

# FIS REGIONAL EVENTS REPORT 2022



**FIS**  
FINISHES & INTERIORS SECTOR

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# INTRODUCTION

The FIS Training and Recruitment Intervention Events were held across the UK starting in London on Tuesday 22 March 2022 and moving to Leicester, Bristol, Dartford, Manchester and finishing in Glasgow on 11 May 2022. Events were sponsored by CITB who presented CITB activities for the sector.

With labour shortages and recruitment, a key challenge within the sector, presentations and discussions focused on the scale of the problem, local opportunities and provided ideas to support recruitment, retention, social responsibility, competence and funding.

# SPEAKERS

Those attending got to hear from the following speakers:

- CITB – Anthony Frayne, Nathan Wilkins, Chris Gingell, Kerry Andrew, Allison Stone, Barry Dawson
- Greater London Authority – Rachel Roberts
- Women into Construction – Jacqui Wordsworth
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Yvette Naylor, Deborah Callaway, Denis Holmes, Corsar Farooq and Lisa-Marie Rafferty
- Local Enterprise Partnerships in Leicester - Stewart Smith
- Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network in Bristol – Jon Gibson
- Skills Development Scotland in Glasgow – Laura Brady

In the audience from Greater Manchester Combined Authority was Joe Crolla. The events provided a strong platform for FIS to extend its network and better understand how various bodies and institutions are able to support members across the UK. It was also encouraging to get feedback from speakers representing local authorities and government agencies who felt enlightened by the information and welcomed the interaction with employers.

## A Focus on local intelligence

Invited speakers presented support available to employers in the region. All speakers suggested and presented support that may not have been considered by some and discussions underpinned how little the awareness of support available and how hard members are having to work in order to attract more people into the finishes and interiors sector.

## The relevance of wider FIS activities

FIS provided information on the wide variety of activities being undertaken and/or that FIS is involved in to support members and the wider community. An emphasis was on how the Building Safety Act further underpins the need to develop a competent workforce.

In preparation for these events, FIS refined the data on the shortages and impact. Key facts presented included reports of 73% of builders delaying jobs due to lack of materials and 55% delaying work due to a lack of skilled labour emphasising recruitment and retention is vital to sustain the sector. Slides were used to help visualise the scale of the existing shortages. The importance of wider work was emphasised. Improving procurement, programme and a focus on the quality of workmanship through training and qualifications will support a 'get it right first time' culture and increase productivity, which is essential to bring recruitment targets down to sustainable levels.

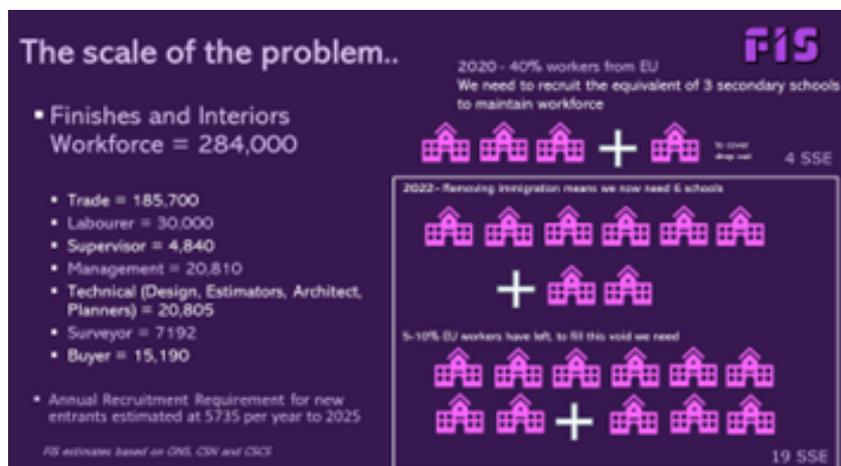
## The scale of the challenge

The events encouraged FIS to focus on tightening data and providing information to help visualise the scale of the challenge. The events were interactive and designed to encourage discussion with the audience.

The impact of migration is key, but concerns about the aging workforce were also discussed together with new expectations about flexible working, the location dependence of construction and the lack of diversity in the existing workforce, particularly in trades. A point repeated was, migration laws mean domestic recruitment needs to double to maintain an effective level and the sector are only really recruiting from about 40% of the potential pool of candidates.

