

CASE STUDY: Eillish Kwai, Employment and Skills Manager, Ardmore



My name is Eillish Kwai and I am the Employment and Skills Manager at Ardmore. I am actively involved with the Women into Construction organisation, providing women with advice, training and job opportunities in the industry.

1. Tell us about your current role. What does a typical day look like? What do you like and dislike about the job?

My role is to oversee the delivery of section 106 obligations in line with council requirements across our developments. This includes delivering apprenticeships, work placements and community events.

My days are varied and would include meetings with clients, stakeholders and educational partners across the boroughs. Preparing reports and monitoring spreadsheets, newsletters for clients, councils and stakeholders this can consume part of my day.

2. What qualities are required to do your job?

In my role you need to have empathy with people who are unemployed and be able to communicate, understand residents' needs and be able to support them, as it can be fairly stressful for residents living next to a building site. Having an understanding of educational modules in terms of construction training to ensure I am able to advise on apprenticeship training and other routes into the industry.

3. Is construction a welcoming environment for women?

Within Ardmore we have a proven record of equality; however as a director of this programme I can see there are still a lot of contractors who shy away from employing women, particularly in trades.

I think more work needs to be done within the industry to ensure that women stand a better chance of employment and the government needs to look at ways to promote this area and end the gender gap.

4. Have you encountered any obstacles in your own career because of your gender?

No, as the field I work in is site based, it is seen as soft construction. That being said, I have always had support from the site teams and the directors in my role.

5. In the time you have worked in construction, do you think the industry has improved its attitude towards women?

Not really, as some contractors are still male dominated and seem not to encourage or embrace women into the industry.

6. Why do you think women remain underrepresented in the industry?

Construction is not promoted enough through the education system. Women are underrepresented in the industry due to lack of promotion and the industry itself not promoting diversity as a big win all-round.

Women are more than capable of carrying out the same roles as men but until the industry highlights the gender issue things won't change.

7. What advice would you give young women considering a career in construction?

Go for it! There are so many opportunities for women in the industry, with great earning potential and continuous learning.

8. How does a diverse workforce benefit the industry as a whole?

Diversity creates a positive reputation for a growing company, attracting more new talent. We need people from different backgrounds to set the goals and compliment the industry. Women would have a better chance in the industry if this was promoted more.

9. What should the industry be doing to encourage more women to work in construction?

The industry should make sure that it is promoting equality and showcasing the unlimited opportunities in job roles, not only in trades but also in management positions.

10. How can wider society (e.g. schools and colleges) contribute to the effort to increase gender diversity in the industry?

Promoting the industry more widely to young people at an early age, ensuring parents have a better understanding of the industry, in particular promoting apprenticeships, Further Education and Higher Education. As we know, apprenticeships can lead to much wider job roles, particularly to young people who may not be able to afford university. I am passionate about this topic, as so many young people don't get a chance as education is primarily focused on academia rather than practical skills.

11. Do you think the industry can get to a point where there are as many women as there are men?

Absolutely - with the support of working programmes within schools and colleges there is definitely a chance this can happen. Again the industry itself has a job to do in this by employing more females and promoting this through their communication newsletters, websites and so on.