



BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

LONDON HOMES COALITION

July 2024

































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i ABOUT THE LONDON HOMES COALITION

The London Homes Coalition is a partnership of major housing associations, contractors and specialist providers, supported by Government and strategic stakeholders, who have come together to understand and address a crucial challenge: to ensure we maintain a highly skilled workforce to continue investing in high-quality homes for all.

Together, we have identified the scale of the challenge ahead, and what we can do to address this, acting collaboratively within the industry and with Government, education and training providers, and other key stakeholders.

We know there is no 'quick fix' to this issue. It will require long-term strategic interventions and continuous collaboration by a range of actors to achieve significant change.

This report is only a first step towards achieving this. We invite other organisations, stakeholders and industry bodies to join us in this critical effort and help us to drive this mission forward.

Our partners



































iii. FORFWORD

I am delighted to present the "Building Skills for the Future" report, a comprehensive analysis and strategic guide developed by the London Homes Coalition. This initiative marks a significant collaboration among major housing associations, key contractors and specialist suppliers in London. It addresses the critical skills and labour shortages that jeopardise our capacity to provide and maintain affordable housing across the capital.

The UK social housing sector is a cornerstone of the national economy, investing billions each year in improving and maintaining homes. This investment adds substantial value to communities, supports job creation, and drives economic growth.

London's major housing associations are responsible for building a quarter of all new affordable homes in the capital, and collectively manage and invest in over 770,000 homes across the country. Our commitment encompasses essential repairs, maintenance, building safety upgrades, refurbishments, developments, and retrofits. These efforts are dedicated to ensuring safer, warmer, and more resilient homes for our residents.

However, our workforce is ageing and retiring, exacerbated by insufficient training programmes and limited awareness of career opportunities in the sector. We understand the urgency of acting now to train the next generation of talent.

This report is the culmination of extensive stakeholder engagement and a first-of-its kind analysis of the consolidated programmes of work of housing associations in this coalition. The findings provide us with a clear understanding of the scale of investment needed in the next 5 years, the labour demand and the resulting skills and labour force gaps.

Over the next five years, the seven key housing associations in the Coalition will need around 10,000 people annually to meet asset management commitments, and up to 31,000 to deliver new build investments. Combined, the Coalition's pipeline represents about 10% of the overall construction workforce in the capital, which is a significant share considering the competing needs of other housing association and council programmes.

If we don't act now, the Coalition alone faces a potential shortfall of over 2,600 skilled individuals to deliver our planned investments. Specific trades and occupations will be critical pinch points – given current recruitment trends, we risk having only 85% of the roofers and 78% of the surveyors we need.

Additionally, there will be significant pressures from low-carbon retrofits as sectors compete for the necessary skills to achieve these goals.

To tackle these challenges head-on, we must elevate sector promotion nationally to attract young and diverse talent. We need to remove barriers to skills development by working closely with training providers and programmes. We must ensure a steady work pipeline and funding certainty as essential for proactive skills development planning.

This report is more than just a document; it's a blueprint for action. It provides a strategic roadmap for the sector to unite, collaborate effectively, and take decisive steps toward building the skilled workforce we urgently need. It's time to act together.

Fiona Fletcher-Smith, Chief Executive Officer at L&Q and Chair of the Building Skills for the Future project.

ii. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

iii. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK social housing sector spends billions of pounds improving and maintaining homes every year, adding substantial value to communities, supporting jobs and driving economic growth and productivity.

However, their ability to provide and maintain affordable housing across the capital is threatened by what is fast becoming a critical skills and labour shortage.

Regulatory changes on building safety and housing quality, and UK- and London-wide Net Zero ambitions, although very much welcomed, are driving an increase in demand for maintenance, repairs and home improvements. While this marks a promising opportunity for investment, it comes at a time when the industry is struggling to recruit and retain workers with the right skills, and often falls on the shoulders of charities and non-profit social housing providers to fulfil. The legacy of COVID-19 and Brexit has also had a severe impact on workforce availability, and competition for skilled workers within the wider construction industry is high.

Building Skills for the Future

Recognising this challenge and the need to work together across the social housing sector to address it, we formed the London Homes Coalition, a partnership of major housing associations, contractors and specialist providers to deliver the Building Skills for the Future project.

The purpose of this project is to 1) understand the scale of the demand for asset management and investment works over the next years, 2) identify the skills gaps likely to result, and 3) design and deliver solutions working together as a sector in close partnership with Government, industry bodies, and education providers.

This report is the conclusion of the first stage of this project and provides a direction of travel for the next steps of this long-term initiative.

Understanding the problem

To identify the scale of this challenge, we conducted a first-of-its-kind analysis of the consolidated work programmes from the seven key housing associations in the Coalition, integrated with a process of partnership building and stakeholder engagement.

Based on this analysis, we identified that:



The Coalition's labour demand represents a substantial share of the workforce in London

Over the next five years, the London Homes Coalition will need **around 10,000 people annually** to meet asset management commitments, and up to **31,000 people** to deliver planned new build investments.

Combined, the Coalition's pipeline alone represents about 10% of London's overall construction workforce demand, which is a significant proportion considering the competing needs of other housing associations and council house building and asset management programmes.



If we don't take action, we face a gap of over 2,600 skilled workers over the next five years

Considering current recruitment trends and the identified labour demand, the Coalition alone faces a potential shortfall of 2,625 skilled individuals to deliver our planned investments over the next five years.



This challenge is particularly critical for specific trades and occupations

Roofers and carpenters & joiners are critical bottlenecks in asset management. The Coalition alone will **demand 8-10%** of London's construction workforce trained in these occupations, and they already face significant recruitment pressures.



For key pinch-point occupations, we will only have a fraction of the people required to deliver investments

Given current recruitment trends, without further action the Coalition would only have around 85% of the roofers needed, and around 78% of surveyors required to deliver asset management and new build investments.



Diversity & Inclusion is a key area in need of improvement in the sector

Women represent only 14% of the construction workforce in London, and as low as 2% in trade occupations. Similarly, ethnic minorities make up only 24% of the workforce, compared to 40% in other industries. The sector is missing out on the skills and contributions of a wide range of people.



Competing demand for low-carbon retrofit could exacerbate these shortfalls

Pressures from low carbon retrofit across all development sectors will compete for skills in the delivery of the Coalition's low carbon activity and regular asset management, which would strain an already limited workforce.

How we will address this challenge

We know that tackling this will require longterm commitments and working together within the social housing sector, the wider construction industry, and with Government, education providers, industry bodies and many other organisations.

