

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)

submission to

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ)

on the inquiry on

Skills and labour shortages in the UK construction sector

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Call For Evidence: Skills to Build - inquiry on skills and labour shortages in the UK construction sector.

About CIOB

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, and we have been doing that since 1834.

Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and other professionals procuring built assets.

Full Response

What are the primary factors contributing to the skills shortage in the housing and construction sector?

Summary

- The continued demand for construction workers due to population growth, hitting government targets (e.g. housebuilding and net zero) and upgrading tattered infrastructure.
- Volatility caused by the cyclical boom and bust nature of construction which means workloads and staffing requirements are broadly dictated by the general condition of the economy.
- Loss of workers through retirement as well as those reaching retirement age.
- Improved standards of welfare and regulation over the last couple of decades reducing 'casual' labour.
- Overall 'attractiveness' of the sector and ensuring 'stability' post qualifications and training.
- Misconceptions around vocational and technical level education and the push towards higher education as the gold standard.
- Loss of migrant workers and/or flexibility to recruit from overseas post Brexit.

Detailed response

Finding labour and skills is the primary concern for the industry as it looks to deliver the promise of huge future workloads. Construction firms face two critical and related challenges, how to boost its workforce and how to raise productivity.

Even ambitious workloads suggest the wider construction sector workforce needs to expand by anywhere from 500,000 to one million over the next few years. That is if the sector is to meet both the underlying market demand and the government's aspirations for house building, moving towards net zero, and upgrading tattered infrastructure.

The official figures put employment within the defined construction sector at about 2.1 million, down by about 150,000 over the past five years. The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) takes a wider count including building professional services and about 300,000 office-based non-construction professionals. It produces a total figure for total employment in 2023 close to 2.7 million.

Regardless of the figure used, the construction workforce will need to rapidly expand, particularly with the rate of losses to retirement.

Looking back at construction employment since the 1950s, there were three periods of major expansion in the workforce. In the five years to 1964 the workforce grew by just over 17%. In the five years to both 1990 and 2007, the rise was 16%. In those periods there was a ready supply of migrant workers, initially from Ireland, but latterly from the EU. And, during the rise in the workforce to its peak in 1990, construction could draw on a huge pool of unemployed adults, which in 1987 topped 3 million.

None of these options are as readily available today. This clearly puts labour and skills at the top of the agenda when considering how to build capacity in the sector to hit the Government's agenda.

Attracting enough people into construction has been tough for decades. One example of why can be seen when considering 'total hours worked' data.

Since 1997 the total hours worked in the UK economy increased more than 19%, but for construction the rise was 11%. Construction is attracting a diminishing share of the workforce as people engage ever more in service-based activities.

Furthermore, hours worked in manufacturing fell by 42%, highlighting a drift from skilled manual labour. In 1961, 43% of the workforce was employed in the production and construction sectors. Today that figure is closer to 15%. This means it has less scope to entice manual skills from other production sectors.

It is well documented that construction has struggled to attract new entrants. However, the importance of getting new entrants into the sector is more crucial than ever given the continued losses of skills to retirement.

Another longstanding issue that has contributed to skills shortages is that young people are reluctant to build a career in construction due to its poor security of employment. From a potential employee's perspective, the time spent training and establishing a career, may seem a high price to pay for a job with limited security. It may seem more precarious now as there are fewer opportunities for manual skills in the wider economy, which makes a construction job seem even more precarious.

From an employer's perspective, investing in training may also seem risky. Work may dry up and the employee made redundant, when workloads fall. Furthermore, 'poaching' of staff is particularly rife in the construction sector, and this often happens with the offer of higher wages when construction work rises.

This was discussed in roundtables that we held with CIOB members in our Real Face of Construction 2023 report. It was particularly prevalent in the East and West Midlands where

major infrastructure projects, such as HS2 were taking place. This report can be accessed here: www.ciob.org/media/1893/download.

