



Supportive energy

From championing employee inclusivity to preparing to go fossil fuel-free, Cadent is on a mission towards a fair future

When Cadent signed the Armed Forces Covenant, promising to make an extra effort to recruit reservists and former military personnel, it did so as part of a wider programme of change that will transform the company's culture over the coming years. Cadent maintains the gas-pipe network for 11 million homes and business in the North West, West Midlands, East Midlands, South Yorkshire, East of England and north London, as well as managing the National Gas Emergency Service. The company's 6,500 permanent staff deliver a programme of repair and renewal, replacing old iron pipes with plastic ones, responding to gas leaks and maintaining above-ground facilities to ensure a constant gas supply through its networks. It also has the responsibility of providing the Freephone contact number for all gas emergencies in the UK.

"We are proud signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant and have a silver award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)," says Martin Rimmer, Chief People Officer of Cadent. "The standard of training delivered by the Armed Forces is second to none. They have the technical skills plus a mindset around doing the best job and understanding the importance of teamwork. But we want to demonstrate how friendly an employer we are, so we have instituted the employee-led Cadent Military Community. We recognise key dates such as Armed Forces Week and Remembrance Day and are looking at charity partners including Help for Heroes."

This is just one pillar in Cadent's journey towards developing a more diverse and inclusive workforce, one that more closely represents its customers and the communities it services. The company's four regional networks are given autonomy and asked to share a common culture and regulatory targets, but with the freedom to respond creatively

to local needs. This community approach sees Cadent support local foodbanks, while a Skills Liaison Manager visits educational environments from primary schools to further education colleges to talk about career opportunities. "We want people to know we aren't just there to dig up the roads, we are there as part of the wider community," says Rimmer. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cadent employees were given additional days of annual leave to use towards community engagement, while sick pay was extended beyond contractual obligations, when necessary.

Cadent's drive towards diversity has seen the creation of further employee support networks including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those with visible and invisible disabilities. All employees will take part in a cultural change workshop, while a roadmap has been developed to mark out the route to change. Gender diversity is a particular challenge for a traditionally male-centric industry so software is used that "de-genders" job descriptions to attract more women into the business. Rather than enforce quotas, data is retained for all applicants so the company can monitor and identify opportunities for progress.

On top of this, the company is also working towards a sustainable agenda, which will see the use of hydrogen eventually replacing traditional natural methane gas. "We see so much passion about the environment and green energy," says Rimmer. "We have a massive programme to transform into a hydrogen supply organisation over the coming years, and we are investing in training our current workforce and making Cadent attractive to people who are passionate about the green agenda. We have a long way to go, but Cadent has a very exciting green future with a very diverse and inclusive workforce."

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