

PRESS RELEASE

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**PROCURE PLUS AND PARKWAY GREEN PARTNER IN INNOVATIVE
TRAINING PROJECT FOR MANCHESTER STUDENTS**

A ground-breaking employment and training scheme has been launched in Wythenshawe, South Manchester, by Procure Plus and Parkway Green Housing Trust. The initiative, named PG Gateway, gives eight local students the opportunity to gain practical on-the-job experience, while completing their education.

The programme sees students from Newall Green High School, St Paul's High School and Manchester Enterprise Academy spend three days per week during term time in school, and the remaining two days working with Parkway Green. The students, who were specially selected for the initiative, work with the organisation's fencing team learning transferable skills such as time management, communication and reliability, which will ultimately help prepare them for the world of work.

Alongside this experience, students will also complete an Edexcel Work Skills qualification, which is equivalent to up to two GCSEs, and through Procure Plus are guaranteed an interview for a training contract with one of its framework partners on completion of the programme.

During the PG Gateway scheme, the students work in groups of two and, day to day, are overseen by an experienced joiner and labourer who are on hand to provide advice and practical training. The participants are also supported by an assessor to ensure successful completion of their academic qualification.

“Parkway Green has a strong commitment to supporting the Wythenshawe community and economy, and helping local people – of all ages – improve their employability,” said Nigel Wilson, Chief Executive of Parkway Green Housing Trust. “PG Gateway is the latest development in this commitment, and gives the students involved a unique opportunity to simultaneously develop real life skills while completing their education which, ultimately, will help them get on the career ladder.”

Fiona Sharp, corporate social responsibility manager at Procure Plus, added: “PG Gateway is a truly innovative project, and demonstrates how organisations can work together to make a difference to communities. By drawing on our individual expertise and resources, Procure Plus and Parkway Green hope to give these students the best possible start and help create responsible, knowledgeable and reliable employees of the future.”

Commenting on his experience, Cameron Graham from St Paul’s Catholic High School – one of the students selected for PG Gateway, said: “The scheme is brilliant and I have learnt so much already. I’ve always known that I wanted to follow in my brother’s footsteps and become a joiner, but as there aren’t that many employment opportunities out there, I was worried that once I left school getting a job would be impossible. The scheme is a great way for me to learn the necessary skills I need to succeed in this career, and will help me stand out from the crowd to potential employers.”

Cameron Graham joins Cameron Jackson, also from St Paul's Catholic High School, Ryan Harvey and Matthew Ham from Manchester Enterprise Academy and Joe Gaunt, Aaron Ashton, Jake Plenty and Josh Casey from Newall Green High School.

PG Gateway is one of many social enterprise projects developed and managed by Procure Plus. By re-investing volume cost savings directly back into the local community, the consortium has supported a variety of initiatives ranging from SME business enterprises, to employment schemes for ex-offenders.

For more information on Procure Plus, visit www.procure-plus.com.

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Notes to editors:

Press enquiries to:

Jo Hart or Gemma Eccleston at Tangerine PR

e: jo.hart@tangerinepr.com / gemma.eccleston@tangerinepr.com

t: 0161 817 6600 f: 0161 817 6601

About Procure Plus

Procure Plus is a regeneration consortium of social housing providers that aims to generate efficiencies by leveraging the procurement of construction materials and contractors. The organisation is compliant with Audit Commission requirements and makes it easier to manage HCA funding for schemes, and it has created a web-enabled system that delivers the benefits of consortium purchasing and a check list to ensure rules governing funding schemes are met.

All savings and any surplus made by the consortia is reinvested in to local communities helping to create jobs and improve local facilities and schemes. It is expected that clients of Procure Plus will collectively invest over £1.5 billion in the repair and upkeep of properties between 2006 and 2010/11; it is anticipated that a substantial proportion of this will be channeled through Procure Plus.

About Parkway Green

Parkway Green Housing Trust is a not-for-profit 'local housing company' that took ownership of 6,000 Wythenshawe homes from Manchester City Council in October 2006. It covers the Baguley & Royal Oak, Brooklands, Newall Green, Northenden and Northern Moor areas of Wythenshawe in South Manchester.

A board of twelve volunteers makes the policies and plans for Parkway Green, setting its wider aims and objectives and making sure that the staff working day-to-day are meeting standards of service.

Parkway Green helps support and fund the Wythenshawe 'Real Lives' Campaign, which challenges negative and outdated perceptions of Wythenshawe and promotes the area as a good place to live. For more information visit www.realliveswythenshawe.com

For more information visit www.parkwaygreen.co.uk