

### CASE STUDY: Kath Moore, Managing Director, Women into Construction

I have 30 years' experience of working in the construction industry. I began as a qualified carpenter, working on site, running my own business, and teaching carpentry. Nine years ago I set up the Women Into Construction project on the Olympic Park, and following the success of this project, developed Women Into Construction (WIC), a community interest company supporting women wishing to work in the construction and infrastructure industries. I believe passionately in encouraging and supporting women to participate and build careers in these exciting, rewarding, and well-paid industries.



#### 1. Tell us about Women into Construction – what is your organisation's purpose and how does it set out to achieve its goals?

Women Into Construction is an independent not-for-profit organization that promotes gender equality in construction. We provide bespoke support to women wishing to work in the construction industry, and assist contractors to recruit highly motivated, trained women, helping to reduce skills gaps and create a more gender-equal work force.

WIC has trained 1,200 women, brokered 300 of these into work-placements and over 600 into paid employment. It is now working in partnership with Crossrail, Tideway and HS2 to increase gender diversity on these projects.

#### 2. How can Women into Construction help contractors seeking to improve gender diversity?

We provide a tailored, fast response to individual contractor's needs, with the opportunity to engage with trained women interested in working in construction, free brokerage of women into work-placements and jobs, and help with meeting CSR targets and addressing skills gaps.

#### 3. Is construction a welcoming environment for women?

The answer depends very much on the ethos of the construction company and client involved. Despite being the only woman on site, my own experiences in the industry were generally positive. Many of the women we place in the industry report a welcoming atmosphere but some parts of the industry have a long way to go.

**4. In recent years, do you think the industry has improved its attitude towards women?**

Yes, there have been huge improvements in attitudes to women at a professional level. There are more women working in these roles and this is increasingly becoming the norm. However, this is not always the case for women in manual trades and this is where the industry has more work to do with regard to gender equality.

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

Industry attitudes, particularly within the trades, can still be hostile to women. This leads to women discounting themselves because they think the industry won't welcome them. The industry needs a culture change, supported from the top levels within organisations, to eradicate sexism on site and ensure all sites provide a supportive and welcoming environment for women.

There are other issues at play – the lack of promotion of opportunities to women and lack of encouragement of girls and young women to consider a career in construction means women do not know the range of jobs available to them in the industry.

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

Go for it! It's interesting, satisfying, has the potential for real career progression, and is well paid.

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

Studies by McKinsey, Ellison and Adams demonstrate that a more diverse workforce (meaning diversity in general, not just gender diversity) is more productive and safer. Different people bring different perspectives and approaches, providing a broader view which can help drive productivity and encourage improvements in health and safety practices.

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

The industry should be working with teachers and careers advisers to promote construction careers. Working with schools will also help change young people's preconceptions about the industry. We also need to encourage girls to study STEM subjects to equip them for careers in these industries.

Crucially, the industry needs positive action to support women wishing to work in construction. Women into Construction address this need by pairing skilled women with contractors to increase gender diversity in the industry.

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

We need to show young girls how interesting and varied a career in construction can be. Specific taster activities for girls will allow them to try out construction-based activities and find out more about the industry.

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

I hope so, but in order to achieve this goal the industry needs to change. It needs a culture change to become more welcoming to women at all levels of the industry to stop women from discounting themselves from construction careers.

Women into Construction promote this change by encouraging women to achieve their goals and placing them into the industry, helping to redress the gender imbalance.