

# Tradesmen hail new 'on the job' training scheme



**WORKING TOGETHER:** Jimmy Shepherd, project co-ordinator (right), with some of the contractors and trainees involved in the project.

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## Gordon Bannerman

FED up with school, don't fancy going to college and desperate to get a foothold in the building industry?

Then an innovative new venture being pioneered locally through the Fairfield Housing Co-operative and local businesses could be the answer.

The Tackit Project allows youngsters to get hands-on experience of the trades – and be mentored by an experienced tradesman.

The work placement lasts 26 weeks, the youngster bags a weekly wage, tool kit and protective gear, and health and safety training before they set to work.

Tackit trainees gain practical everyday experiences, instead of being cooped up in the classroom.

The project welcomed its first trainees over the summer and it's getting top marks from employers and youngsters alike.

Grant Ager at Fairfield said: "Already one of our trainees has landed an apprenticeship with another contractor. We're delighted that a number of local

businesses are backing the project."

The first five contractors to sign up for the Tackit Project were McLeod Glaziers, Fraser Gibson Painters, Meldrum Joiners, Chas Stewart Plumbers and Brian Tavendale Electrical. Now, they've been supplemented by Mackay Decorators, Meddicks Blacksmith, David Fleming Joiner and Martin Glen Painters.

Project co-ordinator Jimmy Shepherd said: "The feedback has been excellent, from both the tradesmen and the lads."

One Perth teenager said: "I'm learning all sorts as I go along. I'm now feeling more confident in what I'm doing."

"I've told all my mates about this. They think it's good. It feels like a proper job."

And one of the tradesmen added: "I'd have no hesitation taking on an apprentice if it was done like when we were apprentices. But you see the problem for a one man band, with them going to college, is you're paying a boy eight weeks for them not to be here."

"It's alright for the big companies because they've got more lads around. You learn more on site anyway. You always have done. But the way the world is now, it's all paper work. You can be brilliant at

paper work but rubbish on site with the tools."

Project co-ordinator Jimmy noted: "We're offering these tradesmen an opportunity which was never there before. Every one of the contractors will say that the laddies are good."

"There's no paperwork for the tradesmen to fill in. I protect them from that as part of my job. Sure there's the initial paper work to set the thing up with the laddie – check their public liability and that type of thing. But once the forms are filled in then that's it. There's nobody breathing down their neck from the college or Scottish Enterprise."

"The good thing is that not one of the five tradesmen who took on a laddie at the start can say he was rubbish. Everyone has positives to say."

Gillian White, Fairfield Housing Co-operative's housing manager, told the PA: "I think the project's been fantastic. It's great for Perth and I think it's great for Fairfield Co-op to be involved in a project like this. It's not airy fairy. It's so simple. I just can't believe nobody thought of it before."