Additionally, the position for prospective employers is risky. With increases in employers' national insurance contributions, the financial commitment of taking on new staff has become a balancing act. Employers must ensure that they are getting 'value for money' and it has been widely criticised that the skills that those who have entered the construction sector are equipped with are not sufficient to guarantee a return on investment. This has created an atmosphere where the jobs are available but those applying are not skilled enough to fit companies' requirements. This was discussed by Mark Reynolds, Co-Chair of the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) in a recent Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry hearing on capacity of the construction sector, which can be found [here](#).

The long-term demographic trend of falling birth rates also works against construction, as it does against all sectors. But construction is further hampered by its pro-cyclical growth rate. Because it rises and falls faster than the overall economy, it tends to recruit when the economy is buoyant and competition for recruits is fierce. And, when it does recruit, it is normally looking for a disproportionate share of those available.

Regulation and Raising Standards

Although contradictory in terms of the impacts on recruitment. Greater regulation has raised welfare standards and made working in construction more attractive. But greater regulation will have reduced the flow into construction of casual labour which in the past was a big feature of the industry. Today, firms need to invest more in training employees to ensure both their effectiveness and welfare, raising the immediate cost of employing someone.

Arguably this has made the construction sector a safer and more attractive one to join. However, it is one that is still inherently dangerous. Recent figures from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) indicate that construction is the most dangerous sector in the UK to work in, with 51 fatal injuries to workers in 2023/24. The numbers are also trending in the wrong direction, with 29 fatalities in 2021/22 and 47 in 2022/23.

Vocational Training vs Further Education

Construction is an apprentice-reliant industry, and this is perhaps where some social stigmas and negative perceptions about careers in the construction industry stem from.

There has long been a social stigma attached to apprenticeships which have been seen as inferior to university degree programmes. There are perceptions apprenticeships are for those who did not achieve the grades required to get into university and, as the above statement suggests, this is a view shared amongst young people, friendship groups, parents, and teachers.

Further to this, there have been misconceptions that apprenticeships involve low pay, long hours and are only for 'hands-on' jobs such as bricklaying or car mechanics, as they were in the past. These misconceptions and perceptions about the construction sector, as well as apprenticeships and vocational training, can be dated back to the abolishment of national Connexions service back in 2012. Many young people lost centres of expertise where they could obtain face to face guidance and support on careers choices

Migration

Migration has played a huge role in supporting the workforce in recent years. In the run up to Brexit, it provided a valuable quick fix to many construction firms looking for skilled workers. In 2016, non-UK born workers accounted for around a quarter of the workforce aged 35 to 39.

Post Brexit, the flow of skilled workers from the EU decreased. Some of the gap has been eased by recruits from outside the EU. This tempered the fall, but firms have found it far tougher to recruit from abroad in the future.

Since 1 January 2021, the UK has operated a **points-based immigration system (PBIS)** which treats EU and non-EU citizens equally. Anyone coming to the UK to work, excluding Irish citizens, will need to apply for permission in advance. The PBIS means that anyone from outside the UK coming to work in the UK must meet a specific set of requirements for which they will score points. Visas are then awarded to those who gain enough points. For employers, they must hold a sponsor licence in order to hire most eligible workers from overseas.

For the vast majority of new migrant workers joining the UK construction and built environment sector, this will mean applying for a Skilled Worker visa to work in an eligible occupation. Applying for a Skilled Worker visa can be a complex process and Build UK has [summarised the key steps](#) to help individuals understand what is involved. Individuals should ensure they set aside sufficient time to review all the information before submitting an application.

We do not have up-to-date information on the number of organisations that have recruited through the Skilled Worker route, but anecdotally it is not a route that would be utilised by SMEs in the sector. We would recommend speaking to the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) who may have further information on this.

A skills shortage in the construction sector is not a new problem. What initiatives have/have not worked in the past to increase the skilled workforce.

