

Careers education policy and practice: implications and recommendations for the construction sector

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09 July 2025

The construction sector needs to expand and diversify its talent pipeline through encouraging more and different people to consider a career in construction, including reaching out to very young people, those on vocational education and training pathways and adults outside the labour market. The careers system in the UK is complex and in the process of change and there is limited hard impact evaluation evidence on what works in career guidance, this makes supporting Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) challenging for construction employers.

Younger children (in early years settings aged 3-5 and primary settings aged 5-11) develop understanding about the world of work and form stereotypes which can be hard to break. Timing of engagement is critical, and it is important to engage early with purposeful career-related learning to broaden horizons, prevent unfavourable stereotypes of construction to take hold, and support social mobility. Career-related learning in primary schools does happen but is notably different from CEIAG in secondary schools and colleges and is currently voluntary. Many activities rely on volunteers from the world of work to support staff, engage with pupils and develop (curriculum) materials, and employers are key to providing breadth and authenticity. However, connections between schools and employers tend to be informal and fragile, relying on individual linkages.

Vocational pathways are traditionally associated with construction. However, individuals may miss out on opportunities for vocational education and training (VET) given the dominance of academic routes, incentives in the system for providers to narrow options, and the confusion and constant changes to vocational provision. This reduces the supply and diversity of technically skilled workers in the labour market. Employers through

outreach activities with schools and colleges can raise the profile of VET, promoting the diversity of opportunities. Additionally, those on vocational pathways may miss out on careers guidance (as they are not covered by the statutory duty and/or are reliant on the industry expertise and linkages of college staff) so may lack awareness of options available to them in or beyond their current pathway or employer. This could in turn narrow careers, restrict movement and negatively affect retention. Employers can support vocational learners with development beyond the training role and exposure to wider experiences, and support college staff keep up to date with industry.

Adults outside of the labour market are a large and growing group that could be a potential source of labour for the construction sector. However, this group are highly diverse, face complex barriers to accessing work, and may not want or feel able to work. Many receive little help as they may not be in touch with the welfare system and thus employment support, or be aware of careers services they could access. For employers, knowing who and how to target is challenging and the role of employers in supporting careers work with adults is harder to identify. Additionally, it can be hard for employers to navigate and find a way into the different careers and employment systems and services available for adults that they can support (or be supported by).

Recommendations for CITB to consider

A key priority for CITB is to inform and enable diverse and skilled people into construction by raising the profile of construction careers and working with the industry to provide more flexible routes in. CITB are investing in a range of activities, notably the Go Construct website and suite of resources to inform potential entrants including young people, Go Construct STEM Ambassadors to engage directly with young people, teachers and careers leaders in schools, and the New Entrant Support Team to support employers with recruitment and retention of new entrants, particularly apprentices.

This review of policy and practice identifies areas of focus for the sector moving forwards with support and leadership from CITB. Many of these align with CITB's current and planned activities which provide a solid foundation to build and improve upon and others indicate new areas where ambitions could be raised even higher.

- 1 Raise the importance of employers engaging with schools and encourage involvement.
- 2 Produce a resource guide for employers to raise awareness of the tools, initiatives and organisations available to support employers working with schools. This could include ideas and examples of how to get involved, personal testimonies from construction employers about their experiences, and signposts to useful organisations.
- 3 Help employers form partnerships to collaborate and deliver construction sector career activities.
- 4 Advocate for change to extend formal career-related learning into primary settings, and advocate and support further research on career-related learning within early years settings.



- 5 Provide support for employers in engaging with standalone careers activities (e.g. careers fairs and mentoring programmes), on providing meaningful encounters for college-based learners, and on offering wider insights (beyond the current role, department or employer) for learners in the workplace to show breadth of prospects and pathways, including facilitating and creating networks for learners to visit other sites and working environments.
- 6 Produce guidance and share best practice on outreach activities, particularly on how to overcome challenges with arranging in-person workplace visits, working with school timetables and tailoring input to school and learner needs.
- 7 Produce a guide for employers of organisations offering support and facilitate partnerships for employers to provide sector specific information, case studies and resources for colleges and providers, and continue to facilitate and encourage engagement in networks such as the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and the Go Construct STEM Ambassadors programme.
- 8 Support the sector to work with provider staff to keep their sector knowledge and links current through offering visits, industry days and in supporting curriculum materials focused on construction.
- 9 Help employers and the sector more broadly work with the National Careers Service to ensure it has current information on career pathways into and within the construction industry (reflecting changing skills needs and technologies).
- 10 Help employers to work with local service providers to improve understanding of local skills needs and input into Local Skills Improvement Plans.
- 11 Develop a guide for employers to raise awareness of national employment support programmes and projects that provide opportunities for employers to engage with adults.
- 12 Promote the business case for making workplaces more accessible and inclusive and how this can be achieved. Collate and maintain a directory of support and funding for employers to help them be more inclusive in their approaches to recruitment, retention and progression.
- 13 Encourage employers to research and share information about local providers, programmes and projects which could help them engage with a wider group of adults and deliver diversity of their intake.

