

Workshop 2E

Women in Social Housing Maintenance

Speaker: Dawn Anderson Foster, Paul Griffin and Helen Colwill (Guinness Property) & Liane Sheppard (Sovereign)

Chaired by: Paul Roberts

Room: Dorset room



National Housing
Maintenance Forum

NHMF
Maintenance
Conference
2019



Women in Social Housing Maintenance

Sharing insights into how to attract women into maintenance, overcoming barriers by working together and developing complementary initiatives



Beyond 2%



Inside Housing 50
 Catriona Simons

Gender equality in trades

The sector needs to make a concerted effort to get more women working in maintenance and construction

I was struck recently by how few commercial plots are women - 6% in the UK, it is incredible that in 2017 almost all are under-represented. The same is true of the maintenance and construction professions. Research commissioned by the Women into Maintenance Steering Group led by Victoria and I, and that I published this summer, suggests that women make up no more than 2% of the overall housing sector's trades workforce.

Given our sector's commitment to diversity and inclusion, this is disappointing. And it is something we have to address, and doesn't require a technical revolution. In the second decade of the 21st century, there must be equal employment opportunities. There should be no barriers - actual or perceived - to women entering any profession.

Tackling stereotypes

The business case for us as employers is clear. We know some of our customers would prefer to have repairs in their homes carried out by a female tradesperson - some for religious reasons, and some because they feel vulnerable in their homes. As business service providers, we should be able to respond to these customer requirements.

The case for improving the resilience of our workforce is similarly persuasive. We have been talking for years about skills shortages in the maintenance and construction industries - that has intruded over the past 12 months with concern about a peak in skills shortages. So why aren't we attracting more women into the industry?

Some of the reasons are occupational and cultural: the stigma of manual and heavy work, the perception of the industry as a male world, where it is sometimes assumed that men are the ones who should be doing the work. We have a lot to do to promote opportunities for women at every stage of their careers. We need to tackle this gender stereotype and address the misconceptions among both women and men about 'male jobs'.

The trades should be seen as a real career option for girls and young women at school, as well as women seeking a career change or returning to work. The training is available



there are clear entry points, when through apprenticeships, there is career progression and there is a strong potential. In the field of repairs in particular, roles need to be made available to women. A male-dominated workplace does not need to be a male-dominated workplace. It's not gender equality that's the issue, it's about creating work places and practices that are available for everyone.

"We need to address preconceptions about 'men's jobs'"

standardising or differentiating as necessary. Standard manual handling guidelines, law making devices, suitable tools and better facilities - some of this is still to be prevented in other professions.

The practical considerations are important, but perhaps only half the challenge. We have no reported cases of women trade-able being broken, but that doesn't clear the way for what is still to be done. So we also need to be thinking about how to make our industry and our work as an employer more attractive to women. There are many ways in which we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women.

Our sector is changing the face of the trades workforce. We need to ensure that we are not only attracting more women into the industry, but also ensuring that we are providing them with the support and training they need to succeed. We need to create a culture where women are valued and encouraged to take on the challenges of the trades. We need to make sure that the industry is a place where everyone can thrive.



Catriona Simons is one of the Inside Housing 50 commentators that have been published on the web this week. To read more from our network, visit www.insidehousing.net/ or www.blogs/50

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Beyond diversity

Across many traditionally male-dominated areas women are making their mark with refreshing regularity - from England Women's football teams to more women getting behind the wheel in the haulage industry.



Paul Roberts
 Executive Director
 The Guinness Partnership

Yet despite everything being done, progress in the trades remains disappointingly slow with women making up, on average, just 2% of that workforce. Promoting a gender diverse workforce is not just the right thing to do but is also vital in a sector where there is a customer service benefit. Guinness is dedicated to building a more tradeswomen workforce, including through our own organisations, our supply chain or as a vocacy. There is a skills gap, but also a career blind spot and untapped potential. Guinness Paperity (along with Keenomat Homes, Regents Homes, Mancunian Way, Oldham Council and Get Oldham Working) recently offered women the

opportunity to enroll on a free five-week training programme designed to help them gain the skills they need to start a career in construction and maintenance. The course had a focus on practical training, joinery and plastering. Practical assessments taught by experienced professionals and site visits enabled students to develop their skills and meet people who can help them use their new qualification. Those who completed the course were awarded a C.S.C.S. card, required by most contractors to work on a construction site.

