

SUCCESS CASE 12.2025

Increasing participation by women in the electrical craft apprenticeship programme



THE CHALLENGE

To increase the participation by women in the electrical craft apprenticeship programme. In 2016 there were no women out of a group of 60 apprentices recruited.

THE SOLUTION

The solution included making the apprentice programme more visible and attractive to women by visiting schools; running media campaigns; highlighting female role models in all media campaigns. There was a full review of our entire recruitment process to identify any unconscious bias and eliminate it.

Attracting and retaining more female apprentices year by year is supported by:

- Continuing the school visits and media campaigns featuring female apprentices and qualified electricians.
- Developing good female support networks in various depots.
- Focus being put on improving welfare facilities in our depots and training school.
- Introducing PPE designed for the female form.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2023, we reached a high of 27 women out of a group of 96; In 2024 our number dropped (slightly) but it is projected to go back up in 2025.

ESB Networks won the Learning and Development Institute of Ireland award for Best Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Initiative for 2024.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

ESB Networks needed to understand that a more gender diverse workforce in the electrical craft area benefits the business. This takes advantage of the different ways of problem solving between the genders and ensures a better outcome.

As well as needing female second level students to see an electrical craft apprenticeship as a viable career path for themselves, we needed for our own employees to get used to seeing females in these roles too and to make conscious the unconscious biases that prevailed. With vocal, articulate and highly accomplished females graduating from our apprenticeship, we are well on the way to changing the perception internally as well as externally.

WAY FORWARD

This initiative requires continued reinforcement of the message that apprenticeships are for everyone regardless of gender and initiatives such as school visits and media campaigns need to be continued and improved.

There is a need to encourage other employers to hire female apprentices too as the college element is still very gendered and on a number of occasions our female apprentices are still the only ones in their college class.