

Supporting a stronger pipeline: Growing the next generation of home builders

A report by The Careers & Enterprise Company in collaboration with the Home Builders Federation and five leading employer partnerships across the country



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Introduction

The [Home Builders Federation](#) (HBF) and [The Careers & Enterprise Company](#) (CEC) have come together with a group of leading home builders and local partners from across the country to explore and address skills gaps in the home building industry.

We believe that a thriving home building industry, underpinned by a skilled and diverse workforce, is not only important to provide high-quality housing to meet the demands of society but also offers wider benefits to the economy. [Research from Homes England](#) shows the importance of the industry to national growth and productivity: “The building of new homes will have a direct impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP)...building the right homes in the right places can also have a longer run impact on economic activity by facilitating labour mobility, enabling a better matching of workers to jobs, supporting agglomeration economies and so improving overall productivity growth.”

[The Government's recent announcement, as part of its plan for change](#), shows the level of national commitment, with a £600m investment to train up to 60,000 more skilled construction workers over the next four years.

As a collective of housebuilders, trades and sector leaders, we have identified what good practice looks like and how it can be delivered through the careers education system - coordinated by CEC, driven by local economic partners, and rooted in regional skills frameworks. We know careers education plays a [vital role in closing skills gaps](#). Young people in schools which perform higher on world class standards of careers education report greater work readiness and are more likely to make career choices that align with the labour market.

Together we have a powerful opportunity to strengthen the connection between education and employment and help close critical skills gaps in home building.

This report combines our shared perspectives and commitment, and aims to:

- 1] **Define the context** – analyse why young people, despite showing interest, do not always progress into, or stay in, home building careers.
- 2] **Demonstrate what works** - show how employer-led, locally-embedded careers education can convert interest into employment and address skills gaps.
- 3] **Distil lessons and practical recommendations** - for employers, industry bodies and policy makers seeking to build a future-ready workforce.

The home builder collaboration in numbers

- **60+ employers**, spanning large enterprises and a FTSE 100 company, through to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and sole traders.
- **3 national bodies:** [HBF](#), whose members deliver some 80% of all new homes built in England and Wales, [CITB](#) the industry training board for construction in England, Scotland and Wales and [CEC](#), the national body for careers education in England.
- **5 innovation projects**, in 5 different locations, supported by their local Careers Hubs.
- **One shared ambition** to build the workforce that will deliver the homes this country needs.

Foreword from Andy George

The home building industry is at a turning point, one defined not just by the homes we must deliver, but by the people who will build them. While we have the workforce to meet current output, meeting the UK's future housing needs will require hundreds of thousands of new people to enter our trades and professions. Our ability to build the homes communities rely on is tied as closely to people and skills as it is to land, planning, or finance.

Many young people know of construction as a career option, but home building is still too often overlooked as a respected, meaningful, and enduring career path. Awareness doesn't always meet ambition and aspiration. That gap matters, not only for our sector but for all young people seeking purposeful careers. Although perceptions are improving and interest is high for some young people, we do not have a sufficiently diverse talent pipeline.

The Home Building Sector Skills Plan has been created with a simple human truth at its centre: a strong future for home building depends on nurturing and retaining future talent, by broadening the ways people can enter the industry and providing the right experiences and learning to develop rewarding, long-lasting careers. A sustainable pipeline of skilled people is essential for long term growth. Yet, we are already seeing early signs of shortages that stunt ability to meet national housing ambitions.

This plan draws on evidence from the CEC, the Home Builders Federation, and CITB - real experiences from employers and pilot programmes to highlight the challenges and set out clear, targeted actions to repair the "leaky pipeline" of future talent. Encouragingly, more outreach is happening, and young people's views of the industry are shifting in the right direction. The task now is to strengthen, scale, and make these efforts consistently impactful.

At the heart of this effort is supporting young people themselves to understand what "being work ready" really means: the essential skills, values, and behaviours that help them thrive not only in our industry, but in life. Achieving this will require deeper collaboration across industry, employers, educators, and skills bodies, building the kind of coherent partnerships that sustain a thriving workforce and will allow us to deliver the homes the country urgently needs.