There have been a variety of initiatives and regulatory changes to increase the number of workers in construction. However, as noted in our response to question one, many of the issues around getting people into the sector is structural and initiatives and campaigns to increase numbers can only have so much impact.

Apprenticeship Levy

We long held concerns about whether the [Apprenticeship Levy](#), which was introduced in April 2017, was necessary for the construction sector, given numerous employers contributed to the CITB Levy.

Reforms to the apprenticeship system, including the Apprenticeship Levy, were subject of well-documented critique. The CBI noted that the approximate fall in apprenticeship starts of 31% following the introduction of the Levy, while Balfour Beatty reported that only 10% of the ring-fenced Levy funds were spent in the first year and many of those paying in find it difficult to spend it all. FE week reported falling numbers of entry-level apprenticeships following the launch of the apprenticeship levy in 2017, with official government data indicating that level 2 apprenticeship dropped by two-fifths from 161,390 in 2017/18 to 91,520 in 2021/22.

One of the primary barriers to employers using the Apprenticeship Levy was a lack of flexibility in how it can be spent, with rules dictating that while it can be used to fund training costs, employers must cover the costs of the apprentices' wages and dedicate resources to administration, recruitment and management.

Given the construction industry already had a successful history of recruiting and training apprenticeships, we questioned the need for the industry to be forced to pay for two levy arrangements. Indeed, in February 2023, a [paper by the National Federation of Builders \(NFB\) Major Contractors Group called for reform of the Apprenticeship Levy](#) to improve the performance of apprenticeships, skills and training delivery. The report referred to addressing 'double pay' and to tackle the issue of CITB and Apprenticeship Levy overlap.

We recommended that if the CITB Levy and Apprenticeship Levy were to remain then the Government must look to reforming the current 'Apprenticeship Levy', to a broader, more flexible 'Skills Levy', enabling employers to leverage funds for skills investment beyond apprenticeships. Lifelong learning, upskilling, and reskilling will help to future-proof the industry, and in turn, boost productivity and growth.

Following the most recent General Election, it was [announced](#) that there would be reforms to the apprenticeship system in England, with a new growth and skills levy replacing the existing apprenticeship levy and include new foundation apprenticeships. These announcements are broadly in line with our asks. The new levy also seeks to allow funding for shorter apprenticeships, giving learners and employers greater flexibility and we have commented on this later in this response.

CITB Effectiveness

We have covered the CITB in more detail in the following question, however, we have long held concerns about the effectiveness of the CITB to increase the numbers of skilled workers entering the sector.

Rather than detail our view on this, it should be noted that as of January 2025, the Government published the latest Industrial Training Board Review with 17 overarching strategic and tactical/operational recommendations, including merging the CITB and Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) to form a single body to be able to meet the construction sector's specialist skills needs. Further information about this can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/2023-industry-training-board-itb-review.

Advice and Guidance

With the abolishment of the national Connexions service back in 2012, many young people lost centres of expertise where they could obtain face to face guidance and support on careers choices. The National Careers Service that replaced Connexions centres in many towns and cities meant that the local interface was lost. This resulted in the onus being placed on schools and teaching staff to deliver independent careers guidance with little or no extra funding or training.

Many teaching staff, despite their best intentions, often lack the necessary expertise and resources to help young people make informed career choices. This can lead to partial advice and bias towards 'tried and tested routes' as opposed to impartial.

Young people should not have to rely solely on websites and call centres for advice. But it is also true that schools should not be blamed for offering advice about tried and pure academic routes, particularly when they are under-resourced to do so effectively. We believe that employers, both large and small, need to have a greater role in providing information and guidance to schools and learning centres. This also entails employers putting forward their own apprentices to talk about their experience and ensure that young people are aware that there are alternatives to university and just going into the world of work. This could be conducted through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) for example.

