

# UK ROOFING SECTOR

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2017-2021

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A REPORT, BUILT UPON EXTENSIVE RESEARCH, SHOWING HOW SUPPORTING THE ROOFING SECTOR WILL OPEN DOORS TO NEW JOBS, HIGHER STANDARDS AND REACHING UK CONSTRUCTION'S TARGETS



### CONSTRUCTION NEEDS STRENGTH IN DEPTH

It is often said that any chain, process or greater goal is only as strong as its weakest link. In the construction industry, with its challenging building targets, stringent health and safety legislation and critical role in supporting the UK economy, the roofing sector has long felt like the poor relation. There has never been a greater need or a stronger argument for supporting the betterment and growth of the roofing sector as a key contributor to the UK construction industry.

The industry has a major image problem due to a lack of clear differentiation between a qualified skilled worker and an operative who calls him/herself a roofer after carrying out a health and safety test.

To provide insight into the specific areas of recruitment, training, accreditation and modernisation that are perceived to be lacking in the roofing sector.

To demonstrate that the right levels of structured support and Government backing for the roofing sector would benefit the wider construction industry, apprenticeship and employment figures, and the UK economy as a whole.

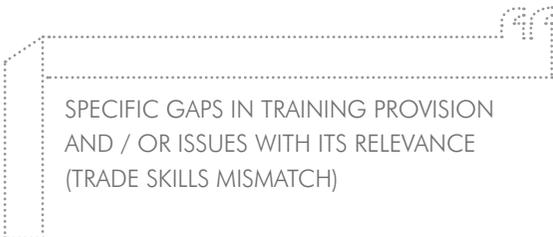


## CURRENT AND ONGOING INTERNAL INVESTMENT WITHIN THE ROOFING SECTOR

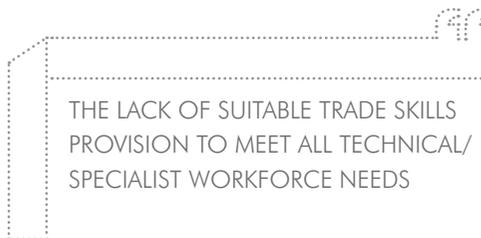
Throughout 2016, an independent research project undertaken by Skyblue Research, funded by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and supported by The Roofing Industry Alliance, The National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC) and other construction industry training companies, has been working to identify the challenges facing the roofing sector. After extensive market research and engaging with a cross-sector group of 141 UK-based roofing contractors, the study identified that satisfying three key objectives would kick-start a revival in the roofing sector.

This research and its conclusions are part of an overall strategy of the NFRC as the leading contracting trade association in the UK roofing industry, to modernise practices and behaviours which demonstrate a contemporary, relevant professional sector which encourages opportunity and innovation. By doing so, this will clearly demonstrate to all building owners whether in large-scale public procurement or a householder carrying out an extension, that using an accredited roofing company is simply an essential requirement.

The foundations for bringing this transformation exist. The NFRC are committed to supporting the whole industry in establishing an oversight body of all stakeholders which is open to close scrutiny on achievement of the four year plan.



SPECIFIC GAPS IN TRAINING PROVISION AND / OR ISSUES WITH ITS RELEVANCE (TRADE SKILLS MISMATCH)



THE LACK OF SUITABLE TRADE SKILLS PROVISION TO MEET ALL TECHNICAL/SPECIALIST WORKFORCE NEEDS

## THREE KEY OBJECTIVES

**1** Establish roofing as a professional, modern, respected sector with clear career paths: able to attract the best and the brightest apprentices, students and new workers.

**2** Formalise and standardise a higher UK-wide training, accreditation and assessment infrastructure: to upskill and multi-skill its growing workforce.

**3** Develop greater levels of proactive engagement with roofing sector companies, customers and suppliers: enabling growth, increased training, access to grants and higher standards.

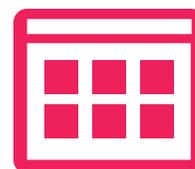
# UNCOVERING THE BARRIERS

## TO SUPPORTING GROWTH IN THE ROOFING SECTOR

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT CENTRED AROUND ENGAGEMENT AND INTERVIEWS WITH 141 UK-BASED ROOFING CONTRACTORS OF VARYING SIZES AND TYPOLOGIES, THAT TOOK PLACE IN 2016

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS 141 UK-BASED ROOFING CONTRACTORS

Further research has included views and information provided by other roofing firms, suppliers and manufacturers, national contractors and representative bodies from within the roofing sector.



