

STEP ON THE GAS

Is hiring an apprentice still the smart choice to
address the shortage of Gas Engineers?

INSIGHT PAPER





Foreword

It's been well documented that we're currently grappling with a significant shortage of gas engineers in the UK, a challenge that is expected to intensify through 2025.

This shortage is driven by a combination of an aging workforce, increasing demand for gas-related services, and the evolving landscape of energy transition.

Despite governmental initiatives to phase out fossil fuel boilers, gas engineers remain essential. They are responsible for installing and servicing boilers in 90% of our homes. Even as we move towards greener energy solutions, the need for qualified professionals to manage existing gas infrastructure and facilitate the transition to alternative heating systems remains high.

Also, the UK's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 involves a significant shift towards renewable energy sources, including the adoption of heat pumps as a low-carbon alternative to gas boilers. However, this transition is hindered by a shortage of trained installers, with at least 27,000 additional gas engineers needed by 2028 to meet government installation targets.

The shortage of gas engineers presents both challenges and opportunities. For those considering a career in this field, the current landscape offers a promising path with job security and growth potential.

The ongoing demand for gas-related services, coupled with the need for skilled professionals to lead the transition to renewable energy solutions, underscores the critical role gas engineers will play in our future.

At ECTA, we specialise in providing domestic and commercial gas engineering apprenticeships for employers to utilise as a cost-effective solution to the shortage of gas engineers.



Carl Sutcliffe
Managing Director



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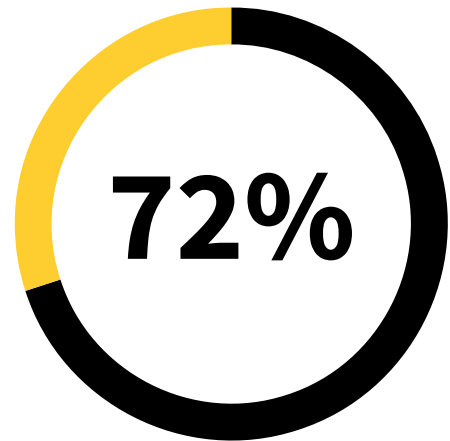
Meeting the demand

The demand for qualified gas engineers in the UK has been on the rise for years.

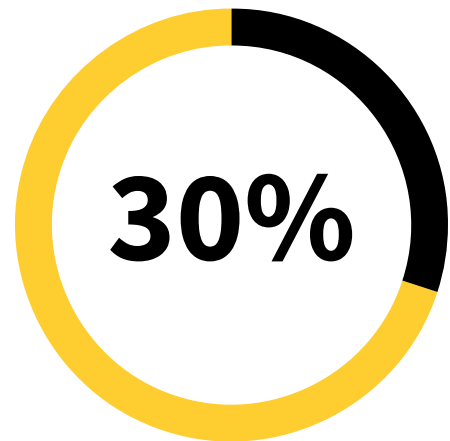
From the need for regular servicing and installations, to compliance with health and safety regulations, skilled gas engineers are essential in the building and construction industry.

However, instead of adding a fully qualified gas engineer, more and more employers are turning to hiring gas engineer apprentices to add to their team.

In this latest insight paper, we explore the current shortage of gas engineers in the UK and how this is impacting the overall demand, as well as highlighting some of the key benefits of hiring an apprentice, and why this might be the more cost-effective and future-proof option for you and your business.



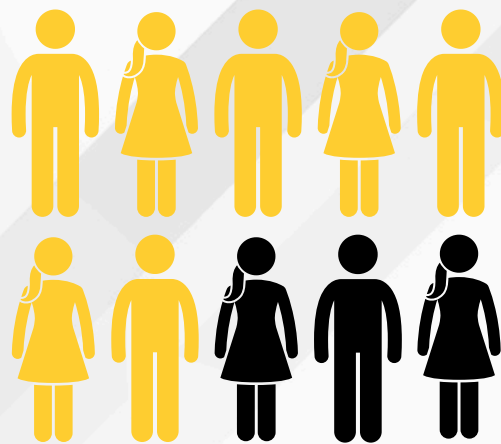
of apprentices remain with the same employer after completing their training*



of the UK's energy sector is aged 50 or over**

ONLY 80%

of apprentices in the construction sector are pursuing gas engineering careers



3 in 10

of the UK's construction and gas engineers are over the age of 50, with many retiring in the next five to 10 years

Why is there a shortage of gas engineers?



Economic Pressure

Rising inflation, increased training costs, and the ongoing energy crisis since the pandemic has further complicated the hiring process for businesses trying to expand or replace their staff members



New technology

There is an increasing need for engineers with skills in new, green energy technologies. Unfortunately, these often require additional training, which can be a barrier for apprentices and employers



The scope of the shortage

According to recent reports, the UK gas engineering sector is facing a severe skills gap, which is expected to worsen over the next decade.