Recognising the scale of the labour and skills gaps for the London Homes Coalition, and the broader set of challenges and pressures for the sector, this report makes a series of recommendations as to how to address this:



Promote the sector nationally, showcasing opportunities and benefits of working in the social housing sector, working closely with education providers to proactively reach young people, and targeting under-represented groups.



Remove barriers to apprenticeships and skills development, reviewing current entry requirements, promoting existing programmes, and working with education providers to improve training provision.



Create greater certainty of work pipelines and funding in the sector, allowing for proactive skills development planning, and maximising procurement practices and social value commitments to enhance training and recruitment.

To achieve this, it will be key to:

- Ensure diversity & inclusion is embedded in solution design and implementation.
- Make better use of data and new technologies to help plan and deliver training and increase awareness of the sector.
- Work closely with Government at local, regional and national levels and be at the centre of funding and policy discussions.
- Explore innovative ways to approach this through place-based interventions.

What's next?

Our work does not stop here. This is only the first step of a long-term collaborative effort. We want to bring more committed organisations to this initiative to help us turn these recommendations into reality.

Failing to face up to the challenges will impact more than just housing associations. It will have a knock-on effect on the health, wellbeing and safety of all social housing residents. Not acting will also impact the UK's ability to meet its net zero goals and the future delivery of investment programmes.

We have already started to plan and mobilise to continue this work. If you are interested in joining the coalition and contributing to delivering these solutions, please reach out to contact@innercircleconsulting.co.uk.

01. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The UK social housing sector spends billions of pounds improving and maintaining homes each year. This adds substantial value to communities, supports jobs, and can drive economic growth and productivity. Housing associations' investment in existing homes directly adds £11.8bn to the national economy every year and supports around 150,000 jobs across the country¹.

The need to invest more in homes is both an opportunity and a challenge. A huge opportunity to create prosperity and sustainable, inclusive growth. But an equally huge challenge, as the investment and growth opportunity cannot be realised without a programme to build the skills for the future.

Post-Grenfell building safety regulations, increasing concern and regulation around housing quality, and Net Zero ambitions are all driving a rapid increase in investment. At the same time, the construction labour force is under pressure due to changes in emigration patterns, an ageing workforce, and a lack of sufficient and quality apprenticeships.

As a result, major landlords and contractors are experiencing labour shortages which hinder their capacity to deliver asset and investment programmes, worsened by a lack of investment in future skills programmes to ready the workforce to meet new standards and requirements.

This is why we formed the London Homes Coalition, to deliver the Building Skills for the Future project. Through this project, we want to identify the investment needed in our homes, the skillset and labour force required to deliver this investment, and design and implement solutions to address this issue.

Building Skills for the Future project stages

Stage 1. Defining the problem

Stage 2. Scoping the solutions

Stage 3. Delivering the solutions

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken in Stage 1 of this project, including:

- A detailed data analysis of the consolidated work programmes of London's major housing associations for the next 5-10 years, and the future workforce demand and the resulting skills gap.
- An understanding of the range of potential solutions to the skills gaps, including collaborative action on outreach and promotion, training and skills development, operations and procurement, and workforce policies and culture.
- A high-level plan for how to progress the identified solutions.

Through this work, we are building the foundations for the next stages of this project, where we will scope and deliver the interventions required to address the skills and labour force gap in the sector and invest in quality homes for all.

02. SETTING THE CONTEXT

2.1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

Numerous factors are all driving the need for increased investment in existing homes, and this is only expected to continue over the coming years.

As the need for asset management and investment work in London grows, the demand for skilled workers rises with it. This means that more jobs and career opportunities will be generated – more and more skilled workers will be needed.

Similarly, with changes in regulation, shifts in consumer expectations, and the continuous availability of new technologies, the skills

Improving homes to improve health

There is a very clear link between living in a safe and well-made home, and the wellbeing of the individual. It's very simple; poor housing has a severe impact on our health and wellbeing. The independent Marmot Review (2010) identified housing as one of the key social determinants of health, which can affect physical and mental health inequalities throughout people's lives².

44% of the population work from home³

Homes are the foundation for a healthy and fulfilling life. Post-Covid, the function of the home evolved, with recent times calling them to serve as a home, office and a social space. More time is being spent at home and so it's even more important that homes are fit for purpose.

requirement landscape in the sector is constantly evolving, which opens up a broad range of career opportunities available.

Putting residents at the heart

Housing associations must invest in existing homes and the very positive impact of this is the impact it will have on residents. Safe, well-maintained housing goes beyond shelter; it fosters physical and mental well-being, improves educational opportunities, strengthens communities, and fuels economic prosperity.

A healthier economy

At least 2.6 million of England's homes presents threats to their occupant's health and safety. The cost to the NHS of treating people who are affected by poor housing is estimated at £1.4bn⁴. Improving the quality of our existing homes will generate considerable savings.

Fixing the worst housing for low-income older adults could save the NHS almost £600 million a year⁵.

The LSE found that improving low-quality housing could significantly reduce adult social care costs by £3.5 billion annually⁵.

"Improving the country's health cannot be done without improving the quality of our homes." ⁵

² Marmot M, et al. 2020. Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On. health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on ³ ONS, 2023. Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 22 to January 2024.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/characteristicsofhomeworkersgreatbritain/september2022tojanuary2023

⁴ BRE, 2021. The cost of poor housing in England. https://files.bregroup.com/research/BRE_Report_the_cost_of_poor_housing_2021.pdf

5 Centre for Ageing Better, 2024. Fixing England's dangerous homes would deliver more than £1.5 billion in annual health and social care savings https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/fixing-englands-dangerous-homes

2.2. BUILDING SAFER AND BETTER HOMES

Significant regulatory shifts in the social housing sector, such as the Social Housing Regulation Act and Building Safety Act, are introducing reforms to ensure all social housing residents are heard and have access to safe homes.

Furthermore, the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) and regular inspections aims to enhance safety standards for residents. Increased focus on accountability and transparency shines a spotlight on housing associations' responsibility to their tenants and regulators. As a result, prioritising the repair and maintenance of existing homes becomes even more crucial.

Regular Inspections and Reporting

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 20236 requires more frequent and detailed inspections of buildings and transparent reporting to residents and regulators.

Housing associations are feeling the pressure to address issues with existing stock quickly and effectively.

White Paper pledge to reduce non-decency in rented homes by 50% by 20307.