We are excited to share this report which sets out a way forward and provides a blueprint for employers.



Andy George

**Director of Industry Attraction
and Skills, Home Builders Federation**

Section 1: The skills gap conundrum

Skills shortages are likely to continue across the home building industry, despite strong and growing interest among young people and a genuine willingness from employers to engage. The challenge is not attracting interest, but supporting young people to enter and remain on this career path.

1. CITB forecasts show the need for more young people to enter the industry

[Labour market intelligence](#) produced by the CITB indicates that the UK construction sector will require approximately 47,860 additional workers annually (around 239,300 over five years) to meet housing targets and wider infrastructure demand.

HBF data shows that occupations critical to home building are among those most in demand. Over [30,000 direct and indirect job roles are created](#) for every 10,000 extra homes delivered. Bricklayers, groundworkers and plant operatives, and plumbers are among priority positions to fill (Fig. 1).

[Recent ONS vacancy data](#) further reinforces the fundamental nature of these shortages. Whilst vacancy rates are similar to the UK average across all sectors, the scale of the challenge the UK construction industry faces is significant, with around 25,000 unfilled vacancies.

A critical driver of demand is replacement need. [CITB analysis](#) shows 20 - 25% of the current construction workforce is aged 50 or over, with retirement expected to impact skilled trades significantly over the next decade. New entrants do not offset leavers. [Apprenticeship starts in construction have not yet returned to pre-2010 levels, and low completion rates further reduce in-flow to the workforce.](#)

Regional disparities exacerbate the issue. High-growth areas, particularly in the South-East and parts of the Midlands, face localised labour shortages, where insufficient workforce supply directly constrains housing delivery. Different sectors also compete for the same talent.

Taken together, the skills shortage is not purely cyclical. It requires systemic intervention throughout the skills pipeline.

Fig.1: Annual extra recruitment requirement needed for every 10,000 extra homes

Approximate number of additional occupations needed, for every 10,000 extra homes to be delivered



2. Young people's interest in construction is high, but not sustained

Evidence from the CEC shows that [construction is firmly embedded](#) in young people's career awareness, and interest strengthens as they move through secondary education.

During the 2024/25 academic year, close to one third of a million young people completed the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) examining their career interests, essential skills and work readiness. Construction ranks in the [top five career interests](#) by Year 11 and is one of the few sectors where interest increases as they move through secondary school - rising from 8% in Year 7 to 11% by Year 11.

As learners progress, their interests become more specific. Those interested in construction [increasingly identify roles](#) such as builders, electricians, plumbers, engineers, and designers, showing a shift from general awareness to more concrete consideration as a career option. However, interest remains uneven. In particular it shows:

