



'Spotlight on...' learning toolkits aim to raise awareness and drive change. The toolkits provide resources including guidance, case studies and best practice examples from across the industry and beyond to help the construction industry to address these issues and raise their standards in these important areas of concern.



**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Spotlight on...

women in
construction

**BEST PRACTICE
HUB**



'Spotlight on... women in construction aims to understand why the gender gap continues to dominate the headlines and suggests steps to tackle the issue.

Why are there so few women in construction? Why does it matter? How can we make a difference in changing attitudes and promote equality, diversity and inclusion? This 'Spotlight on...' learning toolkit helps understand why the gender gap continues to dominate the headlines and suggests steps on how to tackle this issue head-on.

The Considerate Constructors Scheme recognises that there are many genders, we will be using the term women or woman as someone who identifies as female or as a woman. However, we also recognise that the vocabulary evolves, and changes and we are using this term that is correct at the time of publishing.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, we have seen more women entering the UK construction industry than ever before. From project engineers and designers to site managers and plant operators, today women make up **15% of the workforce** in the UK construction sector. **37% of new entrants** coming into the industry from higher education are women and the number of women in senior roles has almost trebled since 2005.

Increased investment in education, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is gaining momentum and making an impression on career choices. Industry wide campaigns are continuing to make an impact; initiatives to boost female apprenticeships, toolkits to support diversity and inclusion, and outreach campaigns to increase the visibility of women in construction. Employers are actively taking steps to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and **The Times Top Employers 2022 for Women** recently ranked 3 construction companies in its top 50.

International movements such as the #MeToo campaign has helped shift public attitudes and behaviour, empowering women to stand up to harassment and inequalities in the workplace.

There's also been a growth in organisations aimed specifically at championing gender equality and providing a support network for women in the sector, including the **National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)**, **Women's Engineering Society (WES)**, **Women in Science and Engineering (WISE)** and **Women into Construction**.

Despite efforts to change attitudes and promote a culture of equality and inclusion, women are still grossly underrepresented in construction and engineering roles. When did you walk past a construction site and see a woman? The answer is probably hardly ever, as **99% of manual workers onsite are male**.

Construction is one of the largest sectors in the UK economy; making up almost 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing approximately 2.7 million people. Spanning multiple disciplines from planning and designing to building and maintenance, across transport infrastructure, utilities and the natural and built environment, the success of the sector is critical to the safe and effective functioning of modern society. So, why is the industry not reflective of **UK society where women make up 50.6% of the population**. Figures around Europe are no different, with France, Germany, Italy and Spain all reporting rates of **approximately 9%** of the construction workforce as female.

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WHY IS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FAILING TO ATTRACT WOMEN?

Traditional stereotypes have plagued the industry for decades, shaped by public attitude and reinforced through first-hand experience, education and media. Historically, working in construction has been seen as a masculine trade and inherently sexist. Women have been portrayed as the weaker gender, predominantly the family caregiver or only seen in support and secretarial roles. The impact of COVID-19 proved the realities of traditional stereotypes, as national lockdowns placed increased pressure on women who were more likely to be responsible for childcare.

Women often face challenges at the first hurdle when applying for jobs, with gender biased language and outdated male oriented policies still prevalent in recruitment and employment. Historically, there's been little reference to maternity leave, returning to work packages or flexible hours required to support a family and work life balance. Gender pay inequality is rife with construction being one of the worst sectors in the UK, with a **pay gap standing on average at 20%**. In a 2020 report published by **Randstad**, 15% of the construction organisations polled had never promoted a women to a senior position and two-fifths had never worked for a female manager.

According to the **Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)**, there are reports of inadequate welfare facilities with non-male toilets locked and being used as storage, and a lack of women's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) placing them at higher risk using PPE designed for the male body.

Discrimination is a big issue, **Randstad** revealed nearly 72% of women surveyed had experienced some form of gender discrimination at work. The report outlines 1 in 4 women are being left out of male conversations and social events leading to isolation and bias unconscious or otherwise. With the industry made up of 85% males, workplace culture will naturally be dominated by the majority view.

WHY ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP MATTERS?

According to the **Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) Construction Skills Network**, to meet growing demand the industry needs 216,800 new construction workers by 2025. The report published in June 2022 outlines the surge in demand for housing, infrastructure, repair, and maintenance, and acknowledges the substantial recruitment and training challenges facing the sector.