High quality focus

In addition, the Building Safety Act 20228 focuses on the structural safety of all buildings and fire safety in higher-risk buildings. The BSA introduces stricter regulations and requirements for building owners and managers to ensure buildings are constructed, maintained, and renovated to meet safety standards. The Act has encouraged a cultural shift towards prioritising safety and quality in housing management

The government have confirmed plans for 'Awaab's Law' to be introduced this year- which will mandate strict timeframes for social housing landlords to address dangerous health hazards such as damp and mould. Again, this tightens responsibility for social landlords to deliver safer and healthier homes9.

A new standards and inspection programme¹⁰

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is raising the bar for social housing in England and Wales. New consumer standards and a stricter regulatory approach ensure wellgoverned housing associations. Additionally, the introduction of TMS empowers tenants by giving them a voice in their living conditions. Starting June 30th, 2024, large landlords must submit data on repairs, maintenance, cleanliness, and overall living environment. This public data will hold social housing providers accountable for meeting higher standards. However, these advancements create a critical need for a skilled workforce.

The pressure to address TSM concerns and implement new technologies could further strain the existing workforce and exacerbate the skills gap.

Increased powers of the Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman has been granted new powers under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, enabling it to address individual complaints and extend "fairness" and protection" to a broader range of residents¹¹.

This complements the focus on TSM data by providing a means for tenants to hold housing associations accountable and ensure their living conditions meet acceptable standards.

⁶ Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/36
⁷ DLUHC, 2022. A fairer private rented sector. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-fairer-private-rented-sector/a-fairer-private-rented-sect

¹⁰ Barber, O. Housing Today, https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/regulator-of-social-housing-finalises-new-consumer-standards-and-regulatory-approach/5128071.article

¹¹ Housing Ombudsman Service , 2023. https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2023/10/10/housing-ombudsman-publishes-revised-scheme-to-extend-fairness-to-all-residents-beyond-individual-complaints/

2.3. FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

The RSH's focus on raising standards encourages social housing providers to invest in long-term solutions rather than quick fixes. Poor quality homes raise the costs of living and contribute to climate change and new technologies will be part of this movement. Retrofitting homes with energyefficient technologies and improved ventilation systems can deliver lasting improvements in comfort and energy efficiency.

Every year, England's homes produce 58.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide - more than all of our cars¹².

The UK has set a target to bring all carbon emissions to net zero by 2050^{13} .

A transformation in building practices

In December 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released the muchanticipated consultation on the Future Homes Standard. The consultation outlines ambitious steps to slash carbon emissions in new builds by focusing on efficient heating, hot water systems, and minimizing heat loss. This 2025 initiative aims to create "future-fit" homes that are kinder to the planet¹⁴.

"The Future Homes Standard will play a pivotal role in our overall goals for reaching net zero by 2050; but it will mean more and more people getting to grips with the latest generation of clean technology and renewable energy."14

Big ambitions

The UK Government has committed to upgrading as many homes as possible to meet an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2035¹⁵. This ambitious plan requires a radical transformation of the housing stock.

New ventilation and airflow systems are crucial, and this necessitates a skilled workforce capable of installing, maintaining, and troubleshooting these innovative solutions. Investing in upskilling the existing workforce and attracting new talent with these specialised skills is critical to achieving this national goal.

Heat from homes currently accounts for around 16% of the UK's total carbon emissions, and 35% of the total energy use¹⁶.

Retrofitting plays a key role in achieving the UK Government's Net Zero targets

Also, new Ofgem regulation around heat networks, set to be in place in 2025, will create new requirements for developments to have heat networks within them. Together with the heat network zoning plans, also set to be implemented in 2025, will drive up demand for skills and specialised technicians in this area to deliver new requirements¹⁷.

¹² National Housing Federation, 2021. https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/news/englands-leaky-homes-greater-threat-to-climate-than-cars/#:~:text=The%20research%20calculates%20for%20the,million%20tonnes%20of%20CO2%20annually.

¹³ House of Commons Library, 2023. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9888/ 14 Buildpass, 2024. An Overview of the Future Homes Standard Consultation. https://buildpass.co.uk/blog/an-overview-of-the-future-homes-standard-consultation/

¹⁵ BEIS, MHCLG, 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-energy-performance-certificates-action-plan-progress-report/improving-energy-performance-certificatesaction-plan-progress-report

¹⁶ Lloyds Bank Group, 2023. https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/sustainability/making-homes-greener.html

¹⁷ Ofgem, Heat Networks. https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/energy-policy-and-regulation/policy-and-regulatory-programmes/heat-networks

So, what's the challenge?

The housing sector is undergoing a seismic shift. Stringent safety standards, tenant satisfaction measures, and regular inspections demand a laser focus on the upkeep and improvement of existing social housing stock.

This is not just about compliance; it is about fostering a cultural shift towards prioritising resident safety and quality of life. This translates to a higher demand for skilled individuals who can deliver repairs and maintenance to a consistently high standard. But the vision extends beyond immediate needs.

Housing associations must also future-proof their properties to ensure long-term value and resident comfort. Retrofitting existing homes with advanced insulation, ventilation systems, and moisture barriers will be crucial. To achieve this ambitious goal, the social housing sector faces a critical skills gap.

This potential for skills gaps to slow down the delivery of investment programmes and therefore the realisation of important ambitions to address climate change, improve building safety and drive-up housing quality. As the needs of housing associations grow higher, the amount of skilled workers needs to grow with it.

What can we do?

This report helps to understand and address the labour shortages which are being experienced by major landlords in the delivery of asset management and investment programmes in London, taking into account the needs of the wider construction industry. If we can provide a clear voice for London to secure the right skills for this investment, we can invest in high quality homes for all and see huge social, environmental and economic benefits.

03. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

3.1. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Our approach to this project integrated a comprehensive analysis of construction skills, employing proven industry-leading research methodologies, alongside a strategic process of partnership building and collaborative inquiry.

In summary, we carried out:

30+

1:1 interviews with partner organisations and strategic stakeholders



Literature Review

to identify industry trends in current and future skills and labour demand



2

large events (40+ attendees) to present findings and capture feedback



Data analysis

on asset management and new build pipelines from partner housing associations



7

workshops with partners to validate emerging findings and identify solutions



Forecast and gap analysis

to understand the scale of the challenge and how to address it



This approach allowed us to:

- Capture and understand the key challenges faced by the sector concerning skills and labour force gaps, drawing on the firsthand experiences of industry leaders.
- Identify the labour demand, resulting skills gap, and critical pinch points by occupation through a detailed analysis of

the consolidated work programs of London's major housing associations, along with an understanding of broader industry trends.

