Dr Samantha Organ

Associate Professor,
UWE Bristol

Improving the Diversity of the Sector

IBEE & RICS Accredited Providers Conference

10 September 2026

ABOUT YOUR SPEAKER



Dr Samantha Organ

FRICS, AMICE — Associate Professor, UWE Bristol

Building surveying academic and researcher, working on retention, diversity and adaptive reuse in the built environment — and industry links lead for Women Like Me's built environment strand.

- **Associate Professor** in Building Surveying, UWE Bristol
- **Industry links lead** for Women Like Me's built environment / surveying strand
- **'How to retain women in building surveying'** RICS Built Environment Journal, with Jo Williams MRICS (2023)

Background: The Skills Gap Pipeline

Inspiration

- Children decide on the appropriateness of science as a career before age 11 (Archer et al,, 2013)
- Girls like connecting STEM disciplines with relevant real-world problems, i.e., communal goals (High Level Group on Science Education, 2007)

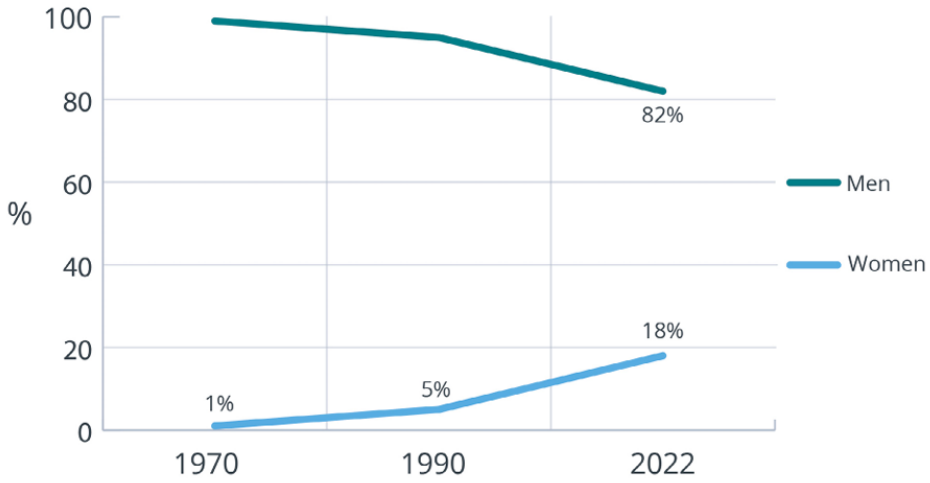
Recruitment

- Women like to see women acting as role models in their chosen careers to feel comfortable with their aspirations (Fogg-Rogers et al., 2017)
- Recruitment into engineering and STEM roles is needed to meet the employment gap (Engineering UK, 2017)

Retention

- An unsupportive workplace is the key reason women leave engineering (Singh et al., 2013)
- Mentoring is proven to enhance career progression and retention, and benefits both mentors and mentees (Haberer et al., 2025)

Background: Surveying



1922 **Irene Barclay** qualifies as the first woman to become a chartered surveyor, alongside Evelyn Perry — running a joint practice in Somers Town for over 50 years.

2014 **Louise Brooke-Smith** becomes RICS' first female president since the forming of the Surveyors Club in 1792 (or 1868 when the first council was elected).

Since 2014, we've had Amanda Clack (2016–17), Kath Fontana (2020–21), Ann Gray (2023), and Tina Paillet (2024).

And the incoming president for 2027, Maureen Ehrenberg

Sources:
RICS (2022) The first woman chartered surveyor – Irene Barclay

RICS (2023) Women in surveying: insight report

FROM MY OWN WORK

The vast majority of my experiences are positive, and I really love my job.

— Sarah, senior building surveyor, quoted in Organ & Williams (2023), ‘How to retain women in building surveying’, RICS Built Environment Journal

What Women Want From the Profession

What are the most reported factors that matter most to women surveyors according to RICS research?

