Construction Leadership Council

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

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(Summarising the CSMB RMI 25-26 Evidence Summary – V6)

Overview & Purpose

Purpose of this Briefing

This Executive Summary distils the full evidence gathered across the RMI sector into a concise overview of the scale of the workforce challenge, the systemic barriers identified, and the implications for policy and delivery. It is intended to support rapid understanding and informed discussion ahead of the detailed Pillar Policy Briefing

It presents:

- The scale, structure and significance of the domestic RMI workforce;
- Cross-cutting challenges evidenced across 25 submissions;
- Opportunities for targeted, practical intervention;
- A consolidated set of implications for 2026–2030 workforce planning;
- The evidence foundations for the Pillar Policy Briefings now presented in the context of the Warm Homes Plan.

It is intended for senior officers, policymakers and delivery partners who need a rapid yet robust understanding of the RMI system. It should be read alongside the Pillar Policy Briefings, which translate this evidence into focused areas for action and will be refined following Working Group discussion.

Since this evidence was finalised, the Government has published the Warm Homes Plan (January 2026), setting out a £15 billion programme to upgrade up to five million homes by 2030. This Executive Summary is therefore presented in that context, providing a workforce-focused assessment of delivery readiness, risks and dependencies.

Executive Summary

The domestic Repair, Maintenance and Improvement (RMI) sector:

- Delivers **44% of all UK construction output**
- Contributes **£96bn GVA** each year
- Employs **900,000 to 1.2 million workers**
- Is dominated by **microbusinesses (86% of firms)**
- Operates across 28 million homes

Yet the evidence shows it remains structurally overlooked in skills, training, funding and policy design.

Cross-cutting challenges identified

Across all evidence submissions, eight themes appear consistently:

1. **Persistent skills shortages** across core and specialist trades;
2. **Ageing workforce** with limited succession;
3. **Fragmented training provision**, poorly matched to RMI's multi-trade reality;
4. **Inaccessible funding systems**, especially for microbusinesses;
5. **Low pipeline visibility**, undermining confidence to hire or train;
6. **Weak consumer trust** linked to inconsistent competence and quality assurance;
7. **Fragmented system leadership** across departments and agencies;
8. **Lack of a national workforce baseline**, making planning difficult.

The sector is operating below its potential and cannot meet future retrofit or home-upgrade demands without systemic change. This reflects the Warm Homes Plan's acknowledgement that fragmented oversight and quality failures under previous schemes undermined consumer confidence, and that future delivery at scale depends on simpler, more trusted systems that work for both consumers and installers.

Opportunity

The Warm Homes Plan (January 2026) creates a unique moment to realign:

- Workforce policy
- Training infrastructure
- Local delivery
- Competence and consumer-protection systems

The Warm Homes Plan estimates that delivery of its commitments could support up to 240,000 jobs by 2030. The evidence set out in this report focuses on the conditions required for those roles to be deliverable and sustained in practice, particularly across the SME-dominated domestic RMI and retrofit supply chain.

This briefing summarises the evidence base required to shape that alignment.

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The Scale & Structure of the RMI Sector

Core sector characteristics

Evidence demonstrates that RMI is:

- Whole-house and multi-disciplinary;
- Delivered predominantly by sole traders and microbusinesses;
- Rooted in local trust networks and regional labour markets;
- Highly sensitive to economic volatility;
- Essential to achieving building safety, decarbonisation and housing-quality outcomes.

Why RMI is unique

The workforce:

- Moves flexibly across job types, tasks and disciplines;
- Learns primarily through informal, on-the-job training;
- Operates without a clear progression spine;
- Faces high administrative burdens when engaging with apprenticeships, Bootcamps or funded training.

Consumer-facing evidence

Data from CORGI Services, HIES, HICS and DGCOS shows:

- Frequent installation failures;
- Inconsistent post-installation support;
- Low visibility of competence for homeowners;
- Strong links between competence, confidence and investment.

These consumer insights reinforce the need for clearer assurance pathways and competence frameworks.

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Key Workforce Challenges

1. Skills shortages

Evidence highlights:

- 61% of SMEs unable to recruit to vacancies;
- Severe shortages in heritage trades, heating engineers, insulation installers, and ventilation specialists;
- Up to 239,300 additional workers are needed nationally over the next five years;
- Geographic mismatches between where workers are and where work is needed.

2. Ageing workforce

- 44% of the workforce is aged 55+;
- Only 9–12% are under 24;
- Up to 39,000 businesses risk closure with no succession plan.

3. Inaccessible training

- Provision is patchy, inconsistent and concentrated in major cities;
- RMI multi-trade roles are not reflected in qualifications;
- Apprenticeships are structurally misaligned with microbusiness realities;
- Informal learning is dominant but not recognised or recorded.

4. Marginalisation in policy and funding

- RMI absent from many LSIPs, Bootcamps, and funding streams;
- Schemes designed for larger employers fail to reach microbusinesses;
- RMI often conflated with new build in policy modelling.

Thematic Findings:

Pillar 1 – Workforce Supply & Attraction

Key pressures:

- Low visibility of RMI careers;
- Weak school-to-sector pathways;
- Difficulties onboarding apprentices;
- Low confidence to hire due to unstable pipelines.

Implications:

- Attraction strategies must focus on trusted messengers, local visibility and clear entry routes;
- SME recruitment support is essential.

