

Volunteer Spotlight

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BE (Hons) BA MFSE AIFireE



THE INSTITUTION OF FIRE ENGINEERS
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Tell us about yourself.

I am a lecturer in fire engineering at Glasgow Caledonian University. I started my career as a Fire Safety Engineer in Australia before moving to the UK.

Tell us about your volunteer roles.

I am a board director and trustee. This involves looking after how the Institution is run and making sure we aren't heading for any disasters! I am also a volunteer for the Scottish Branch Council.

What made you want to volunteer with the IFE?

Volunteering was something that I'd done a lot of back as a student. With the IFE it was almost a bit of a spur of the moment thing. I was at the AGM and they were looking for more people to join the branch council because there weren't as many people that year as they'd liked. They asked 'are there any nominations from the floor' and I thought you know what, I'll nominate myself. I saw that they needed more people and there was so much good work they were trying to do but they were limited by the people they had.

What is your favourite part of being an IFE volunteer?

It's the people I meet. I've met some wonderful people through both the branch and through the board. It's great to meet people from around the world who are in my industry.

Would you recommend volunteering with the IFE?

Yes, I think people have a lot more to offer than maybe they realise and if they take the leap, they'll realise they have a lot to contribute and they can get a lot out of it.

Has volunteering benefitted your career?

I think it has. Partly through knowing people and finding out about opportunities I might not have heard about. I think it's also helped with things like interview skills. I had a really clear moment when I was interviewing for a job and I walked into the room and it was a panel interview. I realised I'd been in this situation before and the interview wasn't as scary as my initial reaction because they were just people around the table just like I'd sat around the table at so many meetings. So that was one moment where I noticed how it just took the fear away and that was really beneficial because I got the job!

Are there any challenges of being a woman in STEM?

There are, partly because there aren't as many of us as there should be, especially in engineering. You're a bit more visible if you're the only women in the room and that can be a benefit and it can also be a bit scary. So there are challenges but it's not inherent to being a woman in STEM it's just because the visibility isn't really there yet, but it is getting better.

What would you say to other women who want to get into fire engineering?

They definitely should, it's a great career. Once again, it's about taking the leap. The perception can be it's very male orientated, but it's not. Just like with engineering and STEM in general, the perception hasn't quite caught up as much as the industry is actually moving. I found it an incredibly rewarding career, there's so much variation and I found there is a huge international aspect to it. You don't get that sort of opportunity in a lot of other careers. It's been amazing and I wouldn't change a thing.

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