Sections 3.2 and 3.3 share further detail on the specific process and methodologies that were used to fully identify the scale of the challenge and indicate where solutions should be focused

3.2. ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Our approach

Throughout this project, over 30 one-to-one interviews were conducted with an array of organisations, such as housing associations, contractors and technology specialists. Strategic discussions took place with a broad range of stakeholders including training providers, recruitment and procurement specialists, local and regional Government, industry bodies, and many other organisations.

The objective of all one-on-one interviews was to gather insights based on both organisational and personal experiences, with the two following focus points:

1) Current demand and access to labour and skills: Emerging shifts in demand in the sector; key skills gaps that risk delivery of housing investment in London; challenges around recruitment or retention in the longterm, and key drivers changing skills requirements in the next 3-5 years.

2) Emerging solutions: Potential solutions to address workforce supply challenges; strengthening the connections between public procurement, training and recruitment; the role of apprenticeships; current and future training needs.

In addition to the interviews conducted, the emerging findings were presented at two key events in February and May 2024. These two events provided further opportunities for feedback and further insight gathering.

Throughout the entire engagement and subsequent analysis process, key drivers were able to be identified to highlight the reasons behind the increasing and shifting labour demand in London.

Key drivers of increasing and shifting labour and skills demand

- ▶ Increased sustainability standards from Net Zero regulations.
- ► Retrofit targets increased and with urgency to ensure specialised and experience workforce.
- ▶ Building safety standards created further resource pressures.
- ▶ Recent and upcoming regulatory changes (e.g., Future Homes Standard).
- ► Housing associations prioritisation on investment which determines that skills are needed in the sector.
- ► Growing number of repairs due to increased customer expectations, condition of current stock, and to align with regulations.
- ▶ Increased need to incorporate new technologies and use of data in the sector.
- ▶ Legacy of COVID-19 and Brexit impact on workforce.
- ► Competition within the wider construction industry and with other industries.

Main challenges

The engagement process enabled further challenges to be identified. The sector is currently grappling with challenges such as skills development, access to the right talent, recruitment and retention issues as well as proactive labour and skills demand planning.



Industry perception and awareness

- The social housing sector struggles to attract young talent, as careers in the sector are often not seen as attractive or valued options.
- There is **insufficient career advice** and guidance in schools, creating a lack of awareness of the sector from an early age.
- There is limited awareness of the array of roles and opportunities within the sector, including the career path itself, learning and development prospects, promotional opportunities and personal growth.
- There is an increase in the expectations of roles, with the requirements for specific jobs becoming more demanding.
 Additionally, there is a growing need for multi-trade individuals with diverse skillsets.
- There is a lack of diversity in the sector, with women and ethnic minorities representing a small proportion of the workforce.
- The industry's lack of diversity creates a **self-perpetuating cycle**. Underrepresented communities see fewer role models in the industry, discouraging them from pursuing skilled trades.



Operations and procurement

- Short-term procurement contracts hinder contractors' ability (particularly SMEs) to invest in long-term training and skills.
- **Insufficient consistency** and accuracy in procurement contracts can hinder efficiency and jeopardise positive supplier relationships.
- Procurement practices in the sector are not leveraging opportunities to promote effective and inclusive skills development through contracts.
- Insufficient adoption of new technologies and utilisation of data can lead to missed opportunities for proactive labour demand planning.

- Inadequate investment in early-stage planning limits the ability to accurately know detailed pipelines of work and therefore what skills and expertise will be needed throughout the project.
- Regulatory uncertainty is impeding long-term planning and investment (e.g., changes in national net zero commitments).
- London has specific challenges in delivery logistics, e.g., less satisfied customers, higher demand, parking difficulties, and building safety concerns, and more complicated monitoring and evaluation due to high-rise buildings.
- Insufficient policies and processes are in place to create inclusive and safe environments for all people, particularly for under-represented communities.



- The **apprenticeship levy** approach is not effectively utilised, this can lead to missed opportunities for joined-up skill development across the sector.
- There are increasing qualification requirements in foundational skills (Maths and English) which can create further barriers in accessing skills training opportunities.
- Training programmes are limited in their scope; they do not encompass a broad range of skills, such as communications or contract management.
- Skills requirements in the sector are constantly evolving due to new technology and changes in regulation. This makes it more challenging for the sector and training providers to maintain up-to-date training programmes.
- There is a **shortage of experienced people** to train new generations and insufficient funding to train trainers. This limits the capacity to provide quality and sufficient training programmes for occupations in the sector.



Skills development and training



- Many workers are nearing retirement age, leading to a significant labour shortage that will worsen if younger generations do not join the sector.
- There are difficulties in upskilling the existing workforce to new industry standards and technologies, which further reduces the pool of available skilled people.
- Rising recruitment costs, partly driven by pressure on wages due to lack of supply, making it harder for organisations, particularly smaller firms, to fill essential roles.
- There is a **lack of administrative roles** within the sector, further exacerbating overall labour shortages.
- Organisations, particularly smaller ones, are struggling to retain employees, impacting an organisation's long-term investment in workforce training and again leading to further labour shortages.
- There is a critical shortage of certified individuals to meet current requirements, such as retrofit and green building practices.

These issues reflect the extent of the challenge that the social housing sector faces, and the various ways they can be addressed.

The findings from this engagement process are complemented by a robust labour demand forecast and skills gap analysis, summarised in the following section.

3.3. DEMAND FORECASTING AND GAP ANALYSIS

Introduction

Having a robust and reliable evidence base is crucial for making informed decisions about labour and skills. This will help to ensure that any interventions are appropriately targeted and address where the need is greatest.

To support the work of the London Homes Coalition, we have carried out a detailed construction labour demand analysis of the work being planned by the housing association members of the Coalition. This has been contextualized within the broader construction labour market in London, as well as the South-East and East of England regions.

The demand for construction labour depends on several factors, including broader macroeconomic conditions. However, it is primarily driven by the Coalition's investment plans, encompassing both the amount we intend to spend and the specific projects we plan to fund.

This section outlines the nature of the construction industry, focusing on broader employment trends, patterns, and demographics, specifically for London where possible.

We have also reviewed the work pipelines for each of the housing associations in the Coalition to determine future workforce requirements. These requirements have been compared to the forecasted availability of the broader workforce.

Characteristics of the industry

The construction industry is made up of a number of sectors covering housing, infrastructure and public and private non-housing works for both new build and repair and maintenance.

