

ASLEF supports first level three Train Driver Apprenticeship standard

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East Midlands Trains is pioneering a new Level 3 Train Driver Apprenticeship programme. The programme is designed to support the industry's commitment to grow its skills base and further professionalise the train driver role.

ASLEF is supporting the new apprenticeship programme, which is part of the National Driver Academy and now underway at the train operator's academy in Derby. Nine new drivers are the first to test the new common approach to Part A as part of the Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard.

The new Apprenticeship Standard has been designed to reflect the professionalism needed for the train driver's role, and will allow successful trainees to secure a formal certification. It has been developed in partnership with the drivers union ASLEF; the Rail Safety and Standards Board; Rail Delivery Group; the Institute of Railway Operators and the National Skills Academy for Rail.

The Apprenticeship Standard will be applicable to all train operators and freight operators in England.

The rail industry is planning to train more than 1000 drivers next year with all train operators moving to

use the new Driver Academy over 2019. East Midlands Trains will train around 30-40 new apprentice drivers over the next year.

East Midlands Trains has also recently carried out a major recruitment drive to encourage more female drivers to join the industry. It has targeted advertising and anonymous candidate screening helping to double the number of female driver applicants.

Rail Minister **Andrew Jones**, came to meet the new driver apprentices in Derby for the launch said:

I am delighted to launch the Train Driver Apprenticeship Programme, a project which will recruit a new generation of drivers with the skills and management to provide more reliable journeys for passengers.

This initiative follows the recent completion of vital infrastructure upgrades at Derby Station, and helps prepare the East Midlands for the arrival of modern, fast and efficient intercity and express trains.”

Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers’ union, said:

ASLEF welcomes the development of the Level 3 apprenticeship standard – which recognises the skills, knowledge and responsibility that a train driver holds – and building on them in future as they are adopted across the industry as part of our agreed training programmes.

ASLEF has worked tirelessly for 10 years to see the introduction of apprenticeships for train drivers at Level 3. We look forward to all train and freight operators making this standard available to new employees training to be train drivers, and involving our reps in the process.”

Kirsty Derry, HR Director for East Midlands Trains and Chair of the Driver Academy, said:

Train drivers are key to delivering great customer service, and with the industry’s exciting investment in technology it was clear that there was a skills and capability gap developing across the entire sector.

That’s why we’ve been working with the Academy members, Department for Transport, ASLEF and safety and skills bodies across the industry to develop a solution to this skills challenge and take this significant step forward in professionalising the train driver role.

We’re delighted to be leading the way, piloting the new common approach to Part A Level 3 Apprenticeship training at East Midlands Trains, and we look forward to working with the rest of the industry to roll this out further.”

Paul Plummer, CEO for the Rail Delivery Group which represents the rail industry said:

The rail industry is working together to train the next generation of drivers as part of our plan to run an additional 6,400 extra services a week across Britain by 2021. These extra services, supported by the introduction of 7,000 new carriages, will better connect communities and underpin £85bn of additional economic benefits across Britain.”

The nine new drivers trialling the new apprenticeship scheme come from a variety of backgrounds including the army, police force, as well as three former tram drivers and a window blind fitter.

Danielle Brown from Sheffield, who is one of the apprentices, said she had wanted to be a train driver since the age of 10 when she stood on the platform with her mum and saw a High Speed Train whizz past and decided there and then that she wanted to be a train driver.

Tom Perry from Nuneaton, most recently worked as a Train Manager for another train operator, has also wanted to be a train driver from the age of four. He has a baby due in five weeks so is learning to drive trains and preparing to be a dad. He said it was a very proud moment when he was chosen out of the 2,500 applicants to become a driver apprentice.

The apprentices will learn to drive a train safely and competently in accordance with rail rules, regulations and procedures, be taught to memorise different routes and how to react to changing conditions, driving the train safely to its destination within the required timetable.

The programme includes training on how to work in a range of railway environments, deal with the moving of passengers, goods, and empty coaches, communicate clearly and safely deal with incidents and emergency situations – driving a train to optimise fuel economy and reduce maintenance costs.

The new Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard replaces the Level 2 Rail Services framework which no longer meets the level of competence required for a train driver in today’s modern world, which has seen the sector move forward at a fast pace with developments in security, digital technology and new traction and rolling stock.

The new standard also reflects the need for a driver to react and make decisions unsupervised, applying situational judgement and real-time risk assessment during normal, unplanned and emergency situations. This all involves a level of knowledge, skills and behaviours which are above the Level 2 framework.