



Representing the best in electrical
engineering and building services

WIRED FOR SUCCESS

ECA Women into Electrical Contracting Initiative



“This exciting initiative offers a blueprint for success which we hope will be replicated in our sector and others throughout the country.”

Introduction

Wired for Success is an exciting and innovative new initiative from the Electrical Contractors' Association conceived by ECA Skills Ambassador and former ECA President, Diane Johnson. In 2010, Diane became the first female President in the Association's 109 year history. A tireless campaigner to raise the profile of vocational trades and a passionate advocate for skills in the electrical industry, upon taking up Office, Diane made it her goal to find a suitable pathway for women to enter the electrical contracting industry.

The issue

The electrical contracting industry currently faces a looming skills crisis, where demand for electricians will soon outweigh supply. We are quite literally sitting on a ticking timebomb, yet the industry continues to ignore 51%* of the population, who could help reduce the deficit.

Existing routes to becoming an electrician are not flexible enough to accommodate women's needs, and perceptions that this non-traditional environment is unsuitable for females further discourages them from seeking a career in the industry.

Wired for Success challenges these perceptions and actively seeks to engage women to ensure that they are represented in the sector; in doing so, we are attempting to address the pending skills crisis facing the industry.

A blueprint for success

Wired for Success is a fully self-funded solution which demonstrates the strength of working in partnership with other like-minded companies and organisations to bring about a solution to the diversity, employment and skills issues of a key vocational industry.

Through our principal partner, Housing Association, L&Q, we have secured £100,000 worth of investment to take this project forward, along with a large helping of goodwill from all of our partners who are committed to this campaign. Each is giving generously of their time and resources to make sure that this programme is a resounding success.

Mighty oaks from small acorns grow – this initiative is a pilot programme where we will not only support our candidates through to employment, but will help those looking to go it alone or set up in business.

“The electrical industry is sitting on a ticking time bomb; we need to act now to avoid a skills crisis.”

DIANE JOHNSON, ECA

THE FACTS:

1m

Over 1 million women out of work in 2010, for the first time since 1988¹

1%

Less than 1% of qualified operatives in electrical contracting are female²

80%

The EOC reports that 80% of females might be interested in a job not traditionally undertaken by their gender³

70

Recent pension reform means many men and women in the UK will have to continue to work to the age of 70 and beyond

63%

63% of the electrical industry workforce is aged 35-54 years



We hope this initiative will serve as an inspiration and blueprint for success which can be replicated by other forward-thinking organisations and businesses up and down the country. We aim to show what can be achieved with a little flexibility, the right partners and the right programme, to get women from all walks of life into a non-traditional career.

We believe this model not only lends itself to electrical contracting, but can be adapted to suit a variety of other sectors for the benefit of men and women – offering them the opportunity to gain a valuable skill that will enable them to go out and work, or build a career for themselves.

The pathway

EAS Education have developed a two year training programme which incorporates all the necessary knowledge and skills required to work competently and safely in the domestic environment. The programme includes a brand new qualification aimed at raising standards in the domestic sector - the Certificate in Installing, Testing and Commissioning Electrical Installations in Dwellings.

The industry's skills deficit lies in the Commercial and Industrial (C&I) sector, where the traditional 3-year work based apprenticeship is required. This route relies on a student being employed. However, following privatisation of the electricity boards, who used to take on thousands of apprentices annually, there has been a steady decline in apprentice numbers and the financial burden of employing an apprentice has reduced the number of employer companies willing to take them on – particularly in these straitened times.

As well as providing a direct pathway to work in the domestic arena, we intend to demonstrate a clear qualification route into the C&I sector by taking a small number of our candidates through the 1-year follow-on bridging process to enable them to work in the C&I environment.

The candidates

We have recruited 12 female L&Q residents to undergo this two year training programme.

The women range in age from 18 to 54 and include single mothers who need to juggle home and work priorities; mature ladies who feel that their life experience is no longer valued; those who have been out of work for some time; and others simply looking for an exciting opportunity to strike out in a new direction.