9 month  
structured exercise



Over 100 roofing contractors of  
different size and typologies in the UK



Illuminated the skills, training and  
employment challenges they report now  
and in future

## PRIMARY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE RESEARCH PROJECT

### 1 SPECIALIST SKILLS IN ROOFING ARE NOT RECOGNISED EXTERNALLY

Roofing contractors with expertise in particular types of roofing (e.g. slating and tiling, waterproofing, and metal working) are not recognised as specialists by the wider construction industry.

### 2 LIMITED TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

The annual spend on roofing sector training is considerably lower than the construction industry standard at just **£743** per person (compared to **£4,090** per person across the wider construction sector).

### 3 OUT-DATED RECRUITMENT METHODS ARE STIFLING NEW TALENT

New vacancies tend to be filled by friends and family rather than proactively looking to attract genuinely talented individuals.

### 4 TRAINING AVAILABILITY IS SCARCE IN SOME GEOGRAPHIES

Quality training provision is more readily available in some parts of the country than others, making it inaccessible for many localised roofing contractors.

### 5 ASSESSMENT IS IN LIMITED SUPPLY UK-WIDE

It is often difficult to arrange an assessment for individuals because of the scarcity of accredited assessors across the country.

### 6 DIFFICULTIES IN INCENTIVISING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

With **69%** of the roofing sector self-employed, and **93%** classified as micro-businesses, their priorities are rarely centred on training (over or above the legislative requirements).

### 7 COVERING COSTS OF DELIVERY IS A BIGGER CONCERN THAN TRAINING

The research showed that roofing contractors allow for very high snagging costs on each project (reducing available funds to invest in the quality training that might eradicate the faults).

### 8 ONE IN FIVE CONSTRUCTION SITE DEATHS ARE LINKED TO ROOFING

This covers construction, repair and maintenance of roofs and could be significantly reduced through more diligent and consistent levels of training and legislation.

The recurring themes, highlighted here, are the sector's need for standardised, accessible, quality training and the ability to attract and recruit good workers who can improve the standards in the roofing sector.

# SECTOR PERCEPTIONS

## AND PROBLEMS WITH TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

THE RESEARCH UNDERLINES THE CLEAR CONCLUSION THAT, FOR THE ROOFING SECTOR TO RAISE ITS STANDARDS (IN LINE WITH THE REST OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY) IT NEEDS TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPING ITS WORKFORCE

This means improving its ability to attract and recruit quality workers to the sector, and creating higher quality training, assessment and accreditations UK-wide.

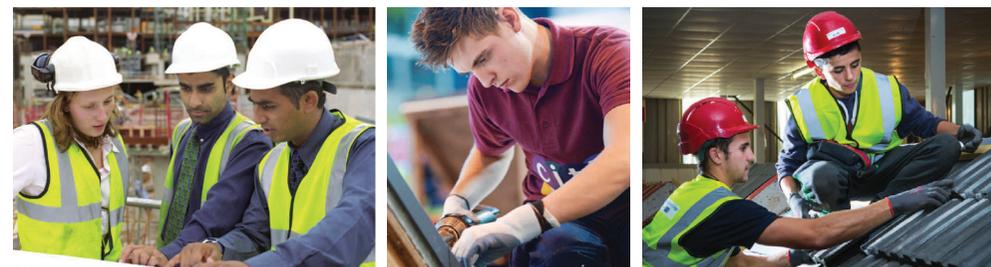
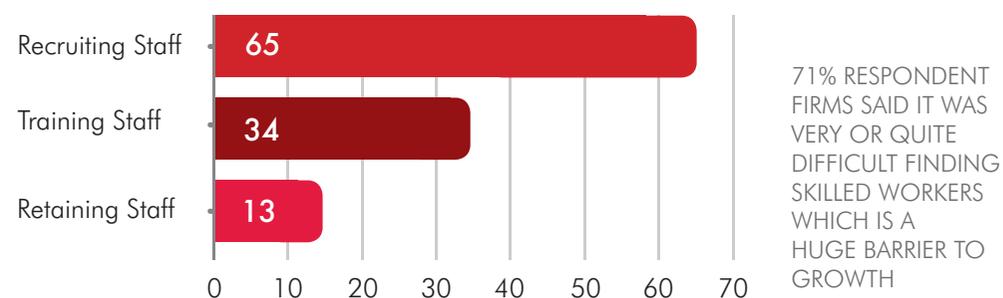
The overriding perception of the 141 roofing contractors involved in the research project, was that the current standards are far below where they need to be and there are tough times ahead for the sector. The fact that this is an industry led project which has generated a real enthusiasm for change and demonstrates that, given the right support and encouragement, the roofing contractors will respond positively.

