

TOM'S STORY

HELPING FILL THE CONSTRUCTION SKILLS GAP

Industry placements are a key part of the new T Level qualifications, designed with employers to give young people the knowledge and skills industry needs. Organisations of all sizes and sectors are working with education and training providers to run industry placements now in readiness for the roll out of T Levels from September 2020 onwards.



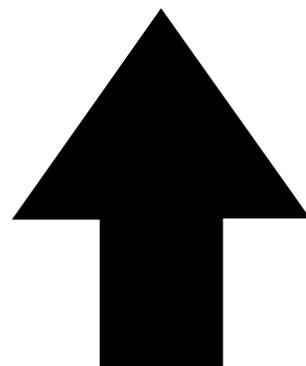
Graham Leigh, senior manager at Bolton-based building firm Willmott Dixon, sees industry placements as a great way to help one of the biggest challenges facing his industry.

"It's an aging industry and the number of people joining every year simply isn't enough to meet demand."

He sees industry placements as an ideal way of nurturing talent and inspiring young people to make construction their career. He also recognises the bonus of developing his existing workforce by having a student to mentor and supervise.

Graham worked with Mike Mullahey, Career Coach at Bolton College, to organise an industry placement for an ambitious student who was passionate about construction. Mike suggested Tom (pictured above) as he felt he would be exactly what Willmott Dixon were looking for.

"We took the time to find out what both Willmott Dixon and Tom wanted in order to successfully match them. Tom has a part time job we had to take into account, but we managed to make it work for both."



Tom has now been working with Graham two days a week for five months helping to refurbish The Octogan Theatre in Bolton. He has his own tasks to do and feels part of the team, not just a student who watches others doing the work. Graham was quick to point out that they also regard him the same way.

"Tom isn't just here to learn, he's here to help. The longer placement means we can set him weekly tasks to do, so he's always got work to get on with. He's become a valued and popular member of the team."

Through his placement, Tom has been able to get a proper taste of all the different roles and possible careers in construction. It has also been key in helping Tom decide that construction is the industry for him.

"It's confirmed I definitely want to go into construction and I've seen what people in the different jobs do, so it has helped me decide which role to specialise in. It's also given me the confidence that I can do it."

As well as helping with his confidence and career plans, Tom says that the industry placement has helped him with his college work.

"The theory is really good, but being able to see things in person makes it more real and it's helped when I'm back in the classroom. It's also helped with my assignments as I can use things I've done on placement as examples."

Mike adds that Bolton College is keen for other students to complete industry placements as it gives them a competitive edge whether applying for a job, apprenticeship or further study.

"A student with real experience with an employer is several steps ahead of a student without. It is a great thing to put on personal statements, job applications, whatever path you take, it makes you stand out."

For both Tom and Willmott Dixon, the industry placement has been a great success. Tom has gained the skills, confidence and experience to prepare him for his next step, and Willmott Dixon has found a potential employee of the future.

Graham is convinced that industry placements not only good for students and employers, they also help to address the skills gap facing his industry.

"Tom has been hard working and dedicated, and we have been very impressed. We are looking forward to working with Bolton College again next year to find more industry placements for construction students."

For more about T Levels and industry placements visit gov.uk/dfes/t-levels

