

CITB GREEN PAPER

# CONSTRUCTION AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Skills Transferability in the UK



## Research summary

A CITB Green Paper to understand the potential of skills transferability into, and within the UK construction sector.



# Executive Summary



**Sarah Beale**  
Chief Executive

“This Green Paper’s message is clear: although there are numerous routes into construction, industry can do more to attract people from all backgrounds and sectors. As accessing the skills we need post-Brexit gets harder, we must also strive to retain and upskill those already working in our industry. Skills transferability can play an important role in workforce recruitment. This Green Paper outlines how CITB and employers can lead a diverse range of people into rewarding construction careers.”

**Sarah Beale, CITB Chief Executive**

Construction is the industry of opportunities: **CITB’s Construction Skills Network forecasts** the creation of **158,000 UK construction jobs** between now and **2022**.

## What is skills transferability?

The ability to apply skills acquired in one sector, such as manufacturing, in construction. Skills transferability can also take place within construction, when someone changes their occupation.

## The aim of this Green Paper

To understand the potential of skills transferability into, and within, the UK construction sector - and to promote action amongst firms who will benefit from a multi-skilled workforce.

## Green Paper findings:

- Construction has the potential to develop skills transferability – but there is little appetite to proactively do so. Our research found that 62% of employers questioned took no action to encourage workers to transfer between trades.
- There is a growing need to boost skills transferability as recruitment becomes more difficult post-Brexit.
- Transferability challenges: needs to build on recent improvements of construction's image; the way training is delivered; opposition to skills transferability from Trade Unions.
- Transferability incentives include: investing in upskilling or training; good salaries; and construction's supportive culture.
- CITB has an important leadership role in highlighting transferability opportunities. CITB's strategy will be underpinned by: partnering and influencing; funding; commissioning outcomes; providing products and services.

## About this Green Paper

### **Desk-based research**

Analysis of existing sources of secondary data, occupation and skills mapping; sector analysis.

### **Depth interviews**

In-depth telephone interviews taken with a sample of 67 stakeholders and employers in the construction sector and other industries spanning manufacturing, engineering, oil and gas and utilities. (Interviews took place between August and November 2017).

### **Online survey**

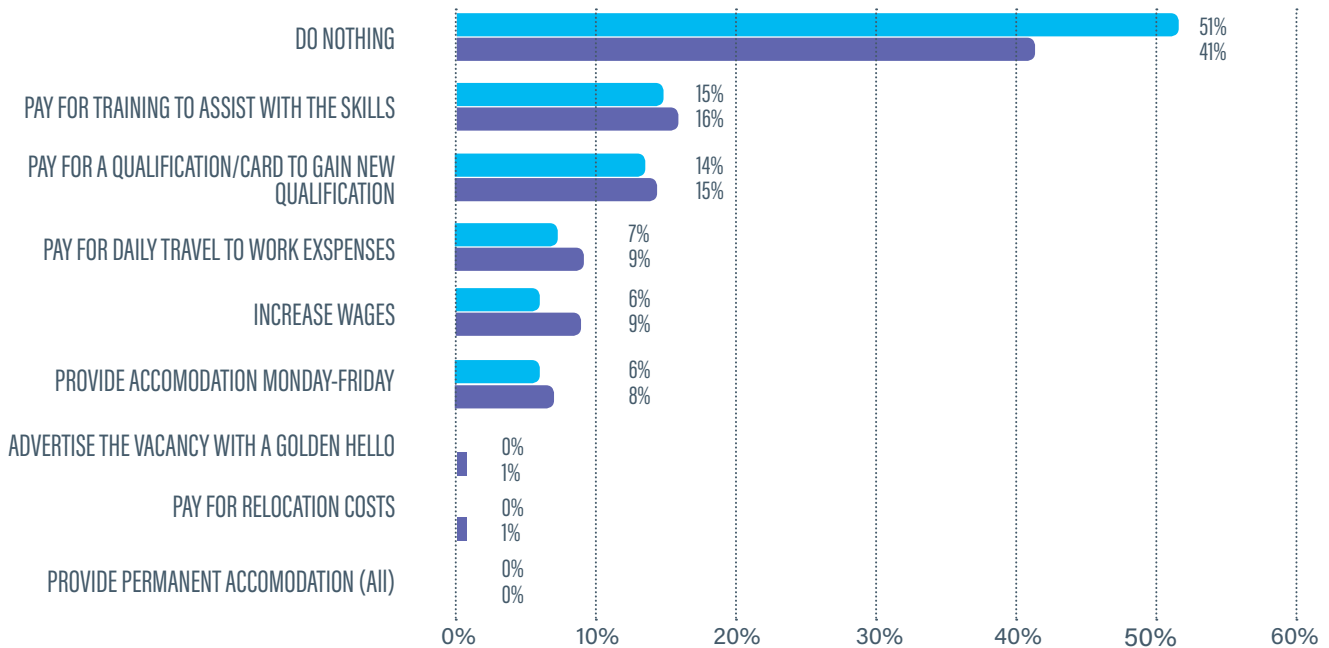
Survey to capture primary quantitative and qualitative data from a sample 420 construction sector employers. (Interviews took place between October and November 2017).