**35%** of the survey sample said that they had active workers who had some sort of skills gap. This compares to the UK construction comparison figure of **10%** of employers experiencing skills gaps. (Source: UK Employer Skills Survey 2015, Data Analysis of Constructor Sector Extracts.)

THESE SKILL GAPS INCLUDE AREAS SUCH AS:

- technical skills
- management
- specialist roofing qualifications

HOW DIFFICULT DO YOU FIND THE FOLLOWING IN RELATION TO YOUR WORKFORCE?



# INVESTMENT IN TRAINING

## ROOFING COMPARED TO THE WIDER CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

To try and understand the gap in training standards and qualifications between the wider construction industry and the roofing sector, the research looked at the days and costs invested in training. Whilst a basic comparison of data would suggest the roofing industry invests a similar amount of time compared to the overall construction industry, this is misleading.

It appears that all the surveyed companies, that had arranged training for their staff during the previous 12 months (58%), confirmed that this was predominantly the HS&E Test. (The HS&E (Health, Safety & Environment) Test is off-the-job training and is mandatory for all new starters in the roofing sector.) So, in reality the (58%) figure would be significantly lower if it were to represent skilled training.

	Construction Industry	Roofing Sector
Companies that arranged training and development for their staff during the previous 12 months	57%	58%
Companies that arranged <b>off-the-job</b> training for their staff during the previous 12 months	46%	58%
Companies that arranged <b>on-the-job</b> training for their staff during the previous 12 months	37%	31%
A company's average number of training days, per worker, each year	6.6	6.0
The average amount that a company invests in training for each worker, per year	£4,090	£743

*The construction industry figures were taken from the UK Employer Skills (ESS) Survey 2015. The roofing sector figures from the survey of over 100 UK-based roofing contractors in 2016 (this is a small proportion of the entire sector but is believed to be an accurate representation).*

The most concerning statistic to be addressed is the significant gap in funding invested in training and developing the skills, accuracy and safety aspects of an individual roofing workers profession.

### OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING THE LEVELS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING IN THE ROOFING SECTOR

In addition to the 141 UK-based roofing contractors involved in the survey, further focus groups and discussions were held around the country with many other roofing firms. Some of the feedback and recurring themes from these discussions highlights the general sense of frustration and being restricted from investing in training and business growth. A summary of these opinions and suggestions is highlighted:

- The sector needs more relevant, higher quality, roofing-specific training that will help to improve the skill levels of the workforce.
- More manufacturer-led (or guided) training would accelerate the learning and reduce errors and the subsequent high levels of snagging costs per project.
- Standardisation in the quality of local and regional training assessments, around the country, would increase the sector's and the wider construction industry's faith in these accreditations.
- Formalising training and employing more qualified roofing assessors would reduce the practice of new workers being trained in-house by existing staff. This would also stop the tendency of some companies to do 'just enough' to become approved.

# EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES

## AND GREAT EXPECTATION WITHIN THE ROOFING SECTOR

WHILE UNDERTAKING THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME, AT THE START OF THE SECTOR'S FOUR-YEAR STRATEGY TO DEVELOP ITS WORKFORCE, MANY 'ISSUES' WERE RAISED



### ANTICIPATION AND OPTIMISM

There was also a sense of 'anticipation and optimism' which began to emerge among the companies that were involved, as they expressed a growing belief in the potential that could be unlocked.

The Government's construction and housing targets are ambitious and critical to the growth of the UK economy, particularly as we move towards a post-Brexit Britain. As a critical part of that chain, the roofing sector has ambitions to improve its credibility and demonstrate that it has an important role to play in supporting the success of the wider construction industry. Given the right levels of support and backing, the Roofing Sector's Workforce Development Strategy 2017-2021 will help to achieve the following ambitions and targets. *(see next page for details)*

QUALITY SHOULD BE, BUT IS NOT THE DRIVER IT COULD BE TO STIMULATE POSITIVE TRAINING BEHAVIOURS AND INVESTMENTS

# UK ROOFING SECTOR

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-2021



### BUSINESS GROWTH

**52%** of the roofing contractors in the survey stated that they are expecting to grow during the next 12 months. With stronger recruitment strategies and training standards in place these companies will be able to make that growth sustainable rather than it potentially overburdening and weakening their current positions.