The programme

Our training partner, EAS Group, has put together a flexible, rounded and supportive programme of learning constructed around term time to accommodate those with children. Study comprises a mix of classroom based sessions with EAS Education and on-site work placements with our contractor partners, Axis Europe, Mulalley and Smith & Byford.

We are not merely looking to increase the number of electricians, we aim to increase the number of electrical contracting firms. The course will not only arm the candidates with all of the technical skills necessary to operate competently and safely in the domestic environment, but will develop business skills for those wishing to become self-employed or to set up their own business.

THE WIRED FOR SUCCESS FORMULA

1 Blueprint for success

A model that can be adopted across the UK

3 Plugs the skills gap

A bridge into C&I electrical contracting

5 Working in partnership

Achieving great things by working with other organisations

7 Enhances the profile of vocational training

An investment in practical skills

9 Raises standards

Enhancing the skills base, providing work, meeting demand

2 A skill for life

An industry-recognised qualification and an exciting new career

4 The ideal opportunity

New qualification, new programme, new approach

6 Raising diversity

Females into non-traditional industry

8 Challenges perceptions

Removes the barriers that deter women

10 Encourages business

Not just jobs and employment but careers and enterprise



“I hate being on benefits, so something like this would make a massive difference. I just want to be in control of my life; I don’t want to sit at home waiting for handouts. This initiative is really empowering.”

JAHMENA WILSON-DUHANEY



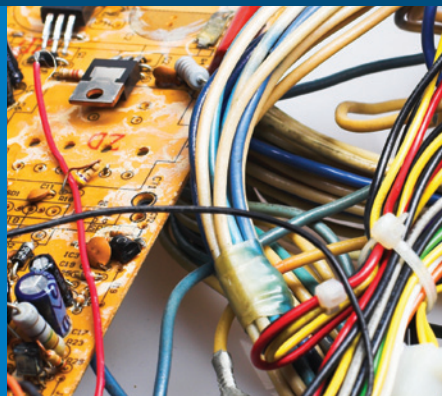
“I want to give other women confidence; they shouldn’t be frightened, or scared, or ashamed because you want to do a different sort of job.”

VICKI VAN ECK



“This will help me set a good example for my daughter, Kira, now that she is able to do things for herself and have a normal life around her disability. All the time I’ve been with her I’ve not been working, and it’s not good for her to see that.”

HOA CHI LUU



We realise that pastoral care is going to be vitally important, as going back to study will be a daunting prospect for many of these women. Every effort is being taken to ensure that the programme is as flexible as possible to accommodate family commitments.

ECA will continue to support the candidates at the end of the 2-year training course with registration to our own ECA Certification Part 'P' scheme to comply with the Building Regulations for those who work in the domestic environment. The candidates will also have access to the ECA Technical, Commercial Contracts and Legal, Health & Safety and Employee Relations helplines.

The market

The domestic sector represents 20% by value of the electrical contracting industry and offers a flexible environment for women who are self-employed or in business to balance the requirements of home and work without compromise or sacrifice. School runs and other appointments do not have to fit in around work; work can fit in around them.

There are many people in society who would welcome a female electrician into their homes – the vulnerable, such as the elderly and single women, as well as ethnic groups where it is forbidden for a man to be in the home without a male family member present.

On the part of employers, there is a real business case to employ women, because a diverse workforce is increasingly a requirement of many prequalification schemes that firms must comply with in order to win contracts.

Another key business driver lies in the sustainability agenda and the Government's commitment to dramatically reduce carbon by 80% by 2050. It is estimated that there are 24 million existing homes which need to be retro-fitted with energy-saving measures and technology if we are to achieve these targets, creating a wealth of opportunities for electricians and electrical contractors.

UK plc

More than 1 million women in the UK today are out of work. We have to find new ways to help them back into the workplace. We have a government which is extremely focussed on our vocational industries, who listens to a significant volume of female businesspeople via their Entrepreneurs' Forum. Our leaders recognise the value of skills and the importance of women's input to our business economy.

