

BESA calls on military engineers to help tackle building services skills shortage

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The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) is urging military engineers preparing to transition into civilian life to consider careers as trainers, assessors and building safety auditors, as the building services sector continues to face acute skills shortages.

With engineering and construction businesses reporting significant gaps in suitably trained personnel, BESA is targeting army leavers as part of efforts to address a critical shortage of apprenticeship trainers and assessors. The lack of qualified trainers has been identified as a major constraint on the delivery of building services courses across further education.

The association is encouraging eligible candidates to join its fully funded Skills Legacy programme, launched earlier this year with the ambition of recruiting 100 new trainers and assessors. The initiative is designed to support further education providers in expanding the number of building services apprenticeships available.

The nationwide programme brings together employers and training providers to create a clear pathway for individuals with relevant skills, experience and qualifications to become trainers or assessors. Participants will work towards a Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA).

In addition, the scheme will support engineers in becoming qualified building safety auditors in line with the ISO 9001 management standard, helping the industry meet new competence requirements introduced by the Building Safety Act.

Stuart Rattray, head of competence at BESA, said:

“68% of UK employers struggled to find skilled workers in the past year, with the shortfall costing businesses a collective £4.4 billion. Yet there is an often-overlooked solution hiding in plain sight in the shape of highly trained people leaving our armed forces.

“They represent a rich and largely untapped pool of skilled, dedicated professionals who bring with them a wealth of transferable skills, discipline, and a proven ability to thrive in high-pressure environments.

“However, as well as being ideal direct recruits into the built environment workforce, they can also be rapidly re-trained to help our colleges deliver more of the specialist courses we so desperately need.”

BESA said army leavers bring a combination of technical expertise and leadership skills developed in challenging environments, making them well suited to roles in training, assessment and building safety auditing. The association believes their experience of working under pressure, adapting quickly to new technologies and meeting tight deadlines is particularly valuable as the sector grapples with an ageing workforce.

“With a background that values commitment, structure, and integrity, former armed forces personnel are ideal for passing on a strong work ethic and the importance of reliability to a new generation – things that are hugely valuable to employers,” Rattray added.

“They can also hit the ground running which is also extremely valuable at a time when our industry is struggling to cope with an ageing, and therefore shrinking, workforce.”

BESA pointed to recent success stories, including two members of the Royal Corps of Engineers reaching the final of this year’s WorldSkills UK refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump competition, organised by the association. One of the finalists, 18-year-old Isaac Jervis, went on to win a gold medal.

The Skills Legacy programme is being co-sponsored by the Manly Charitable Trust, which has committed funding for the first 50 participants. Founded in 1991 by former BESA President Graham Manly in memory of his father Alfred Manly, the trust supports charities that provide STEM opportunities for young people and advance engineering education.

BESA said further information about joining the Skills Legacy programme and the work of the Manly Charitable Trust is available via its website.