With the exodus of thousands of skilled workers from the EU following Brexit, a decline in young people entering construction roles and an aging workforce with **22% of workers over 50**, it's clear there is a massive deficit of skilled workers.

In figures recently published by the **Office of National Statistics (ONS)**, around 49,000 construction jobs remained unfilled between February and April 2022 and **one fifth of all vacancies** are difficult to fill because employers cannot recruit staff with the right skills, qualifications or experience.

Construction is facing the biggest skills crisis in decades. Rising costs and soaring wages are changing the landscape of the industry as smaller firms struggle to compete. Recruiting employees is becoming a long and costly process, not to mention the growing challenges associated with retaining staff. Ignoring or alienating 50% of the UK population could signal serious problems for sustained growth of the sector in future.

Having a workforce that's reflective of society can add real value. Analysis from **McKinsey** suggests companies in the 'top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability than companies in the fourth quartile'.

Higher rates of workplace diversity can help companies evolve, innovate, problem-solve, and be more efficient. Moreover, highly diverse workplaces offer employees a better sense of community, increased worker engagement, and a more positive corporate culture.

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WHAT ARE WE DOING TO HELP SUPPORT WOMEN INTO CONSTRUCTION?

At the Considerate Constructors Scheme we strive to encourage and support equality, diversity and inclusion to raise standards of conduct and respect in the workplace. We provide registered activity with the latest resources, advice, and best practice to add value to employee engagement and wellbeing.

The Scheme's Code of Considerate Practice states that all registered organisations should value their workforce and provide a workplace where everyone is respected, treated fairly, encouraged and supported. The Checklist used by Scheme Monitors asks the following questions:

- Q3.1.2 – How is the Registered Activity planning and delivering learning and development to encourage construction as a career choice, improving representation from poorly represented groups?
- Q3.1.3 – How is the Registered Activity ensuring the workforce is treated fairly and with respect?
- Q3.3.1 – How is the Registered Activity ensuring suitable, hygienic and well-maintained welfare facilities are provided?
- Q3.3.3 – How has the Registered Activity supported other workforce needs?

Our Scheme Monitors continue to score registered activity for conformance to the Code of Considerate Practice supporting the Equality Act of 2010 for equal treatment of employees regardless of their protected characteristics. The protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We record and address issues including inclusion, harassment, open door policies and inappropriate language.

The Scheme has also published a 'Spotlight on...' learning toolkit focussing on equality, diversity and inclusion where we carried out a survey of construction industry professional and learnt that sex was seen as the largest reason that individuals in the construction industry have witnessed or been aware of discrimination occurring.

Law and legislation

The following law and legislation are relevant to helping address the obstacles faced by women in the workplace. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and not to suffer any form of less favourable treatment on the basis of their sex.

EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act superseded earlier legislation including the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The Act requires equal treatment in access to employment, as well as private and public services regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

For government guidance on the act, visit
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING

From April 2017, UK employers with over 250 staff are required to publish statistics on the gender pay gap in their organisation. This provision of the Equality Act will apply to a number of UK construction organisations.

For government guidance on the mandatory gender pay gap reporting, visit
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-pay-gap-reporting-overview>

For ACAS guidance on gender pay gap reporting, visit
<https://www.acas.org.uk/equal-pay>



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External resources

Gender diversity is a huge issue in the construction industry today. There are numerous organisations and initiatives committed to encouraging women into the construction industry.

ORGANISATIONS

Constructing Equality training workshops and consultancy services to guide employers on creating and sustaining a diverse workforce.

<http://constructingequality.co.uk/>

National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) aims to raise awareness and promote women in construction.

<https://www.nawic.co.uk/>

Tomorrow's Engineers seeks to create a national network of employers working to connect with young people interested in a STEM career.

<http://www.tomorrowsengineers.org.uk/>

Volunteer It Yourself (VIY) offers opportunities for young people (aged 14-24) to learn construction skills while volunteering on local community projects.

<http://www.volunteerityourself.org/>

Women's Engineering Society (WES) is a charity and professional network of women in engineering disciplines, offering inspiration and support.