In 2024, a survey by the Gas Safe Register revealed that around 20% of gas engineers in the UK are over the age of 55, and many are approaching retirement age. This presents an urgent need to recruit and train younger engineers to replace this aging workforce.

The National Grid has warned that the energy sector, which includes gas engineers, will need to recruit over 20,000 new workers by 2030 to keep pace with demand and technological advancements.

A significant portion of these workers will be required to maintain and install gas systems, making the shortage of gas engineers particularly critical.

The impact on consumers and businesses

For homeowners and businesses, the shortage of gas engineers has led to longer waiting times for essential services. In 2024, some consumers report waiting weeks for routine gas appliance servicing, boiler installations, and urgent repairs.

This delay can be especially concerning during winter months when heating systems are vital.

Small businesses, especially those in the property management, construction, and maintenance sectors, are struggling to find qualified engineers to meet client demands.

70% of businesses have reported difficulties in recruiting experienced gas engineers*



Why do we need more Gas Engineers?

While the shortage of skilled gas engineers remains high, so does the overall demand.

This has been driven by several key factors that underscore the profession's enduring relevance.

High demand for services

Gas engineers play a crucial role in maintaining and servicing heating systems, with 90% of UK homes relying on gas boilers. Despite governmental plans to phase out fossil fuel boilers by 2035, many homes are exempt, ensuring the continued need for gas engineers in the foreseeable future.

Additionally, qualified engineers are essential for decommissioning old boilers and facilitating the transition to alternative heating solutions.

Transition to Green Energy

The UK's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 involves significant changes in energy infrastructure, including the installation of 600,000 new heat pumps annually by 2028.

This ambitious target requires an estimated 50,000 additional qualified workers. Gas engineers, with their transferable skills, are well-positioned to upskill and meet the demands of installing and maintaining these new technologies.

Job market dynamics

Gas engineers rank among the top in-demand trades in the UK. A recent study by HR News highlighted that builders, electricians, and gas engineers are projected to be in high demand, with over 55,000 open vacancies on popular job sites.

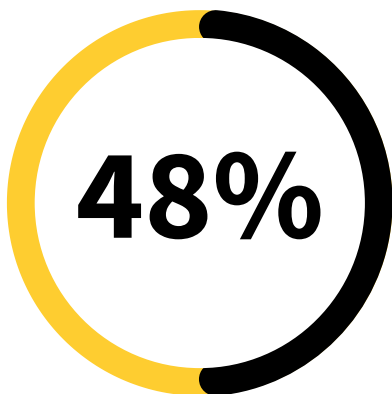


Mythbusting: Apprenticeships

“Apprenticeships are just for school leavers”

This is a common misconception. Apprenticeships are available for people of all ages.

Whether it's a young school leaver seeking their first step into the workforce, or an experienced professional looking to upskill, apprenticeships cater to a much wider demographic.



of apprenticeship starts were by people aged 25 and over*

“They’re too expensive”

Apprenticeships are a cost-effective way to develop your workforce. Large employers pay into the Apprenticeship Levy, which can be used to fund apprenticeship training.

For smaller businesses, the government covers 95% of the training costs. In some cases, additional grants and incentives are available to reduce expenses further.

For example, the government announced last year that it would continue offering up to £3,000 for each new apprentice hired, making it even more affordable for you to bring fresh talent into your business.



**WHY SHOULD
YOU CONSIDER
HIRING AN
APPRENTICE**





Cost-effective hiring

Hiring an apprentice can be much more affordable when compared to bringing in a qualified gas engineer. The UK government's apprenticeship levy and various funding opportunities significantly reduce the financial load. For instance, employers who pay an apprenticeship levy can claim back up to 95% of apprenticeship training costs.

In fact, the average annual cost of hiring a gas engineer apprentice is considerably lower, with apprentices typically earning around £15,000 to £18,000 in their first year, which can gradually increase with experience.



Building a skilled workforce

Apprenticeships provide an opportunity to train and shape a new generation of professionals according to the specific needs and standards of your business. By bringing on an apprentice, you have the opportunity to cultivate a worker who understands your company culture, values, and specific technical requirements from the start.

By hiring an apprentice, you're not just filling an immediate gap, but you're investing in the future of your business. Plus, you'll be actively contributing to addressing the industry's skills shortage.



Access to funding and grants

The UK government has several schemes to encourage businesses to hire apprentices. The Apprenticeship Levy, available for employers with a pay bill over £3 million, allows businesses to access funds for training and development. If your business qualifies, you can reclaim up to 95% of apprenticeship training costs.