### **Face-to-face Consultation**

Round table discussion, which took place in the Midlands in November 2017.

## Challenges to improve skills transferability

How do employers **incentivise recruitment of skilled trades/operatives** from **other parts** of the UK and **outside the UK**?



● Skilled construction workers from outside the UK

● Skilled construction workers from other parts of the UK

Base: 589 responses (skilled construction workers from outside the UK); 532 responses (skilled construction workers from other parts of the UK)

### Challenges include:

- **Culture and image of sector**

CITB's research found that construction's image inhibits skills transferability.

One large employer in England and Wales told us: "The sector still suffers from an image problem; so many people (including career-changers) don't see construction as a technical and professional industry. They see it as trade-orientated and for those not so able and gifted. That works against transferability and also new entrants."

- **The way training is delivered (in isolation and trade-specific).**

Training is traditionally trade-specific, not collaborative and generally not designed to promote multi-skilling or multi-tasking.

- **Reluctance from employees and trades unions**

Qualitative evidence from the research indicated there could be some reluctance from employees and unions around multi-skilling and transferability. It may be that some employees wish to specialise in their chosen profession rather than undertaking multiple roles and the opinion of a trade federation indicated possible union resistance: "A plasterer's a plasterer, and that's not changing. If a joiner picked up a paintbrush, the union would strongly and loudly object."

- **Brexit uncertainty**

Brexit may make it more challenging to fill skills gaps through tighter migrant labour controls. This means UK construction must identify non-construction occupations and sectors which could transfer into the industry by offering construction as an attractive career.

- **Funding**

Employers find it difficult to predict where decline in output might be, citing the uncertainties of Brexit and availability of public funding.

One medium-sized construction employer, in England told us: "To bring in a career-changer or returner, it's recognising they would need to have qualifications and work experience. It's understanding that it is going to take some time to get people up to speed. There's no funding available at the moment. Years ago, there was 'train to gain' but I'm not aware of any financial support now - that would make an enormous difference as it's very costly"





#### ▪ **CSCS cards**

One employer told us that CSCS cards—proof that individuals working on construction sites have the required training and qualifications—are a disincentive to those considering joining from another sector.

“The CSCS card structure should change. There are too many cards and it needs to be simpler. The cost of getting the card can also be an issue for people coming from a different sector, employers aren’t always willing to invest in someone with limited experience, who could leave.”

#### ▪ **Geographical mobility**

Employers’ feedback gathered for this study suggests that much of the workforce does not want to be more mobile or transfer their skillset into a different role.

“Our experience is that people don’t like to travel too far. They don’t move that often and they don’t move very far. They always want to work within striking distance of home,” Large construction business, England (operating UK-wide).