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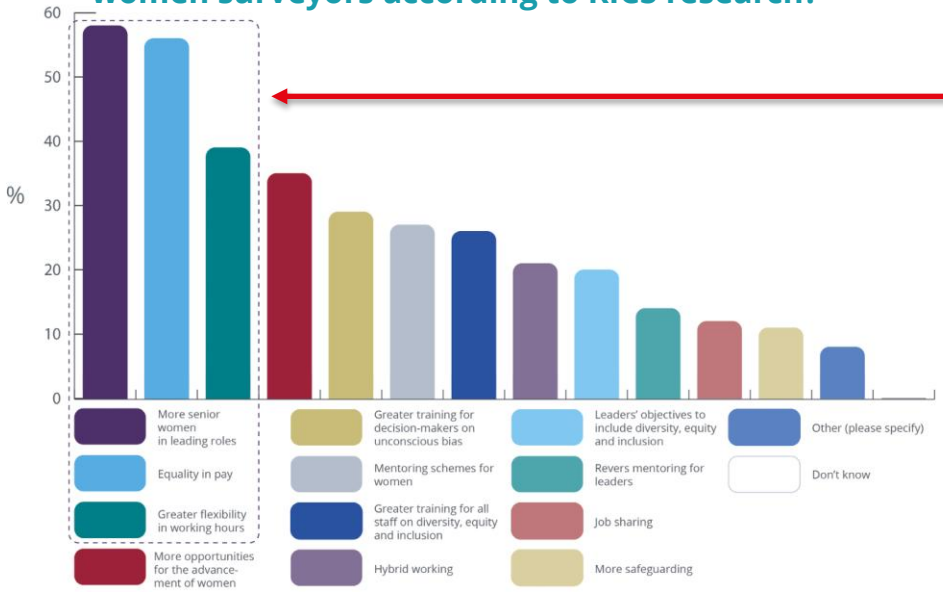


Figure 12: In your opinion, what are the three most important areas to deliver improved support for women in surveying?

RICS (2023) Women in surveying: insight report

1. More senior women in leading roles
2. Equality of pay
3. Greater flexibility in working hours

The Pay and Pension Gap

The pay gap Macdonald & Company (2023): 37% global median pay gap in real estate; UK gap 31.9% (£80k male vs £58k female median) and widening. Women are just 10% of the most senior professional category.

The pension gap Not sector-specific data — but the UK's overall gender pension gap (c.35–38%) is more than double the pay gap, compounding a career-long pay gap into a much larger retirement shortfall.

What the evidence says helps UK Government Equalities Office guidance rates salary transparency and named diversity accountability as 'effective'; flexible working and mentoring/sponsorship as 'promising'; mandatory bias training alone as 'mixed'.

Sources: Macdonald & Company, Real Estate Salary Report (2023–24); Royal London, Tackling the Gender Pension Gap; Behavioural Insights Team / Government Equalities Office, What Works guidance (2018)

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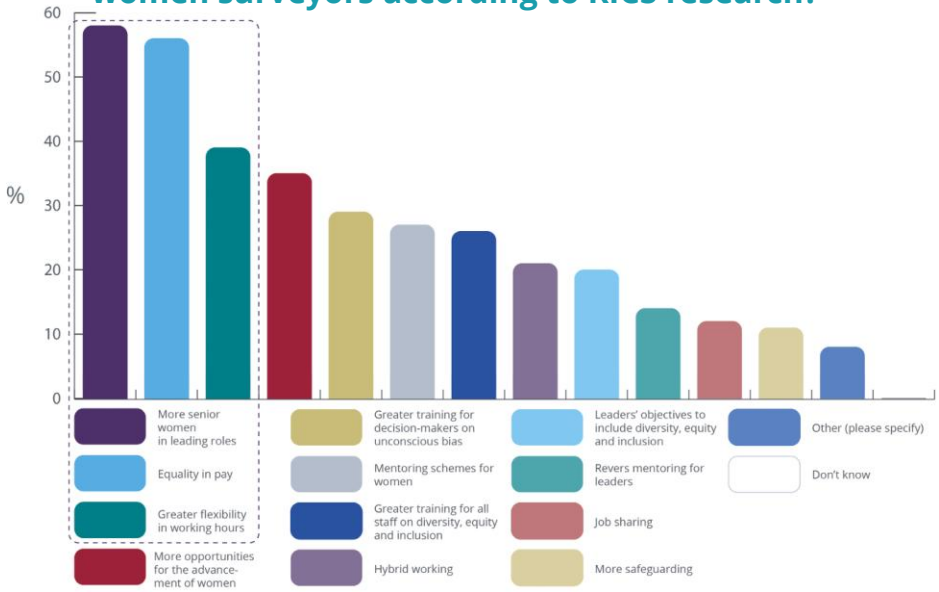


Figure 12: In your opinion, what are the three most important areas to deliver improved support for women in surveying?