Pillar 2 – Skills, Training & Progression

Challenges:

- No national RMI competence framework;
- Limited modular, flexible training;
- Qualifications are too siloed for whole-house RMI practice;
- Poor regional coverage of specialist retrofit training.

Implications:

- Reform is needed to create multi-trade, modular pathways;
- Recognition of informal learning would provide quick, meaningful uplift;
- Regional training infrastructure must be strengthened.

Pillar 3 – Industry Engagement & Visibility

Evidence highlights:

- Low visibility of competent professionals;
- Underused digital tools;
- Missed opportunities to leverage trade associations, CPS schemes and consumer-protection bodies.

Implications:

- Engagement programmes must reflect how microbusinesses access information;
- Trust signals must be simplified for consumers.

Pillar 4 – Productivity, Innovation & Technology

Challenges:

- Thin margins limit training investment;
- Digital adoption remains low;
- Retrofit rollout demands new, specialist skills.

Implications:

- Funding must recognise the real-world commercial pressures facing small firms;
- Productivity support should focus on digital tools, on-site mentoring and targeted upskilling.

Pillar 5 – System Leadership & Coordination

Evidence highlights emerging capacity constraints within the training system itself. Submissions point to limited tutor availability, inconsistent quality across providers, and insufficient incentives to retain experienced practitioners as trainers. These constraints are already limiting apprenticeship places and specialist provision, particularly in retrofit and heritage skills.

For mid-career entrants and career switchers, evidence shows that low apprenticeship pay, reduced productivity during retraining, and limited financial support significantly reduce the attractiveness of transition into RMI roles.

Challenges:

- Fragmentation across government;
- Overlapping programmes and inconsistent language;
- Lack of regional coordination.

Implications:

- A national RMI Workforce Strategy is needed;
- System leadership must enable local adaptation, regional brokerage and clarity of roles.

Summary of Barriers

The evidence clusters into **11 barrier themes**, with the strongest consensus around:

1. **Skills shortages**
2. **Training provision mismatches**
3. **Ageing workforce**
4. **Lack of competence frameworks**
5. **Funding and administrative burdens**
6. **Weak consumer confidence**
7. **RMI marginalised in policy**
8. **Short-term work pipelines**
9. **Poor data and absence of a national baseline**
10. **Low appeal of the sector**
11. **Limited diversity and inclusion**

These barriers are widely shared across SMEs, trade bodies, training providers and consumer groups. This evidence aligns with the Warm Homes Plan's commitment to a more coordinated, area-based delivery model, including the establishment of a Warm Homes Agency to consolidate oversight and support local delivery. The findings highlight the importance of ensuring workforce capability, capacity and sequencing are embedded within that delivery architecture from the outset.

Opportunities for Action

Across submissions, the following were repeatedly identified:

Immediate "quick win" options

1. **Regional SME Brokerage Pilots**
2. **Recognition of informal RMI learning**
3. **Simple SME "Help to Train" grant**
4. **Local retrofit engagement packs**
5. **A national workforce baseline**

Medium-term opportunities

- Multi-trade RMI apprenticeship;
- Regional retrofit training centres;
- Integrated data platforms across PAS/MCS/TrustMark.

Longer-term structural improvements

- National RMI Competence & Career Framework;
- RMI Workforce Strategy;
- Reform of apprenticeships;
- Integrated funding and workforce planning;
- Strengthened consumer assurance routes.

Evidence Gaps & Further Work

Evidence gaps fall into three categories:

Structural

- No national RMI workforce baseline;
- No standard definitions for RMI competence;
- Informal learning remains invisible;
- Limited integration of consumer outcome data.

Regional

- Inconsistent insight into local shortages;
- No national map of RMI training provision;
- Variable LA capacity for retrofit delivery.

Sectoral

- Under-representation of heritage, insulation, heat-pump and ventilation trades
- Limited insight on digital adoption
- Insufficient data on mid-career entrants.

Next steps

- Regional capacity mapping;
- Enhanced consumer-facing insight;
- Integrated data-sharing pilots;
- Deeper workforce modelling aligned to Warm Homes Plan delivery.

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Conclusions & Implications for 2026

The evidence paints a clear picture:

- The RMI workforce is essential but structurally unsupported;
- Skills shortages, ageing workforce pressures and limited training access threaten delivery;
- Microbusinesses require tailored support systems;
- Consumer confidence depends on strengthened competence pathways;
- The sector is ready to grow but constrained by fragmented policy, funding and data.

What is needed

1. A coherent national workforce strategy, aligned across DESNZ, DBT, DfE, DLUHC and HMT;
2. Local brokerage models that support microbusinesses;
3. Clear, modular training pathways matched to RMI practice;
4. A national RMI competence and career framework;
5. Integrated data systems to enable planning;
6. Long-term funding certainty tied to retrofit and housing upgrades.

Purpose going forward

As the Warm Homes Plan moves into delivery, this evidence provides a practical framework for understanding workforce risks, dependencies and sequencing, helping to ensure that policy ambition is matched by delivery capability on the ground.

This briefing underpins the:

- 2026 Pillar Policy Briefings;
- Warm Homes Plan workforce alignment;
- CSMB's strategic planning and ministerial engagement;
- Cross-government workforce conversations.

It enables a shared understanding of the evidence and a shared foundation for targeted, practical, sector-led solutions.