#### ▪ **The oil and gas industry**

Transferability between sectors is not always successful. The most notable example is the transition of oil and gas workers into construction. Oil and gas workers have, on paper, a transferable skillset. However, in practice construction sector employers say they are reluctant to invest time and money into training people they expect to lose when the oil and gas sector has a resurgence. A dedicated government training fund to upskill oil and gas workers in Scotland has not, to date, reported any sizeable moves into the construction sector.

Sectors typically transferring into construction. Research conducted in 2015 found **19%** of construction sector workers **had previously worked in another sector**. The ‘push/pull’ factors vary depending on the nation and region. For example, a higher than average proportion of: **Northern Irish workers** previously worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing (**23%**); **West Midlands workers** previously worked in manufacturing (**30%**); and **South East (16%)** and **South West (17%)** workers have previously worked in the hospitality sector.

**Ex-tradespeople** bring **practical knowledge** of how things are done. It's always been the case that **bricklayers** and **carpenters** are best suited to **transfer** into **other roles** - carpenters better than anyone else because of their strong emphasis on maths skills.

## What works?

Research identified activities that encourage skills transferability.

### ▪ Investing in upskilling or training

The most common/successful action reported is to pay for training and/or qualification/card to assist with upskilling.

### ▪ Salary and work environment

Feedback from interviews suggests a higher rate of pay can be a strong enabler of geographical mobility, however this depends on the age group. Younger workers without family commitments are considered more readily able to move, and will be drawn by the prospect of more money. Incentives such as a tool allowance can also act as an enabler.

### ▪ Supportive culture

Medium and large employers, particularly in Scotland, say that a strong incentive to join their organisation is a positive, supportive culture, with excellent working conditions on and off site. A favourable reputation as an employer can attract people in professional roles without the need to offer higher salaries. Excellent site facilities, health and safety and quality entice workers.

Occupational and skills mapping conducted for this study shows **multiple professions** have a **transferable skillset** including: **roofers; painters and decorators; plasterers; bricklayers; carpenters;** and **general operatives.**



## Best practice

Sarah Lockhart is a mother-of-one who retrained through **Step In Step Up to Construction**, a **£298,000 project funded** by several leading construction sector employers and CITB.

"I worked at JobCentre Plus in Plymouth for 11 years. I did various roles but wanted to do something more challenging. I heard about Step In Step Up, they were looking for people with transferable skills so I decided to see what was available."

"I am now enjoying the start of a career as an Estimator with Kier. I have been integrated into the team, my colleagues are very supportive."

"My role fits with family life. My job is flexible. An average day is 8am – 5pm. I have a 4-year-old daughter and I can fit her schooling around that. Whether I'm pricing a job in Plymouth or further afield I can do it directly from the office or at home if needs be. I'm doing my Higher National Certificate in construction at the moment and enjoying my work."

"There are diverse opportunities in construction. People from various backgrounds work together to build schools, hospitals and communities; it is a career to feel proud of."

"It's easy to introduce people from trades or other sectors into site management. It's easier for site management. It's more of an understandable and visible role. We have taken people from ex-military – they have the discipline, team work, authority, presence."  
Large construction employer, England.



## 15 most commonly used skills and knowledge in construction

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- ✦ Health and safety knowledge/adherence
  - ✦ Waste management/reduction
  - ✦ Problem solving
  - ✦ Communications
  - ✦ Risk assessment
  - ✦ Time management
  - ✦ Working with precision and accuracy
  - ✦ Knowledge of building materials/fabric
  - ✦ Understand/work to build plans
  - ✦ Use of machinery/tools
  - ✦ Working to plans/specifications
  - ✦ Measurement and calculation
  - ✦ Surface preparation
  - ✦ Practical skills/manual dexterity
  - ✦ Installation of building components
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## Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the Green Paper findings, CITB has an important leadership role to encourage skills transferability. CITB can identify and communicate transferability opportunities to help meet construction's skill needs.

The research has highlighted the occupations with most potential for transferability (Appendix 1) with higher emphasis amongst manual occupations such as steel erectors and bricklayers.

