

Elizabeth Findlay

BTEC Level 3 in Construction and the Built Environment

Current position: Assistant Site Manager at Keepmoat Homes

Elizabeth Findlay talks about her journey into the world of construction and how she became a Construction Manager at Keepmoat Homes.

My journey into construction started when I left school at 16. I loved visiting various world heritage sites, where I would marvel at the interior decoration of each historically preserved space, ranging from grand ballrooms to ornate churches. Looking at architecturally-profound buildings became a hobby of mine and I quickly came to realise that I wanted to become a part of the construction industry. So, when I left school, I enrolled onto a painting and decorating course.

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Over time I gained much practical and theoretical experience, extending my knowledge into topics I never imagined I would study. This in turn showed me career options I never realised existed. While at college, I completed many independent restoration projects, which included a whole house renovation and children’s bedroom designs. I was part of a team at college who helped design some large bookcases for a library, and I was then responsible for painting them to a high quality. In my second year of college, I was awarded ‘Level Two Student of the Year’ for my hard work and dedication to the course. As well as this, I had the opportunity to attend education conferences in London where I spoke to over 200 people about my journey as a ‘woman in construction’.



After re-assessing my position, I decided to go on to level 3 painting and decorating, gaining my advanced construction craft. After my level three course I re-evaluated my career interests and decided to proceed on to BTEC Level 3 in Construction and the Built Environment to extend my professional building knowledge.

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During my two-year BTEC course I experienced many job opportunities, including an Erasmus trip to Estonia, where I completed my work experience abroad; 6-months employment in an architects’ practice where I created drawing packages for small-scale extension schemes; being part of a design team, going out to site and liaising with clients and other contractors; and volunteering for teaching duties within the painting and decorating department at West Nottinghamshire College, which led to some paid sessional hours. In my first year, I was awarded ‘The Principles Student of the Year’ award, and at the end of my BTEC course I was awarded the ‘BTEC Construction Student of the Year’ award, where I attended a ceremony at the Royal Horticultural Hall in London. I feel that both awards highlight my dedication to the course and my desire to succeed.

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Throughout my time at college, I was recognised as a role model for excelling in a male dominated industry, and I became a refreshing sight to others for promoting women in construction. I feel that the construction industry is a very important and inspiring career that not a lot of people are aware of. I have worked alongside many different people in many different jobs roles, from labourers to surveyors, each one a value to society as everyday life would not be the same without these roles sectors. I want to inspire a new generation of construction workers and show them what a valuable working sector this is and how it teaches you a variety of life lessons. Personally, without these life lessons I would not be the person I am today.

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There are many stereotypes about the construction industry; for example, that it is a male-dominated industry for non-academic students. However, I have learnt from personal experience that you can take something like painting and decorating as far as you want to go. Being a woman in the construction industry, I am considered a rarity, but if more women were given better advice about manual jobs, I am sure more women would flourish in this industry as well. More women would get the chance to pursue a career with limitless prospects and a prosperous future.

I am now an assistant site manager for Keepmoat Homes while being funded to study Site Management and Property Development at the University of Derby part time. I have most recently been nominated for a London Construction Award for Women in Construction.

This interview took place May 2020.

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