

# Helen Finlay

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## Can you tell us a little bit about your job and your career journey?

My job now involves lots of design management, organising a design team, writing programmes, marking up drawings and ensuring we've spotted the mistakes before they get to site. I initially studied architecture and worked for a long time purely on the design side of things, but the client side means you are exposed to the commercial drivers and working closely with the construction teams to aid delivery on site.

## What did you want to be when you grew up and why? Who inspired you?

I played with LEGO a lot as a young child, and then developed a huge interest in Art & Design. I was inspired by travelling to different countries and seeing amazing buildings. I knew I wanted to be an architect at a very early age!

## What difference did you want to make for yourself and young people through volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

I mainly wanted to reach out to inspire girls to think about careers in architecture, construction or engineering, and to break down the stereotypes that women cannot succeed in construction. I wanted to make sure young people knew how many varied choices are out there and how they can achieve what they want from their careers.

## How long have you been volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

For the last six years. I find it really fulfilling to give something back for the next generation.

## What has been the best part about volunteering?

Feeling like you have opened someone's eyes to a career path they may not have considered. Breaking down boundaries and stereotypes for young girls.

## What has been the strangest/funniest/best question you've been asked?

'Do you not get very muddy on site?!' I am often asked if it's very muddy or dirty, and just simply explain that while on site we always wear the right protective clothing so it's actually fine.

## What have you learnt from volunteering with Inspiring the Future about yourself and about young people?

I've learned that my career path has continually evolved, and it's really been a journey from design across to delivery on site, but that you never stop learning. Meeting young people really inspires me as I know that the world is their oyster, and it feels great to encourage them to work hard and follow their dreams. Young people are full of energy and enthusiasm and so it's invigorating to spend time around them.

## What events and activities have you taken part in?

Career talks, speaking with young people in schools, mentoring young people and volunteering at careers fairs.

## How have you benefited from volunteering with Inspiring the Future? Please give examples to skills, knowledge and behaviour.

It makes me think about my own career and the path I've been on in a different light and helps me to look back at the progress I've made from A to B. I have always liked to speak about my career, and I think meeting young people has made me more confident about doing this. It's helped me to figure out what skills are the most useful to me in my own career too.

## What's the one message you feel is important to share with the young people you speak to?

Don't be afraid to take a risk with your career choice as there are so many varied options out there, but don't forget you need to work hard, stay determined to succeed, and choose something where you can be passionate about what you pursue as a career.

## Describe Inspiring the Future in five words

Fantastic organisation for young people.

## Who or what inspires you today and what is the reason?

Women in leadership positions who are smashing through the glass ceiling and breaking down boundaries really inspire me. Great design that is successful aesthetically and also with its functionality really inspires me.

## What would you say to other volunteers thinking of volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

Go for it! It will get you out of your day to day routine, meeting young people, and will bring you a new perspective on your own career.

## What difference do you think you've made to the lives of young people who you spoke with?

I hope it's inspired them to think that roles in construction are fully open to girls as well as boys, maybe it's helped them have an interest in design as a profession, and hopefully they've learned things they wouldn't have known.

## Any other comments you'd like to add?

Follow the motto "nothing ventured, nothing changed!"

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