



Briefing Document:

Attracting Young Workers to the UK Pest Control Industry

This briefing paper examines the challenges faced by the UK pest control sector in attracting younger workers, compares these challenges with similar trades (plumbing and electrical work), and provides recommendations for employers to improve recruitment among younger generations.

1. UK Pest Control Workforce Demographics

1.1 Workforce Size & Market Overview

- The UK pest control industry is valued at approximately £700m[1].
- The workforce is ageing, with a shortage of younger workers entering the sector although there is no specific data for the Pest Control sector alone. Data is derived from the general construction sector data[2].
- There are approximately 803 pest control businesses in the UK.

1.2 Age Distribution of the UK Pest Control Workforce

- While specific historical data on the age distribution of pest control workers is limited, broader UK workforce trends suggest a declining number of younger workers in skilled trades[3].
- The construction and trades sector are experiencing increasing retirement rates, with fewer young professionals replacing those leaving the workforce[4]

1.3 Regional Breakdown

- The highest concentration of pest control businesses is found in London and the Southeast[5].
- Pest control companies in rural areas are likely to have an older workforce, due to migration patterns and limited job opportunities whereas urban areas attract slightly younger workers

2. Comparison with Plumbing and Electrical Work

2.1 Ageing Workforce and Shortage of Young Workers

The shortage of young workers is not unique to pest control; other skilled trades are experiencing similar difficulties:

- **Plumbing:** The UK plumbing industry is struggling to attract apprentices, with many plumbers aged over 50 and nearing retirement[6].
- **Electrical Work:** The UK needs 937,000 new recruits by 2032 to bridge the skills gap in construction-related trades, including electrical work.

[1] [Career in pest management | Start a company | Become a technician](#)

[2] [Demand for Trade Skills in the Construction Industry - Blogs | Constructionline](#)

[3] [An ageing sector with a recruitment crisis looming | Pest Magazine](#)

[4] [Labour Shortage In The Construction Industry | The Access Group](#)

[5] <https://www.ibisworld.com/united-kingdom/industry/pest-control/4285/>

2.2 Why Young People Avoid Skilled Trades [7]

Key reasons why young people do not enter pest control, plumbing, and electrical work include:

- **Stigma:** Seen as "dirty" or "low status" jobs.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Schools rarely promote pest control as a career.
- **Limited Apprenticeships:** Fewer structured entry routes compared to IT, finance, or healthcare.
- **Initial Pay Concerns:** Young workers perceive starting salaries as too low, even though long-term earnings can be competitive.

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[6] <https://www.aboutapprenticeships.com/reports/uk-trade-skills-index-2023/#:~:text=The%20UK%20Trade%20Skills%20Index%202023%3A%20the%20go-to,workforce%20needs%20of%20the%20construction%20and%20trades%20industry.>

[7] <https://www.constructionline.co.uk/insights/blog/demand-for-trade-skills/>

4. Reasons Why Young People Are Not Attracted to Pest Control

4.1 Lack of Awareness and Perception Issues

- Pest control is rarely mentioned in schools or career guidance programmes.
- The industry is perceived as unappealing, despite offering job security, specialisation opportunities, and business ownership prospects.

4.2 Limited Exposure and Training Opportunities

- Few apprenticeships or structured training schemes exist compared to other trades.
- Unlike plumbing or electrical work, pest control lacks clear training pathways at school and college levels.

4.3 Low Initial Pay and Career Progression Concerns

- Many young people are unaware of long-term career progression (e.g., from technician to business owner).
- Entry-level salaries in pest control may not appear competitive, even though experienced professionals can earn well.

4.4 Stigma and Social Perception

- The handling of pests can deter potential recruits.
- Pest control is sometimes wrongly perceived as "unskilled", despite requiring extensive knowledge in entomology, health & safety, and compliance.

5. Strategies to Attract Younger Workers to the Sector

5.1 Improve Industry Awareness

Engage with Schools & Colleges:

- Introduce career talks in secondary schools and further education colleges. Offer work experience placements for students.

Develop Outreach Programmes:

- Partner with career advisors to promote pest control as a profession.
- Use social media campaigns to challenge outdated perceptions of the industry.

5.2 Enhance Entry Routes & Training

Expand Apprenticeship Programmes

- Develop structured apprenticeships like those in plumbing and electrical work.

Offer Paid Internships & Graduate Schemes

- Provide hands-on work experience before young workers commit to a career in pest control.

5.3 Improve Pay and Career Progression Transparency

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5.4 Tackle Stigma & Improve Industry Image

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Offer Paid Internships & Graduate Schemes

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6. Conclusion & Next Steps

To tackle the shortage of young workers in pest control, the industry must:

1. Raise awareness through schools, social media, and marketing.
2. Develop structured apprenticeships and internships to create clear entry points.
3. Improve salary structures and highlight career growth to compete with other trades.
4. Rebrand pest control as a skilled profession, emphasising science and technology.
5. Learn from successful companies that have made the industry more appealing to young workers.

By implementing these strategies, the UK pest control sector can potentially build a sustainable workforce for the future.



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