RICS (2023) Women in surveying: insight report

*"Lack of **recognition** of skills, **culture** driving imposter syndrome and **unconscious bias** were the most voted for factors as barriers faced by women in developing their careers as surveyors. Lack of access to **flexible or remote working** and workplace **harassment** were also stated."*

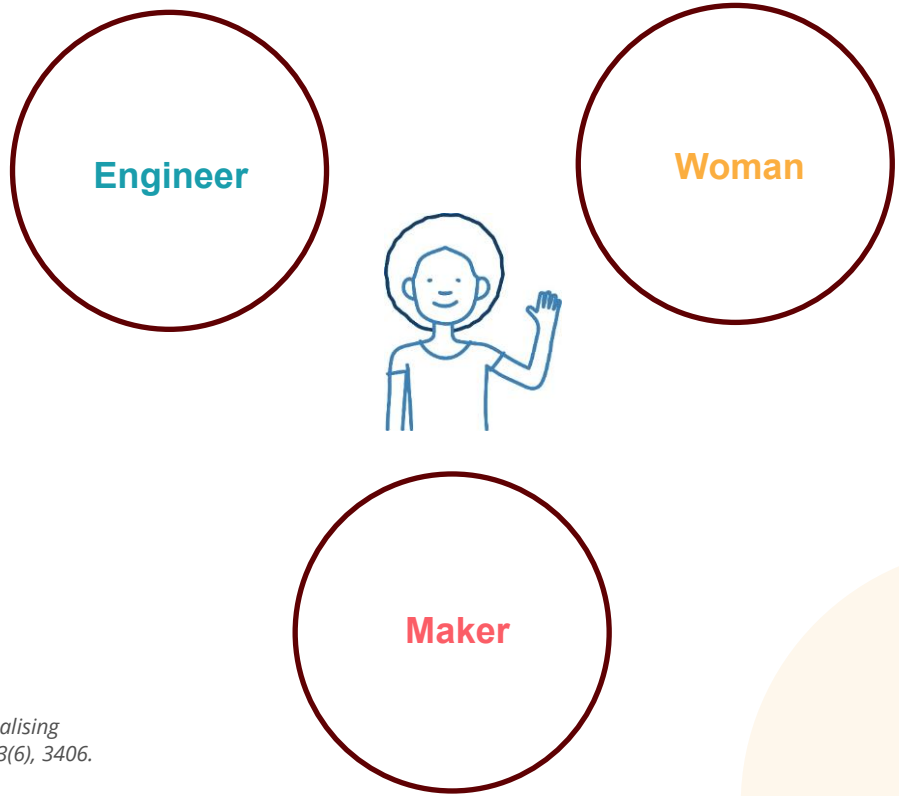
THE AUTHORITY GAP

Men are broadly assumed competent until proven otherwise. Women are often assumed less competent until they prove otherwise — and report having to provide that evidence roughly twice as often as men.

Sieghart, The Authority Gap (2021) — directly relevant to the site-based, client-facing, technical-authority roles central to surveying practice