This is not just intended to be a route to employment but could potentially lead to the creation of new businesswomen who will contribute greatly to the economy. We hope that those women who start up in business will go on to repay our investment and pass on the torch by investing in other women.

Pass it on

Principal partners L&Q were a perfect fit as they have a mandate to enrich the lives of those in their communities. We would like other progressive Housing Associations, businesses and organisations to follow their lead, and that of our other partners. We believe we have an innovative model which serves as 'best practice' and we will share not only the model, but the experiences of those taking part, with anyone who is interested in replicating this programme.

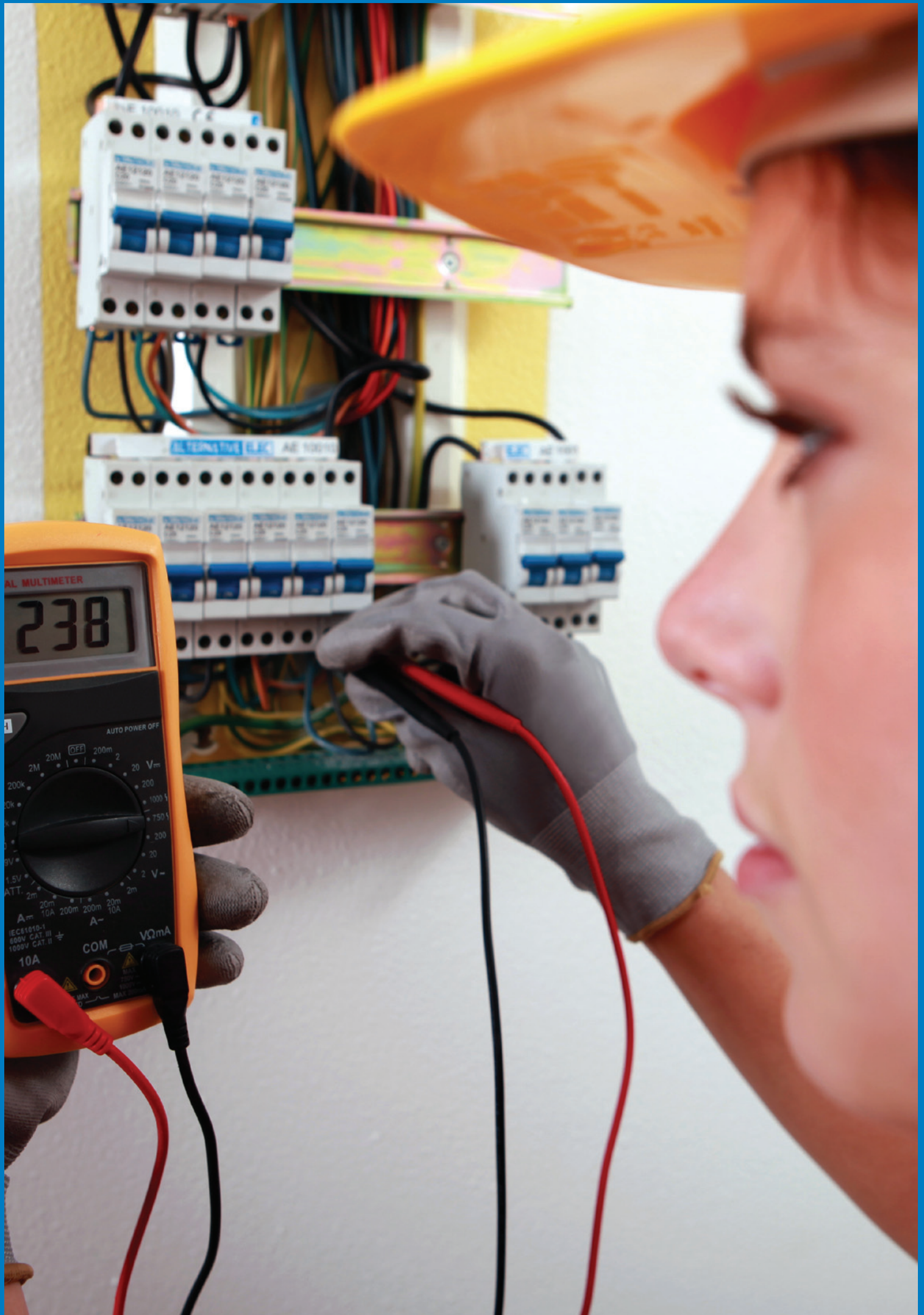
This campaign starts with a small group of 12 who will serve as role models. By sharing their experiences, we believe this forward-thinking pilot will challenge perceptions and enable women to realise their potential and to make an equal contribution to powering our homes and buildings, giving them a great career in a sector of the industry that needs their input.