Broader Government Policy Failures

Finally, it is worth noting that a lack of confidence in long-term policy direction has impeded the construction sector's ability to acquire new entrants and train them in areas such as low carbon skills of the future. Failure in the structuring and delivery of the Green Homes Grant and prior to that, the Green Deal has meant piecemeal policy have weakened the resilience of the construction supply chain and reinforced a lowest-cost procurement model which has eroded quality and hindered innovation across the sector.

In short, these are just two examples where successive government's have put in place delivery-side stimuluses without full consultation with the construction sector about its ability to deliver. Training staff in new technologies is an expensive endeavour and if funding is cut, it further erodes trust in schemes and initiatives.

Does any sector or group bear particular responsibility for the construction skills shortage?

The CITB was set-up in 1964 to build a safe, professional, and fully qualified construction industry, and was one of 21 industrial training boards established in the wake of the Industrial Training Act 1964, primarily to address concerns about UK skills shortages.

The CITB is now one of only two industrial training boards left in the UK, alongside the ECITB. The CITB collects the industry levy: a fee paid by employers and contractors in the construction industry, which leads to funding, training, grants and promoting careers.

With construction being a cyclical boom and bust industry, it means workloads and staffing requirements are often dictated by the general condition of the economy. CITB seeks to assist in filling that void through funding and training.

Despite this, the construction sector, and wider built environment, has consistently struggled to recruit the numbers required to maintain or grow its output.

Although it is not down to the CITB exclusively to address the construction skills shortage. They should help provide guarantees that the industry invests enough in attracting, training and retraining new talent and, secondly, that the existing workforce is equipped with the skills needed to ensure construction projects are completed safely, on time, on budget and to the highest possible standards.

Furthermore, the CITB is fundamentally focused on trade-level training, as opposed to careers at more professional levels, such as construction and site management. Although professional and trade bodies, such as CIOB have a key role to play here, there is often a limited dialogue between the organisations, particularly in England (as opposed to Wales and Scotland). We do have some

examples of the difficulties engaging, for example though their Approved Training Organisation (ATO) scheme if helpful, however we recognise this is not the basis for this call for evidence.

The government has promised to reform skills policy recognising that there has been a historic failure to plan for the workforce of the future. In particular, the government has promised to:

- **Establish Skills England.**
- **Work with the Migration Observatory Committee to make sure training meets the needs of the labour market to reduce reliance on overseas workers.**
- **Devolve adult skills funding to combined authorities.**
- **Transform Further Education Colleges into specialist Technical Excellence Colleges.**
- **Reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy.**
- **Launch Homebuilding Skills Hubs and accelerated apprenticeships.**

What does the government need to do to ensure that these new initiatives effectively tackle the construction skills shortage?

As noted in the question, there is a range of policy levers that the Government is pulling to address skills gaps in industrial sectors including construction. Although we are broadly supportive of the aims of many of these policies, we believe there needs to be further detail from the Government in providing a clear and co-ordinated approach to addressing the sector's skills shortage, with greater consideration of the logistical challenges that will need to be overcome.

For example, we hold concerns that many policy announcements are focused purely on increasing numbers of workers in the 'trades' without considering the 'professional' side of the sector that is essential to delivering construction projects, which consists of construction site managers, surveyors, architects, town planners and other professional level jobs. We also are concerned about the current capacity of the further education sector to be able to train an increased number of new entrants to the construction industry in the short term.

We have commented below on how each of the new policy initiatives need to be shaped to effectively tackle the construction skills shortage:

Establish Skills England - We welcome the introduction of an arms-length body aimed at coordinating policy across the national skills landscape, to address the high level of fragmentation in the current skills system. We think Skills England will be crucial to addressing the national construction skills gap coherently and hope it will bring a more cross-departmental approach to construction skills.

We would like to see Skills England produce an in-depth strategy for addressing skills gaps in the construction workforce across all levels and specialisms. Skills England will also need to build

strong relationships with employers and industry bodies to help link the relevant activity across government departments more closely with the needs of industry.