In the UK as a whole, the repair and maintenance sector (housing and nonhousing) accounts for around 41% by value of construction work: in London, it accounts for around 30% (Figure 1). About 60% (£6.5bn) of the 31% repair and maintenance spend is related to both public and private housing repair and maintenance. The new build housing sector in London accounts for around a further 30% of the output (£12bn per annum). It is in these two sectors that the Coalition will operate and compete for skilled labour.



Figure 1: Average 2024-2028 regional construction output: breakdown by sector¹⁸

Based on the CITB Construction Skills Network report, the construction workforce in London, the South-East and East of England is just over one million people.

The London workforce forecast for the 2024-2028 period is between 402,250 and 426,750 people, with an average of 413,500 people, accounting for 39% of the total of the three regions (Figure 2).

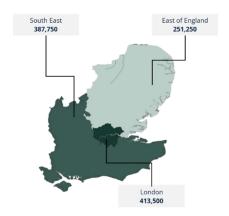


Figure 2: Average 2024-2028 construction workforce demand by region¹⁹

The construction industry has a large proportion of self-employed workers. Over the last two decades, this has varied between 3 and 40% of the workforce and currently sits at 37%.

This large proportion of the workforce being self-employed can present additional challenges for recruitment and training in the sector.

There is geographical mobility of the construction workforce within the three regions (Figure 3).

Around three-quarters of the workforce in each region have their current workplace in the same region as their permanent residence. Within the East of England and London, most of the remainder comes from neighbouring regions. However, in the South-East, approximately 15% are from regions much further afield than neighbouring regions.

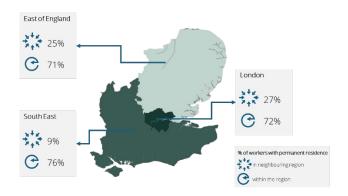
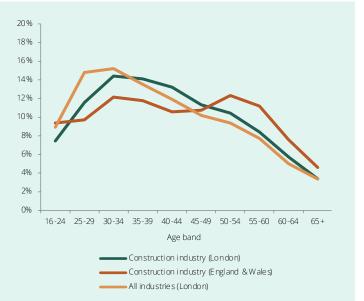


Figure 3: Inter-regional/national movement from permanent residence to current site²⁰

Age profile²¹

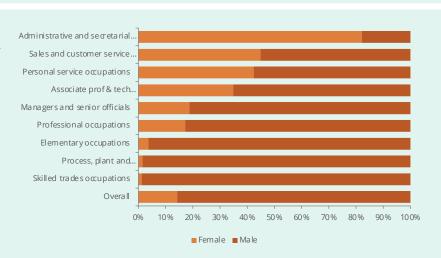
The age profile of the construction workforce in London is younger than the wider construction workforce in England and Wales, driven by a lower share of people in the 50+ age bands.

At the same time, the London construction workforce presents an older age profile when compared to the London workforce across all industries. This varies by occupation as outlined in the Technical Annex scorecard (see Technical Annex).



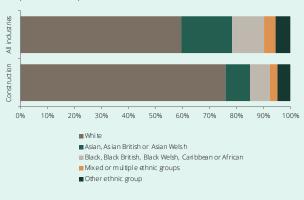
Gender²²

Women represent only **14%** of the construction workforce in London, and as low as 2% in trade occupations.



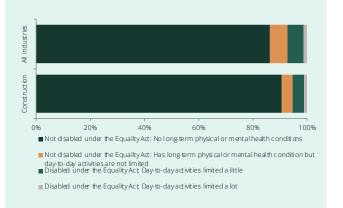
Ethnicity²³

The construction workforce in London is less ethnically diverse, with ethnic minorities making up 24% of the construction workforce in the capital, compared to 40% across all industries.



Disability²⁴

The proportion of disabled and not disabled construction workers in London is similar to that for all industries.



²¹ ONS, 2023. Census 2021

²² ONS, 2024. Annual Population Survey, Dec 2023

²³ ONS, 2023. Census 2021

²⁴ ONS, 2023. Census 2021

Labour demand

We have estimated the labour demand arising from the asset management and new build plans of the seven housing associations within the Coalition, using the CITB Labour Forecasting Tool (LFT).

The LFT can estimate the construction labour requirements (i.e., number of operatives, managers, designers and support services) based on the value of work being delivered.

To gain an understanding of the spending plans we have engaged with each of the seven housing associations in the Coalition to obtain their asset management and investment plans over the next 5-10 years.

A distinction is maintained in the analysis between asset management and new build. This reflects the nature of the workforce which may focus on one or the other of those sectors (although there will be overlap). However, more crucially, it allows the occupational pressures which may be pertinent to one or the other to be seen independently.

The modelling has been carried out based on the spend profiles provided by the Coalition members and therefore reflects the current commitments. As there may be future changes to policy or regulation which require these to vary, we have explored scenarios around low carbon retrofit and offsite construction in later sections.

We have been through a process of consultation with the Coalition members to review the preliminary forecast and adjust as necessary to ensure that the results are as robust as possible. The consultation has been carried out both through 1-to-1 with data providers, and in group workshops to review the aggregate outputs.

The analysis indicates that the Coalition will need around 10,000 people per year to meet asset management commitments, and up to 31,000 people to deliver new build investments.

Combined, the Coalition's pipeline alone represents around 10% of the overall construction workforce in London, which is a significant share considering competing needs from other housing association and council house building and asset management programmes.

The overall construction workforce in London is forecast to require an additional recruitment of 26,250 people over the next five years. Considering that 10% of this workforce will be required to deliver the Coalition's programmes, this would represent around 2,656 people required to be recruited into the sector, in addition to expected recruitment from historical flows.

In other words, if recruitment into the sector continues on its current trend, the Coalition alone faces a **potential shortfall of 2,625 skilled individuals** to deliver asset management commitments and new build planned investments over the next five years.

The following sections provide further details into the asset management and new build work pipeline and labour demand and into the challenges from specific occupations within the sector.

Asset Management

Figure 4 shows the output of the forecast of labour demand arising from the Coalition asset management plans. The asset management workforce demand over the next five years is forecast to remain relatively constant, varying between 9,760 and 10,850 people, with an average of 10,280 people.

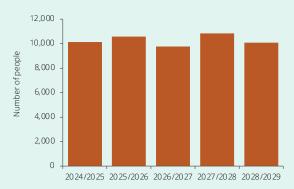


Figure 4: 2024/25-2028/29 workforce demand: asset management

The average number of people required by occupational group to deliver asset management work over the 2024/25-2028/29 period is shown in Table 1.

