

## FLOORING SECTOR REPORT

August 2018

### **Background**

1. One of CITB NI's objectives is to become the hub for all training carried out by the construction sector. To contribute to achieving this CITB NI need to engage with employers to identify training needs and develop innovative and high quality solutions.

### **Aim**

2. This report outlines the findings following a number of visits with Flooring sector employers carried out by William McMullan, Director, CITB NI and Amanda Stevenson, Project Manager, CITB NI and includes responses to a survey of the Flooring sector.

### **Engagement**

3. There are 33 flooring sector companies registered with CITB NI, all are active and undertake commercial/industrial and private work.
4. Visits were carried out to nine employers from four of the six counties. The main focus of the visits was to engage with the flooring sector to establish their training needs and inform them of CITBNI's products and services.
5. In addition to the face to face visits a total of 27 companies were surveyed on line via Survey Monkey. Eight responses were received giving a 30% response rate. A typical response rate for an on line survey would be 5%. Findings from these responses are included in this report.

### **Visit results**

#### ***Apprentices***

6. There was a lot of discussion around apprenticeship training because currently there is no formal flooring apprenticeship training available in Northern Ireland. Some of the companies visited train their apprentices in house but allocation of time to do this is always a problem and experienced operatives find it a burden because trainees slow them down. Other employers have an experienced workforce that have been with them for many years and don't expect to employ apprentices in the near future.
7. Six employers stated they would employ a total of 11 apprentices if a formal apprenticeship programme was available or if there was a structured training programme leading to a formal qualification.
8. One company stated they would be interested in partnering with CITB NI and one of the vinyl manufacturers to deliver short training programmes, but this would need to be less than two weeks duration.

#### ***Quantity Surveyors/Building Surveyors***

9. A few of the companies stated that they were having issues recruiting Quantity Surveyors and Building Surveyors. Companies reported that any recently graduated or those about to graduate

are already recruited by the larger, main contractors. One company trains in house to fill the skills gap.

### **Other Training**

10. Most companies undertake manufacturer's product training which is generally delivered free of charge. However since the training is delivered in GB there is the added expense of travel and accommodation as well as the lost production time.
11. Other training needs identified were mainly generic IT related and some management / supervisory training.

### **On line Survey Results**

12. Eight companies responded to the Flooring sector survey. Six companies employed between 1-9 and two companies employed between 26-50. Half of the companies surveyed stated they had training needs. These training needs would mainly be covered by product training, eg preparation, applying primers, adhesives, understanding products and grinding and polishing.
13. Three of the companies stated they had both apprentices and experienced workers who needed trained as follows:-
  - 3 Apprentices
  - 13 Experienced operatives
  - 1 Supervisor
  - 1 Manager
14. Preference for training would be short duration training lasting between 1-10 days. Some companies indicated a preference for FeRFA (The Resin Flooring Association) recognised training.

### **Conclusions**

15. The employer visits and on line survey of the Flooring sector has identified some training needs. Those employers who were directly visited benefited further by being made aware of the products and services that CITB NI has to offer and in particular the CITB NI grants scheme and what they are entitled to claim for. The research found that most (7 out of 9) had recently claimed a training grant from CITB NI.
16. Apprentices – As there is no formal flooring apprenticeship being delivered in Northern Ireland, companies who do take on apprentices have to train in house but this causes problems with lost production time. Companies who don't take on apprentices tend to have their own experienced workforce and supplement this with reliable sub-contractors as and when needed. Whilst these companies are satisfied that they have the workforce at present to meet their needs, none had given any consideration to the potential impact of an ageing workforce on their business and how they would address the skills gap this will generate for them in the future.
17. Due to the scarcity of Building Surveyors and Quantity Surveyors attracted to smaller employers, once qualified they tend to be recruited by main contractors who are more attractive and therefore smaller contractors have to train internally to fill the skills gap.
18. Most companies can avail, or have availed of manufacturer's product training; however this is delivered in GB and therefore incurs costs for travel and accommodation which is not CITB NI grant aided.

19. Training for the other needs identified, eg management/supervisory skills, fork lift truck and IT, are available in NI and is supported by the CITB NI grant scheme. Therefore there is adequate training supply.

**Recommendation**

20. A flooring sector training group is established to work in partnership with CITB NI to address the issues raised in this report i.e. Apprentices, Surveyors, Product training and an ageing workforce and develop training solutions for the Flooring sector in Northern Ireland.