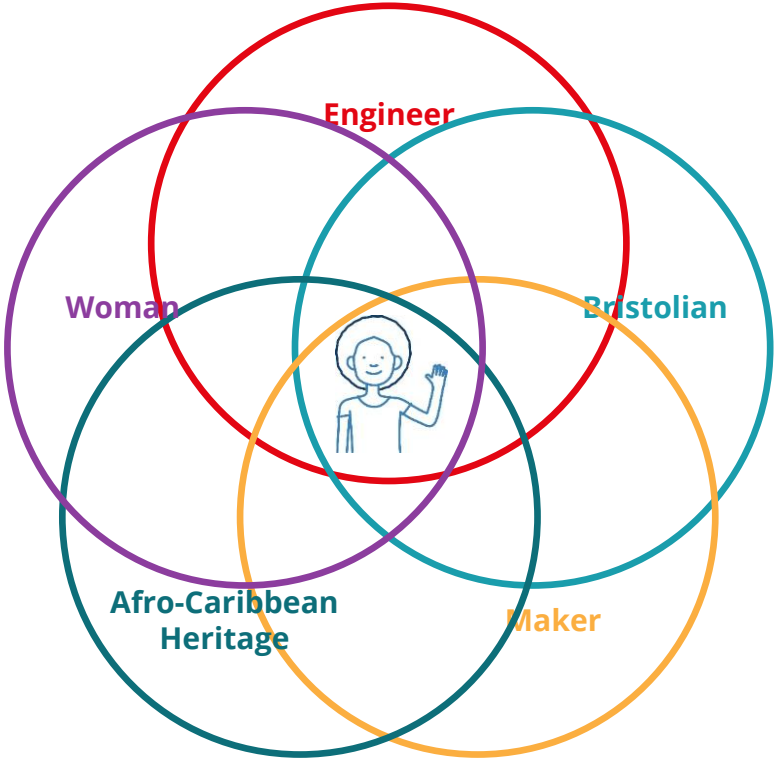
Congruent Intersectional Identities





Fogg-Rogers, L. et al. Applying Social Learning to Climate Communications—Visualising 'People Like Me' in Air Pollution and Climate Change Data. Sustainability 2021, 13(6), 3406. doi.org/10.3390/su13063406

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What Are We Already Doing?

Discussion

- What is your programme or practice already doing well on with growing and retaining diversity?
  - What's working well? Why?
  - What could improve?

- What's the one thing holding you back?
  - How might this be overcome?

As a table, agree on what main points you'll feedback to the room



What Are We Already Doing?

Feedback to the Room



UWE's Women Like Me



Winners of Outstanding Programme of the Year at the Bristol Women in Business Awards 2026

It takes a team, not just a single advocate

CASE STUDY

UWE’s Women Like Me

It takes a team, not just one advocate, to change a pipeline — founded 2018/19, funded by the Royal Academy of Engineering, DETI, the Office for Students, and industry partners.

Dr Laura Fogg-Rogers
Founder — leads the Mentoring & Outreach programme, School of Engineering, UWE Bristol

Dr Laura Hobbs
Co-founder and Project Lead, Women Like Me — Science Communication Unit

Sarah Behenna
Coordinates the programme — Science Communication Unit

Dr Samantha Organ
Industry lead and founder for surveying strand

Dr Amina Hamoud
Leads Inclusive HR practices

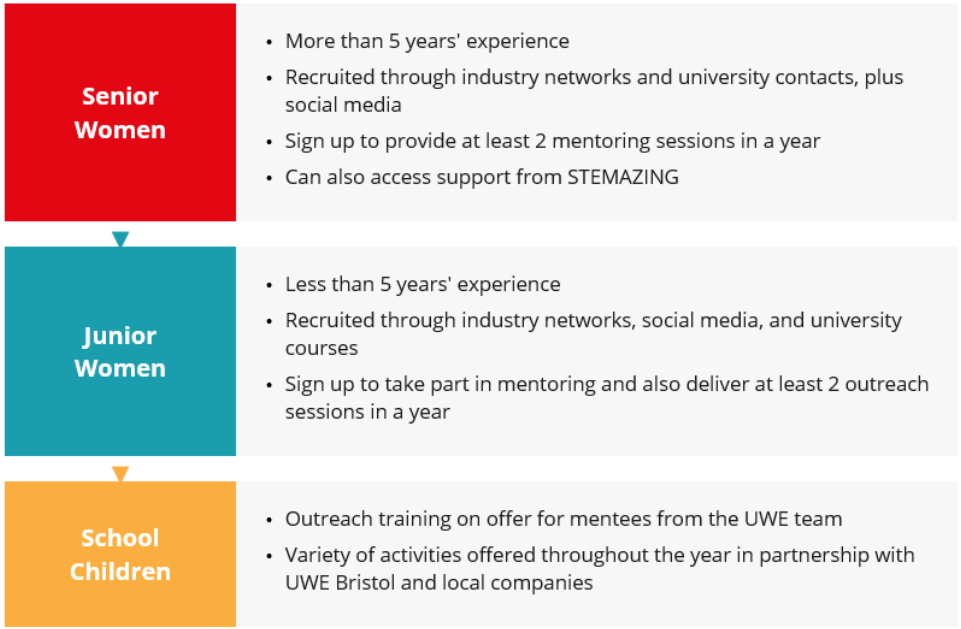
UWE's Women Like Me



UWE's Women Like Me

Structure and Partnerships

- Structure



UWE's Women Like Me

Structure and Partnerships

- Structure
- Partners

STEMAZING

STEM AMBASSADOR HUB
STEM Ambassador Hub West England

WISE campaign for gender balance in science, technology & engineering

babbasa

afbe Association for Black & Minority Ethnic Engineers

Recruitment	• Usually about 25 pairs per year
Matching	• Match within industry but outside companies
Launch Event	• Mentors and mentees invited with open networking
Training and Support	• Mentor circles • Outreach training and activities
Closing Event	• Evaluation • Networking