<http://www.wes.org.uk/>

Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) works to achieve gender balance in STEM industries by showcasing role models and providing consultancy and training.

<https://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/>

Women into Construction is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support for women looking

to work in construction and assists contractors to recruit female workers.

<https://www.women-into-construction.org/>

WHAT IS THE INDUSTRY DOING?

Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) released a **video** called 'Building Tomorrow' profiling women in construction. They have also launched a video blog series featuring a young female construction student using the hashtag #elliethbuilder.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luo-NuemAql&feature=youtu.be&list=PLLtLm1g49pKVHhFoEkTA-uzbSW2A3FH4Y>

Construction Industry Council (CIC)'s Diversity Panel is a collaborative forum for members of all construction disciplines and professional bodies to identify and promote diversity policies in the construction industry.

<http://cic.org.uk/networks-and-committees/diversity-panel.php>

Construction Industry Federation Ireland is encouraging women in the industry to share their stories as part of its Building Equality campaign.

<https://cif.ie/building-equality/>

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)'s BeFair accreditation framework aims to raise awareness about fairness, inclusion, respect and equal pay among construction companies.

<http://www.citb.co.uk/>



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CITB Northern Ireland run the Women in Construction Network Northern Ireland which provides site visits and seminars and gives an opportunity for women in the industry to network and experience different elements of the construction industry. The network also showcases case studies of women in the industry and runs events promoting construction among schoolchildren.

[http://www.citbni.org.uk/Careers/Women-in-Construction-\(1\).aspx](http://www.citbni.org.uk/Careers/Women-in-Construction-(1).aspx)

Construction Youth Trust has a #notjustforboys campaign which showcases role models and hosts careers courses for young people, such as the Budding Brunel's programme.

<http://www.constructionyouth.org.uk/notjustforboys>

Federation of Master Builders challenge stereotypes that women cannot be involved with manual building work by citing women's involvement in domestic DIY.

<https://www.fmb.org.uk/>

Go Construct highlights career opportunities for women by compiling information, case studies, links and personality quizzes.

<https://www.goconstruct.org/construction-today/diversity-in-construction/women-in-construction/>

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) provides guides on how employers can implement diversity and inclusion. Their Inclusive Employer Quality Mark encourages companies to sign up and commit to improving inclusivity along six principles.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RICS-Building-Inclusivity-2016.pdf>

Active Training Team are a provider of immersive, experiential safety training. They also produce a

quarterly podcast on a specific issue, one being on the topic of women in construction.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/episode-5-women-in-construction-who-benefits-whats/id1422738957?i=1000431243229>

WHAT ARE CONTRACTORS DOING?

Ardmore worked with Women into Construction to support female graduates into employment on the Olympic Park site. This work has continued, and Ardmore continue to promote construction as a career choice and place female construction workers on their sites.

<http://www.ardmoregroup.co.uk/>

BAM Nuttall has launched a range of work clothing specifically designed for women. The company is also using its highway vans as mobile advertising hoardings to encourage women to consider a career in construction.

<http://www.bamnuttall.co.uk/>

Ballymore is encouraging women to join the industry by promoting career opportunities and providing additional support to women in the workplace. They recently interviewed women working on their London City Island project about their experiences in the industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/LCI-Phase-2-Ballymore-Spotlight-on-...-women-in-construction.pdf>

Bechtel, Bouygues and **BRE Group** host women's networking forums for all genders to share advice and identify role models.

<https://bregroup.com/networks/bre-womens-network/>



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Crossrail is seeking to boost the representation of women working in construction. Almost one third of jobs with Crossrail are filled by women and they are conducting school visits and working with Women into Construction to place more women into the company.

<http://www.crossrail.co.uk/>

Durkan worked for a decade with Lambeth Council Building Work for Women and Women and Manual Trades to build a sustainable pipeline of female apprentices.

<http://www.durkan.co.uk/>

Laing O'Rourke has a PeopleFIRST (Fairness, Inclusion, Respect and Sustaining Talent) programme to create a workforce that reflects society by making the company appealing to people from diverse backgrounds.

<http://careers.laingorourke.com/equality-diversity-inclusion-policy.aspx>

Lendlease promotes women in construction as part of its commitment to diversity, with campaigns to increase the visibility of women in the industry.