CITB will use these to target any interventions. Our current and proposed actions are highlighted under four headings that underpin CITB's strategy:

- **Partnering and influencing—generally through providing intelligence and through relationship**
- **Funding**
- **Commissioning outcomes**
- **Providing products and services**

### Partnering and influencing

CITB will:

- Maintain its commitment to the Construction Skills Network (CSN) forecasts and other vacancy data. CITB produces a range of reports that help industry plan on a national and regional scale. The reports provide recommendations on how the sector can keep pace with change and improve the working lives of those in – and who will join – the construction sector. CSN intelligence will inform colleges and training providers to better respond to demands for upskilling.
- Expand its bespoke research services, detailed forecasts of construction demand for local authorities and enterprise partnerships as well as for major projects. The reports establish the labour requirement for each industry sub sector and for 28 occupational groups required to meet anticipated demand.
- Increase its monitoring of the actions taken by other sectors dependent on migrant workers which could be of use in construction.
- Work with card scheme administrators, for example CSCS, to identify the potential to enabling aspects such as prior learning and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to be taken into account. This could also help workers show up-to-date skills and improve transferability.



## Funding

The research has clearly highlighted that the most successful action in support of transferability is to invest in upskilling or training.

CITB's New Grants Scheme, launched on 3 April pinpoints funding to enhance construction training, particularly for SMEs, and keep pace with modernisation.

The grant scheme will enable firms to receive automated grant payments. This will cut through red tape and ensure training grants reach SMEs and micro firms in particular. Grants will be aligned to industry agreed standards. This will increase the transferability of employees between employers, reducing the need for duplication of training in terms of cost and timing.

## Commissioning

CITB will identify the scope for construction as a whole to benefit through commissioning, from programmes seeking to achieve the same outcomes as those recently funded. The following are examples of skills transferability enablers:

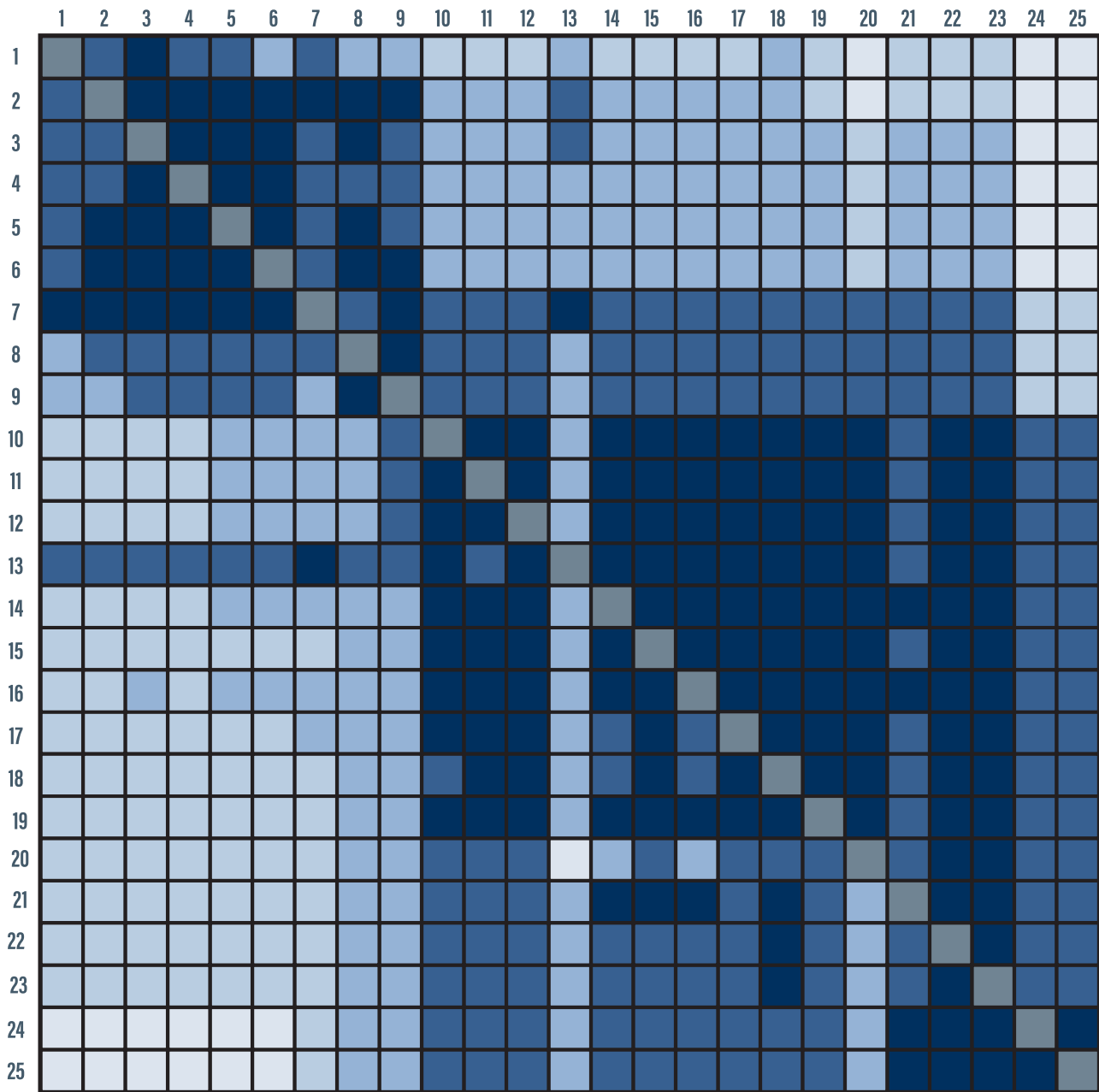
- Skanska's **Bring your Difference** offering **secondments** to their employees in different areas of their business
- **Combat to Construction** (Persimmon's scheme to attract ex-servicemen)
- **Step in, Step up to Construction** (Keir Construction and CITB – flexible courses designed to attract a wide range of people from within and without the industry)