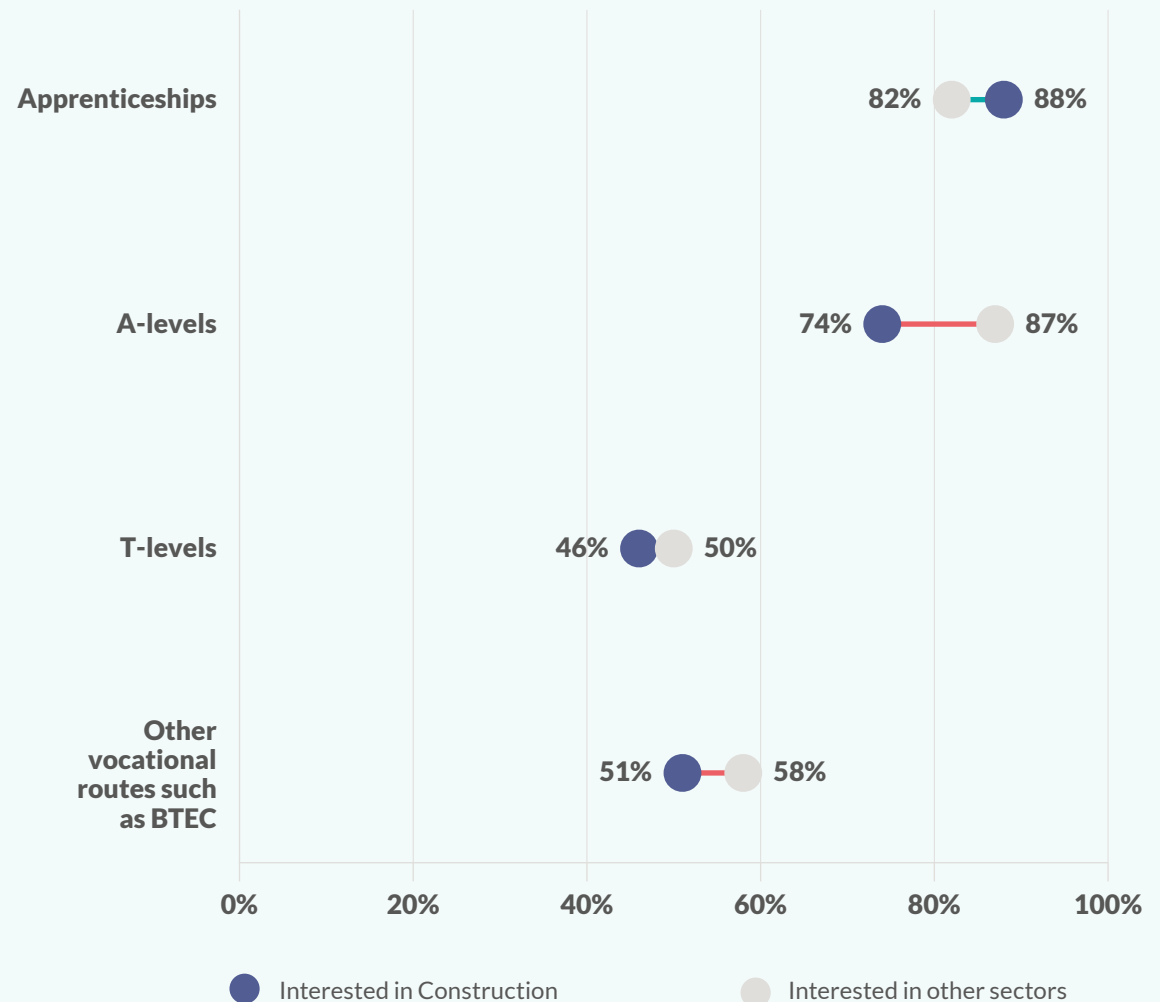
- [Gender disparity](#): male learners are almost six times more likely than female learners to express interest (19% compared with 3%), significantly limiting the future labour supply.
- [Regional mismatch](#): interest does not always align with local labour market demand, reinforcing the need for targeted, place-based engagement.

The CEC's data also highlights where employer and system action are most urgently needed. While young people interested in construction are more likely than their peers to understand apprenticeships, they are less likely to understand other routes, including A-levels, technical qualifications and vocational pathways, such as BTECs (Fig.2). BTECs and T-levels, broaden pathways into home building trades and A-levels are important for professional roles such as Quantity Surveying and Engineering.

There are also persistent gaps in [essential skills](#). Learners interested in construction report strong confidence in problem-solving, but lower confidence in essential skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication and listening. These essential skills are important in the modern construction workplace, where young people are increasingly expected to be work- and site-ready.

Fig.2: Young people interested in Construction sector are more likely to understand Apprenticeships

% of young people understanding each pathway than those interested in other sectors



Source: [Future Skills Questionnaire data](#), end of July 2025 (Year 11 responding to the industry/career question, N=26,842)

3. Employer engagement is strong, but too intermittent to maximise impact

CEC [data from more than 750 employer self assessments](#) last year shows that construction employers are actively engaged in careers education and, in many cases, [outperform cross-sector averages](#). The Employer Standards, a framework that helps employers benchmark and improve the quality and impact of their careers outreach highlight particular strengths in construction. Employers in construction are more likely to deliver activities that raise awareness of pathways into work (Standard 6, +15%pts), prepare young people for application processes (Standard 5, +19% pts) and build essential skills (Standard 4, +9%pts). This helps explain high levels of interest in construction careers among young people. Employers also report strong benefits from their engagement, including encouraging applications (92%), recruiting apprentices (85%) and helping address skills gaps (79%).