To meet the predicted 4.4% increase in construction activity it is estimated a minimum of 5735 new entrants are required each year to 2025. There was clear recognition that to bring in the volume of people needed, it's necessary to explore approaches and broaden career pathways.

Data currently shows approximately 50% of the sectors workforce do have accredited qualifications or CSCS card registration, so upskilling the existing workforce in the wake of new competency requirements in the Building Safety Act must also remain a priority.



# RECRUITMENT

FIS set down a list of activities against a talent funnel, designed to visualise the Recruitment, Onboarding, Induction and Ongoing Development of an individual.

The underlying recruitment challenge was the main thrust of all discussions. Beyond the difficulty in working out how to approach schools and colleges, the sector is on the back foot with the perception of construction in terms of type of opportunities, early starts and lack of flexibility, nature of work, location dependence and competition with initially comparatively higher paid roles in e.g., McDonalds undermining growth. The challenge of short-term focus on wage rather than long-term understating of potential earnings needs to be addressed.

A lack of understanding of the different parts of construction was also cited, with the potential candidate poll not appreciating the difference between a local domestic builder and the world of commercial construction. The confusing occupational landscape and lack of clarity as to what work is outside of the “biblical trades” was also raised and it was agreed the current message to schools and further education is inconsistent.

Whilst there are some reports of positive interaction with schools and colleges, the sector approach is inconsistent and sporadic, which means learnings are not effectively captured. The lack of awareness of things like the Talent Retention Scheme and the National Apprenticeship Service meant that vacancies were not getting in front of young people and jobseekers, these are the portals that careers services rely upon. As it stands, across the UK it looks like only a handful of apprentice places are available in the sector. This undermines the sector and perceptions of opportunities in the sector, a more consistent push for using these services is essential.

Much of the discussion focussed on trade workers, however, it was noted that this is not the only area of shortage and the need for construction, project managers and surveyors was highlighted. More needs to be done to present these roles within the sector.



# RECRUITMENT

Input from DWP and other speakers suggested systems, schemes and methods that employers could use as support in recruitment, retention, social responsibility, proof of competence and the identification of available funding. An outline of the nine government training and employment schemes currently available was given (note these differ between England and Scotland). The speakers from DWP presented and explained the current Way to Work scheme and the variety of services and support for employers via local Job Centre Plus offices. This short video, how Job Centre Plus can support your business was presented.

Publicising the various progression routes through case studies of individual success were seen as key. FIS has developed a number of Career and Qualification Paths, these have been refined based on feedback at these events and new versions will be available summer 2022.

Both CITB and FIS emphasised the importance of the Construction STEM Ambassador scheme reflecting a desire to encourage people from schools, colleges, universities and the rich mix of gender and ethnic diversity available in this country into the finishes and interiors workforce. More resource is being made available to FIS from CITB to support the sectors Construction STEM Ambassadors. For details on becoming a Construction STEM Ambassador, the commitment is two events per year, contact [marieflinter@thefis.org](mailto:marieflinter@thefis.org) telephone 07799 903103 or [catherinebullough@thefis.org](mailto:catherinebullough@thefis.org) telephone 07900 083325.

The STEM work will help to get more FIS members in front of groups of young people, FIS will work to co-ordinate this activity more effectively, maintaining a list of STEM Ambassadors and developing the Career and Competency Paths to simplified flyers that can be used and/or adapted to present career opportunities in a more consistent fashion. Vital to lean this work into and link it to Go Construct, which provides a strong central platform. A recommendation was that FIS target Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) to help cascade careers information to a wider group.

CITB also flagged up the resources available on GO CONSTRUCT to support presentations to schools. The Metaverse visualisation of a construction site that enables interaction with workers was picked out as a highlight.



# RECRUITMENT

CITB also presented available grant funding and published additional support for Drylining, which is currently recognised as a top four priority shortage occupation within construction.

Other issues discussed included the alignment of funding with trained, not into employment outcomes, this exacerbates high wastage in the college system. One attendee was told by his local college that they had no-one available until the end of the academic year, this is because the college is incentivised to complete training courses rather than to deliver employment outcomes.

