

Go-Ahead looking to hire 1,020 rail and bus apprentices this year

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The Go-Ahead Group has set a target of hiring 1,020 apprentices in 2023 to train as bus drivers, rail drivers and engineers.

The intake will include 700 apprentice bus drivers for Go-Ahead London, which runs a quarter of the capital's buses for Transport for London. Some 220 apprentice engineers and train drivers will be recruited by Govia Thameslink Railway, which operates Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern and Gatwick Express rail. And a further 100 apprentices will work at Go-Ahead's regional bus companies and in head office roles in London and Newcastle.

Go-Ahead was named as one of the UK's top 20 apprentice employers recently in a ranking developed by the Department for Education, and as the top provider in the transport industry.

The group's apprenticeship intake is highly diverse: 61% of apprentices recruited in 2022 were from ethnic backgrounds other than White British, including 78% of those who joined Go-Ahead's London bus operation. And 32% of new apprentices were aged over 40, including many career switchers who are seeking a new start in transport.

In the bus industry, Go-Ahead London's Camberwell academy is the first and largest in-house provider of bus driving apprenticeships in the UK and recently celebrated its fifth birthday. The academy uses virtual reality technology to teach driving skills, and trainees alternate over the course of a year between periods driving buses and time in the classroom. Last year 77% of those who started the course completed their apprenticeship and gained a qualification.

Since the training programme was introduced in 2018 the bus company has been able to deliver all aspects of training to their apprentices including offering numeracy and literacy training equivalent to Maths and English GCSEs, and additional support to those with a range of neurodiverse conditions.

A further 466 apprentices are in training at Govia Thameslink Railway, the UK's largest railway network, working across engineering, driving and customer service roles. In 2022, 184 new recruits began their training- 30% were aged over 40.

Scott Maynard, Go-Ahead Group's HR Director, said: "We're proud to be training a new generation of drivers and engineers at Go-Ahead. Apprentices are fundamental to the future of our business and of our industry as a whole – and providing on-the-job learning has helped us to attract people from all walks of life.

"We want our workforce and the transport industry to reflect the communities we serve. Our apprenticeships programme is forever expanding, and the vast majority of our apprentices continue their careers with Go-Ahead after their training is completed."

Photo credit: Go-Ahead