

Why the Construction Sector Needs Women Veterans

2 hours ago



By Meg Lee, Employment and Training Manager for Women and Manual Trades

Armed Forces Day (27 June 2026) gives us an opportunity to recognise those who make up the armed forces community, from currently serving personnel to cadets and veterans.

It also gives us a chance to look at how we can better support veterans as they transition to civilian life, and how we can create more opportunities for them to thrive in the workplace.

Every year, women across the UK Armed Forces leave service with a wealth of skills and qualities developed through service. But many are unsure where their experience fits, and employers still often overlook the value that ex-military women can bring to their workforce.

Research from the Forces Employment Charity, published in 2024, shows that women who have served are more than twice as likely to be economically inactive than men, and can face additional barriers when transitioning to civilian work.

62% of female veterans said they underestimated the skills they developed during their military career, compared to 56% of male veterans. Further findings revealed that women were also more likely to rule themselves out of roles they'd actually be well suited for*.

This represents a talent pool the construction sector can't afford to overlook, particularly as it continues to grapple with a persistent skills shortage.

The armed forces and the construction industry have much in common. Both rely on teams working to

tight timescales, solving problems as they arise, often outdoors, and navigating complex operations.

Employers in construction need people they can rely on, who work well in a team, who show strong leadership, communicate well, and have the ability to work well under pressure.

This is the skillset that ex-military women already have, and their military experiences translate seamlessly into hands-on roles, yet this connection is often still overlooked.

This is where Women and Manual Trades (WaMT) can help bridge the gap. WaMT operates as part of Procure Plus's subsidiary charity, which aims to make women the norm rather than the exception within the construction and building trades.

WaMT supports women into training and sustainable employment, helping to create a more diverse and stronger workforce. As the Employment and Training Manager for WaMT, I lead on building partnerships with employers in the construction and trades sector and on our 3:2 initiative, which offers trades students a structured programme based on three days of study and two days of practical work experience.

This work means a great deal to me, both on a personal and a professional level. I started this role after 12 years in the military and three years in the prison service, so I'm no stranger to the challenges that can come with working in a traditionally male-dominated environment.

When making the change to civilian life, I needed that extra support myself. The transition from military service to a new career is not straightforward for all. Starting a new job can feel daunting, let alone starting a new job in a new industry.

This is why dedicated support and clear training pathways matter. WaMT provides free, tailored support for women planning their next chapter in their career journey.

For those transitioning out of the military, this includes guidance on making the most of Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Service funding, introductions to employers who understand and value military experience, and access to supportive, women-focused training environments.

We also provide one-to-one support in understanding training routes and qualifications within the sector, and guidance on choosing the right trade or construction role. Whether someone is approaching their final year of service or has already started their new career journey, we help identify the right pathway for them.

Our support doesn't stop after someone secures a training placement or job opportunity. We know that the first few months in a new role can be challenging, which is why we provide structured wraparound support that often lasts for at least six months after employment begins.

At WaMT, we want to use this Armed Forces Day to celebrate the contributions women have made during their military service and the contributions they're equally equipped to make beyond it.

The construction industry has much to gain from women veterans. It's now up to the sector to question whether enough is being done to open the door for more women looking to enter the trades.

If you're an employer who wants to help address the skills gap while bringing in motivated, resilient people into your team, WaMT can help connect you with talented women to strengthen the workforce.



If you're an ex-service woman considering a career in the trades or feeling unsure about how to take the next step, we're here to help whatever stage you're at.

For more information about Women and Manual Trades, visit <https://wamt.procure-plus.com/> or contact Meg Lee at megan.lee@procure-plus.com.

*<https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/news/women-into-employment-new-research/>