

TAKE YOUR PLACE



Take Your Apprenticeship

Lucie's perspective

We spoke to Lucie, apprentice site manager with Morgan Sindall construction. She tells us about why the apprenticeship route appealed to her, her current project working on Norwich Castle and her ambitions for her career.

Could you start by telling us about your position and what you're currently working on?

I'm currently working on the Norwich Castle project, which is very exciting. Usually at Morgan Sindall, we do quite a lot of work with schools and council framework jobs. So this one's a little bit different, which is quite fun to be working on.

Site management involves being the main point of contact on site for everyone, organizing the health and safety, sub-contractors, liaising with the client, looking at programme, etc. I've been doing it for a year currently, just going into my second year and I'll have a construction management degree at the end.

How did you first become interested in doing an apprenticeship and what was your route from GCSE's to your position now?

I went to University Technical College Norfolk and they have a lot of community engagement with businesses. They actually talk quite a lot about apprenticeships right through from year 10, so I was quite fortunate in that I knew about it quite early on. So I'm quite lucky that my school was very supportive. We also had a careers advisor and she told me about them. I knew I wanted to go into construction in some form but I wasn't completely sure.

I did the Arkwright scholarship, which is an engineering scholarship and Helen Clements who actually works for Morgan Sindall interviewed me, which then led onto work experience.

When you started applying for this apprenticeship, where did you look to find vacancies and what type of questions did you have to answer in the application?

I looked on icanbea.org.uk, where you can see lots of different companies who have vacancies and also the government website for Apprenticeships. In terms of questions in applications, it's usually about what experience you've got, so your actual grades are quite a small part of what they want to know in the application. It's more about your qualities and obviously why you would like the job. A job is much more than just the money side of things, it's about being interested in it and having some kind of passion for it.

You were invited to an interview, how did that process work?

They had over one hundred candidates and about five of us were interviewed. There was a project manager and one of the commercial team as well, who actually carried out the interview.

Interview prep is the biggest thing, so knowing the role and what you'll be doing, and more importantly, what qualities they are looking for in that role. So for a management role, you could mention your leadership skills, whether you're good at talking to people, that kind of thing and how that all fits within the role.

So it's about understanding the drivers for the company, their values, and you can then demonstrate to them that you appreciate those as well.

Could you tell us a little bit about what you do in a typical week?

It's pretty crazy on site usually. My day usually starts with inductions, say perhaps new people on site, making sure they know all the emergency

procedures and organising sub-contractor work. Then ensuring all of the sub-contractors have been briefed and that all of the safe systems of work are in place, meetings with the planner to ensure we are on time and progress meetings with the designers and client. We have to liaise with the client team, consultants and archaeologists to discuss progress, quality and any specific issues to ensure the best outcome for the project. We are basically there to ensure the project runs smoothly, safely, efficiently and on time.

There's been a couple of things I've done that have been a little bit different - I've been doing my tower crane rescue training, which includes abseiling off the side of a tower crane and other training like fire marshal, first aid course, etc. No week is the same!

Historically construction has been quite a male dominated sector. What would you say to other women who are considering this career?

I was definitely nervous about this and at first I had this big stigma in my head that no one is going to take you seriously. But actually once I got onsite for my work experience, I realized that it's not like that anymore.

Especially with companies like Morgan Sindall, they've cracked down on anything that isn't right. I actually haven't had any issues, which is really, really nice. I am completely equal to everyone else on site. My view is taken into consideration. I'm respected and people listen to me. So I'd say to other women considering a career in construction, just go for it, just give it a go because you'll actually be quite surprised like I was.

A huge benefit of doing an apprenticeship is that you get a salary as you train, how have you found this?

It's been a massive benefit to me. Doing university is great, you have your student loan and everything, but with an apprenticeship, not only do you not have to pay for your degree, but you're also earning a salary. So I'm actually in the position now at nineteen where I'm looking at buying my first house, a great position to be in while I'm still at

university. You also get all the other perks you would get from a job for some companies this may be a company car or private healthcare.

How is your time split between studying at college or university and your placement?

As I mentioned earlier, I do one day a week and everyone is either part-time or doing an apprenticeship. So we're all there on the same day at college. So it can be tricky with balancing because obviously you do have the one day a week, but that's just your lectures. You have to be motivated to do your assignments on top of work but it's definitely beneficial. Also the work you're doing, compliments your assignments and vice versa. So as long as you're motivated enough to do the assignments, perhaps on the odd evening or weekend, then you can get a good balance.

Do you have any top tips for anyone looking to go into construction or engineering?

Yes definitely, not just for construction, but generally LinkedIn has been a massive help for me. It's like Facebook but for businesses and people in a professional environment. People are posting all the time about different ways to do things and it gives you some fresh insights.

People are often posting about work experience opportunities, placements, apprenticeships, etc. It's really good to be connected to lots of different people and to get your name out there and be seen as proactive.

Also, when I was doing my A levels, if I hadn't taken my non-contact day to reach out to companies and done my work experience, I wouldn't have been in a position of being offered three degree apprenticeships that I could choose from at the end of year 13.

It gets your foot in the door and also gives you a chance to build your network and keep your options open for the future.

So it's about being proactive, getting your name out there, getting as much work experience as you can and building your network.