However, engagement can be intermittent. 36% of construction employers are not achieving Standard 7 (Engage over the long term) and engagement is less routinely evaluated (Standard 3, Evaluate and improve, 5%pts lower) than in other sectors. Meeting these Standards is a particular challenge for smaller employers who face capacity constraints, demonstrating an opportunity for collaboration.

The evidence is increasingly clear: the conundrum facing the home building industry is not one of interest, but of conversion and retention. These two interconnected challenges need to be addressed:

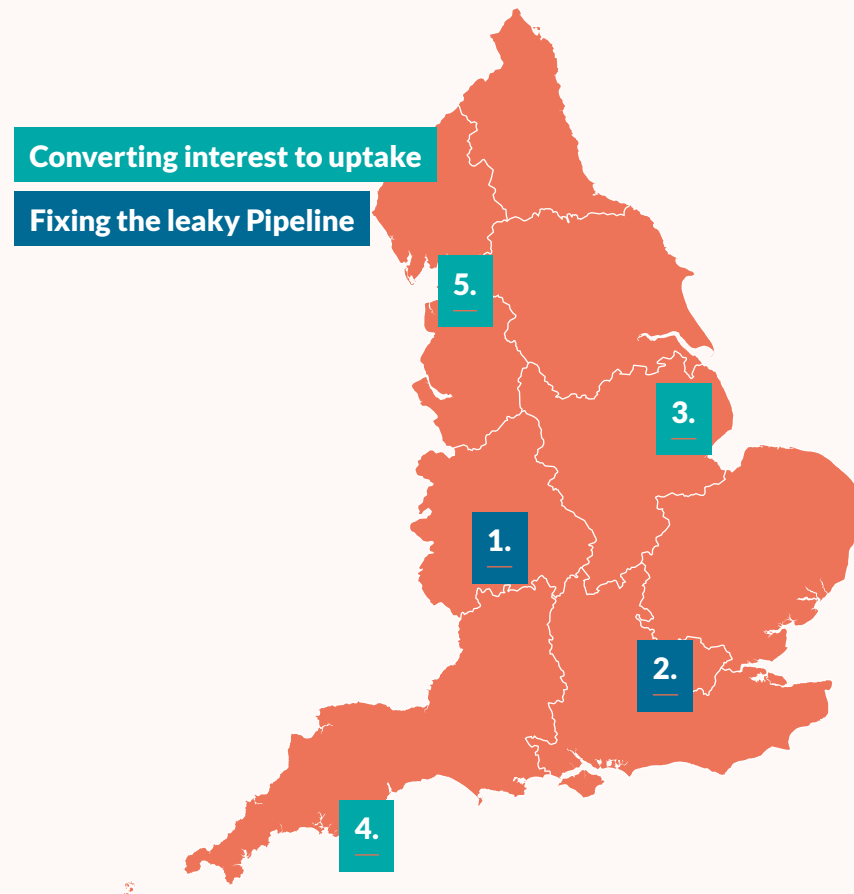
- **Converting interest to uptake:** Young people are aware of construction and increasingly consider it as they progress through education. However, persistent skills gaps would suggest this interest is not consistently translating into post-16 choices or employment.
- **Fixing the “leaky pipeline”:** Young people who start training or apprenticeships are [falling out of the industry before they complete](#). CITB data shows that out of 130,000 people starting a construction apprenticeship, only 40,000 secure employment in the industry. Learner data suggests this may be because pathways aren’t clear or are misaligned with expectations. This highlights the need for better transition support to ensure young people are equipped to thrive in as well as join the sector.



