

THE FIRE & SECURITY SKILLS SHORTAGE 2026

Why Recruitment And Workforce Planning
Have Become Critical To Industry Growth

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Executive Summary



The UK fire and security industry is facing a growing workforce crisis.

Demand for fire alarms, CCTV, access control, integrated systems, and compliance-led services continues to rise across the UK. However, the number of experienced professionals entering and remaining within the industry is not keeping up with growing demand.

The industry is also facing several additional pressures:

- Experienced engineers are retiring faster than they can be replaced
- Systems are becoming increasingly technical
- Demand for integrated solutions continues to rise
- Businesses are under growing delivery pressure
- Skilled professionals are becoming harder to retain

As a result, companies are increasingly relying on:

- Permanent recruitment
- Strategic workforce planning
- Flexible subcontract labour
- Long-term recruitment partnerships

This report explores:

- Why the skills shortage is worsening
- The roles most affected
- The rise of subcontracting
- The impact on project delivery and growth
- How businesses are adapting

According to Skills for Security:

"Reports from the BSIA suggest that over 30,000 more alarm engineers are needed to meet ongoing sector demand. However, in order to meet the UK government's housing, infrastructure and retrofit goals it is estimated that nearly one million additional workers will be needed in the built environment sector by 2030."

+30,000

Alarm Engineers Needed

This statistic highlights the scale of the challenge facing not only fire and security, but the wider built environment sector as a whole.

The fire and security industry is now competing for talent within an already overstretched technical labour market.

The Industry Is Growing Faster Than The Talent Pool



The fire and security sector remains one of the UK's strongest long-term technical industries.

According to Skills for Security:

"One guaranteed topic of conversation across the fire safety sector is the persistent and deepening skills shortage."

Growth continues across:

- Commercial fire alarm systems
- CCTV and surveillance
- Access control
- Integrated security platforms
- Data centre infrastructure
- Compliance upgrades
- Service and maintenance contracts

Several factors are driving demand:

- Increased legislation and compliance requirements
- Expansion of smart buildings
- Growth in critical infrastructure projects
- Insurance and risk management requirements
- Greater focus on life safety and security integration

However, the available talent pool is not growing at the same rate.

This challenge is now being felt across almost every area of the industry.

The issue is no longer isolated to engineering alone.

Businesses across the fire and security sector are increasingly struggling to secure:

- Engineers
- Project managers
- Designers
- Estimators
- Technical sales professionals
- Commissioning specialists
- Operations staff

The labour shortage is now impacting the entire delivery chain.

The Ageing Workforce Problem



One of the biggest long-term concerns facing the sector is the ageing workforce. Many highly experienced engineers entered the industry decades ago through apprenticeship routes and hands-on manufacturer training programmes that no longer exist at the same scale today.

Large numbers of senior engineers are now:

- Approaching retirement
- Reducing travel and overtime
- Moving into consultancy roles
- Becoming subcontractors
- Leaving the industry entirely

The industry still produces entry-level engineers, and it still contains highly experienced senior professionals.

However, the shortage is becoming particularly severe in the mid-level market:

- Engineers with 5-10 years' experience
- Commissioning engineers
- Technical project staff
- Multi-skilled engineers
- Integrated systems specialists

These professionals are increasingly difficult to secure and retain.

FM Business Daily recently highlighted the issue

"Experienced engineers are retiring faster than they can be replaced."

This has created a growing experience gap throughout the market.

Training Has Not Kept Pace With Demand



The fire and security sector has historically relied heavily on:

- On-the-job learning
- Internal mentoring
- Manufacturer courses
- Experience-based progression

While these routes remain valuable, they are struggling to scale quickly enough to meet modern demand.

According to Skills for Security, apprenticeship and development pathways are under increasing pressure as employers compete for the same limited pool of experienced talent.

At the same time, modern systems now require broader technical understanding than ever before.

Today's engineers are increasingly expected to understand:

- IP networking
- Cloud-connected systems
- Software integration
- Cyber-aware infrastructure
- Multi-platform integration
- Compliance standards and regulations

The role of the modern fire and security professional has evolved significantly over the past decade.

The Most Difficult Roles To Hire In 2026



The shortage no longer affects only engineers.

Businesses across the sector are now struggling to secure talent in multiple departments.

Engineering & Technical Roles

- Security Service Engineers
- Access Control Engineers (Enterprise)
- Commissioning Engineers
- Multi-skilled Engineers

Projects & Operations

- Project Managers
- Project Coordinators
- Small Works Managers
- Operations Managers

Design & Commercial Roles

- Fire Alarm Designers
- Security Systems Designers
- Estimators
- Technical Sales Professionals
- Bid Managers
- HSQE Managers

Specialist System Experience

Demand is especially high for candidates with experience on enterprise and integrated platforms such as:

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| • Genetec | • Gallagher |
| • C-Cure | • Gent |
| • Lenel | • Notifier |

Businesses are increasingly competing for the same small talent pool, particularly within the commercial and enterprise sectors.

