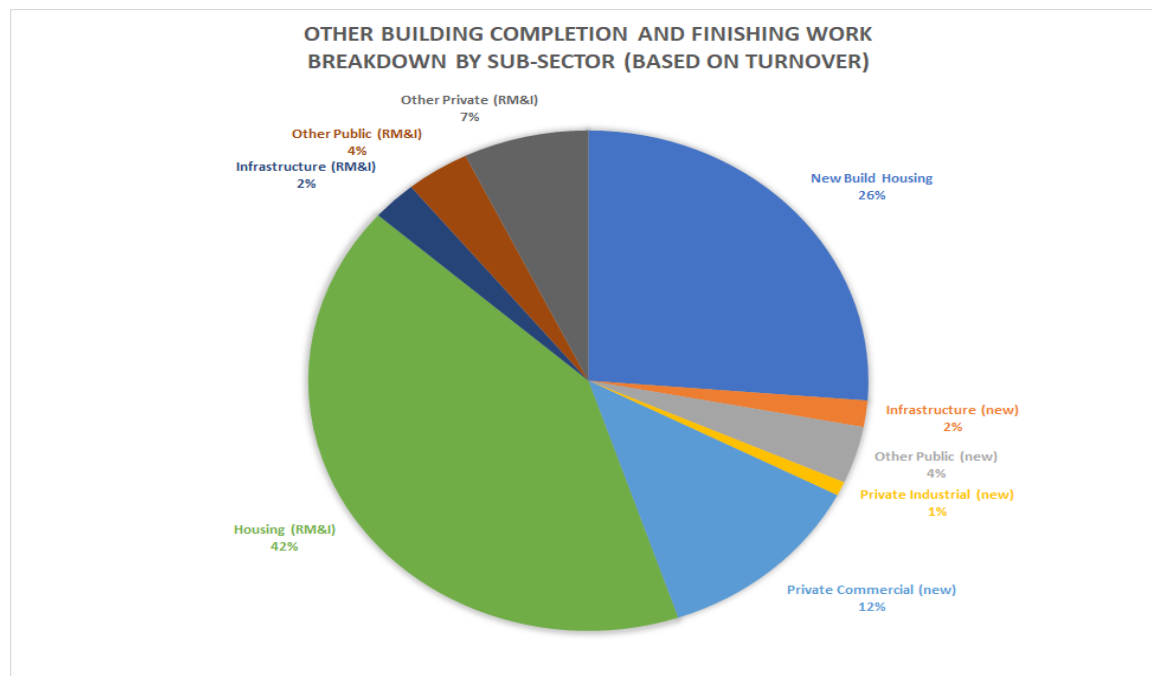


Finishes and Interiors Sector Immigration Concerns

FIS membership spans all key sub-sectors of construction. Total sector size is estimated to be around £10 billion. Total number of people employed within the finishes and interiors sector is estimated to be 175,000 (CITB CSN data 2019) across 33 occupations.



Currently 65.8% of companies in the sector employ European Labour, as at January 2020 FIS members reported 42% of their workforce was immigrant labour.

A growing concern has been reported to FIS in recent weeks around labour availability and that a number of EU workers have decided to not to return and are not now expected to apply for settled or pre-settled status.

Table 1 Trade Operatives in the sector listed by Occupation (based on CSCS Cards held in November 2019):

CSCS Cards Held by Trade		Shortage Occupation	VQ Level 3 Qualification practically available	High proportion of LOSC
Drylining	45,699	No	No	Yes
Ceiling Fixing	3,440	No	No	Yes
Partitioning	820	No	No	Yes
Plastering	12,058	Yes	Yes	Yes
Passive Fire Protection	3,569	No	No	Yes
Carpentry and Joinery	73,098	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Relevant Trades	1,691	No	Some	Yes
Total	140,375			

NB: Colour relates to risk Red, serious, Amber, challenges remain

Numbers do not reflect many working on housebuilding sites and other sites where cards are not obligatory or those working on labourers' cards.

Concern 1: Skills Shortage List

Key occupations in the Finishes and Interiors Sector and other specialist trades have not been listed in the Skills Shortage List within [UK points-based immigration system: Further Details Statement](#).

Part of the issue is that construction occupations are not that well defined in Sector Occupational Classification (SOC) Codes. For historic reasons, a number of key occupations including those listed as Interiors Systems Installers are included as “Construction Operatives Not Elsewhere Classified” (8149). All occupations in this SOC have been classified as “Occupations which are not eligible for the Skilled Worker route”, despite having being listed as a [Shortage Occupation in the cross industry research report](#) published and presented to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) last year.

***NB:** The list of “Construction Operatives Not Elsewhere Classified” trades listed in the Further Details Statement is also not comprehensive (see below)*

8149, Construction operatives not elsewhere classified	Asbestos remover, Cable layer, Demolition worker, Dry liner, General handyman, Maintenance man, Thermal insulation engineer
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Specifically for drylining, it is frustrating that SOC2010 codes were used for the formulation of this Points Based System. In the SOC 2020 recast, Drylining was moved to be a categorised within plastering (reflecting overlap at a company and qualification level). FIS has been advised that Government intends to stick to using the 2010 SOC system for the points based system.

Proposed Solution: CLC to approach Government again asap to assert the need to revert to using the 2020 SOC codes and/or adopt a more granular focus within “Construction Operatives Note Elsewhere Classified” to ensure that genuine shortages in vital specialist areas of construction are appropriately considered. If this is not addressed there are likely to be considerable bottlenecks surrounding many specialist trades.

Concern 2: RFQ3+ Qualification Requirement

Only 14 of the 76 construction operative occupations currently have a VQ Level 3 qualification. Even within these trades take-up has been low, with only around 20% of workers qualified to VQ L3 where available.

The initial recommendation of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) was to ensure that shortage skilled occupations could be deemed to satisfy RFQ3+ level descriptor. This removed the requirement to have a VQ L3, but effectively meant that the employer would have to prove they were working at the appropriate level. I do not believe the current *Further Details Statement* provides sufficient clarity around this.

Proposed Solution: Clarification that a worker in the Skilled Worker List is accepted as RFQ3+ level descriptor if holding an equivalent qualification (this could be a L2 VQ or equivalent).

CLC working group to develop guidance for employers to satisfy skill level and hence eligibility.

Concern 3: Employment model is unique in construction.

Many workers in construction are not “employed”, but work as Labour Only Sub contractors, often through labour gangs. Administration and sponsorship are a serious concern for many construction businesses, particularly smaller businesses.

Proposed Solution: Develop a toolkit for employers to support sponsorship and look at models that could support alternative ways of sponsoring of skilled workers

FIS are currently engaging with employment groups to understand options available and will feed back to the group.

A communication plan to help ensure that settled and pre-settled status is understood is essential. It would also be helpful to clarify if any issues are created by people having returned to their home country during COVID and whether this will have an impact on their ability to apply moving forwards.

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