

How the Building Safety Act is reshaping healthcare construction.

Key outcomes & learnings from the BSA Breakfast Forum, November 2025.



THE HEALTHCARE DOOR SPECIALIST

Executive summary.

The BSA Breakfast Forum, hosted by Specialist Door Solutions (SDS) in November 2025, brought together architects, principal contractors, specialist suppliers, healthcare estates leaders, and representatives from the Building Safety Alliance to explore how the Building Safety Act (BSA) is transforming the planning, design, and delivery of healthcare environments.

Across the session, a shared theme emerged: **the BSA is a disruptive but necessary catalyst for cultural change**, highlighting the need for competence, collaboration, transparency, and earlier engagement across the supply chain. While the sector still faces operational and regulatory challenges, the consensus was clear: **the BSA is driving the industry toward better, safer and more accountable outcomes.**

In this document we have summarised some of the key insights and discussion points from the session.

1. Why the BSA exists – a necessary reset.

Speakers rooted the conversation in the failures exposed by Grenfell and decades of declining industry-wide quality assurance.

Key reflections included:

- ✓ The BSA represents deliberate disruptive legislation designed to correct complacency, fragmentation, and gaps in accountability.
- ✓ Historically, design, installation, oversight, and sign-off became increasingly disconnected and driven by lowest cost rather than best value.
- ✓ The industry has “lost the art” of detailed coordination, rigorous checking, and collaborative problem-solving.

The BSA is therefore not an overreaction, it is an overdue rebalancing.

Tim Ashton, Director from Hunters Architects, framed it clearly:

“Not one single aspect of our construction industry could hold their heads up after Grenfell. It was systematic failure.”

He went on to highlight how the industry has gradually drifted away from robust checks and interconnected working:

“We’ve lost all those checks and balances... architects stopped visiting site, design teams stopped interrogating interfaces, everyone did ‘their bit’ and then stepped away. This is why we’re here now.”

The Act, therefore, is not “extra red tape”; it is seen as a fundamental course correction.

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Tim Ashton, Director,
Hunters

2. The competence gap – and how to close it.

Anthony Taylor, Chair of the Building Safety Alliance, emphasised that competence: skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours is the central issue the BSA seeks to correct.

Key observations:

- ✔ Competence requirements are not new, but historically overlooked.
- ✔ The sector lacks enough competent practitioners across disciplines – particularly in fire safety.
- ✔ Organisations must develop competence management systems, not merely train individuals.
- ✔ Behaviours matter: reporting issues, questioning decisions, refusing unsafe instructions.

Anthony was direct:

“The sector is not competent enough, there aren’t enough competent practitioners, and that’s a fundamental problem.”

He stressed that competence includes not only skills and knowledge, but also behaviours:

“The days of the Nelson’s blind eye—‘I didn’t see it, I’m off to the pub’—are gone. People must be prepared to report non-compliance.”

The forum emphasised that competence uplift will take 5–10 years, and must be driven by:

- ✔ Clients
- ✔ Professional bodies
- ✔ Insurers
- ✔ Contractors
- ✔ Manufacturers and the wider supply chain.

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Building Safety Alliance





3. Gateway 2 in practice – harsh realities and new behaviours.

Architects and contractors shared frank reflections on the challenges of completing Gateway 2 submissions.

Emerging themes:

- ✔ Detail levels are far deeper than industry norms. Fire dampers, penetrations, interfaces, test evidence, and installation methodologies are now interrogated in granular detail.
- ✔ Approval timelines are far longer than the statutory eight weeks, 20+ weeks is common.
- ✔ For complex healthcare refurbishments, unknown existing conditions introduce the risk of major change applications.
- ✔ Procurement cycles and legacy funding models are not aligned with the need for earlier certainty
- ✔ The BSR is reportedly under-resourced, creating delays and variable interpretations.

Despite the pain, the process is forcing:

- ✔ fuller design at the end of Stage 4
- ✔ more meaningful early-stage technical coordination
- ✔ higher quality information and decision-making

Morgan Parrack, Director from Hunters Architects, noted:

“You get questions like; how does this interface with that? What’s the fire damper detail? Is the fire stopping solution a tested detail? It’s a level of granularity we’re not used to and in an existing environment, it’s not always possible to demonstrate it.”

This is forcing design teams to rethink old assumptions:

“We used to say ‘that’s for the contractor to sort out.’ Not anymore. You cannot hide from it in a Gateway 2 submission.”

Contractor teams echoed the same experience. David Wellwood, Design & Build Director from McLaughlin & Harvey, shared a turning point:

“For months, I thought: we don’t do much high-rise, this probably won’t affect us. Then a client asked for our BSA procedures on a project that wasn’t even an HRB. It was my Spielberg moment: ‘Oh my God, we’ve fundamentally misunderstood what’s happening here.’

4. Procurement must change – early contractor and supplier involvement.

A major insight repeated by multiple speakers:

Late-stage contractor appointment is no longer compatible with Gateway 2.

The Act is pushing industry toward:

- ✔ early contractor engagement (Stage 2 or early 3)
- ✔ early procurement of BSA-critical packages
- ✔ upfront supply-chain collaboration to de-risk design
- ✔ moving away from “design & dump” behaviours

The forum also highlighted the tension between best value and lowest cost procurement models. Gateway 2 creates strong incentives for clients to prioritise value, certainty, and competence over the cheapest price.