<http://www.lendlease.com/uk/>

Mace's Women of the Future programme is a key part of their gender diversity policy. Run in partnership with WISE, the programme seeks to help participants reach their potential by building their skills, networks and confidence.

<https://www.macegroup.com/media-centre/160815-congratulations-to-maces-first-women-of-the-future-graduates>

Willmott Dixon is the only construction firm represented on the Women's Business Council, which advises the Government on how women's contribution to economic growth can be optimised.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXeLiLk7Y20>

Women Returners is a consultancy service for women returning from a career break. Amey, Balfour Beatty, Skanska and Tideway are among those offering returnships.

<http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/>

REFERENCES

The Scheme has sourced information from across the construction industry as well as organisations and studies from the across the world.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/REFERENCES.pdf>

Examples of best practice

Drawing on pioneering campaigns from within our industry, we've compiled a resource of best practice and innovative examples. Benefit from the insight and experience of our registered activity, and gain ideas on how you and your organisation can strengthen your approach to this topic.

- The company worked with Women into Construction to offer short term work placements and to place female professionals onto their projects.
- Appointed a 'female advisor' on site for female staff to contact, if an issue occurs.
- The contractor created an educational programme of hourly after-school sessions with two girls' schools. The programme involved working in groups to complete each stage of a new build.
- Created a range of company-branded PPE specifically designed for women.
- Hosted site visits from local girls' schools so they could see construction work in progress.
- The contractor promoted International Women in Engineering Day by interviewing female employees and sharing their stories through internal communications and social media channels.
- The site visited local schools to host engineering taster days involving practical challenges such as constructing a bridge using paper and recycled household waste.
- Encouraged employees to invite young women from their families to a taster day visiting construction sites to learn about engineering.

To view Best Practice Hub entries relating to the 'Spotlight on... equality, diversity and inclusion' learning toolkit visit: <https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/tag/women-in-construction/>

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Case Studies

Women interested in a career in construction need to hear from successful women in the industry, as female role models are essential in helping to engage more women into the industry.

Get inspired by women across our industry who share their story and offer advice to those aspiring for a career in construction.



Aby Wallace is Site Manager at Robertson. Aby completed a Construction Management qualification at University, and since graduating has progressed to being a site manager.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Aby-Wallace.pdf>



Caroline Barker is a civil engineer by profession and a Monitor for the Considerate Constructors Scheme. She is actively involved in the effort to improve the image of the industry and encourage people from diverse backgrounds to consider a career in construction.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Caroline-Barker.pdf>



Eillish Kwai is the Employment and Skills Manager at Ardmere. She is actively involved with the Women into Construction organisation, providing women with advice, training and job opportunities in the industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Eillish-Kwai.pdf>



Hayley Gill is Site Manager at Robertson Construction. Hayley did work experience on a site at 15 and is now attending College to gain qualifications in Construction Management.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Hayley-Gill.pdf>



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Kath Moore is a qualified carpenter by trade and the Managing Director of Women into Construction, a not-for-profit organisation supporting women wishing to work in the construction industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Kath-Moore.pdf>



Jo Bowditch is a Monitor with the Considerate Constructors Scheme. As a Monitor, Jo gets to visit construction projects of all types and interact with the people working in the industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Jo-Bowditch.pdf>



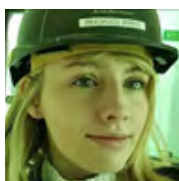
Katie Kelleher is a crawler crane operator working for Select/Laing O'Rourke. Katie worked in recruitment before starting an apprenticeship in October 2014. She has been working on the Tottenham Court Road Crossrail site since May 2015.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Katie-Kelleher.pdf>



Laura Doherty is Site Manager at Robertson Construction. Laura has worked in the industry since she left school and has worked in Civil Engineering, Utilities and House Building.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Laura-Doherty.pdf>



Leanne O'Donovan is an Assistant Site Manager at L&Q. Leanne carried out work experience at L&Q, fell in love with the industry and has worked in it ever since.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Leanne-ODonovan.pdf>



Liz Moss is an Apprentice Site Manager at Morgan Sindall who completed her Extended Level 3 Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment and then explored work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Liz-Moss.pdf>



