



Spotlight on...
women in construction

**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Case Study: Considerate Constructors Scheme

Jo Bowditch - Scheme Monitor

1. WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED YOU TO WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE JOB AND WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DID YOU REQUIRE?

I kind of fell into construction after completing my A Levels and not getting the grades to do my choice of degree. I still wanted to move away from home and do a degree so went through clearing and if I am honest, I saw the management part of the degree title before the building part as no one had ever talked to me about construction and the many opportunities in the industry. It was a degree over 4 years that had 3 x 6 months of practical experience as part of it and I applied and was successful at securing a role with Willmott Dixon. They had an amazing programme where I was well supported to gain experience on site and in other areas such as quantity surveying, planning, estimating, buying and design coordination.

I have since gained other qualifications which help me greatly with my current role and they include the Chartered Management Institute level 7 Executive Diploma in Management, NEBOSH construction certificate, SMSTS, IEMA environmental awareness and the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and the level 3 in Assessing Vocational Achievement in the Workplace.

I continue to learn each and every day firstly from those in industry I meet whether I am training, assessing or monitoring as well as accessing short courses and learning available through the CCS and the Supply Chain Sustainability School.



2. TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE. WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? WHAT DO YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT THE JOB?

It is so varied depending on what work I am doing that day. It usually involves an early start (although not as early as many in our industry have!) and I could be travelling to site to assess or monitor or to a clients venue or a hotel to set up and deliver a course or workshop. If I am not out then I work from home undertaking course development, arranging meetings, writing CCS reports and chatting to clients and other trainers/assessors in my network who help, support and guide me as it can be lonely working for yourself.

I really love working with others especially first line supervisors.

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I love that they think they can't always learn and change but they absolutely can and it is a joy to watch them grow and develop and build confidence for the challenging work they undertake, and then hearing about the difference it has made to them and their teams. I also love visiting projects – all of which are interesting in their own way and learning about the technology/innovations/change that is happening in our industry from the talented people that work on them.

I do sometimes dislike the travelling and overnight stays. I recognise of course that this allows me to have a real variety of work and try to manage how frequent these are and if I can start even earlier to get somewhere without having to stay over I will.

3. WHAT QUALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO DO YOUR JOB?

- Good communication skills and the ability to build rapport with others quickly
- A genuine interest in people and their work/projects.
- Interest in continuing to learn.
- To be able to really care about someone else's development.
- Particularly good attention to detail when assessing.

4. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE YOU FOUND WHEN YOU STARTED WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION?

The variety of people who work in the industry and their passion and commitment to achieve the

impossible (sometimes!) and the projects that are undertaken – all unique, all challenging yet rewarding.

5. WHAT WERE/ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

It was hard working on projects in the 1990's with long commutes, long hours and stressful situations. This made me move away from site based work. Thankfully much has changed since then to support people with health and wellbeing and more flexible working although more still needs to be done especially around working hours.

If I can carry on with what I am doing now until I am very old I would be happy as I know I will continue to find the work rewarding and purposeful.

6. HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OBSTACLES IN YOUR CAREER BECAUSE OF YOUR GENDER?

Not really no. Only once did someone say they couldn't take an instruction from a woman and I have felt supported by so many people.

7. WHY DO YOU THINK WOMEN REMAIN UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE INDUSTRY?

I think there is still a negative perception of the industry and that some that work in it are sexist (I think it can be and I do have examples of others facing this). I mostly think though that the industry is not promoted enough to influence people to come into it (and obviously not just women). What we are talking about now and how we can change this was talked about when I joined. We all have a duty to challenge stereotypes and even language or phrases used such as the 'men on site'. I think the women that do enter the industry will stay if offered training, progression, flexible benefits etc. All of which responsible employers are offering to everyone anyway. Retention is a challenge across the board I believe.

8. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT YOUNG WOMEN SEEK OUT CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION?

Absolutely I would and I do! My family joke that I will find any opportunity to talk to anyone about the industry and that I regularly ask 'have you considered a career in construction?'. I have supported careers education in schools and must try to find some more time for this work. After years of promoting the industry to my own daughter she finally admitted at the age of 14 that 'I have maybe overlooked construction' and I am so proud of her that two years on she has now secured a level 4 apprenticeship with HS2 as an Associate Project Manager. She is hoping this will be successful and then she can move to work for a contractor and continue her training and development.

9. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY WOMEN WISHING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?

Don't underestimate the value of work experience. Research where you would like to work and reach out to companies and ask them if you can do some work experience with them. This allows you to see what the industry is about, the different roles and become clearer about what you are interested in. It can also allow them to get to know you and who knows you might get offered a role/apprenticeship afterwards. I have known this to happen to people.

Once in the industry be prepared to work hard, to be able to ask lots of questions, to develop skills to build rapport, learn from each and every day and make time to reflect on that learning.

10. HOW DO YOU THINK A DIVERSE WORKFORCE BENEFITS THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE?

A larger talent pool to recruit from as well as improved problem solving, innovation and decision making

as different people and backgrounds come together.