For smaller businesses, there is additional support available, and apprenticeships in the gas engineering sector are eligible for various other funding initiatives and incentives, including help with course fees and learning materials. These financial incentives make it a more affordable option to grow your team without stretching your budget.



Long term retention

Research has shown that an apprentice tends to stay with the business that trained them, with the National Apprenticeship Service reporting that 72% of apprentices stay employed with the same company after completing their training.

This is especially valuable in sectors like gas engineering, where the cost of recruiting and training new employees can be high. By investing in an apprentice, you not only fill your current skills gap, but also ensure that your workforce is replenished with qualified and loyal employees over time.



Current knowledge and innovation

Apprentices bring fresh perspectives and the latest knowledge into the workplace. Since apprentices are trained using the latest technology and methods, they can offer insights into innovative practices that may benefit your business. For example, as technology in heating systems, energy efficiency, and smart home solutions evolves, apprentices are more likely to be trained with modern systems that will benefit your clients.

As a result, hiring an apprentice provides a chance to future-proof your business by integrating the most current technical advancements into your service offering.



Increased productivity and flexibility

Though apprentices are still in training, they are expected to contribute meaningfully to projects, performing tasks under the guidance of experienced staff. Many businesses find that apprentices, once they are familiar with the company's systems and procedures, are a productive addition to the team. They take on a variety of tasks, ranging from basic maintenance, to assisting with more complex installations.

Furthermore, hiring an apprentice provides your business with the flexibility to train employees for specific needs, ensuring that your workforce can adapt to changing business demands.



Tyler Speight - National Apprentice of the Year (2024)

21-year-old Tyler Speight from Sheffield recently completed our Level 3 **Commercial Catering Equipment Technician Apprenticeship**.

The apprenticeship has been developed by CEDA, a leading trade organisation in the Commercial Catering industry, and is delivered between 27 – 30 months, with 20% 'off the job' training carried out in our Stockport training centre and 80% of 'on the job' through placement at the employer.

Not only did Tyler successfully complete her apprenticeship and gain a full-time role working as a Gas Engineer for her employer (the Advance Group), but she also won a prestigious national award.

Tyler was nominated by the Advance Group for the "Apprentice of the Year" award at the Foodservice Equipment Association (FEA) conference.

The awards celebrate the contributions of apprentices who have demonstrated significant commitment to their training, have applied their learning in their work, and who have demonstrated inspirational levels of achievement.

FEA chief executive John Cunningham and award sponsor John Gilbert presented Tyler with the award and said;

"We had a difficult time choosing from such a high calibre field, but after much deliberation, Tyler emerged as the unanimous decision."

“

I'd really recommend (this apprenticeship) to anyone that wants a continuous job, always to have a trade, and wants to **enjoy their job and learn.**



Speaking about her apprenticeship experience, Tyler was full of praise for her tutor and the team at ECTA in regards to the support she received throughout her apprenticeship experience.

Tyler said;

“My tutor (Steve) was amazing, I could not thank him more because he listens, he understands, he takes on feedback, and he’s willing to work with you, which is everything you can ask for from a Tutor.

“It’s nice to come to a place where, no matter what you look like, everyone’s just wanting the best for you. If you show them that you’re willing to work as hard as possible, they will give you 100% back.”

Tyler also mentioned how she would recommend the apprenticeship route to anyone who has an interest in becoming a gas engineer.

She said;

“You have to put in a lot of work, but you get so much out of it and it will pay off more than you think. It's more than worth it in my opinion.

“I've had more opportunities than I ever thought I would get and I've been lucky to meet some amazing people throughout my apprenticeship.

“You will have days where you doubt yourself, but you will always have the support from ECTA and the people there to help you succeed.”



Mythbusting: Apprenticeships

“Apprentices are too time-consuming to manage”

While implementing an apprenticeship programme does require some planning, you won't be left to navigate the process alone.

Training providers such as us will handle most of the administrative burden, which includes recruitment, compliance, and progress tracking.

Moreover, the long-term benefits outweigh the initial investment of time.

A study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) backs this up, revealing that apprenticeships deliver a typical return on investment of up to £28 for every £1 spent on training.

“They don't provide any real value to my business”

Apprentices can bring fresh perspectives and energy to your business, while being trained to meet specific your organisational needs.

According to a survey by the National Apprenticeship Service, 87% of employers said apprenticeships had helped them develop skills relevant to their organisation.

8 in 10

employers reported that they had experienced improved productivity as a direct result of hiring apprentices.



Our Apprenticeships

Our apprenticeships are either partially or fully funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Apprentices aged under 21 will receive full funding, whereas those aged 21 and over will receive 95% funding.

Further to this, employers could also receive additional incentive payments through the ESFA, which amounts to £1,000 for an apprentice aged under 19, subject to meeting the eligibility requirements.

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