Section 2: What works - employer led action

In response to these challenges, employers are working on solutions across the country. Over the last year, we have collaborated with the industry on five innovation projects. Each has focused on one or both of the two challenges: converting interest to uptake and fixing the leaky pipeline. Lead employers have worked closely with their local Careers Hubs and schools and colleges to address these challenges (see Fig.3)

Fig.3 Map of innovation projects - click numbers to read more



1. NHBC Lichfield Training Hub - Stoke and Staffordshire

Fast-tracking training of skilled, site-ready apprentices on a housebuilding site.

Having strong pathways and connections with employers leads to consistent employment outcomes for young people.

2. ThriveMap and Berkeley Group - London

Developing a suite of pre-hire assessment tools to ensure employers are practising inclusive recruitment.

Giving candidates a realistic experience before they are hired results in more diverse entrants and strong retention.

3. Construction & Engineering Week - Lincolnshire

Supporting over 1,500 learners to experience the roles the sector needs through workplace experiences and practical skills development days.

Meaningful encounters can be delivered at scale and linked to pathways.

4. In-school construction work experience - Build Torbay and Devon, Plymouth & Torbay Careers Hub

Providing immersive experiences of the workplace and showcasing apprenticeship routes for learners at risk of becoming NEET.

Innovative partnership working can support young people at risk of NEET and provide new talent for local SMEs.

5. SPL Change Academy - Sterling Plastering and Keepmoat - Liverpool City Region

Structured modern work experience programme that focuses on employability behaviours, site-readiness and a realistic understanding of construction roles, alongside practical industry insight.

Partnership working solves challenges for SMEs and large employers by providing meaningful experiences for young people.

Section 3: Where next and practical actions

The evidence in this report shows the scale of the challenge for the home building industry to build a stronger talent pipeline and achieve its ambitions. Young people show interest. However, converting that to uptake and retaining those young people in the industry is the next step.

The examples in this report show where and how this is already happening. For these solutions to scale, a system-wide approach is needed from education and employment.

Employers wanting to align with this coalition's findings should adopt these principles:

1. Start outreach early to encourage a new generation of talent

Employers should prioritise high-quality, hands-on work experience that gives young people a realistic understanding of construction roles and pathways from an early age.

Primary education outreach brings an opportunity to spark curiosity and make jobs feel tangible and possible. It also arrests damaging stereotypes that ingrain bias and lock young people out of sectors and roles. Sustained engagement through secondary education, starting from years 7 and 8, is more likely to have meaningful impact.



2. Adopt more structured employment pathways with meaningful experiences

Employers should develop clear, supported routes from school engagement into employment, including pre-employment programmes and early in-work support. Pathways should illuminate the range of roles and progression opportunities.

A key driver of the leaky pipeline is the disconnect between engagement activity and employment. Evidence from Berkeley Group, alongside partners such as ThriveMap and NHBC Training Hubs, suggests that structured, employer-led pathways significantly improves progression and retention.

Adopting a structured, [modern work experience approach](#) helps employers better prepare young people with the insight and skills needed to be work- and site-ready. Helping all employers incorporate an inclusive, progressive and outcomes-focused approach to engaging with careers education, means young people (especially those facing barriers, such as those in Alternative Provision, with [SEND](#) or eligible for [FSM](#)) can improve confidence and essential skills, while businesses also expand their talent pipelines.

3. Align national and local skills plans, working through industry bodies and local Careers Hubs

The Government's [Industrial Strategy](#) aims to support employers to prepare for future skills needs and the announcement of [new funding for training, as part of its plan for change](#), is welcome. The strategy strengthens the focus on social value criteria - a powerful incentive for businesses to invest in workforce development, through work experience, not least in sectors with identified skills gaps. Government's procurement power also offers leverage to strengthen domestic supply chains to support good quality local jobs. Similarly, Local Skills Improvement Plans offer a further impetus to connect local, national and sectoral partnerships.

