

Army veteran Sarah marches on in her career as an engineer

1 year ago



A woman who served in the British Army for 18 years is advancing in her career as a specialist engineer and is urging others to follow her example.

Sarah Luscombe, 36, joined Warrington-based building services company [B-engineering Group](#) for work experience after returning to Civvy Street and impressed her bosses so much they offered her a permanent role.

She qualified as an air-conditioning engineer and now undertakes installations, servicing, maintenance and fault-finding for the company's clients across the north west and beyond, at locations including hospitals, schools, offices, factories, industrial buildings, police and ambulance stations.

Sarah joined the army after leaving school at the age of 16. She was a combat medical technician in the Royal Army Medical Corps and rose to become an operations manager, holding the rank of warrant officer.

During her army career, Sarah served in countries including Ukraine, Sierra Leone, Germany, Canada and Kenya, as well as in Afghanistan and Iraq. Her tours also included undertaking assignments while attached to the Royal Engineers, such as helping to build schools in Kenya.

Her passion for engineering led her to win a placement with B-engineering Group's air-conditioning division after she finished her military service in May 2023.

The family-owned company has a track record of supporting and employing ex-forces personnel, and managing director Rob Ditchfield quickly offered Sarah the chance to retrain and join on a permanent basis in a new role as the business expanded.

Sarah said: "I've always been interested in engineering, and wanted to stay field-based when I began a new career after the army. Working at B-engineering Group has been a great learning experience, and it's been a super-smooth transition.

"The company loves people who've served in the armed forces – they get good workers, who arrive on time, in the right place and with the right kit.

"It's a really good working environment and everyone has been tremendously supportive. I also love the company's ethos. It does a lot of things that are close to my heart, such as helping charities.

"I was buzzing when Rob offered me a full-time job. The transition from the army and going out and trying to find a job can be a stressful time, and I realise I've been very fortunate.

"Although I was new to the profession, my transition was eased by learning on the job with senior engineers, which was a massive help.

"My army experience has also helped a lot, because values and standards are drummed into you from day one, as is the need to be resilient and open to change. Customer relations and high standards are second nature."

Sarah added: "I've not had any issues at all with going into a traditionally male-oriented profession, and I would urge others who are considering a similar move to just do it. I've learned heaps since I joined the company and have gained lots of confidence. I love the banter too, it's just like we had in the army."

B-engineering Group was founded in 1990 by Rob's father Bernard and currently employs more than 50 staff.

The company designs, installs and maintains heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, electrical and energy systems and solar PV panels in premises across sectors ranging from education, healthcare, leisure and hospitality to manufacturing, retailing, construction and nuclear. It is a specialist in decarbonising commercial properties and estates.

Its support for the Armed Forces has seen it supply equipment to former soldier Andy Reid's Standing Tall Foundation charity for the conversion of a four-bedroomed terraced property in St Helens into a house of multiple occupation for armed forces veterans in need.

Standing Tall is one of B-engineering Group's charities of the year and the company has signed up to be an affiliate partner.

The company is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and recently gained a bronze award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which recognises employers which support those who serve or have served, and their families.

Rob said: "We've hired a number of ex-forces personnel who have impressed us with their strong work ethic and attitude aligned to the values of how we operate as a business, including a passion for health and safety and quality and the ability to integrate really well into a team and accept instructions.

"We were actively looking to employ more of them and, when Sarah approached us, we were delighted to give her the opportunity to join our air conditioning division on a placement. She was as good as we

expected and we offered her a permanent role, in which she continues to excel each working day.

“Alongside our ethical policies and drive to become a more diverse workplace, we feel ex-forces personnel have a really big role to play in shaping our future workforce.

“Our air-conditioning division is one of the fastest-growing areas of the business and we are still recruiting specialist engineers.

“With the electrification of the heating network and the high capital costs of heat pump systems to replace boilers, we are finding more and more clients are selecting

air-conditioning as a great value alternative to heat pumps which offer greater efficiencies.

“Once installed, all systems need to be maintained, hence our requirement for air conditioning maintenance is increasing. Air-conditioning is also a great solution for decarbonising commercial premises.”