A recommendation when approaching colleges was to look more broadly at the range of occupations available considering all students completing construction related courses as they may not be sold on the trade they are studying, but may find interiors and finishes attractive.

With no panacea, employers will need to consider all options to secure the people needed this includes local networks, college and school leavers, unemployed, ex-military and ex-offenders. The lack of diversity in the workforce was also raised with Jacqui from Women Into Construction particularly adding context to the discussion. Language, a more open attitude to flexible working and reinforcing progress made in terms of attitude to inclusivity in construction were all highlighted. Support is available from Women into Construction and Jacqui's slide on Recruitment was highlighted as a great start to support Recruitment Plans.

## Support for Women



# INDUCTION AND RETENTION OF NEW RECRUITS

A focus on employer readiness and more consistent and better support for new entrant induction is a priority. A constant in discussion was inconsistency in mentoring and pastoral care and the burden this places on businesses. In a sector that has, due to high levels of flexibility demanded, become increasingly reliant on “contracting” rather than “employing” skills, the skills, knowledge and resources to do this are often missing. Again, an inconsistency of approach was cited with the need for more support and training. If employers are not ready, the sector could be losing good candidates who get a bad initial experience.

For micro, small and medium organisations it was proposed there should be a network of mentors and coaches that could work via short term contracts to provide direct support to new entrants. Employers are effectively now being asked to operate as “finishing schools”, but do not have the training or resource always to offer the pastoral care necessary to support a trainee or apprentice effectively. FIS is recognising Mentors in the new Training Awards and this should help to start to build a network.

The critical role of work and industrial placements to students and offering work experience or work trials to the unemployed and career changers was raised. To support discussions after the first event, FIS produced the table below providing a RAG status for the various training and work placement options available to support employers across the various pathways into construction. The process is two-way, the candidate gets exposed to the industry and the employer can get a look at the candidate’s attitude to work.

	<b>Apprenticeship</b> Employed 20% of the job/training	<b>Vocational Qualifications</b> Competence Assessment based on workplace activities and experience	<b>T-Level</b> Sixth form students with a 12 week Industrial Placement	<b>Traineeships</b> Occupationally focused training course with an Industrial Placement	<b>Work Academy Programme</b> (new) Six to eight training followed by work placement	<b>FIS Build Back</b> 115 programme, two weeks off site practical training, followed by 2 weeks work experience	<b>Skills Bootcamps</b> Short workplace training/lessons up to 16 weeks and existing employees	<b>Booze Back</b> Targeted programme for prisoners and prison leavers run with participating prisons
<b>Job Advert</b> (inc Friends and Family)	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Red	Red	Red	Red
<b>Unemployed /NEETS</b>	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Red	Green	Red
<b>FE Students</b>	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
<b>Ex-Offenders</b>	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green
<b>Service leavers</b>	Orange	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
<b>Nature of Programme</b>	16+ Employment	16+ Employment (or self-employment)	16 to 19 Work Placement (9 weeks)	16 to 24 Work Placement (2 - 6 weeks)	18+ Work Placement (6 weeks)	16+ Work Placement (2 weeks)	19+ Re-Employment (you can interview candidates)	18+ prison leavers Pre-Employment

# INDUCTION AND RETENTION OF NEW RECRUITS

It is acknowledged the rate of fallout from apprenticeships and those not securing employment in construction after completing construction training courses is too high at approximately 30%. One of the reasons sighted is individuals do not like 'being back in the classroom'.

To address this, organisations like Multi Trades Training explained all the training they deliver is conducted on site using a mobile training workshop. This eliminates college visits and student travel. FIS are working with e-Aptitude to create an eLearning package for Dryliners using the Specialist Technical Education Programs Specialist Technical Education Programs platform, so people can study anywhere using any display screen equipment.

Once recruited it's important to anchor individuals to a long-term career within the sector. More is being done by FIS to present the Career and Competency Paths. FIS are working with the Strategic Development Network <https://www.strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk/> on a guide that explains the education and skills landscape to employers, <https://educationlandscape.org.uk/the-landscape/>

# TRAINING PROVISION

Whereas training provision for certain occupations, Dry Lining, is increasing across the UK there are reports of provision decline for other occupations and a growing concern for plastering and limited uptake of the Ceilings and Partitions option within Interior Systems Installer.

