

ALL CHANGE FOR BRITAIN'S RAIL AND ENGINEERING WORKFORCE AS NATIONAL COLLEGE LEADS DIVERSITY DRIVE

February 15, 2019



The National College

As Britain prepares its workforce to deliver a pipeline of major infrastructure schemes worth more than £600bn over the next decade, the College built to train the next generation of transport engineers and technicians needed for projects including [HS2](#) and [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#), is taking action to ensure more women take advantage of the industry's unprecedented opportunities.

The National College for High Speed Rail opened in Doncaster and Birmingham at the end of 2017 and has more than 230 learners enrolled already. Of its current learners, 36% are from BME (black and minority ethnic) backgrounds – a radical departure from the national average which sees those from BME backgrounds representing just 8% of UK engineers and technicians, and only 12% of the overall UK workforce.

However, only 10% of the college's current intake are female. This falls just short of the 12% of women who are part of the UK's engineering workforce currently; itself a vast underrepresentation when compared to the 47% of women who make up the nation's overall workforce.

Whilst the College remains on track to reach its learner target of 396 learners by the end of this academic year, it is bolstering activity to encourage more women into the rail and engineering sectors in 2019. The College is preparing a recruitment campaign to encourage more females to consider careers within the rail

and engineering sectors. It will continue to speak directly with potential learners – encouraging more females to get on board – through its employer network and its programme of school visits and open days.

Clair Mowbray, chief executive of the National College for High Speed Rail, said: “As a national training provider, we’re focussed on attracting and upskilling the talent our country needs to deliver major transport infrastructure projects. However, our ambitions are about much more than simply making up the numbers that are needed to plug the skills gaps.

“As we build capacity, we’ll be paying close attention to our learner demographic and taking a proactive approach to ensure we have a balance of talented individuals from all backgrounds.

“We’re bucking the trend with our representation of learners from BME backgrounds and there is no reason why we can’t do the same to achieve a much stronger proportion of women too.

“This is why we’ll be doing even more this year to celebrate our strong female role models and encourage even more women to take advantage of the exciting career opportunities this sector has to offer.”

The National College for High Speed Rail forecasts that it will reach full learner capacity within five years of opening when there will be over 1,000 new learners enrolling each year. The College is meeting employers’ needs with a flexible approach to recruiting apprentices throughout the year. Full time courses for September 2019 are currently filling up while the college continues to take on apprentices as the industry upskills its existing workforce and creates new vacancies.

For more about the National College for High Speed Rail: www.nchsr.ac.uk