The analysis shows that the mix of occupational groups involved in the delivery of asset management works does not change significantly over the 2024/25-2028/29 period (e.g. carpenters and joiners account for percentages varying between 14% and 15% of the total demand; plumbing and HVAC trades share varies between 9% and 10%).

The analysis indicates that the five occupational groups with the highest demand for the delivery of asset management work over the next five years are as follows.

- Carpenters and joiners (average demand of 1,480 people)
- Other construction and building trades (average demand of 1,240 people)
- Plumbing and HVAC trades (average demand of 980 people)
- Non-construction professionals and technical office-based staff (average demand of 910 people)
- Directors, executives and senior managers (average demand of 830 people).

New Build

Figure 5 shows the output of the analysis of future labour demand arising from the new build component of the Coalition's plans. The new build workforce demand over the next five years is forecast to range between 13,220 people in 2028/29 and 31,080 people in 2025/26, with an average of 21,200 people. There is an apparent tail off in workforce from 2025/26 onwards, although this may reflect a reduction in confirmed spending.

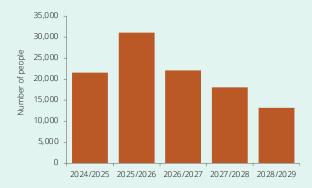


Figure 5: 2024/25-2028/29 workforce demand: new build

The average number of people by occupation required to deliver asset management work over this period is shown in Table 1. The analysis shows that the five occupational groups with the highest demand for the delivery of new build work over the next five years are as follows.

- Other professionals and technical staff working in construction (average demand of 2,900 people)
- Directors, executives and senior managers (average demand of 2,330 people)
- Non-construction professionals and technical office-based staff (average demand of 2,130 people)
- Other non-construction office-based staff (average demand of 1,810 people)
- Other construction and building trades (average demand of 1,390 people)

Table 1: Average workforce demand 2024/25-2028/29, annually

Occupational group	Average number of people Asset management	Average number of people New build
Other professionals and technical staff working in construction	450	2,900
Directors, executives and senior managers	910	2,330
Non-construction professionals and technical office based staff	910	2,130
Carpenters and joiners	1,480	1,170
Other construction and building trades	1,240	1,390
Other non-construction office-based staff	790	1,810
Plumbing and HVAC trades	980	1,060
Electrical installation trades	830	1,050
Labourers	170	970
Surveyors	140	850
Bricklayers and masons	40	850
Painters and decorators	560	280
Plasterers	340	270
Construction project managers	150	440
Roofers	320	250
Civil engineers	70	480
Architects	70	460
Construction trades supervisors	170	300
Plant operatives	20	400
Plant mechanics/fitters	20	390
Floorers and wall tilers	160	210
Non-construction trades and operatives	100	270
Scaffolders	150	180
Logistics	60	250
Groundworkers	30	190
Glaziers and window trades	100	110
Steel erectors and metal workers	<10	200
Road and rail construction operatives	<10	10
Total	10,280	21,200

Labour demand in context and mismatch analysis

It is important to consider the labour demand forecast to deliver any given pipeline of work in the context of the wider demand for construction labour in the same neighbouring regions.

This is achieved by calculating the overall proportion of the construction workforce required to deliver the modelled pipeline as a percentage of the total regional construction workforce and the annual recruitment requirement (ARR). More details of the methodology are outlined in our Technical Annex.

Prioritising one occupation over another

The scoring matrix in Table 2 outlines the criteria used to assess the pinch points associated with each occupational group, and therefore the level of priority they should take when developing policies and plans to tackle them.

- Occupations with an above-average ARR and share of demand are deemed to be "high priority" occupations;
- Occupations with a demand of less than 50 person-years are classified as "very low priority" regardless of their ARR level;
- Occupations with no ARR but a demand greater than 50 person-years but below average are classified as "low priority".
- The remaining are classified as "medium priority".

A zero ARR does not mean that no recruitment is required, but that current recruitment levels are forecast to satisfy future demand. It is therefore important that existing recruitment approaches for occupations with no ARR are continued.

Table 2: Scoring matrix for each occupation

ARR ²⁵	ARR > Average ARR	Very low priority	Medium priority	High priority
	ARR ≤ Average ARR	Very low priority	Medium priority	High priority
	No ARR	Very low priority	Low priority	Medium priority
Londor deman	n Homes Coalition d	< 50 people	≥ 50 people	≥ 50 people
	n Homes Coalition d as share of London vment	n/a	≤ average	> average

²⁵ Additional average annual recruitment requirement⁵

Results

High-level results of the prioritisation procedure are presented in the sections below distinguishing between the following.

- Construction trades and manual occupations;
- Construction-specific professionals and managerial occupations; and
- Non-construction specific occupations.

Details of the values of each of the metrics used to identify potential pressures and skills mismatches can be found in our accompanying Technical Annex.

Construction trades and manual occupations

Table 3 below provides an overview of the outcome of the prioritisation exercise for construction trades and manual occupations. Roofers and carpenters & joiners are critical pinch-points – the Coalition alone will require around 8-10% of London's construction workforce for these occupations, which already have significant recruitment pressures (see Technical Annex).

Considering current recruitment trends, the Coalition would only have 85% of the roofers needed to deliver asset management and new build works.

Table 3: Priority rating: construction trades and manual occupations

Occupational group	Priority rating	
	Asset Management	New Build
Roofers		
Carpenters and joiners		
Plumbing and HVAC trades		
Glaziers and window trades		
Electrical installation trades		
Painters and decorators		
Floorers and wall tilers		
Scaffolders		
Other construction and building trades		
Construction trades supervisors		
Labourers		
Logistics		
Bricklayers and masons		
Plant mechanics/fitters		
Steel erectors and metal workers		
Plant operatives		
Groundworkers		
Plasterers		
Road and rail construction operatives		

Construction professionals and managerial occupations

Table 4 below provides a high-level overview of the outcome of the prioritisation exercise for construction professionals and managerial occupations.

According to this analysis, the Coalition would only have 78% of surveyors needed to deliver asset management and new build work programmes if current recruitment trends continue.

Table 4: Priority rating: construction professionals and managerial occupations

Occupational group	Priority rating	
	Asset Management	New Build
Surveyors		
Other professionals and technical staff working in construction		
Construction project managers		
Civil engineers		
Architects		

Other occupational groups

Table 5 below provides a high-level overview of the outcome of the prioritisation exercise for the remaining occupational groups. This group are less construction-specific than the two previous groups.

