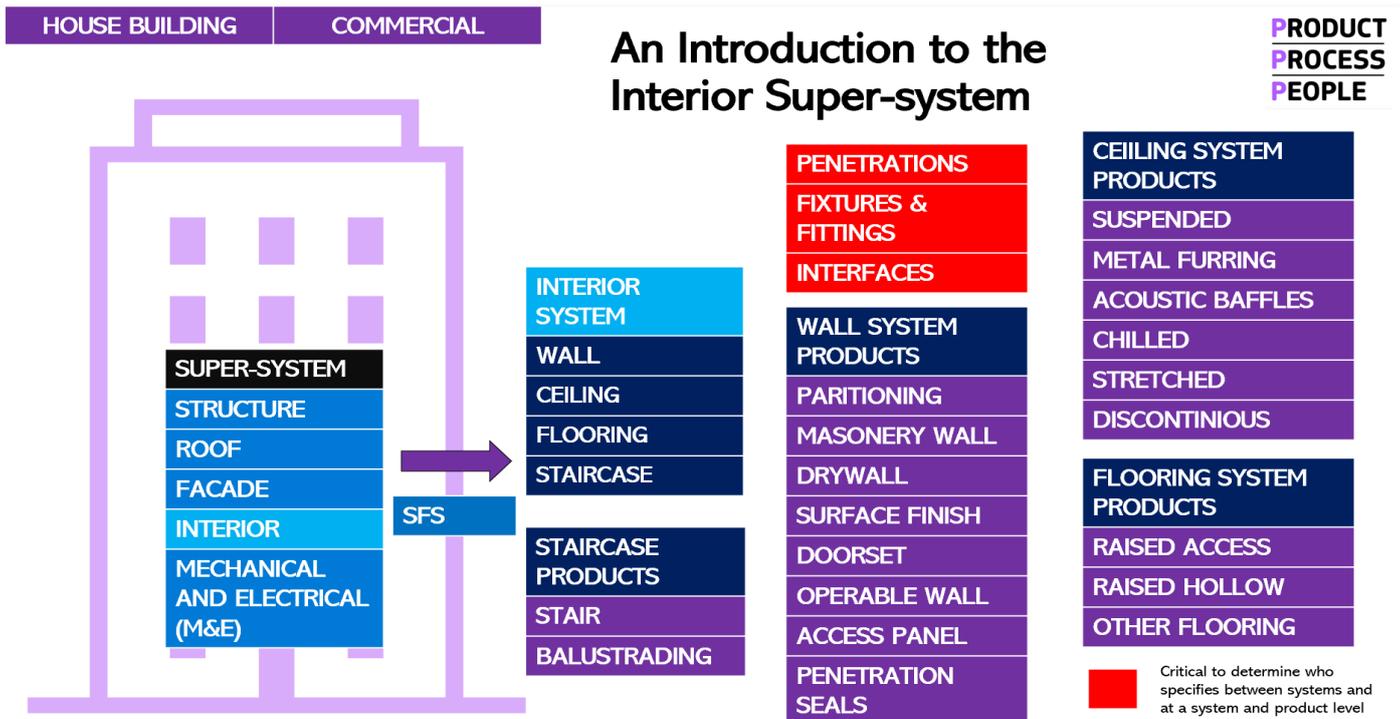


RESPONSE TO THE MIGRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AMMENDMENTS TO THE SHORTAGE OCCUPATION LIST

Interior Systems Installers: A vital construction trade

The Dry Lining, Plastering and Ceiling Fixing occupations are part of a vital family of occupations that support the installation of interior systems. This sector undertakes the construction of internal walls and ceilings for **all** buildings (low rise homes, high rise residential, education, hospital, hotels etc). These elements provide critical compartmentation and are integral to fire safety, acoustic comfort 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 and hence our work supports the refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings essential as part of the nation's net zero ambitions.

We believe key occupations, Dryliner and Ceiling Fixer which are not currently separately listed meet the requirements to be on the skilled worker and shortage occupation list and this should be revisited. The current national data collection systems including the 2010 and 2020 Standard Occupational Classification Codes and Construction Skills Network confuse Dryliners and Ceiling Fixers with Carpenters and Plasterers, FIS collects data directly from employing organisations.

Shortage Occupation List

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

With the net migration of workers, shortages are starting to add to inflation concerns. For example, wage inflation tracked by FIS, is indicating that Dryliner Fixer Day rates have increased by 31% in the period January 2020 to July 2022, plastering by 33% and Ceiling Fixing by 30% over the same period.

At the start of 2023, 48% of contractors responding to our Skills Pulse Survey are experiencing labour shortages and 39% identified that they currently have vacancies. Less than 10% see this situation improving and 32% anticipate a worsening in 2023. This is seen to be constraining growth for 79% of these companies. Beyond this we have had reports of extended contract completion time and an impact on quality and ultimately delivery of work linked to shortages. The top three areas for shortages are Dry Lining, Ceiling Fixing and Plastering (this is closely followed by Carpentry and Joinery)

The Dry Lining occupation accounts for the highest employment sector, approximately 70,000 people were employed across the UK as Dryliners 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 have not remained 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 this challenge by growing Apprenticeships, Bootcamps, SWAPS and a range of structured specialist induction and recruitment programmes run in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions, the Department for Education, Charitable Groups and CITB. Recruitment has been difficult given the shortage of available people and when set against perceptions of working in the construction sector. Apprenticeship durations are 18 months for Dryliners and Ceiling Fixers and 36 months for Plasterers and consequently they do not solve immediate challenges. Around 26% of the current workforce are 50 years plus according to latest data from the FIS Skills Pulse Survey. As Dry Lining has become more technically demanding employer groups are considering the merits of a Dryliner qualification at level 3.

The growing concerns mean that 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 and Carpenters and Joiners are recognised as a skilled worker route, but Ceiling Fixers and Dryliners are not. This does not reflect the high level of skill required in these vital trades and the need to create and maintain a level of experienced employable people to provide the living and working surroundings society has become accustomed too.

Summary:

Occupation	SOC code	Skilled worker eligible occupations	Shortage Occupations list	Qualification level	Current Workforce Annual Recruitment Requirement	Average Salaries
Dryliner	8149 in 2010 SOC codes, but moved to 5321 in 2020 SOC	Currently not included	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level descriptor (but the qualification is not deliverable at present)	Current workforce 60,000 workers ARR 1,200	£36,000 to £55,000 annually
Ceiling Fixer	8149	Currently Not Included	Not currently included	Currently workers working and qualified to RFQ3+ level	6,000 ARR 120	£28,000 to £52,000 annually
Plasterer	5321	Currently recognised	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level	50,000 ARR 720	£36,000 to £55,000 annually
Carpenters and Joiners (total sector, not just Interiors)	5315	Currently recognised	Not currently included	Currently workers working to RFQ3+ level	242,100 ARR 5,280	£28,000 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 around 600 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 member of BuildUK, the Construction Products Association and the Construction Industry Consolidated Voice in Scotland.

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