Work with the Migration Observatory Committee to make sure training meets the needs of the labour market to reduce reliance on overseas workers - We agree with the intention of creating a strategy to better train the UK's domestic construction workforce. However, we would view this as a long-term initiative, as it will take a substantial period to train a suitably qualified and experienced workforce at the scale needed to meet the Government's ambitions for construction. With the construction sector being highly cyclical in nature, it benefits from being able to utilise overseas workers to meet high demand in the short term.

Devolve adult skills funding to combined authorities - We support devolution of skills funding but, given the high level of fragmentation of the skills system, Skills England will need to co-ordinate with the combined authorities to ensure that delivery and funding of construction training is coherent across regions, does not leave gaps in training needed to meet construction demand and does not duplicate other funded programmes through being overly focused on specific trades or specialisms in construction.

Transform Further Education Colleges into specialist Technical Excellence Colleges - Whilst we welcome the conversion of FE Colleges into Technical Excellence Colleges in principle, this transformation should not distract from the central need to address capacity issues facing the further education sector, particularly for construction.

Many further education colleges and training providers are not equipped to handle a significant influx of construction trainees, due to a lack of funding, the capacity of facilities and a lack of qualified teachers. There is an ongoing lack of teaching staff in construction disciplines, particularly due to the pay disparity between FE teachers and those working in industry. Without urgent investment in further education and training capacity, the education system simply won't be able to train the number of new workers needed.

Reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy – As discussed beforehand, we have long held concerns that the Apprenticeship Levy is not fit for purpose, having failed to increase the number of new apprentices and omitting funding for a wider range of training opportunities. The Growth and Skills Levy provides a significant opportunity to improve the funding model for construction training. Increased flexibility with the new levy, including its expansion to include a wider range of training, could help bolster opportunities for upskilling and development in the construction workforce.

A major issue with the current levy format is its high level of bureaucracy, that particularly prevents SMEs from taking up levy funding. The new levy model will need to ensure funding is more accessible, and be designed to better meet the needs of SMEs and large businesses alike in funding training. In addition to the new levy's objective to fund a wider range of training outside apprenticeships, it will still need a clear strategy to incentivise take-up of additional apprentices by employers, as the current level has failed in this aim.

Launch Homebuilding Skills Hubs and accelerated apprenticeships. - The introduction of these new construction-specific skills hubs is a welcome measure and will help in building a stable pipeline of skilled workers in key trades for the future. However, it is worth noting that new skills hubs are not a sufficient solution alone to meet skills needs for housebuilding, with the number of additional apprenticeships to be delivered in the skills hubs falling short of those that are needed to meet future construction demand – particularly as the skills hubs are focused on

a select few construction trades and will not deliver the full set of skilled persons required to build new homes.

We hold particular concern around the prospect of shortening construction apprenticeships. It is vital that apprenticeships ensure individuals' competence through providing sufficient knowledge and experience, with a lack of competence presenting significant risks to quality and safety of construction work. The Government is yet to confirm which apprenticeships will benefit from the accelerated route, and our view is that many construction apprenticeships would not be appropriate to shorten in duration.

Lastly, it has recently been announced that level 7 apprenticeships will be ditched to save money as well as fund other opportunities, such as the Homebuilding Skills Hubs. CIOB and other professional bodies called for exemptions to these, as can be seen [here](#). Level 7 apprenticeships are still important higher-level skills and as we have noted elsewhere in this response, the construction skills crisis is not just one at trade level, but also at professional level.

What support could the government provide to help economically inactive individuals, including young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), ex-offenders, and ex-military personnel, into construction careers?

Firstly, it should be noted that CIOB has published research on each of these areas and we have provided links to these below. In the majority of these reports, we make more specific recommendations focused on each issue.