### RECRUITING SPECIALISTS

**34%** of the roofing companies consulted expressed their intention to employ around 180 new starters in the coming year. Of these, the preference would be to recruit workers trained in specialist areas of roofing, rather than low-level labourers.



### RECRUITING APPRENTICES

**32%** of the roofing companies that were asked said that employing and training apprentices would form part of their business growth plans in the coming year.



### MORE AMBITIOUS TARGETS

Many of the larger roofing contractors, interviewed during the research, were keen to make proactive efforts to engage in bigger projects than they had done historically. This will mean support is required to enable good recruitment practices, strong training and ongoing development programmes.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CONTINUED



### DIVERSITY IN SPECIALISMS

To reflect the multi-skilled nature of the industry, many of the roofing contractors consulted said that they would be looking to increase the diversity of specialist skills within their businesses. This needs to be supported and encouraged through increased training availability. This must also take into account off-site technology and continuing innovation, for instance, in rainwater management and solar roofs.



### A DESIRE FOR IMPROVEMENT

The overwhelming feeling among the companies involved in the survey and focus groups was that they want to train their staff better, grow effectively and employ good quality new starters. This would result in higher roofing standards, lower snagging costs and a greater contribution to the wider construction industry's targets.



### INCREASED TRAINING NUMBERS

It is predicted that the number of workers trained in the roofing sector in the next 12 months will raise by **4%**. The sector would like this to be even higher, and also to see an increase in the value that is spent on each individual. This is only possible if more roofing companies can be persuaded of the longer term benefits of gaining better training and accreditations. The right support and proactive changes will help to demonstrate this to everyone.



### CLOSING THE SKILL GAP

**35%** of the roofing contractors involved in the survey felt that they had workers, currently out on-the-job who had unmet training needs. These firms justified this skill gap by stating that they felt it was too difficult to train staff and that there was a lack of support and facilities available to them.

# CONCLUSIONS

## AND NEXT STEPS ...

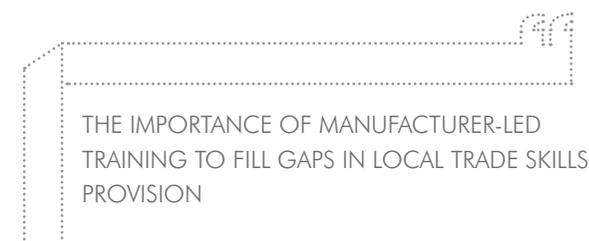
The roofing sector recognises its own weaknesses and has embarked on this ambitious four-year Workforce Development Strategy to try and address those issues. Many of the actions and objectives required are things that the sector itself (contractors, manufacturers, representative bodies and training organisations) can and are taking the responsibility to improve themselves.

There is, however, a limit to the changes and targets that can be achieved internally. To really make a difference and to empower the roofing sector to play its part in the governments industrial strategy, it needs full government and private sector backing, support and engagement.

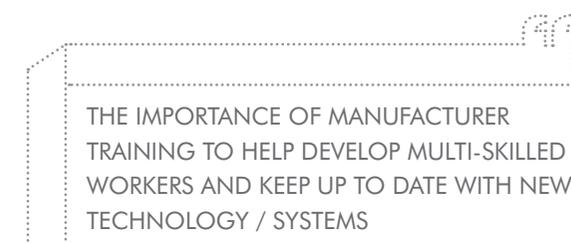
This document has been designed to help garner that support and kick-start a revival in the roofing sector.

### THE PRIMARY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE ROOFING SECTOR'S WORKFORCE DEVELOP STRATEGY 2017-2021

- 1** Establish roofing as a professional, modern, respected sector with clear career paths: able to attract the best and the brightest apprentices, students and new workers.
- 2** Formalise and standardise a higher UK-wide training, accreditation and assessment infrastructure: to upskill and multi-skill its growing workforce.
- 3** Develop greater levels of proactive engagement with roofing sector companies, customers and suppliers: enabling growth, increased training, access to grants and higher standards.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MANUFACTURER-LED TRAINING TO FILL GAPS IN LOCAL TRADE SKILLS PROVISION



THE IMPORTANCE OF MANUFACTURER TRAINING TO HELP DEVELOP MULTI-SKILLED WORKERS AND KEEP UP TO DATE WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY / SYSTEMS



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