



**Finishes and Interiors Sector**  
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## **Recognition of Interior Systems Installers being added to the Skilled Worker and Shortage Occupation list for the purposes of the Points Based Immigration System**

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### **Interior Systems Installers: A vital construction trade**

The Dry Lining, Plastering and Ceiling Fixing occupations are a vital part of the construction process providing the internal walls and ceilings for all buildings (homes, hospital, hotels etc) constructed across the UK. These elements provide critical compartmentation and are integral to fire safety (our work is essential to providing passive fire protection), acoustic and thermal performance of the building.

The Finishes and Interiors Sector accounts for £10 billion of construction turnover, in addition to new build work, the average building undergoes 30 interior fit outs in its lifetime.

We believe the occupation meets the Home Office Immigration requirements to be on the skilled worker and shortage occupation list on the following basis:

### **Shortage Occupation List**

Shortages are emerging across the three critical occupational areas of plastering, dry lining and ceiling fixing. Two thirds of companies in the sector employ European Labour - at the start of 2020 42% of the workforce was made up of immigrant labour.

Shortages are starting to put upward pressure on pricing, extending contract completion time and will start to impact quality and ultimately delivery of work. We are gathering updated information, but at the end of March 2021, around 40% of FIS contractor members were reporting labour shortages across these three areas. Looking forward to the summer over 60% were at the time concerned that shortages would limit their operation and potentially lead to delay and open the door to a host of quality and safety issues.

Pressure is most acute in the Dry Lining sector. It is estimated there were approximately 60,000 people employed across the UK as Dry Liners at the start of 2020. The occupation has an annual recruitment rate (ARR) of approximately 1,200 individuals per year. The impact of the changes to the immigration system are acute - as well as a significant uplift in domestic recruitment, for every 5% of EU workers that do not remain in the UK, we need to find an additional 1,200 workers (effectively doubling our annual recruitment rate).

The sector is actively engaged in addressing with new Apprenticeship Standards and structured specialist induction and recruitment programmes run in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, but the education and training system does not allow a quick fix. Apprenticeship durations are 18 months for Dry Liners and ceiling fixers and 36 months for Plasterer. Currently, principally due to COVID related impacts, apprenticeship registration numbers are approximately 40% less than previous years for these occupations. The reported figures for England up to 01 April 2021 are:

- Interior Systems Installer 66
- Plasterer 397

Moving forwards employer focus on apprenticeships and particularly take-up for the new Interior Systems Installer apprenticeship by both employers and training providers in September is encouraging, but the

timescales cannot be reduced. These occupations should be added to the Shortage Occupations List for the purposes of the points based system.

### **Skilled Worker List**

All occupations listed have operatives currently working to the RFQ Level 3 descriptor and should be recorded and treated as such under the Home Office immigration rules as Skilled Workers. Plasterers are recognised as a skilled worker route, but Ceiling Fixers and Dryliners are not.

### **Summary:**

Occupation	SOC code	Skilled worker eligible occupations	Shortage Occupations list	Qualification level	Number required/Number available	Average Salaries
Dryliner	8149 in 2010 codes, but 5321 in 2020 iteration due to occupation relationship	Needs to be recognised, either in 5321 as per 2020 changes to the SOC or under 5319 as 'aligned' occupations	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level descriptor	Current workforce 60,000 workers ARR 1,200	£36,000 to £55,000 annually
Ceiling Fixer		Can we include under 5319 or 5321 as 'aligned' occupations	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level	6,000 ARR 820	£28,000 to £52,000 annually
Plasterer	5321	Currently recognised on the skilled worker list	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level	50,000 ARR 250	£36,000 to £55,000 annually

### **The Finishes and Interiors Sector**

FIS is the representative body for the £10 billion finishes and interiors sector in the UK. The FIS has over 500 members drawn from contractors, manufacturers and distributors of ceilings, steel framing systems, partitions, operable walls, plastering, drylining, and specialist interior fit-out and refurbishment businesses.

FIS exists to support its members, improve safety, minimise risk, enhance productivity and drive innovation in the sector. As well as specialist publications, technical and training support and expert helplines, FIS is a dynamic network that brings the sector together through a range of events, awards and specialist working groups, all aimed at sharing best practice, setting standards and advising Government, that help its members to improve performance and win work. Members of the FIS are subjected to an audit and vetting process when they join and then again, every three years that underpins the values by which the organisation operates. To drive quality and ensure the future sustainability of the sector, FIS is dedicated to promoting skills and training in the sector and has a number of Approved Training Providers members to attract new people and encourage a qualified and competent workforce.

FIS is dedicated to collaboration in construction and a proud member of BuildUK, the Construction Products Association and the Passive Fire Protection Forum.

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