20%
 Guinness' target of new recruits to the trades being women

The programme included personal development with a 'branding me' workshop and inspirational women speakers who have progressed within the industry. Those attending highlighted how important it was to see that a career in this field really is possible. One student said: "You don't often get the chance to see different trades and hear how women can progress in the construction industry."

Another commented, "site visits have given me a wider understanding of the industry" to develop and extend it across the country, it won't just be open to Guinness customers, but to all women in local communities to attract Guinness would like to see women make up 20% of new recruits to trades positions by 2020. To achieve this the sector needs to encourage more apprenticeships, support those who wish to return to work or retrain, and those who are mentors and ambassadors who can inspire more women in schools, colleges and workplaces. Only by doing so can we produce more skilled tradeswomen with the potential for a long-term career in this most rewarding of sectors. ■

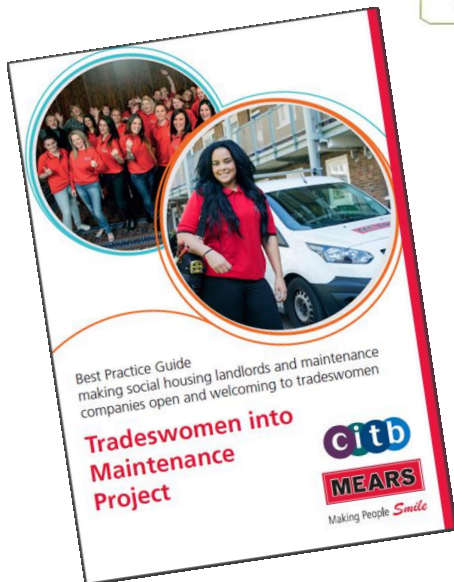
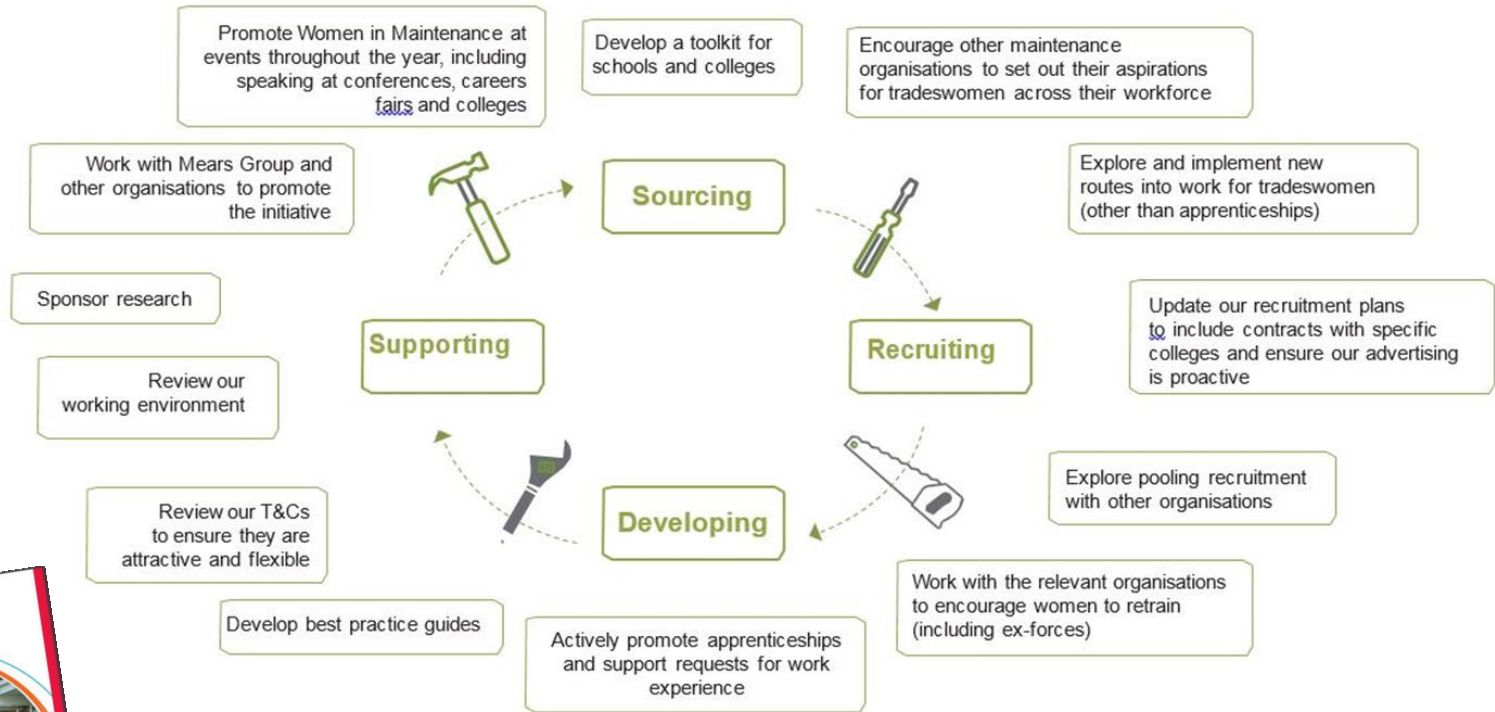
OPINION

