

How can we tackle the skills shortage in 2026?



Sara Roberts, chief services officer of construction training provider Kingdom Academy, discusses how the housebuilding industry can attract staff and bridge the skills gap in 2026 and beyond

The Last Word

With the latest *Housing Pipeline* report from the Home Builders Federation revealing a 15-year low for new homes planning permissions, the government has a considerable job ahead to boost housebuilding.

With the target of 1.5 million new homes by 2029 looming, the construction industry is stalling. The 42,000 homes that received planning permission in the third quarter of 2025 marks a 31% drop from the same quarter in 2024, prompting even housing secretary Steve Reed to admit there needs to be a sharp surge in housebuilding for the government's target to be achieved.

With the construction industry also facing a considerable skills gap, it is crucial that the industry takes urgent action to attract, train and retain a new generation of workers. From rethinking how construction careers are promoted, to improving access to high-quality training and progression routes, the future of UK housebuilding depends on building a workforce that is fit for demand.

Reportedly, more than 140,000 job vacancies are stalling essential housing and infrastructure projects across the UK. Despite skilled trades making up 10% of England's workforce, it is clear the supply of competent workers needs to go further and at a faster pace. And the industry is truly against the clock when it comes to tackling the skills shortage, which – without intervention – will only grow over the coming decades.

Ageing workforce

According to a report from Places for People, by 2035 it is predicted that more than one-third of construction workers will retire, with an ageing workforce placing considerable pressure on the growing skills gap.

With just 20% of the workforce

under 30, and 1 million additional construction workers needed in the next six years alone, the stats paint a rather bleak picture if there is not significant investment in upskilling, training and attracting more people into the construction industry.

Whilst recent planning reforms such as changes to building on brownfield, around train stations, more blocks of flats and cutting costs and delays for housebuilders will hopefully boost housebuilding, without tackling the skills gap there will not be enough workers to deliver all these new projects. Investing in bridging the gap – as well as addressing the knowledge transfer that needs to occur between workers nearing retirement and workers entering the industry – needs to be happening now to build a sustainable workforce for the years to come.

Bridging the skills gap

So how do we bridge the skills gap and bring more people into the construction industry?

Firstly, for the many potential workers who are keen to get into the construction industry, businesses and housebuilders need to work closely with training providers that offer apprenticeships and other qualifications to ensure that everyone who wants to learn the necessary skills can do.

Businesses can utilise their apprenticeship levy to help them hire more workers, focusing on building up a wider range of traditional skills for workers, rather than focusing on modular workers.

Training and apprenticeships must also ensure they are building the foundations of knowledge, especially around regulations and how to put them into practice – ultimately building a workforce that will still be in the industry over

the coming decades.

As well as this, as people look more towards careers that value progression, development and training, it is important for the construction and housebuilding industries to increasingly invest in training in order to attract more people into the industry.

Management training

This also goes beyond the skills such as bricklaying, roofing and steel fixing. Increasing skills also includes management training, ensuring people who start out in the industry can see a career path ahead of them. Management training is becoming more common across sectors, enabling people who may have been promoted to team leader role without the necessary training to learn what kind of leader they exactly want to be.

At Kingdom Academy, we often find that many people in the construction industry go from the trade to be promoted to their first time management position without being given any further management training. As such, they often do not have the tools to have difficult conversations with staff, don't understand how their attitude and approach need to shift to account for their new position and the impact it can have on their team – and themselves.

Additionally, as the workforce inevitably grows in the coming decades to meet demand, experienced and highly skilled management in the industry is even more crucial.

There is more to housing than getting the homes built. From the very initial plan to build homes, to the first brick being laid, and eventual management of those homes by housing professionals, everyone who is involved in the process must have the skills and competence to drive the industry forward. [hb](#)