fatalities from falls from height began to be heavily reported. There's a whole health and safety industry, which started off as a cottage industry, which is now mainstream."

Whilst huge improvements have undoubtedly been made within the construction industry over the years, GMG endeavours to ensure there is no risk of complacency setting in within the business. GMG strongly believes in having two trained operatives working together on all projects involving heights. "As a business we never put any of our workforce to work at height on

QUINN ROOFTILES

Congratulations GMG Contractors on winning the RoSPA President's Award



Congratulations to GMG Contractors Limited on receiving this prestigious award. Well done to Gerry and his team.

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safety first approach



Gerry and his wife Margaret at Buckingham Palace after winning the President's Award

their own," Gerry added. "No lone workers."

The physical dangers of construction are, of course, well documented. However, one issue which is now starting to gain more attention is that of mental health. Work-related stress, anxiety and depression are all too common in an industry still largely dominated by men, for whom speaking on mental health issues doesn't often come naturally.

Given GMG's desire to support its employees in whatever way it can, it is no surprise that the business is proactive in this department too.

Gerry plans to have Fundamental Life, an innovative and forward-thinking wellbeing organisation from south England, travel to Glasgow to train all GMG employees on mental health and inner wellbeing. Dave Lee, a former builder turned author and speaker on mental health, and Paul

Apps, an author, wellbeing coach and mentor, have both risen from troubled and challenging backgrounds. Their interesting and personal experiences have been key in helping to develop a unique, simple and profoundly effective programme, which points the individual to 'The Source' of their own inner wellbeing. This exciting new programme challenges old thinking about mental health and how we see and deal with it. The insightful sessions clearly demonstrate that when we truly understand how thoughts and feelings actually work, we can find our way back to 'good mental health', peace of mind and a more stable, creative, connected and enjoyable life experience. (www.fundamental-life.com).

Gerry is also a strong proponent of healthy living. The business supplies fresh fruit for staff and encourages apprentices to make sure they're well rested if they have college or work

the following day.

GMG prides itself on providing opportunities for young people, often from difficult backgrounds. The vast majority of apprentices are recruited from communities with high levels of unemployment, and most arrive with no formal qualifications. Work ethic and a desire to learn are the type of attributes the firm values above all others, along with trust and honesty.

The company has earned praise for giving young people the chance to earn a living and learn a trade that will stand them in good stead for the rest of their working lives.

GMG currently has 42 apprentices enrolled on their apprenticeship programme – which equates to more than 25% of the total workforce. They are all provided with their first set of tools and appropriate work wear.

GMG is a shining example of what can be achieved by investing in young people and giving second

chances to those in need of a helping hand to fulfil their potential. Many youngsters who struggled academically at school have gone on to have hugely successful careers in the business/industry.

Workforce development is paramount and Gerry is always keen to help his young staff to believe in themselves. For example, someone who is adept at computer games is encouraged to take inspiration from the excellent concentration levels required to excel at video games, and use that to their advantage in the working environment.

Motivational quotes are also strategically placed all over the walls of the company's Baillieston head office.

The cost of training young people is considerable and the risk of losing workers the company has spent years developing, to rival firms who haven't invested in training, is always there. However, the rewards are plentiful. Gerry is rightly proud of the fact that apprentices have helped GMG to flourish and says most of those who do decide to move on end up returning. A young and vibrant workforce is one of the reasons why the business has become a leading name in the Scottish construction sector and enjoyed such success over the years. GMG has an enviable track record of completing projects the length and breadth of Scotland and North West England in both the public and private sectors.

Clients include leading housebuilders, national contractors, NHS, local authorities and housing associations.

The business is a three-time winner of the Youth Investment Award at Scotland's Best Employer Awards and was the first Scottish construction firm to achieve Investors in Young People status.

GMG has also been influential in

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South Lanarkshire College
congratulates **GMG Contractors**
on receiving the **RoSPA**
President's Award

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Before and after. GMG provided a range of internal and external refurbishment works to transform these Cumbernauld homes for Sanctuary HA

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the development of relevant training courses, working with the likes of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC).

The firm has also enjoyed a long association with South Lanarkshire College (SLC), with whom it helped develop and pilot a successful roof tiling course.

GMG has been training apprentices for quarter of a century but, like many firms, had to stop sending them to college during the financial crisis of 2008/9 for economic reasons.

When CITB asked what it would take to reverse that situation, GMG

suggested a change to the traditional approach of apprentices spending 22 weeks a year at college in their first year. Instead, GMG recommended that apprentices spend ten weeks of the year at college during the harsh winter months when it is often difficult to work outdoors, and then ten weeks being externally validated onsite by college lecturers. That balance has proved hugely successful, dramatically reducing the amount of time workers spend away from the business without compromising on the quality of training in any way.

The mutually beneficial relationship between GMG and SLC is evidence of what can be achieved when industry and academia work together

towards a common goal.

James Martin, associate principal (construction) at South Lanarkshire College said, "GMG Contractors Ltd have had a close and very productive working relationship with South Lanarkshire College for over 25 years, specifically focused on the delivery of roofing apprenticeships. GMG have demonstrated sustained commitment to recruitment and formal training of apprentices in partnership with the college.

"Over the last four years both organisations have worked even closer to ensure the effective delivery of the new SVQ 2 Roof Tiling Award for New House Buildings which GMG played a significant role in

developing. The new award structure was developed by industry and fully meets the current training needs of industry. This qualification has been successfully delivered to over 40 GMG apprentices.

"GMG are a valued partner who support and participate in the annual College Construction Awards, through sponsoring awards and sharing in the celebrations of student success. In addition, GMG regularly contribute to the quality of the student experience through providing a range of roofing-specific materials, tools, and equipment. In turn GMG recognise and value the role the college plays in providing high quality specialist training delivered by

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GMG upgraded flat roof insulation and installed a new single layer roofing system at Queen Margaret Hospital in Dunfermline

industry expert, teacher trained and assessor qualified lecturer assessors. This college provision takes place in an excellent learning environment using current, high quality tools, materials and equipment.

"The college also support GMG's staff quality assurance processes by providing added value training and certification opportunities such as: abrasive wheels, health and safety and CSCS testing for their apprentices, experienced staff, and managers.

"It is the college's and GMG's ambition that this long-standing employer college relationship continues to grow and develop to benefit industry and apprenticeship training.

"As a college we are delighted to be working with such a forward-thinking company whose vision for education and training is well aligned to the college's ethos of inclusiveness and widening access."

Given some of the challenges facing construction at the moment including labour shortages, skills gaps and Brexit-related economic uncertainty, this kind of collaboration has never been more important. The CITB revealed last year that more than 10,000 new workers will be required

in the Scottish construction sector over the next five years to meet demand.

GMG's passion for training and desire to extend opportunities to people who otherwise might have drifted out of the workforce can only be a positive thing for an industry crying out for fresh talent.

Looking to the future, GMG has its sights set on continuing along the path which has served the firm so well thus far.

Safety will remain the main focus, while the contractor's progressive approach to training will continue to produce an ever-more diverse workforce and provide even more youngsters with an opportunity to create a better life for themselves and their families.

With the construction industry going through a period of unrelenting change, the decisions GMG have taken seem certain to leave the business well placed to prosper in the future and add to its already impressive list of achievements.

GMG's company motto is "Success is no accident". It is no accident that GMG has and will continue to be successful due to their forward-thinking, relentless drive, commitment and passion.



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Congratulations to **GMG Contractors Limited** on their recent achievement of **Rospa Presidents Award in Health and Safety.**



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We would like to congratulate all the staff at GMG on their recent achievement

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