Attendees expressed a need to review the English Apprenticeship standard for Plasterer, removing all Dry Lining elements, reducing the training to 18 months and creating a new apprenticeship standard for Dryliner Finisher or Ames Taper, with a 12 month training duration. This suggestion has the potential of stemming the number of training providers abandoning Plastering. Readers wishing to support this work should submit contact details to George Swann, [george.swann@thefis.org](mailto:george.swann@thefis.org) or telephone 07553 874838.

FIS are working with various organisations to address this, including a request to amend the English Apprenticeship Standard for Plasterer (which has now been instigated). A shortage of quality provision and gap between training and work readiness was another common theme. Work to develop the C&J and Interior Systems Apprenticeships in Scotland is due to start in Summer 2022. An outline of the process was presented at the event in Scotland.

As well as accredited courses, there is a strong demand for smaller flexible training interventions to build skills and knowledge. There needs to be stronger recognition of flexibility and innovation to meet the needs of those that have been trained, it was suggested individuals who have recently qualified should be deemed as 'Improvers' until they have the skills, knowledge attitude and experience to be considered competent by employers. This was reinforced by the Construction Recruitment Agency City Site Solutions that use the term 'Improver' and provide continued support for people who have recently qualified. City-Site have an existing programme working in the C&J sector and are starting to adapt for Drylining where they are hiring out "trainees" on a not-for-profit basis whilst continuing to support training.

Interventions must be identified to ensure Trainers stay current and offer the broad range of skills and knowledge needed to sustain the sector and improve quality. The government scheme Teach in Further Education part-time while remaining in a current occupation may be seen by employers as poaching experienced people. A better solution may be for employers to sub-contact expertise to training providers.

The role of Manufacturers and private provision will be crucial to the delivery of skills, knowledge and to support experience. Ways to share best practice and ensure no duplication of effort in training development regardless of source are being explored to ensure standardisation. Please see the FIS Training Directory for a list of training provider members and the services they offer. However, the need for flexibility in approach, that meets employers' and sector requirements must be central to all delivery.

# SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Although each of the devolved governments are promoting apprenticeships policy intent alone is not a driver for all employers to invest. For large and medium companies to pivot in the direction of direct employ, a profitable pipeline of work must be visible that will ensure an apprentice is engaged for the duration of the apprenticeship.

To support contactors driven by section 106 requirements there is the Flexi-job Apprenticeship scheme highlighted at each event. If an employer is unable to support a 'full apprentice' but may be able to provide experience for some of the apprenticeship training period, through the Flexi-job Apprenticeship scheme when the contact finishes the apprentice will be assigned to another employer.

# COMPETENCE

Upskilling and/or continuous professional development courses does not need to sit within official qualifications structures but should be sector recognised and endorsed. FIS explained the agreement with My Professional Pass a cloud based vault to store, receive and share digital certificates that can provide evidence of achievement for all and any courses attended. The system includes a process for recording work experience. It is believed My Professional Pass is ideal for organisations that rely on a Labour Only Sub Contract workforce, ensuring an individual can quickly provide verifiable proof of competence to prospective employers.

## FUNDING

It was emphasised Micro and small companies require a higher level of financial and practical support. CITB publicised an increase in grant payments of £2000 per apprentice, for those taken on after 01 April 2022, specifically for Dry Lining Apprenticeships, for details contact FIS. Through the FIS Skills and Funding Clinics a total of £107,615 had been recovered for employers between 01 April 2021 and 01 April 2022.

## NETWORKING

At each event the networking sessions exceeded the allotted time and it was encouraging to hear the discussions all focused on improving the sector. Discussions and initial planning for next year's regional meetings has already begun, these will be evening events.