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What can be done?



<https://www2.mearsgroup.co.uk/mears-tradeswomen-into-maintenance>

Innovations, hints and tips

Kick Start programme



Try a trade.

As part of International Women's Day, Guinness Property is hosting free sessions for women who want to try out different maintenance skills.

We will be covering the basics of tiling, plastering, joinery and plumbing at our Oldham training academy. We will also be available to chat about career opportunities within housing maintenance.

So if you're curious about working in trades, or just fancy learning a new skill, come along and give it a go.

Thursday 8th March 2018

Guinness Property, Irving Court, Oldham Broadway Business Park, Oldham, OL9 9XA

Drop in between 9.30am and 3pm

This invitation is open to all our female customers.

For further information please contact ☎0161 947 3550



Our aims for 2019

- **Improve recruitment techniques**
- **More Kick Start Programmes**
- **More Ambassador Training**

Innovations, hints and tips

Moving the initiative from Push to Pull...

Advocates!

Advocates!

Advocates!



Millie & Emma – trainee carpenters

Emma was a police officer and wanted a change in career – she joined Sovereign as a trainee carpenter from a taster day in Oxfordshire “I like to be physically active and can't sit behind a desk. I'd been looking for trainee carpentry role for a while, to pick up new skills. I'm hoping to be able to broaden those skills as time goes on to other trades.”

Millie was already working at Sovereign as an administrator and wanted to try a career as a trade – Millie signed up to the taster day and loved it – so followed it up with some work experience – she is doing really well in her apprenticeship working on empty homes and response repairs



Kimmy – trainee carpenter

Kimmy felt no-one was willing to give her a chance as she hadn't got a carpentry background. She showed real passion for carpentry at interview. Kimmy is one of our residents

At interview said that there was no scheme like this (that she'd heard of) and how forward thinking we were in setting up the programme



Networking & support

We've set up a what's app and Sovereign facebook groups to provide support and mentoring as our team grows

5 years ago there were 0 female trades

Now we have 18 female trades 3%

Our target is to recruit 1% per year



Q & A

With Helen Colwill (Electrician) and Paul Griffin
(Head of Responsive Repairs)

Can we get to 5% by 2021?

