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# **Women In Construction/ Apprentice Programme Update**

Assistant Mayor Briefing: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024

Housing and Neighbourhoods Board: 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Housing Scrutiny Commission: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

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Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin  
Lead Director: Chris Burgin

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: ALL
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- Report version number: v1.2

### 1. Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the Women in Construction and Apprentice Programmes within Housing delivered by Leicester City Council.

### 2. Recommended actions/decision

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the delivery of the Women in Construction programme and the craft apprentice recruitment for 2024/25 and 2025/26. Members are recommended to review the report and provide any comments for consideration.

### 3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

3.2 This report will be subject to scrutiny at Housing Scrutiny Commission.

### 4. Background

4.1 Women in Construction was established in partnership with Leicester College well over 20 years ago and is run every year in February at Leicester College. This year for the first time the Council also ran an additional Women In Construction week at the Construction Training Centre of Excellence to encourage an even greater take up by running the programme over two weeks from two different locations.

The main objectives of the programme are to;

- Provide an environment that challenges the outdated stereotype that trades (carpentry, plumbing, tiling, painting and decorating etc) are only suitable for men;
- Showcase Leicester City Council tradeswomen who are qualified in their respective trades and to pass on some of their knowledge to the women who attend the workshops, raising confidence and skills in women in the community in practical trades;
- Actively demonstrate that Leicester City Council is a forerunner in implementing diversity and inclusion within its trade workforce. Currently 20% of our craft workforce is made up of women. Nationally this stands at 13% in the construction industry with just 1% working on site;
- Provide a supportive and positive environment to enable women of any age or background to take part in taster sessions in a chosen trade. In turn increasing women's confidence in their own ability.
- Promote, encourage and support applications to the trade apprenticeships from the attendees.

4.2 Until 2023 Leicester City Council employed 30 apprentices within Housing in craft trades providing on the job experience with qualified operatives and educational attainment through Leicester College and Stephenson's College. In 2024 to reflect the growing need to develop our own talent to fill roles in Repairs, Gas and Voids the apprenticeship programme was extended from 30 to 40 posts, supported and mentored by three Operational Development Supervisors. This year the programme has grown again from 40 to 50 apprenticeships with an additional supervisor in place to support and mentor them. In addition, the Council also now works with SmartGas to deliver Gas apprenticeships and from September 2025 will work with Langley to deliver a roofing apprenticeship.

## **5. Main report**

### **5.1 Women in Construction**

The 2025 Women in Construction programme was run for one week during February half term at Leicester College. Leicester College provided this venue free of charge to LCC as part of a longstanding partnership and half term week is selected as the college is empty whilst students take a break from their studies. In addition, for the first time the Council also offered a further week for women to attend Women in Construction in March 2025 at the Council's own, Construction Training Centre of Excellence. This was in response to feedback that some women could not attend during half term week due to childcare arrangements.

These weeks were well promoted in advance through schools and colleges, social media and local advertising including billboards within the City at the ice rink and on bus stops. The Unions also provided sponsorship to assist with promoting the programme in the community.

Women were asked to sign up to attend one or more sessions during the week. Sessions were focused around the core trades of carpentry, plumbing, tiling, painting and decorating.

This year we had female and male craft operatives attend to support the week long sessions in teaching women basic craft skills, three female supervisors, 1 male Team Leader and two managers (including a female Repairs Manager who came through the apprentice route into a craft role so is hugely inspirational to more junior members of staff and new recruits.) The emphasis is very much on promoting LCC as a female friendly working environment to encourage women to apply for craft roles through our apprenticeship programme and to promote the good work the Council is doing around increasing the number of women in craft trades. Below is a picture of Leicester City Council staff taken at the start of the week ready to meet the potential new recruits.



During the two weeks nearly 130 women attended a variety of sessions, scheduled from Monday to Friday. Feedback from the women was hugely positive with many feeling it supported their confidence in developing practical skills and their knowledge around job opportunities within the Council.

## **5.2 Apprentice recruitment**

This year our apprentice recruitment programme has started as it always does with Women in Construction in February following on from this we are currently working closely with local schools, colleges, the DWP and through social and other local media to promote our apprentice vacancies which will be filled by September 2025. We also work very closely with Children's Services to promote these opportunities to Looked After Care Children (LACs) and leaving care to ensure we fulfil our obligations as a corporate parent. We have a successful history of mentoring and supporting LACs and Care leavers within our apprentice programme. Last year the Council advertised 18 apprentice vacancies, 5 in Gas, 5 in Carpentry, 5 in Electrics and 3 Property Maintenance Operatives. These apprenticeships vary in length from 2.5 years to 5 years long and are delivered in partnership with Leicester College, SmartGas and Stephenson's College. In 2025, the Council is advertising for 10 new apprenticeships in Roofing to meet a need in the service provided by Langley, and a further 2 x Electrical, 2 x Gas and 2 x Carpentry.

In 2024 we received 326 applications, of which 22 were from Women, 57 candidates were BME and 8 were from LACs/Care leavers. These applicants were then put through a variety of practical and written tests before they were invited to interview. At this stage the 326 applicants were reduced to 66 applicants including 11 women, 5 LACs/Care leavers and 28 BME candidates.

Following on from interview all 18 positions were offered including to 3 women. The 18 successful candidates included 3 BME candidates, 2 LACs/care leavers, 2 candidates with disabilities, 1 candidate from LCC's own Leicester to Work (Neighbourhood Improvement) programme and 1 Armed Forces candidate.

The successful candidates commenced employment with Leicester City Council in September 2024. They all have a detailed induction programme and are assigned a supervisor in the workplace, an onsite mentor (operative) and a tutor at college. The Council works closely to ensure adequate support is in place to enable all our apprentices to have a positive work

experience and to also mould and shape the next generation of our workforce. Pictures below show the apprentices in their first week of employment at City Hall for their induction.



### 5.3 Next steps

The Council will continue to build on its existing apprentice programme, delivering high quality apprenticeships which build a robust workforce for the future which is representative of our tenant profile. With the success of running an additional session at CTCE this year, the Council will build on this and aims to deliver future sessions during 2026 to enable future employees to have access to the programme and to make best use of our facilities.



## **6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

### **6.1 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.  
Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance  
19<sup>th</sup> August 2024

### **6.2 Legal Implications**

The report is an update on the programme and therefore no direct legal implications arising at this stage.

Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor, Commercial and Contracts Legal Services, Ext 1423  
Date: 20 August 2024

### **6.3 Equalities Implications**

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report provides an update on the delivery of the Women in Construction programme for 2024 and the craft apprentice recruitment for 2024. Both have had a positive impact across a number of protected characteristics as highlighted in the report, e.g. disability, race, sex. The next steps identified in the report continue to take equality considerations into account and promote the aims of the PSED.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 22 August 2024

### **6.4 Climate Emergency Implications**

Construction and buildings are a major source of carbon emissions in Leicester. Following the city council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and its ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions, addressing these emissions is vital in meeting this aim.

To tackle the climate emergency future construction will need to meet higher standards of environmental sustainability, with a corresponding need for training in the relevant skills and technologies such as insulation, heat pumps and renewables. As such, opportunities for the project to support training in these areas could be investigated, in order to help prepare Leicester's construction industry for a low carbon future.

Additionally, the provision of services contributes to carbon emissions, for example from the use of buildings, equipment and transport. To minimise these impacts staff and partners should be encouraged to reduce energy use, use sustainable transport and procure low carbon equipment and materials.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

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