

The Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP  
Secretary of State for Science, Innovation & Technology  
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology  
22-26 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EG

26 May 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) regarding the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's '[Growing up in the online world national consultation](#)' which includes considerations around young people's use of social media, including proposals that could significantly restrict or ban access for those under the age of 16.

As the professional body for construction management and leadership, CIOB is not in a position to comment on wider questions relating to safeguarding, online harms, mental health, or child wellbeing. We recognise that there are many organisations and stakeholders better placed to provide evidence both in support of, and in opposition to, restrictions on social media use by children and young people.

However, we would like to raise one specific issue that we believe should form part of the Government's considerations: the growing role social media plays in informing young people about careers and employment opportunities.

[CIOB research](#) from March 2026 into young people's perceptions of construction careers found that social media is now one of the most influential factors shaping career choices among young people, second only to family influence and surpassing schools and friends. In our 2026 survey, 32% of young people identified social media as a major influence on their career decision-making, up from 26% in 2025. These findings align with wider UK research, including work by the [Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry](#) (ABPI), which found that over one in three young people have used social media to inform a career or job decision.

There is also growing international evidence of the role social media plays in shaping perceptions of skilled trades and vocational careers. A [recent global survey](#) conducted by DEWALT and WorldSkills International across 69 countries and regions found that 44% of young trade professionals said social media had played a role in inspiring their career choices, while nearly 75% intended to use social media themselves to raise awareness and visibility for skilled careers.

More than half also expressed an interest in creating content showcasing themselves at work in order to encourage others to join their trade. The findings suggest that social media is increasingly

functioning not only as a source of information, but also as a mechanism through which young people challenge outdated perceptions around vocational and technical careers.

This is particularly significant for sectors such as construction, which continue to face substantial workforce and skills shortages while also seeking to diversify and modernise their workforce. Social media has increasingly become a means of showcasing modern careers, challenging misconceptions about the sector, and reaching young people who may otherwise receive limited exposure to the breadth of opportunities available.

Our own research highlights that many young people are not receiving sufficient careers information through formal education channels. Nearly half of respondents (45%) agreed that construction careers were not covered in the careers advice they received during education. Furthermore, 44% of parents surveyed stated they felt under-informed about modern career options. International findings similarly point to wider cultural barriers, with 42% of respondents in the DEWALT and WorldSkills survey identifying social stigma surrounding skilled trades as a major obstacle, while 35% cited a lack of parental support.

Taken together, these findings suggest that social media is currently helping to fill an important information gap within the careers advice landscape. While we appreciate that the Government must weigh a broad range of considerations in this policy area, we would encourage departments to consider the potential unintended consequences that significant restrictions on social media access may have on career awareness and engagement among younger age groups.

Should the Government decide to introduce substantial restrictions or a ban on social media use for under-16s, we would urge consideration of how this gap in access to career information could be addressed. This could include strengthening careers advice services in schools and colleges, increasing investment in outreach programmes for key sectors experiencing labour shortages, developing national campaigns promoting career pathways, or exploring alternative ways of engaging parents and guardians directly with information about future careers and skills opportunities.

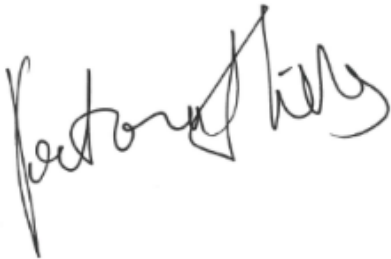
Equally, if the Government determines that an outright ban is not the appropriate course of action, we believe there is a strong case for greater collaboration between Government, industry and education providers, to ensure that social media is being used more effectively and responsibly to support informed career choices. More effort and resources may need to be directed towards curating and promoting high-quality careers content for young people, or supporting existing platforms and online personalities that promote such content, particularly in sectors such as construction, which continue to struggle with awareness and perception challenges.

At present, while evidence increasingly suggests that social media can positively influence career discovery and aspiration, it remains unclear how the algorithms employed by different platforms shape exposure to careers-related content, whether certain industries are favoured over others, or whether all children and young people are receiving equal visibility of the full range of career opportunities available to them. This is an area where further research and cross-sector engagement may be beneficial.

We believe this is particularly important at a time when the UK is seeking to address critical skills shortages across sectors central to economic growth, housing delivery, infrastructure development, and the transition to net zero.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further on this issue and to share additional findings from our research should that be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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