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There is a big stigma around engineering being a predominantly male sector and people often make statements like “you’re a girl though...” or “don’t you find it hard to keep up with the lads?” when they learn I’m a female engineer. I think other girls should understand there is nothing stopping you or making you less capable of doing the job except yourself. If engineering is something you’re interested in or enjoy, there is nothing that says your abilities are limited because of your gender.

I’ve worked for Holroyd for nearly a year and a half and was initially attracted to the company for their prestige amongst the local engineering community and their reputation of turning out well-trained and successful apprentices. My day starts at 7:45am and ends at 4:30pm and I spend the majority of my time ‘shadowing’. This is where I’m paired with a skilled engineer and placed on one sector on the shop floor to develop my skills through observing others who can then assist me in eventually being able to run the machines on my own. Once I am able to do so, I’m moved to a different sector to broaden the skills I am getting from my apprenticeship.

Growing up I had a keen interest in taking things apart to see how they work and spent time playing with Meccano trying to build bigger and better structures than the last time. I also spent some time in engineering workshop environments alongside my dad where I would sketch a design I had and we’d create it together whilst he taught me the different processes behind making them. I learnt how to weld and work with sheet metal which was something I can remember always being interested in and enjoying.

Initially an apprenticeship wasn’t the direction I saw myself going in – whilst at school, we were led to believe that apprenticeships were what you did if you weren’t capable of getting the grades you needed to get into college or university, when in fact they open up so many doors and future opportunities along with providing options for progression both on the job and education wise.

I wish someone had taken the time to explain what is actually achievable through an apprenticeship – I think knowing about the apprenticeship opportunities that were available after I left school could have greatly impacted my decisions prior to leaving. If I had known this information aged fifteen when I made the decision to go to sixth form I probably would have applied for an apprenticeship straight from school. As I came to the end of my time at the local sixth form college where I studied Psychology, Biology and English Language I realised university wasn’t the best option for where I

wanted my career to go at that moment in time, that the best thing for me would be to gain skills-based experience as well as furthering my education, and that’s when a friend suggested an apprenticeship might be an ideal option.

I can always remember my parents being supportive in my choices growing up however when I told them I was thinking of abandoning my university offers and taking an apprenticeship in engineering they were a little sceptical. I think the main issue they had was that I would be in a predominantly male environment and either would be incapable of achieving the same as a male would, or that I wouldn’t fit in well with the other employees and I must admit it was nearly enough to put me off the idea.

I haven’t faced any tasks that I’ve been unable to carry out because I’m a girl – female engineers are becoming increasingly common and in today’s society are greatly encouraged from training centres and employers. Although there are many people that still believe engineering is a man’s job there are hundreds of girls like me proving them wrong on a daily basis.

The part of the job I enjoy most is probably being part of a production line and having an impact on each final product we produce in some way or another – you get a great sense of achievement once you have learnt a new skill and can work on your own.

My greatest achievement in the workplace so far has to be picking up a machine and running it on my own for a week whilst having to meet tolerances and having other people rely on your work to carry out their own. By doing this I gained a lot of confidence in my abilities and it also became evident just how much knowledge and skill I was gaining on the job. Once I finish my apprenticeship I’m hoping I get the opportunity to complete a higher national certificate and maybe go onto university so I have the options to progress as much as possible through the business either as a highly skilled machinist or a production engineer.