Given the fragmented nature of the home building sector, no single employer can address the skills challenge alone. Collaboration through industry bodies, such as HBF and CITB offer access to labour market intelligence, funding, and toolkits. Place-based partnerships are essential, particularly to enable SME involvement. The CEC's 44 regional Careers Hubs provide a proven model for employer engagement. Effective approaches, such as the SPL Change Academy, and [HBF's Partner a College](#), demonstrate the impact.

Practical actions all employers can take now:

- 1| [Connect with your local Careers Hub](#) and partner with its network of schools colleges and other employers to strengthen engagement, support talent development, and enhance recruitment opportunities.
- 2| [Assess your approach against the Employer Standards](#): Use the CEC's evidence-based, free-to-use, framework to deliver high-quality, consistent careers engagement that drives real employment outcomes.
- 3| [Offer meaningful work experiences](#): Offer young people hands-on experiences of construction careers. CEC's equalex model offers businesses of all sizes a flexible, outcomes-focused framework.
- 4| [Participate in the Home Building STEM ambassadors' initiative](#): Leverage industry voices to inspire, inform and connect with young people at scale.



Section 4: Pilot projects deep dive

Fixing the leaky pipeline: Improving hiring outcomes by aligning candidate expectations with role reality at the point of intake

In West London, Berkeley Group partnered with ThriveMap to redesign its early careers recruitment process for graduate and apprenticeship roles in construction. The aim was to improve expectation alignment, diversity and early retention by ensuring candidates had a realistic understanding of construction roles before accepting an offer.

ThriveMap developed a Realistic Job Assessment based on detailed job analysis with Berkeley employees and hiring managers. Applicants completed interactive, job-relevant scenarios reflecting real site environments, day-to-day responsibilities and collaboration challenges. The process applied blind recruitment principles, prioritising behaviours and transferable skills over prior experience or educational background, making it applicable across both graduate and apprenticeship pathways.

By introducing this assessment early in the recruitment process, candidates gained a realistic preview of construction work, enabling more informed self-selection. This significantly improved alignment between candidate expectations and the realities of the role, a key factor in reducing early attrition.

This approach directly addressed a key driver of the sector's 'leaky pipeline': candidates entering roles without a clear understanding of what the job involves, leading to early drop-out.



The impact was significant:

- 61% female graduate intake
- Improved emerging talent retention rates in recent cohorts across the first 6-12 months. 85% retention after 12 months from September '24 cohort.
- 98% positive candidate experience
- High offer acceptance rates.

The project highlights that conversion does not end at recruitment. Ensuring candidates have a realistic understanding of the role before entry is critical to improving early retention, increasing diversity of entrants, and building a more sustainable workforce.

“Realistic pre-hire assessments help to reduce the candidate expectation gap, reducing attrition post-hire.”

Catherine Hawkett, Group Future Skills Manager, Berkeley Group



Converting interest to uptake: Place-based collaboration with SMEs

Practical Solutions is a place-based collaboration between the Devon, Plymouth & Torbay Careers Hub and Build Torbay - a network of local and national construction firms.

The project was designed to support young people at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training), whilst enabling local SMEs to participate meaningfully in careers engagement.

A group of Year 10 students from an Alternative Provision setting worked with multiple local construction SMEs to design and create a community café on their school site. Students took ownership of real design and build tasks, supported by employers, designers and site managers.

During the workplace experience learners developed practical construction skills, alongside essential employment skills such as teamwork, communication and confidence. Importantly, along with the pride involved in creating something tangible, they also gained a clearer understanding of construction career pathways.

The experience resulted in:

- Improved confidence, teamwork and employability skills
- Increased understanding of construction careers
- Positive shift in school and community perceptions of construction

The Practical Solutions Project demonstrates how collaborative, place-based approaches can help fix the challenge of conversion, supporting young people who need it most while enabling SMEs to contribute without a disproportionate burden.



Converting interest to uptake: Young people show high levels of interest when experiences are real

Lincolnshire's Construction & Engineering Week is a flagship initiative delivered across the county. During the week, the Lincolnshire Group Training Association, supported by the Greater Lincolnshire Careers Hub, brings together more than 60 employers to deliver immersive construction and engineering experiences for young people.