The Rise of Subcontracting in Fire & Security



Subcontracting has become a major part of the modern fire and security workforce model.

Many experienced professionals are actively choosing subcontract work over permanent employment.

As permanent hiring becomes more challenging, many businesses are increasingly using subcontract labour to:

- Backfill difficult-to-fill roles
- Support major projects
- Scale teams quickly
- Handle peaks in workload
- Reduce pressure on permanent engineering teams
- Access specialist system knowledge

With the wider built environment sector predicted to require nearly one million additional workers by 2030, workforce flexibility is becoming increasingly important.

For many businesses, subcontract labour is no longer simply an emergency solution.

It has become a core part of workforce planning.

Subcontracting is particularly common amongst senior engineers and commissioning specialists who are seeking:

- Greater flexibility
- Higher earning potential
- More control over workload
- Project-based work
- Reduced management structure

The shift towards subcontracting is becoming increasingly visible across:

- Data centre projects
- Enterprise security installations
- Fire alarm upgrades
- Large-scale integrations
- Commissioning and small works support

The Operational Impact of the Skills Shortage



The skills shortage is no longer simply a recruitment problem. It is now a commercial and operational challenge affecting the wider industry.

Extended Project Delays

Insufficient staffing slows installation, commissioning, and project completion.

Pressure On Existing Teams

Engineers and project staff are increasingly stretched, leading to burnout and higher staff turnover.

Reduced Service Capacity

Maintenance response times and customer support can suffer when teams operate under constant pressure.

Lost Revenue Opportunities

Some businesses are now declining projects due to insufficient delivery capacity.

Rising Salary Inflation

Counteroffers and reactive hiring continue to drive salary expectations upwards.

Increased Management Pressure

Senior leadership teams are spending increasing amounts of time focused on staffing rather than growth and operational improvement.

Recruitment Models Must Evolve with the Industry



Traditional recruitment methods are becoming less effective in an increasingly competitive market.

Reactive hiring alone is often no longer enough.

The companies navigating the skills shortage most effectively are combining:

- Permanent recruitment
- Subcontract support
- Talent pipeline planning
- Retention strategies
- Long-term recruitment partnerships

This blended approach allows businesses to remain flexible while protecting long-term operational stability.



At Complete Security Recruitment, we support businesses through a range of recruitment solutions, including:

- Traditional contingent recruitment through our Essentials plan
- Enhanced and committed recruitment partnerships
- Strategic long-term hiring support
- Flexible subcontract recruitment solutions



This allows businesses to scale recruitment support based on project demand, growth plans, and ongoing staffing pressures. We work closely with our clients to:

- Improve hiring speed
- Access specialist talent pools
- Source permanent staff
- Provide subcontract labour support
- Reduce pressure on internal teams
- Help solve long-term staffing challenges

The Outlook For 2026 And Beyond



The fire and security industry remains one of the UK's most important and resilient technical sectors.

▶ **Demand for skilled professionals is expected to remain strong for years to come.**

However, businesses that continue relying purely on reactive hiring models may face increasing operational pressure as competition for talent intensifies.

▶ **The companies most likely to succeed will be those that:**

- Invest in recruitment strategy
- Develop junior talent
- Improve retention
- Strengthen employer branding
- Build long-term hiring partnerships
- Use subcontract labour strategically
- Plan workforce growth proactively

The skills shortage is no longer simply a staffing issue.

It is now one of the defining commercial challenges facing the fire and security industry.

Solve Your Fire & Security Staffing Challenges With CSR



The skills shortage across fire and security is creating growing pressure on businesses across the UK.

From difficult-to-fill permanent vacancies through to project-based subcontract support, companies are increasingly struggling to secure the talent needed to maintain growth, service delivery, and project deadlines.

At Complete Security Recruitment, we work exclusively within the fire and security industry, giving us a deep understanding of the technical skills, systems, pressures, and workforce challenges businesses face every day.

We do not believe every business needs the same recruitment model.

This is why we offer multiple levels of recruitment support designed to match different hiring pressures, growth stages, and operational requirements.

Our Support Includes

- Traditional contingent recruitment
- Committed recruitment partnerships
- Strategic long-term hiring support
- Flexible subcontract labour solutions

We work hand in hand with our clients to help solve staffing challenges across the fire and security industry.

The businesses navigating the current market most successfully are those planning ahead and building stronger recruitment partnerships.

Workforce Challenges We Help Solve

- Permanent engineers and technical staff
- Specialist system experience
- Rapid subcontract support
- Long-term workforce planning
- Ongoing recruitment partnership support

Let's Solve The Staffing Challenge Together

Start the conversation:



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