

PRESS RELEASE 28.04.2022

Hannah is helping to break the mould for women working in scaffolding

A change in direction could soon see Hannah Watt hitting the dizzy heights. The 21-year-old has swapped work in complex care nursing for a career in scaffolding.

While she is unintentionally breaking the mould when it comes to an industry traditionally perceived to be male dominated, she is loving every minute and says she would certainly encourage more women to do the same.

Explaining her own career change, she explained: "Following the increasing demands of working in care through the covid pandemic, and at the point where I was working six or seven night shifts a week, I was ready for something different."



Scanning potential vacancies, the apprenticeship in scaffolding was the first to stand out.

"It's not something I had considered before, but it did appeal," said Hannah, of Castleford.

Six months later she is working and building the skills of her trade with MJM Scaffolding Services Ltd and travelling to Stockton's NETA Training to pick up her qualifications.

She said: "It is quite physical work, but it's also quite a matey environment, so it doesn't always feel like you're at work. I did realise I would probably be working with all lads, but despite not knowing any women scaffolders or women in trades, I didn't realise the numbers were quite so low."

With around just a dozen female scaffolders qualified at the moment, Dave Mosely, director of CISRS, the construction industry scaffolders record scheme, said: "Hannah is joining a pretty exclusive club."

But he added: "The numbers of new entrants, labourers and trainees are increasing, with approximately 50 at this current time. We very much look forward to welcoming more women into the sector."

It seems employers simply want the best person for the job. John Forsyth, director of MJM Scaffolding, explained when they advertised for apprentices the post said they encouraged applications from men and women.

He said: "There were three lads that started around the same time as Hannah and there really is no difference. She wants to learn the job and is keen to work overtime."

Having completed the first part of her scaffolding part one training, she is in the process of getting her heavy goods licence so she can drive the trucks as well.

John, who says he would certainly encourage more women to consider careers in the industry, said: "I have known of other female scaffolders but only a few. I suppose it is the stereotype for men to be in construction and particularly scaffolding.

"Us scaffolders can be a bit rough and ready, so it might not be for everyone, but it's down to the individual. Talking to other companies, they can be shocked that we have a woman on the team, as there are so few female scaffolders, but everyone thinks it's good.

"To have a female scaffolder on the team doesn't make us better as such, but it certainly brings us into the 21st century."

NETA's lead scaffolder, Brian Ward, said: "It's encouraging to see a female scaffolding apprentice among our latest cohort. After 33 years in the scaffolding industry, I can honestly say I have seen three or four other females in, what is a massively male dominated role.

"This can hopefully show and convince other females to pick up the spanners and see scaffolding as a viable and achievable career. Hannah is certainly no shrinking violet and is very competent and proficient in all areas of the course, albeit classroom based or practical skills she copes with the product knowledge and physicality without issue."

Given her own experience, Hannah said, a career in scaffolding is something more women should think about. She said: "I play rugby and regularly go to the gym and so I like the physical aspect. I wouldn't want a job where I am sat in an office."

As for her advice to others, she said: "It is tough on your body, but if you've got a head for heights and don't mind getting dirty and sweaty, and looking a bit rough, I would absolutely say, give it a shot!"