CITB, together with industry partners, will collaborate with industry to develop top-up conversion courses to enable transition for people with relevant transferable skills, but who may require a short training intervention, for example to obtain a CSCS card.

## Products and services

CITB's digital recruitment channel (Go Construct) features a number of case studies highlighting transfer from other sectors into construction. We are investigating the possibility of Go Construct listing opportunities for 'jobs with training' which, if successful, could include opportunities specifically suitable for career-changers.

## Appendix 1: Potential for transferability between occupations



### Key to mapping:

- Strong potential for transferability
- Good potential for transferability
- Some potential for transferability
- Limited potential for transferability
- Very limited or no potential for transferability

\*Scope for transferability will vary, becoming higher where the supervisor was formerly a skilled tradesperson

## Key to occupations:

- 1 Production managers and directors in construction
- 2 Architects
- 3 Town planning officers
- 4 Quantity surveyors
- 5 Chartered surveyors
- 6 Chartered architectural technologists
- 7 Construction project managers and related professionals
- 8 Engineering technicians
- 9 Building and civil engineering technicians
- 10 Plasterers
- 11 Floorers and wall tilers
- 12 Painters and decorators
- 13 Construction and building trades supervisors
- 14 Steel erectors
- 15 Bricklayers and masons
- 16 Roofers, roof tilers and slaters
- 17 Plumbers and heating and ventilating engineers
- 18 Carpenters and joiners
- 19 Glaziers, window fabricators and fitters
- 20 Construction and building trades n.e.c
- 21 Scaffolders, staggers and riggers
- 22 Road construction operatives
- 23 Rail construction and maintenance operatives
- 24 Construction operatives n.e.c
- 25 Elementary construction occupations



## About the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

CITB is the Industrial Training Board (ITB) for the construction industry in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). CITB ensures employers can access the high quality training their workforce needs and supports industry to attract new recruits into successful careers in construction. Using its evidence base on skills requirements, CITB works with employers to develop standards and qualifications for the skills industry needs now, and in the future. CITB is improving its employer funding to invest in the most needed skills and by making it easier for companies of all sizes to claim grants and support.

### CITB Research

Study prepared by Pye Tait Consulting from a commission by CITB.



## **CITB GREEN PAPER**

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