Lynette Whittle is a Monitor with the Considerate Constructors Scheme. As a Monitor, Lynette gets to visit construction projects of all types and interact with the people working in the industry.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Lynette-Whittle.pdf>

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Margaret Conway is a Project Manager for McAleer & Rushe. In 2017 she became the first woman to win the Construction Manager of the Year Award for her work on the 9 Adelaide project in Belfast.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Margaret-Conway.pdf>



Megan Robinson is a Technical Coordinator at Barratt Developments plc and co-founder of Built by Both, a campaign to inspire young women to embark on careers in the built environment.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Megan-Robinson.pdf>



Michèle Dix is Managing Director of Crossrail 2, a new railway which will improve access to and from London and reduce congestion on existing rail services. Before moving to Crossrail, Michèle worked as Director of Congestion Charging at Transport for London.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Michele-Dix.pdf>



Mollie Phipps is an Intermediate Quantity Surveyor, at Watson & Cox Construction. Mollie was interested in Architecture from the age of 6, and has completed many qualifications to reach her current role.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Mollie-Phipps.pdf>



Nayera Aslam is Aviation Engineering Manager for AECOM. Nayera was interested in an engineering career by technical feats like the Channel Tunnel and the Hoover Dam and has since worked on projects including the London 2012 Olympics.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nayera-Aslam.pdf>



Nicola Jackson is a Technical Manager at Robertson. When Nicola was 14 she gained work experience at an architecture firm and from this point decided this was the career path for her.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nicola-Jackson.pdf>

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Noelene Russell is an Architectural Assistant at Claridge Architects. She was attracted to architecture by its artistic nature and is currently working on a large development project in Plymouth.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Noelene-Russell.pdf>



Roma Agrawal is a Structural Engineer at AECOM. Throughout her career she has worked on major projects, including The Shard, and appeared on television and radio promoting engineering careers to young people.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Roma-Agarwal.pdf>



Ruby Lee is a Trainee Site Manager with Berkeley Homes. She had never considered a construction career until attending a careers event where Berkeley were present. She has been working on the Kidbrooke Village site since September 2017.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ruby-Lee.pdf>



Sally Cave is the first qualified female Gas Membrane Installer in the UK. She began working at her father's installation company in administration but trained to become qualified for on-site work.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sally-Cave.pdf>



Savannah Williams-Duberry is an Architectural Assistant Apprentice at L&Q. Savannah wanted to gain knowledge of buildings and properties, which led her to architecture.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Savannah-Williams-Duberry.pdf>



Shannon Dawe is a Community Impact Advisor at Robertson. Shannon's role is centred around planning, delivering, and reporting on social value within the communities they work.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Shannon-Dawe.pdf>

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Stephanie Bennett is a trainee Quantity Surveyor with Morgan Sindall. She worked in administration before becoming a surveyor and is currently being supported through university by Morgan Sindall.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Stephanie-Bennett.pdf>



Victoria Betts is a senior Site Manager at Higgins Construction working on the Gabriel Square project in St. Albans. She started in the industry working with her father for a general building company carrying out plastering, tiling and kitchen installation.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Victoria-Betts.pdf>



Yosra Khalaf is a Site Manager at Peabody. Yosra studied Civil Engineering at University before moving to the UK and working her way up to becoming a Site Manager.

<https://ccsbestpractice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Yosra-Khalaf.pdf>

What can you do?

The industry has made strides to help readdress the gender imbalance, but it's clear there's still so much that needs to be done to make the industry more reflective of the world we live in.

DRIVE DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT

- According to the **University of York**, diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace are key decision making factors in choosing a future employer, in particular millennials who tend to be more progressive and proactive in this area.
- Are opportunities for recruitment, training and career progression the same for men as for women? Do HR policies translate into practice? Monitor real-life examples of recruitment in your organisation to make certain processes and procedures are followed and identify areas for improvement. Take steps to raise awareness of unconscious bias and make the recruitment process fair and inclusive with a diverse interview panel, name-blind CV's and gender-neutral language.
- Assess existing contracts and policies related to pay, workplace flexibility and maternity leave. Insurance firm Zurich saw a **20% rise in women** applying for management roles after an initiative to tackle the gender pay gap; it went on to appoint a third more women to senior positions after it advertised roles with the option of 'part-time', 'job-share' or 'flexible working' and the use of gender-neutral language.
- Will leadership quotas influence gender equality in your company? In a landmark ruling the EU recently approved a new directive for **large companies to ensure 40% of the 'underrepresented sex'** (typically women) on their boards from 2026. Initiatives like this can bridge the gap and help improve gender equality with a top-down approach. Review the demographics of your teams to understand where there are gaps and take initiative to make change.

