

FIS engages the sector in readiness for Fit-Out Futures

The phrase “no man is an island” not only holds true for individuals and societies but also applies to the construction sector, where building new partnerships and working collectively is often less prevalent than it is in other industries. **Helen Yeulet**, skills delivery director for FIS, outlines what the finishes and interiors sector trade association is doing to bring the industry together and deliver on a challenging skills development programme.

FIS has previously written about the problems facing the sector – the skills shortages, ageing workforce, lack of new entrants, difficulty in accessing quality training and, of course, Brexit – and presented a solution in the form of the Fit-Out Futures programme, an umbrella name for a series of projects designed to alleviate/remedy some of the above issues.

Sector engagement and galvanising key partners to work in collaboration and help to deliver Fit-Out Futures has been the main focus for FIS, and we were delighted to be awarded £1.5 million from CITB to deliver the programme to bring in 1,500 new entrants per annum into the sector by 2020.

There are essentially three strands to the Fit-Out Futures programme.

BuildBack

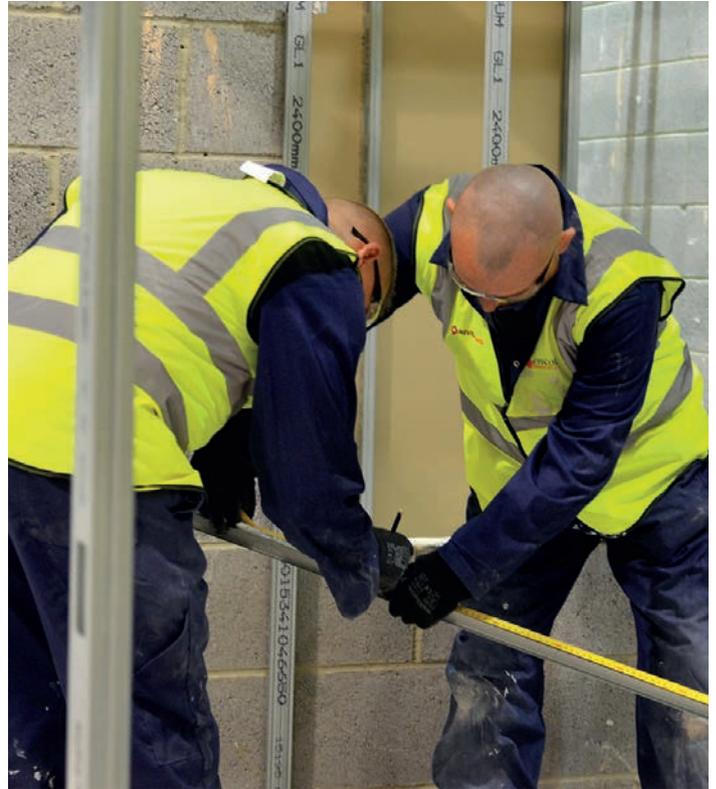
The first is BuildBack, which has a target to get 980 unemployed people trained in drylining and in employment by 2020. BuildBack provides an opportunity for unemployed people to be retrained on an SUP (Specialist Upskilling Programme) for drylining at a local college over a two-week period. This is then followed by two weeks of on-site work experience with an employer. If a BuildBack trainee is successful in securing employment after work experience, then the programme will pay for them to complete their NVQ 2 qualification in drylining.

FE to Employment Programme

The second strand of Fit-Out Futures is the FE (Further Education) to Employment Programme, which focuses on engaging students to be the next generation of construction. The target for this is for 352 candidates to have undertaken four weeks of work experience with an employer over a two-year period. This will connect students with employers in order to retain them in the construction sector by enabling them to experience first-hand the trades within the fit-out sector and gain valuable mentoring and networking opportunities. Employers benefit by having a pool of young people that they are engaged with and can draw from for their future operational and skills needs.

Sector Engagement

At the heart of the third strand is Sector Engagement with a focus on getting a fully carded workforce by 2020 by liaising with employers, students and the



industry. The target here is for 31,000 candidates to have been registered for any CSCS card that is relevant to the fit-out sector.

Fit-Out Futures – bringing the sector together

At FIS, we know the delivery of this programme is going to be a tall order. To help galvanise our partners into action, we hosted a Fit-Out Futures kick-off event in Birmingham last month. The response was fantastic with attendance from across the industry, including tier one contractors, subcontractors, training providers, specialists from various fit-out trades, educators and consultants.

It was motivating to see how more than 30 high-profile stakeholders from the industry gave their time to attend, demonstrating their passion, commitment and a sense of personal responsibility to drive change in the sector, improve the situation for all that operate within it and tackle the skills shortages collectively.

FIS immediate past president Steve Coley kicked-off proceedings and Helen Yeulet, the skills delivery director, set the realistic scene to outline the challenges facing the sector and what needs to happen now to change things for the better.

Attendees were grouped according to their specialisms, discussing ideas and producing tactical plans to deliver on each of the programme strands. Rotating the groups ensured each programme strand received input from all angles of the fit-out sector.

To wrap up the event, all the discussions, risks, actions, issues, dependencies, metrics and success criteria were outlined for each strand ready to be inputted into practical action plans that will allow FIS to move forward with the knowledge, specialism and experience of the industry behind us in a consultancy format.

With the support of our partners in the fit-out sector, we believe we have the right people and set-up behind us to successfully deliver this very ambitious Fit-Out Futures programme. We will update the sector on developments throughout the year, and please get in touch to express an interest in getting involved with these essential initiatives.

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www.thefis.org/skills-hub