Bonnie Chu, Alliance Design Director at Kier Construction Strategic Projects, explained:

“We need clients to stop procuring contractors at the end of Stage 3 or 4. Bring us in at Stage 2 if we’re serious about meeting Gateway 2.”

She added:

“We’ve always known finishing design early is efficient, but now it’s essential. BSA-critical packages need to be brought forward.”

The Act is also exposing unintended consequences:

“Gateway 2 has thrown procurement out of shape, especially when the Procurement Act is layered on top. Nobody anticipated how difficult it would be to prove best value while still achieving design completion early enough.”

She emphasised that achieving a “fully coordinated design at the end of Stage 4” should be seen as a realistic ambition, not an idealistic one. But only if procurement models evolve.

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Bonnie Chu, Alliance Design Director,
Kier Construction Strategic Projects





5. Supply chain competence & product assurance.

Several participants centred on increased pressure to prove competence at every stage, from design through to installation.

Key insights:

- ✔ Manufacturers are facing growing scrutiny on testing validity, certification currency, and installer compatibility.
- ✔ “Equal or approved” product substitutions are increasingly dangerous and non-compliant under the BSA.
- ✔ Principal contractors require both:
 - » organisational capability (company-level assurance)
 - » individual competence (installer-level certification)
- ✔ Trusts are becoming more proactive in rejecting non-compliant products—often late in procurement due to inadequate earlier checks.

Examples were raised of Trusts rejecting door packages after discovering failed or out-of-date fire test evidence. Such cases underline the need for standardised checks, robust documentation, and fully competent installers.

Digital record-keeping, photographic evidence, and shared datasheets all support visibility before elements are concealed. These digital tools are vital for catching issues or future problems early.

6. Cultural change – collaboration over contractualism.

Multiple speakers reflected on the shift from adversarial contracting to transparent, team-based working.

Examples included:

- ✓ multi-party coordination workshops (architect, contractor, manufacturer, client)
- ✓ open dialogue around constraints, interfaces, and test evidence
- ✓ shared ownership of risk rather than blame-shifting

The cultural reset is essential for:

- ✓ eliminating design gaps
- ✓ preventing unsafe substitution
- ✓ achieving Gateway approvals
- ✓ managing interface risks
- ✓ reducing remedial costs

Collaboration is no longer optional, it is required by law.

Many attendees reflected on how the sector historically worked in silos or even in opposition.

The BSA is now pushing teams together earlier and more transparently.

Russell James, Strategic Partnership Director at Specialist Door Solutions, highlighted this shift:

“For the first time, we had the Trust, contractor, architect and manufacturer all in one room reviewing door designs before Stage 4. That simply didn’t happen before, and that’s exactly what the BSA requires.”

Bonnie Chu, Design Alliance Director at Kier Construction Strategic Projects, reinforced the point:

“BSA is helping us bring commercial colleagues, designers and specialists together earlier than ever. It’s pushing everyone in the right direction.”



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Russell James, Strategic Partnership, Director,
Specialist Door Solutions



7. Challenges ahead.

Responsible sourcing:

Slow response times and inconsistent interpretation are creating programme uncertainty.

Product durability and innovation:

Legacy buildings were not designed with today's fire and safety standards in mind, making compliance difficult and costly.

Existing healthcare estates:

Legacy buildings were not designed with today's fire and safety standards in mind, making compliance difficult and costly.

Long programme new-build schemes:

Test evidence or products may change between Gateway 2 and installation, forcing redesign or resubmission.

Design responsibility clarity:

Principal Designer and Lead Designer roles remain misunderstood, especially in design-and-build models.

Supply chain variability:

Ensuring consistent competence and avoiding unsafe product substitutions remain challenging.

8. Opportunities ahead: a better industry.

Despite the challenges, the BSA was widely seen as a turning point for positive change.

Benefits identified by the panel:

- ✓ safer buildings
- ✓ clearer accountability
- ✓ reduced long-term remedial costs
- ✓ uplifted professional standards
- ✓ value-led procurement
- ✓ more integrated and transparent project delivery

The forum agreed that the BSA represents a decade-long journey, but momentum is growing and industry behaviours are already shifting for the better.

Tim Ashton summarised this shift: “the Act is forcing designers to re-engage with the fundamentals of building regulations—something the industry has “let slip” over the past two decades. The disruption may be uncomfortable, but it is already driving better conversations, earlier alignment, and a renewed focus on doing things right the first time.”

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Summary.

The BSA Breakfast Forum highlighted that the Building Safety Act, while complex and at times disruptive, is accelerating a transformation that the industry has needed for decades. Success over the next 10 years will depend on early collaboration, competence uplift, cultural change, and a new commitment to transparency and quality across the lifecycle of every healthcare project.

SDS, as a manufacturer and industry convenor, is committed to supporting the healthcare construction sector through this transition, providing trusted products, technical guidance, and collaborative forums that help stakeholders navigate this new regulatory environment with confidence.

If you'd like to watch a replay of the Forum - you can see the session in full [here](#).



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