SUPPORT EQUALITY IN CAREER PROGRESSION

- Review policies and leadership culture around career progression and professional development. A survey undertaken by **Hays Recruitment for Building Magazine**, found 64% of women polled aspired to be in a senior position. Why are women being passed up for promotions?
- Ensure that decisions are made based on skill and experience rather than background and gender. Develop Key Performance Indicators that are free from bias. Remove the stigma and unconscious bias of maternity leave (or indeed, paternity leave which can enable women to return to work sooner) and support women coming back to work.

IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS

- Review salary and bonus schemes to ensure they are consistent and reflective of the job role and not on gender. With **gender pay reporting** mandatory for all companies with over 250 staff, there is nowhere to hide when it comes to pay.
- Stamp out sexism, harassment and misogyny with a zero-tolerance policy. Promote an open-door policy to encourage all workers to report bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensure workplace facilities and equipment are fit for purpose for all employees including PPE, sanitary and accessible amenities and nursing rooms.

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CHANGE PERCEPTIONS

- Breakdown traditional perceptions and stamp out old fashioned attitudes by influencing public opinion. It's easier said than done – small steps in how we promote and market our industry will make a difference; from how we talk, to the photography we use on our websites.
- Drive company-wide awareness campaigns for equality, diversity and inclusivity. This is not just an issue for HR and should be seen as a key priority and be embedded throughout the organisation at every level. How our leaders behave will have a trickledown effect on the rest of the organisation. Ensure site inductions and toolbox talks cover equality and diversity to ensure all workers are treated with fairness, inclusion and respect. Measure employee engagement and wellbeing by conducting regular surveys to track the 'pulse' of the organisation.
- Construction is no longer an old-fashioned trade stuck in the past. Use of augmented reality, artificial intelligence and 3D modelling and printing for example, are changing how we construct and maintain the world we live in, opening new career opportunities and changing the way the industry works.

PROMOTE ROLE MODELS

- With agreement and consideration of approach, make a difference to public perceptions and put a spotlight on the women working in your organisation. Make the voice and image heard of role models that are women; from advertising photography and social media engagement to workplace mentoring and external talks.
- Create a community and support system by developing networking groups or mentoring schemes with other women in your organisation. Be a champion for women in construction and actively speak to colleagues, peers, prospective students, industry leaders or even your neighbour down the road. Work with women's organisations to conduct training in recognising and eliminating casual sexism and unconscious bias.

INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION

- Make a positive impact and inspire the next generation of construction professionals by supporting STEM initiatives. Connect with local schools and colleges to raise awareness with seminars, forums or work experience placements.
- The next generation are more digitally savvy than ever before, why not spark their interest by promoting new technology, real-life projects and the wide range of opportunities for growth and development for a fulfilling career in construction.

CONCLUSION

Whilst there have been many successes to address the gender imbalance in the UK construction sector, with increased awareness and initiatives to remove gender biases, overall numbers are yet to see a significant change. The impact of coronavirus has permanently changed the way we work, with digital working and greater flexibility of home working, removing some barriers for women entering the industry.

The skills crisis is, and will continue to be, a huge challenge for construction in years to come. Together these issues create exciting opportunities to reinvent the sector; to challenge stereotypes, boost the adoption of new technology, and invest in up and reskilling our population. Whilst the sector is adapting to a new post-covid world, it's clear a significant joint effort from education, industry and government is needed to make the construction accessible and truly inclusive. There is no doubt that creating a gender balanced workforce that is truly reflective of society will help meet growth targets and sustain the future of the UK construction industry.

Further reading on this topic can be found in the References and Useful Resources section.

The Scheme will continue to update this page as new case studies and examples of how the industry is tackling this issue are identified. If you would like to share how your organisation helps to encourage more women to consider a career in construction, please contact the Scheme by emailing enquiries@ccsbestpractice.org.uk.