UWE's Women Like Me

Structure and Partnerships

- And regional connections

UWE's Women Like Me

Impact - overall

- The *Women Like Me* mentoring programme **grew by 39%**, supporting **41 pairs of mentors and mentees** in 2024, compared to around 25 pairs per year.

- **38% of mentees** came from **Black, Asian, Mixed, or Ethnic Minority** backgrounds (compared to 19% in Bristol), demonstrating strong intersectional reach.

- Mentors **and** mentees reported increased **confidence**, **empowerment**, and **career clarity** through the scheme.

- Mentoring supported mentees to feel **less isolated** in male-dominated environments and encouraged **role modelling** for the next generation.

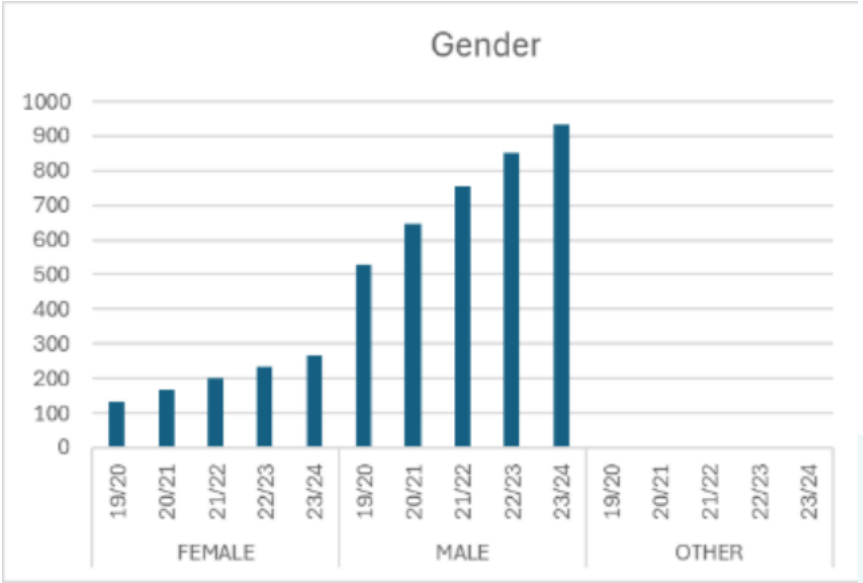
UWE's Women Like Me

Impact – Degree Apprenticeship

- **60% increase in women applicants** for the targeted degree apprenticeship programmes, from 25% in 2023/24 to 40% in 2024/25.