- CIOB, Attitudes Towards Construction Careers, March 2025: www.ciob.org/media/3010/download
- CIOB, Employing People with Criminal Convictions, March 2024: www.ciob.org/media/2440/download
- CIOB, Arming the Construction Industry for the Future: Recruiting from the military into construction, June 2016: www.ciob.org/media/58/download

Given the focus on the Government's 1.5 million homes over the course of this parliament and the acknowledgment that there is a huge amount of work to do with repair, maintenance and improvement (RMI) and retrofit on a more localised scale, the Government should take this opportunity to link its construction and infrastructure ambitions with a national campaign to drive up interest and routes for careers in the built environment.

The unique feature of construction is that it is a highly socially and economically mobile industry. Our own research indicates that in the UK, the average annual earnings in construction in 2022 were around £36,000 compared to £33,000 across all other sectors and, while average earnings across all sectors rose by 15% between 2012 and 2022, the rise for full-time construction workers was significantly higher at around 24%.

Further, many of these roles not only provide social status and good earning in themselves but provide many with an opportunity and a platform for progression within their career, from the trades through to management and professional roles.

Are there any other specific policy interventions that the government should prioritise to ensure a stable and skilled construction workforce for the long term?

Yes, and we have outlined a few of these below:

Built Environment GCSE

We believe more built environment courses need to be introduced at a secondary school level as part of the national curriculum to attract more young people to choose a career in construction.

In Northern Ireland, a GCSE for construction and the built environment has been operational since September 2017 and in Autumn 2021 a GCSE in the built environment became available to schools in Wales. This has provided tangible opportunities for students to practically apply their learning of mandatory subjects, including Maths, English, and Science, as well as optional subjects, such as Design and Technology, Computer Technology, Geography, and Art and Design.

CIOB strongly supports the intention of the built environment GCSE in cementing a knowledge of the built environment and the various roles and opportunities it presents at a young age. These GCSEs teach methods in planning, designing, constructing, and managing the built environment, equipping students with a set of interdisciplinary skills and knowledge that can be applied to a range of careers. However, there is currently no nationally recognised qualification at GCSE level on the built environment in England.

We have recently published (3 March 2025) the results of our polling of 2,001 young people (aged 16-24) and 2,000 parents (aged 31+) about their attitudes, perceptions, and views towards construction careers. Within the research, we asked both audiences about the concept of a GCSE for the built environment. More than half of the young people (53%) said they would be interested in studying a built environment GCSE while almost two thirds (64%) of parents said they would encourage their children to take this subject were it to be available.

The results from this survey indicate there would have been strong interest in taking a GCSE in construction and the built environment, leaving significant opportunity to increase the number of students aware of professional construction careers through the mainstream secondary education curriculum. Should you wish to view the research, it can be accessed here: www.ciob.org/media/3010/download

We are aware that the Cabinet Office and Department for Education (DfE) are receptive to the concept, and we are currently in discussions with both departments about its potential.

We do, however, note that a GCSE in isolation will not 'fix' the historical skill shortages issue. Any qualifications, whether GCSE, vocational qualification, apprenticeship or university degree, should all be built upon the principle for preparing people for work and ensuring work opportunities are available post achievement.

Addressing Construction's Volatility

Construction is a volatile sector that is reliant on stability and visibility of work. It is also a sector made up primarily of SMEs and sub-contractors who often face cash flow issues due to numerous factors including delayed payments, delayed invoicing and cash flow forecasting.

More broadly, construction SMEs are grappling with cost escalation of materials, energy and labour, alongside supply chain challenges and rising interest rates.

A number of unique challenges cause SMEs to be more exposed to economic disruption, including more limited access typically to liquidity and less consistent pipelines of work making it more difficult to secure financing at good rates.

With this in mind, it is unsurprising that 4,264 UK construction firms went into insolvency in the year to September 2024, according to the Government's Insolvency Service.

It is not just smaller businesses that are at risk of insolvency, and we are still yet to see the full impact of the administration of ISG, which was the sixth largest contractor with £2.2 billion turnover, going into administration in September 2024. Inevitably this will have an impact on sub-contractors as outlined above.

