

# Education & Training Is The Only Way To Make WDC Industry Fit As A Career Choice

Jon Vanstone, Chair at Certass says education and training are key elements in ensuring Window, Door and Conservatory (WDC) installation is seen as a job with a career path – and also in raising the skills perception amongst homeowners.

**As the skills debate continues to dominate the industry agenda, writes Certass' Jon Vanstone, it's good to see that The FIT Show is dedicating a full day to the topic with Skills Thursday.**

It's the responsibility of the industry's influencers to do more to help the skills shortage in a way that works for everyone and isn't just another quick money maker.

At UK Construction Week (UKCW) back in October, many of the seminars were focussed around skills and attracting young people to careers in the construction industry.

## Reaching out

Having the discussions and the debates is one thing but what about reaching out to those who we are trying to encourage into the industry? UKCW organisers had the foresight to invite youngsters from local schools and colleges to the show, so there were lots of groups of teens wandering around the NEC's halls. There is a lack of young talent coming into the glazing industry, but in reality, even if they were coming towards us we don't yet have the framework in place to develop them into com-

petent window fitters.

## Training availability

The few who are coming into the industry through the school system and industry qualification skills structure are not at the level required, missing vital workmanship abilities often combined with a lack of digital skills and work readiness. Qualifications in glazing have failed to create the competent tradespeople that we so desperately need in the industry. We know that sitting in classrooms all day does not create a competent window installer and there is no better training than getting on site and learning on the job. But the availability of any alternative training is limited. This is leaving installation companies to train people on the job themselves, without any real support from the industry. This lack of practical onsite experience has a negative impact on the reputation of our industry. It does nothing to make our industry an attractive career choice for young people.

## Learning from other sectors

We are not the only construction sector that has had a poor perception. Roofing in particular

has seen real successes in recent years, after understanding and addressing the same issues that the glazing industry is faced with now. I have worked with the National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRFC) as they developed the RoofCERT programme to address issues such as the standards for qualified and experienced workers and lifetime career paths for school leavers. By collaborating with other sectors to help drive their agenda, they have built a new image for roofing that is now attracting young talent as they recognise the value of a roofing career.

Other sectors are doing a good job too. The Electrical industry 'Jobs for the Girls' initiative introduced by Emma Clancy at NICEIC, produced ambassadors within the sector who are female. The 'Young Merchants Forum', created by John Newcomb at BMF, is constructed of managers all of whom are under 40 and represent the industry of the future. This is the point that the glazing industry needs to get to and perhaps Skills Thursday at FIT Show will be a good place to start the wheel in motion. 