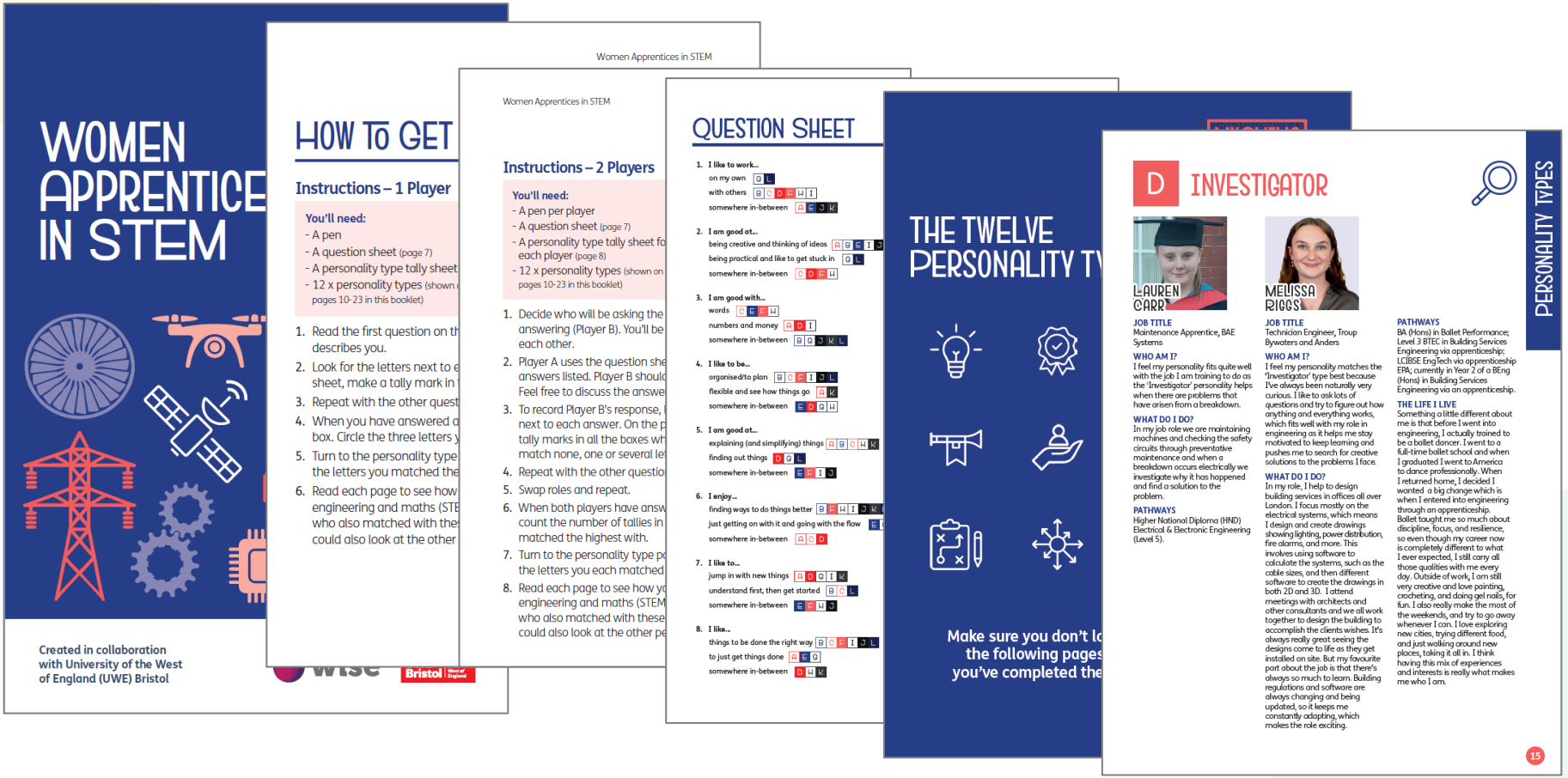
- **Employer and community engagement:**
  - Delivered **employer roundtables** with companies like Airbus, Boeing, Bristol Airport, and Wessex Water to address diversity challenges.

- Launched **workshops**, STEMazing goal-setting sessions, and **outreach** activities



Behenna, S., Hobbs, L. and Fogg Rogers, L. (2026) Diversifying Degree Apprenticeships: Insights from mentoring and employer engagement in work-based learning, *University Vocational Awards Council: Work-based learning: forging pathways between theory and practice in higher education*, https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/16292041

UWE's Women Like Me



From Insight to Action

1

Mentoring links

Build links between students and practice, timed to real decision points. Role models

2

Peer networks

Build peer and near-peer networks from year one, not only at entry to practice

3

School outreach

Build outreach into local schools and colleges, with visible role models locally and in mainstream channels

4

Curriculum audit

Audit curriculum and marketing imagery for who it visibly appeals to

5

Track the data

Track the diversity data – remember the qualitative data and intersectionality

6

Authority gap

Consider who is receiving micro boosts and micro barriers, and how might you address this?

Co-Design Activity

Pick ONE action — from the actions listed or your own — you could realistically start this academic year. Who owns it? What's the first step?

Finally

Table Takeaway

- On your table, agree **one main takeaway** from this session. What is it?

Call to action

- Commit to implementing **one thing** in your own programmes; advocate actions amongst others (academia and practice).

Final questions?

Get in touch

engineeringourfuture@uwe.ac.uk

Find out more about the project: [httpsWomen Like Me - Projects | UWE Bristol]