In 2025, 1,700 learners across primary, secondary, and SEND settings engaged in hands-on activities including bricklaying, surveying, joinery and electrical challenges, alongside employer-led workshops explaining progression routes such as apprenticeships, T-Levels and further education.

The experience helped young people move beyond abstract awareness of construction careers to a more tangible understanding of the roles, skills and expectations involved. It demystified the sector, increased confidence and supported the development of key employability skills.

The impact was significant:

- 93% of participants expressed an interest in construction or engineering careers.
- 82% reported increased awareness of career options.
- 63% said they were more likely to consider a career in the sector.
- Engagement was particularly strong among SEND learners, students from rural schools and disadvantaged cohorts.

The initiative demonstrates that high-quality, practical workplace experiences play a critical role in deepening interest and improving work readiness.





Converting interest to uptake: Supporting SMEs to build sustainable talent pipelines

The SPL Change Academy is an employer-led initiative developed by Sterling Plastering Ltd and Keepmoat in response to persistent skills shortages, low diversity and early attrition within the construction sector in the Liverpool City Region.

The programme responds directly to sector challenges, including an ageing workforce, limited awareness of construction careers, unequal access to meaningful work experience, and a disconnect between classroom learning and real world application. Using the [modern work experience framework](#) enables a structured, blended learning approach that combines curriculum-based study with hands-on practical training and live site exposure. Experiences are designed to build progressively over time, rather than as standalone activities. Young people develop foundational skills while gaining meaningful, real-world insight into live home building projects in the Liverpool City Region.

Key delivery partners include Sterling Plastering Limited, a Knowsley based SME, and Keepmoat. Sterling Plastering delivers hands-on skills training through the SPL Change Academy, including a bespoke 6,000 sq ft facility with mock house environments that reflect live construction practice. Keepmoat supports delivery through access to active housing developments and professional role models across trade, engineering, and site management roles. Together, they demonstrate how employer-led collaboration can drive high impact workforce solutions.

Overall, the Liverpool City Region Housebuilder Modern Work Experience Programme provides a scalable, employer-led model that aligns social value, education, and workforce development. It offers a replicable blueprint for building a future ready talent pipeline to meet regional and national housing needs.



Fixing the leaky pipeline: NHBC – Lichfield Multi-skills training hub

NHBC is the UK's largest warranty provider for new homes. It also delivers training to support its purpose of improving standards in home building. NHBC opened its first multi-skills training hub in September 2025 at Lichfield, following successful pilots of smaller facilities. NHBC hubs deliver apprenticeship training on a live home building site. Students wear full PPE, complete a normal working day and attend for periods of at least a week at a time. An identical hub is under construction near Cambridge and 10 more are planned nationwide.

Bricklaying, groundworks and carpentry apprenticeships are delivered – these being the trades in highest demand and where NHBC warranty claims data shows there is the greatest need in pursuit of building quality homes. Employers send apprentices from across the country for this unique experience.

The NHBC model delivers excellent results:

- The average completion time for a Level 2 NHBC apprenticeship is 16 months.
- Over 80% of students being retained in their trade – much more effective than traditional training methods. This helps fix the leaky pipeline of training through to employment.

Focusing on local students and working with partners, including the Stoke & Staffordshire Careers Hub, 120 students are currently on apprenticeships at Lichfield. The facility has capacity for shorter courses and can be utilised for awareness activities for schools and other groups, and so has potential for wider use to convert interest to uptake.



“This programme demonstrates the value of collaborative, place-based delivery. By working within a shared framework alongside a large housebuilder, SMEs can contribute industry-relevant skills and insight sustainably, supporting inclusive access to meaningful work-related learning and helping young people make informed decisions about technical and vocational career pathways.”

Jeff Murphy, Managing Director at Sterling Plastering Limited

THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

[Our Impact](#)

[Our evidence](#)