About the ECA

The Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) is the UK's largest trade association representing electrical engineering and contracting businesses. Our members form a collective of over 3,000 firms across the UK, from local electricians with one or two operatives, to the large national commercial and industrial companies who employ thousands. They carry out the full range of electrical installation and maintenance work – from wiring properties to responsibility for the electrical systems in buildings like Heathrow Terminal 5, to the installation of the state of the art, energy-saving environmental control technology in the London Swiss Re Building ('the Gherkin'). Generating an aggregate turnover of over £5 billion and giving employment to more than 30,000 operatives and 8,000 apprentices, ECA's membership provides a snapshot of how significant the electrical sector is to the British construction industry and to our economy. Visit our website www.eca.co.uk.

Sources

- * The Office for National Statistics, Census 2001: First Results on Population in England and Wales, First Results on Population in England and Wales
- 1. The Office for National Statistics, 2011
- 2. SummitSkills AACS LMI report (June 2010)
- 3. The Equal Opportunities Commission (2005): Free to Choose - Tackling Gender Barriers to Better Jobs



Principal partner



L&Q

L&Q is one of the UK's leading housing associations building high quality homes for a range of incomes. L&Q is involved in large scale community regeneration projects across London and is committed to investing in local neighbourhoods and communities and has dedicated local Neighbourhood Investment teams. L&Q works in partnership with local authorities and local and national voluntary and community agencies to develop opportunities for residents. www.lqgroup.org.uk

Partners



EAS Group

Electrical Assessment Services UK Ltd (EAS UK) was launched in 2004 and EAS UK works closely with industry institutions, awarding bodies, employers, colleges and training providers across the country to ensure that trainee electricians get the best learning experience to achieve an industry expected standard and competency. Today EAS Group supports the full spectrum of the Building Services Engineering sector including Educational services, Mechanical & Electrical training and Environmental Technology training. www.easukltd.com



Mulalley

Mulalley is a family owned construction and refurbishment contractor operating successfully throughout South-East England for nearly 40 years. Mulalley's primary business is construction and construction related activities including: New Housing and Development, New Social and Education projects, Major Refurbishment, Estate and Area Regeneration, Decent Homes/Planned Maintenance and Reactive Maintenance. The majority of these projects are delivered under Partnering arrangements with our Partner Clients who include RSL's, Councils and ALMOs. www.mulalley.co.uk



Axis Europe

Axis specialises in the improvement and maintenance of Housing, Retail and Commercial properties. Axis operates out of eight offices across London, the South East and Midlands. The company believes that in any working relationship what is good for one, should be good for the other, so that everybody wins. This has kept the firm focused on its clients, staff and end customers, driving benefits for all parties. Today Axis employ 427 people, 10 per cent of whom are trainees and apprentices, and all of whom share its values. www.axiseurope.com

Smith & Byford

Smith and Byford

Smith & Byford was established in 1966, and is still a family run business today. The company specialises in providing Gas and Electrical Installations and Maintenance services to the private, social and public sectors. Smith & Byford offers a pro-active service which is backed by a helpful and professional workforce that is committed to providing a high standard of service with a personalised touch. www.smithandbyford.com

Supporters



Representing the best in electrical engineering and building services