# SUMMARY KEY POINTS AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS

1. The impact of the Building Safety Act and requirement for a Competency Plan will necessitate the need for proof of competence. A clear communications campaign is required to support usage of My Professional Pass. See FIS Skill and Competency Strategy(S&CS) for 2022 Action 1 and 3 below.
2. FIS need to refine the presentation of Career and Qualification Paths and produce a better bank of Central Resources to make more accessible for employer members. See FIS Skills Hub Apprenticeships and Qualifications. See S&CS Action 2 below
3. A skills fact sheet will be made available for each of the government schemes providing details on how employers can use the scheme and links to more details. Under development.
4. Guidance on developing a recruitment plan is critical to include free support available for recruitment that is being under-utilised by the sector: Promoted in FIS News Feeds
  - a. DWP – email [gm.waytowork@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:gm.waytowork@dwp.gov.uk) or telephone 0800 169 0178 with business name, contact details, full postcode of recruitment area and a brief description of your recruitment query.
  - b. Government web site: Advertise a job which is linked to Find a job
  - c. Advertise vacancies using FIS JobSpot
  - d. Construction TalentView About
  - e. Contact your local schools and colleges, but don't be fixed on seeking a Dryliner ask to speak to all on construction training courses.
  - f. Try FIS BuildBack sponsor an individual for one day of assessment, two weeks of introductory training and two weeks of work placement at no cost to employers.
5. Employer Readiness information to be developed and refined to support an understanding of employer responsibilities and mechanisms and best practice guidance to manage them. Under development currently available Apprenticeships Employers Guide

# SUMMARY KEY POINTS AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS

6. Employer involvement is crucial to instigate change, 20% off the job training means employers are responsible for the other 80% of the training, on the job. National training and qualifications will never meet every individual organisation's needs. FIS to focus on providing simple feedback loops to better engage employers. See FIS S&CS for 2022 Action 6, 7 and 9 below

7. There is a need to introduce qualified coaches and mentors to support new entrants, apprentices and trainees during and immediately after the learning phase See FIS S&CS for 2022 Action 10 below

8. There is a strong demand for smaller flexible training interventions to build knowledge over and above formal accreditation. See FIS S&CS for 2022 Action 3 below

9. An emphasis on how to attract a more diverse workforce and reinforce positive messages round the opportunities the finishes and interiors sector can provide. Seeking case studies for publication

10. Greater consistency and best practice exchange is critical to more consistency and better promote attraction and retention. Promoted in FIS News Feeds and via FIS Working Groups

11. Consider the inclusion of 'informal' training e.g., manufacturers product training in national programmes. See FIS S&CS for 2022 Action 3 below

12. Ensure Trainers have access to site work to maintain currency. In development

13. Find ways to track and share evidence and insight, learn from each other and identify and address skills and knowledge gaps. Possibly via My Professional Pass, FIS News feeds and Working Group meetings

**The actions identified in the FIS Skill and Competency Strategy for 2022 and progression to date are:**

Action	Description	Progress as of July 2022
1	Publicise support available to members with regards to the Building Safety Bill through FIS news feeds.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy presented to the FIS Skills Board 16 December 2021, BSB featured on all working groups agenda.</li> <li>2. March to May 2022 six regional events funded by CITB focussed on recruitment, retention, social responsibilities, competence and funding with guest speakers from Women into Construction, Greater London Authority, regional offices of the Department for Work and Pensions, Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Skills Development Scotland.</li> </ol>
2	Develop an employer feedback process and instigate chronological review to ensure Career and Qualification Paths are current.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduced as item on FIS Skills Board, FIS Working Groups and FIS Training Provider Forum agenda.</li> <li>2. Considering a different presentation format June 2022.</li> </ol>
3	Report and consult FIS Skills Board as and when progress is made to introduce MyProPass. Add consultation on occupational CPD requirements for specific occupations to FIS working group meetings.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agreement with MPP signed April 2022</li> <li>2. Initial CPD programme presented to FIS Skills Board and Approved Training Providers Forum June 2022</li> </ol>
4	Facilitate meeting in order to encourage delivery of apprenticeship training and request success case studies for publication.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Progress eLearning package with e-Aptitude potential availability September 2022</li> <li>2. FIS registered on the IfATE register of professional and employer led bodies induction to be completed July 2022</li> </ol>
5	Continue to seek, negotiate and advertise discounts and offers on all training and qualifications provided by the FIS ATP network.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responsibility given to Marie Flinter as Group Training Officer for the FIS National Training Group continuous.</li> <li>2. Dedicated page on FIS web site</li> </ol>
6	Encourage employer involvement in apprenticeship standards revisions influenced via the IfATE Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standards for Interior Systems Installer and Plasterer scheduled to be reviewed starting June 2022.</li> <li>2. Review of Plasterer to start July 2022</li> </ol>