Table 5: Priority rating: other occupational groups

Occupational group	Priority rating	
	Asset Management	New Build
Other non-construction office-based staff		
Directors, executives and senior managers		
Non-construction professionals and technical office based staff		
Non-construction trades and operatives		

Investigating further variables

To enhance the analyses and to understand the sensitivity of future skills needs to potential variables which have not been modelled we have considered the impact of wider low carbon retrofit in London for repair and maintenance, as well as the role of modern methods of construction for new build.

Low carbon retrofit

To understand the likely scale of the challenge the Coalition might face in delivering energy improvements on their building stock, we have isolated out the part of the Coalition asset management plans which refer to energy performance improvement/sustainability works.

Forecasts of labour demand obtained from the analysis of the Coalition plans were then put in the context of the wider London demand for low carbon retrofit skills.

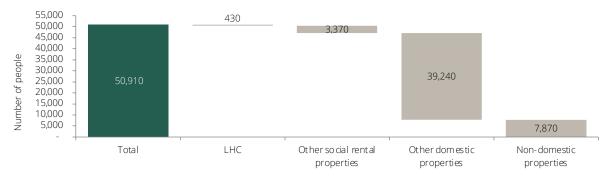


Figure 7: Average low carbon labour demand for London Homes Coalition planned works in context

Feedback from the validation workshops has indicated the workforce from the Coalition's low carbon work is very low compared to the estimate of the workforce for all low carbon retrofit in social housing.

It was agreed in the Coalition workshops that the committed plans are probably lower than what might be realistically expected due to uncertainty over future funding for such works, meaning that they are not yet specified in the pipelines of work.

The average number of people in each occupation required to deliver the Coalition's energy improvement works is shown in Figure 7.

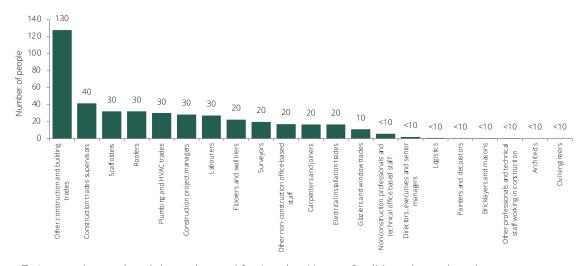


Figure 7: Average low carbon labour demand for London Homes Coalition planned works

The role of new methods of construction

Modern Methods of Construction can have an impact on the size of the workforce required to deliver new build domestic projects, its occupational mix, and where it is needed (i.e., onsite or offsite).

The analysis of the Coalition's new build plans yielded the following findings when two scenarios for the proportion of new build homes delivered through volumetric and panelised construction compared to traditional methods.

- Workforce demand reduction: Under the scenarios, the expected reduction in total workforce demand is relatively small (between 1.4% and 5.4%). Labourers, construction trades supervisors, carpenters and joiners, glaziers and window trades, and bricklayers and masons are the occupational groups which are most likely to experience a reduction in workforce demand of between 4% and 33%.
- Onsite workforce reduction: Under the scenarios, the expected reduction in onsite workforce could range between 5.2 and 20.5%. Glaziers and window trades, labourers, carpenters and joiners, plasterers, and plumbing and HVAC trades are the occupational groups which are most likely going to experience onsite workforce reductions of between 13% and 71%.

04. HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THIS

4.1. IDENTIFYING THE SOLUTIONS

Understanding the scale of the challenge, as described in Section 03 of this report, is not an end, but a means of identifying where the focus needs to be for designing and implementing solutions.

Through a series of 1:1 interviews with project partners and strategic stakeholders, we identified a wide array of potential interventions to address the skills and labour force gap challenge in the sector.

These were then reviewed and refined through a number of workshops to identify those that are more likely to turn the dial in a significant way.

The diagram below summarises the key interventions that the London Homes Coalition identified and will drive forward, as well as cross-cutting workstreams that will complement and enable the delivery of these interventions.

Section 4.2 below provides further details on the proposed solutions to take forward and how we are going to achieve this.

DUTREACH AND PROMOTION

Promote the sector nationally, showcasing opportunities and benefits, working closely with education providers, and targeting young people and under-represented groups

ILLS AND RAINING Remove barriers to apprenticeships and skills development, exploring current entry requirements, promoting existing programmes, and working with education providers to improve training provision

'ERATIONS AND ROCUREMENT Create greater certainty of work pipelines and funding in the sector, allowing for proactive skills development planning, and maximising procurement practices and social value commitments to enhance training and recruitment

ROSS-CUTTING

Adopting an approach that promotes and integrates Diversity & Inclusion principles

Comprehensive strategy for influencing government decisions and shaping public opinion

Robust systems and operating models to generate and use data to inform investment

Leveraging new technologies and harnessing innovation to deliver the proposed solutions

Integrating solutions into place-based interventions

4.2. HOW WE WILL ADDRESS THIS CHALLENGE



Workstream 1. Outreach & promotion

Promote the sector nationally, showcasing opportunities and benefits of working in the social housing sector, working closely with education providers to proactively reach young people, and targeting under-represented groups.

In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, we need to design and deliver a national campaign to increase awareness and strengthen the reputation of the social housing sector as an attractive, rewarding, and inclusive career pathway option for everyone, particularly targeting younger people and under-represented groups.

The social housing sector has a direct and positive impact on the national and local economies, and communities, by providing affordable quality homes and spaces to thousands of families across the UK.

We want to make the sector aspirational increasing awareness of the benefits and opportunities that the sector offers.

This would include:

 Collaborate with schools to proactively engage with young individuals about career paths in the sector and raise the profile of vocational education. The data shows a steady pipeline of work and constant labour demand need in the sector, and significant opportunities in specific trades (e.g., the sector will need 10% of all roofers in London to deliver asset management commitments), as well as in specialised retrofit skills.

- Targeted campaigns to underrepresented groups. As Section 3.3 shows, women make up only 14% of the construction workforce, and as low as 2% in trade occupations. There is an untapped opportunity to attract and recruit a greater and more diverse talent pipeline for the future.
- Review and improve internal workforce policies to ensure people have opportunities for learning and development, vertical and horizontal career progression, as well as flexible working arrangements that cater to diverse needs and capacities.
- Work with central Government, including DLUHC and DfE, and with the GLA and Local Authorities to promote and raise the profile of apprenticeships and vocational education.



