

Contractors fill vital skills roles as government announces top worker shortages

Contractors can take heart that their place in the UK's economy is secure as a [government-backed study](#) shows there were no major skills shortages identified in any of the contracting sector's mainstream sectors.

The government appointed [Migration Advisory Committee](#) has just [published](#) what is thought to be one of the most comprehensive studies of its kind in the world about skills shortages in the UK.

Designed to support the [new Australia-style points based immigration system](#), the report highlights that positions open to migrant workers are in fact 30% fewer than previously thought.

Low level shortages across the board

The Migration Advisory Committee's report assesses contracting sectors such as:

- o IT
- o Engineering
- o Construction

Specific skills within each sector were rated according to 12 shortage indicators and, whilst in many contracting disciplines there were low level shortages, none of the mainstream contracting roles, outside of engineering, scored higher than 3. The Migration Advisory Committee therefore concludes that there were no shortages requiring inward migration to fill positions.

Within engineering there are sufficient shortages in some occupations to warrant inclusion on the shortage list and these include:

- o Civil engineers
- o Geologists and geotechnical engineers
- o Chemical engineers
- o Aircraft component manufacturing engineers.

Quantity surveyors and construction managers are also in short supply in the construction sector.

So, what does this mean for contractors?

Because only a handful of engineering roles are on the shortage list, migrants seeking work in the UK's contracting sector will have to pass stiff tests before they are allowed to work, which include:

- o a good grasp of English;
- o prospective earnings of more than £24,000 or having a good qualification; and
- o enough money to support themselves for the first month of their stay.

Naturally workers and contractors from other parts of the European Union are free to seek work in the UK, as they can anywhere within the EU's borders. The new points system applies only to migrants from outside the EU.

According to Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne:

"Our tough new points system, plus our plans for newcomers to earn their citizenship, will reduce overall numbers of economic migrants coming to Britain and the numbers awarded permanent settlement.

"Crucially, the points system means only the migrants with the skills Britain needs can come – and no more. Unlike made-up quotas, this stops government cutting business off from the skills it needs when they need them."

This is good news for end user clients and good news for contractors. It also demonstrates the role contractors play in ensuring the UK's businesses have access to the highly skilled and flexible workforce they need.

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Liam Byrne, Border and
Immigration Minister

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