**The actions identified in the FIS Skill and Competency Strategy for 2022 and progression to date are:**

7	Inform, advise and guide employers on the revision and development of qualifications and when and where necessary facilitate consultation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Via regular news feeds and individual emails to members based in each of the home nations.</li> <li>2. Support being provided to all custodian organisations.</li> </ol>
8	Advertise availability of Traineeships across the FIS ATP network and encourage employers to provide work placements for Trainees.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Established a working group to develop technical content with CITB standard completed and signed off April 2022.</li> </ol>
9	Create a conduit for employers to inform on poor assessment practices while remaining anonymous in order for FIS to escalate to the appropriate authorities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Added to FIS Skills Board agenda.</li> <li>2. Continue to promote the services of FIS Approved Training Providers.</li> </ol>
10	Encourage employers to qualify Construction STEM Ambassadors, develop and implement an FIS Ambassador networking group to promote activity and exchange best practice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. George and Catherine qualified in order to support employer members through the process Feb 2022.</li> <li>2. Marie responsible for a register of FIS Construction STEM Ambassadors</li> </ol>
11	FIS to work closely with colleges to improve this return encouraging employer members to visit colleges to see the training being provided.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encouraged via News feeds and FIS Skills Factsheets</li> </ol>
12	Continue delivery of FIS BuildBack extending the project with training for more occupations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. April 2022 project extended to 31 December 2022 with first quarter of 2023 for evaluation and reporting. Plasterer added February 2022.</li> <li>2. New CITB commission reflecting FIS BuildBack autumn 2022 must bid</li> </ol>
13	Monitor available funding sources applicable to the sector and bid.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monthly scan of funding web sites.</li> </ol>
14	Publicise the availability of CITB grant funds for training and qualifying LOSC in order to encourage employers to promote training to LOSC operatives and claim.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Marie supported employers to claim £107,615.00 between April 2021 and April 2022</li> <li>2. Promoted in FIS News</li> </ol>
15	Conduct a Skills Pulse Survey, collect, collate, analysis and report data received by end Q1 2022 to seek feedback on any necessary interventions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moved to Q4 2022 to facilitate regional events and summer break</li> </ol>
16	Advertise vacancies and recruit FIS Skills Board members before end of Q1 2022.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completed April 2022 ongoing.</li> </ol>

# EVENT FEEDBACK

Feedback shows employers appreciated the information provided, comments included:

Charles Richards YouthBuild Ventures UK "As mentioned, I was asked to step in at the last minute for Shenaaz. I am happy that I did as I found the presentations to be useful and informative. It was a pleasure speaking with you too at the end of the session."

Measonm Dryline. "This week our HR team attended the FIS Regional Event in Leicester. The event focused on presenting a collective response to labour shortages and attracting the next generation of workers into the Finishes and Interiors sector. Our team found the event very useful, taking away new methods for the recruitment and retention of our drylining apprentices."

Lee Simkins Stanmore Group "Thanks for the invite to the Seminar this morning. I found it very informative and extremely well presented. All the speakers were excellent and for me, who has only been in my "trades" role for 2 months and on a long learning curve, it gave me a valuable insight into the various organisations and support we may be able to benefit from going forward."

Deborah Callway DWP. "Thank you for yesterday it was very informative, and a good opportunity for discussion. I think there were some honest discussions around supporting new employees and promotion of sectors. I think engagement is vital, also self-promotion using their own workforce, who better to promote what a great opportunity an employer has but their existing workforce."

Patel Krishan DWP. "Thank you for your email and letting me attend the event yesterday. Was great to meet everyone and I definitely learnt a few new things."

George Swann FIS Skills and Training Lead says "The loudest message from these events is FIS know there are employers who are finding it hard out there but as a member of FIS you are never alone, please contact us, if we have not got an answer for you we will know someone who has. To support recruitment from Schools and Colleges FIS have started to build a network of Construction STEM Ambassadors, as a Construction Ambassador the commitment is two visits per year, if you feel you can spare the time for this please get in touch."