This is why visibility and project certainty are needed, to enable businesses to better plan workloads and recruit where needed.

As highlighted in our response to question 1, investing in training for many SMEs (which make up approximately 99% of the construction industry) is risky, particularly when they are so heavily reliant on cash flow.

Better use of economic data and coordination across government departments

The need for consistent and detailed market data is paramount given the complex, often bewildering and erratic nature of the construction sector. Yet even the government, which constantly promotes the better use of data, relies on a paucity of market information to underpin its policymaking.

For example, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) defines 'construction' by its Standard Industrial Classification Code (SIC) code F and amounts to work done by building (SIC 41), civil engineering (SIC 42) and specialist construction firms (SIC 43) on sites.

Defined this way the construction industry officially accounts for approximately 6% of the economic output of the UK and provides employment for 2.2-2.3 million people. However, the narrow ONS definition of the industry ignores the work of architects, engineers, and quantity surveyors as well as manufacturers dedicated to the sector and many other firms that support construction such as builders' merchants and plant hire providers. These are caught in other SIC codes such as SIC Code B (Mining and Quarrying) and SIC code M (Professional, scientific and technical activities), for example.

The reason this is important is that construction, as defined by its SIC code is considerably smaller and is likely seen as a less productive industry, given the labour intensity of standard work on-site. We believe the creation of a satellite account, which would include the aspects from more productive sectors such as real estate and professional services, would garner a better picture of the most valuable 'subsectors' as well as a better overall picture of the built environment to inform policy making.

This satellite account would pull together data into a coherent and easily comprehensible form that would better describe how the wider construction industry is performing. This would include

all the contractors, consultants and dedicated suppliers to the industry, whether they are classified as in the construction sector, the service sector, mining or quarrying or manufacturing.

Apprenticeship Data

When it comes to the numbers of entrants starting on built environment apprenticeships and courses, we warn that this should not be seen as an ‘indicator of success’ in its own right.

Statistics showcase the low levels of competition and attainment on these apprenticeships, highlighting a plethora of potential issues. These might be because of low levels of pay, training or might centre around the more challenging aspects of construction that young people are not ready for such as early morning starts and the locational variations that are often inherent in construction.

Ensuring that apprenticeships are high quality is of the utmost importance. Those undertaking apprenticeships should have confidence that the skills they are learning will help them succeed, progress and thrive. It also means that employers will see the bottom-line return of a workforce with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours. There has been issues in the past with the overarching quality of apprenticeships in the built environment with Ofsted finding that many schemes do not meet the needs of young people or the skills and knowledges necessary for employers.

This is why we believe that data on the numbers of starts and achievements in built environment courses must be closely monitored. This is particularly pertinent when there are dropouts, and research should go into understanding the reasoning here.

Improved awareness of roles in the built environment

Whilst creating strong early careers opportunities for young people to train and join the sector is essential, to support a wide range of people to take up these opportunities there also needs to be a good level of awareness of careers paths in construction. Our recent research on attitudes to construction careers (referenced previously) identifies clear opportunities to increase awareness of the various opportunities in the construction sector, particularly those in professional and specialist roles.

Our research found that young people are most interested in roles in project management, technology, and health and safety. However, many young people’s perceptions of the construction industry will centre on working in manual occupations, i.e. skilled trades, that do not appeal to everyone’s skillset and interests. Raising awareness of the diverse range of opportunities in the sector can help the sector appeal to a wider range of young people, especially women, that can help address the sector’s skills gaps.

The report found that nearly half (47%) of young people had not received careers advice related to construction whilst in education, and that their views of construction careers were most likely to be influenced by family, friends or other people they know. We would therefore recommend that the Government looks at how advice on careers in the built environment can be delivered more consistently to young people to align with its wider drive to ‘Get Britain Building’, to improve awareness of routes into the sector.