Workstream 2. Skills development & training

Remove barriers to apprenticeships and skills development, reviewing current entry requirements, promoting existing programmes, and working with education providers to improve training provision.

Creating a robust and skilled workforce in the sector will require a coordinated approach to promote and facilitate access to apprenticeships and skills development opportunities, as well as making sure that training courses are designed to match the current and future needs of the industry.

This would include the need to:

- Collaborate with central Government to review the appropriateness of current apprenticeships entry requirements (e.g., Maths & English GCSE), and advocate for supporting policies and funding to make apprenticeships and skills development programmes more accessible.
- Strengthen existing programmes, such as the Mayor's Skills Academies in London, to ensure that these offer training opportunities in the social housing sector and that training provision is aligned with the priority occupations identified in this report.
- Develop a close partnership with Further Education providers to:
 - Ensure that course provision is aligned with current priority

- occupations, e.g., roofers, joiners and carpenters for asset management, and specialised retrofit skills, and transferable skills such as communications, digital skills, leadership).
- Continuously review training programmes to meet emerging trends and upcoming changes (e.g., Heat Networks regulations in 2025).
- Explore collaborative arrangements to have experienced professionals train and mentor the next generation.
- Ensure training provision considers the needs and capacities of diverse groups.
- Invest in the current workforce to ensure people have the tools to progress in their careers and leverage current and future opportunities (e.g., digital skills, data management, management & leadership).
- Foster a culture of collaboration across the sector, exploring opportunities for joined-up apprenticeship programmes.



Workstream 3. Operations & procurement

Create greater certainty of work pipelines and funding in the sector, allowing for proactive skills development planning, and maximising procurement practices and social value commitments to enhance training and recruitment.

Having clear work pipelines and consistent funding is key to planning and investing in skills development to ensure we have the right people to deliver our planned investments.

Achieving this requires close collaboration across the social housing supply chain, as well as working closely with local, regional and central Government to have long-term certainty of funding and pipelines of work.

This would include:

- Close working with central Government and the GLA to ensure greater funding certainty for the social housing sector from existing funding streams.
- Reviewing procurement practices to provide long-term certainty of pipelines of work for contractors and subcontractors. The Procurement Act 2023, which will come into force in October 2024, provides a significant opportunity to achieve this, as it will require contracting organisations to provide longer-term visibility of pipelines of work. This would allow organisations

- throughout the supply chain, including smaller firms, to proactively plan for skills development and training.
- Review procurement practices to maximise social value commitments and prioritise training and recruitment, with a focus on ensuring local residents and under-represented groups have access to training and employment opportunities.
- Improve internal operations, including developing robust and coordinated data generation and management systems that allow for proactive labour demand planning, ensuring coordination and data sharing between teams (e.g., asset management and new build) to collectively identify skills development needs.
- Strengthen collaboration across the supply chain, including sharing insights on landlords' future planned investments to ensure organisations across the supply chain have an indication of emerging trends and direction of travel of the industry.

4.3. HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS



Communications & Engagement

Designing and driving a robust communications & engagement programme will be key to delivering the proposed solutions.

The London Homes Coalition needs to be at the centre of funding and policy discussions concerning housing and skills development, ensuring these reflect the challenges facing the social housing sector and the specific priorities identified in this report.

Working together with the London Councils, the Greater London Authority, and key Government departments, such as the Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, and Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, will be critical to achieving our objectives.

📲 🖔 Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion needs to be at the heart of the design and implementation of the proposed solutions. This could include

- Delivering targeted campaigns to attract talent from under-represented groups, including women and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Offering flexible work arrangements that cater to diverse needs and capacities, which would also help make the sector more attractive.
- Leveraging procurement processes to promote recruitment and training for under-represented groups.
- Learning & development and career progression opportunities for underrepresented groups, and targeted support (e.g., mentorships).

Data & Technology

Generating and utilising data, and embracing new technologies will be critical to enable the delivery of the identified workstreams, including:

- Improving data generation, including new data collection methods, and making better use of existing data to anticipate labour demand.
- Use of technology to enhance access to training (e.g., online courses), including upskilling programmes for existing staff.
- Leveraging social media platforms to increase awareness of the social housing sector as a career option.



Place-based approaches

Housing associations are ideally positioned to implement place-based approaches to investment, recruitment, employment and skills development.

This could include working with local community organisations, further education colleges and training providers, and other local stakeholders to promote and facilitate access to employment and training opportunities linked to investments happening in their communities.



Governance & Programme Management

Delivering this programme of work will require close coordination between stakeholders and setting up the right governance and programme management arrangements.

05. WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT'S NEXT

This report concludes an extensive 9-month period of dedicated research, engagement and analysis. It provides a pathway forward with actionable recommendations to bridge the critical skills gap, address the challenge & enable change.

But the work does not stop here. This is only the first step of a long-term initiative that will require a long-term, collaborative effort. Partnering with strategic stakeholders, joint-working and continuous engagement will be key to implementing these recommendations and turning this report's insights into reality. Together, we can build a robust programme of work to deliver on the promise of a well-housed future.

Next Steps: Building Momentum Together

This report is just the first step in addressing the skills gap in London's housing sector. Here's how we'll move forward:

- Refine Our Solutions: Build on the initial solutions identified, ensuring they are clear, actionable, and aligned with industry needs.
- Develop A Collaborative Delivery
 Framework: A robust governance and delivery
 framework will be developed with the London
 Homes Coalition, outlining clear roles and
 responsibilities for collective action.
- Deliver Thematic Workstream Plans: Design detailed delivery plans for each thematic workstream, designed to drive progress, maximise impact and enable lasting.

- Design Strategic Communications: Shape and lead a dedicated communications and engagement strategy to keep stakeholders informed and engaged.
- Drive a Data-Focused Approach: Continue to develop a robust evidence base and data framework to guide decisions, track progress, and measure success.
- Promote a Coalition Expansion: Continue to develop the London Homes Coalition and actively expand it to include new stakeholders, bringing more stakeholders to the table to drive industry-wide action.
- Enable Effective Delivery: Work diligently to establish the right conditions to enable and drive delivery.

Moving Beyond This Report

- Share This Report: Circulate the report widely to raise awareness and encourage discussion within the industry.
- Join the coalition: Reach out to the project team if you're interested in collaborating or contributing to the solutions. We have already started to plan and mobilise to continue this work. If you'd like to find out more and join this coalition, please contact our project team (contact@innercircleconsulting.co.uk).





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