

HS2's link up with charity helps young people into work

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- HS2 Ltd has strengthened its partnership with charitable organisation The Social Mobility Foundation (SMF) in a bid to help support the 'covid generation'
- One young apprentice goes from HS2 work experience to an engineering apprenticeship with Dyson

Now in its fifth year, HS2's partnership with the charity has focused on providing work experience placements and 1:1 mentoring to ensure that young people can access professional support when preparing for their next steps into education and employment. And this year the programme has sparked amazing results, as one youngster from the West Midlands is set to embark on an engineering degree apprenticeship with The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology.

In response to growing fears that young people's career prospects are predicted to be adversely impacted by the pandemic, HS2 acted quickly to adapt this year's traditional summer work experience programme to provide virtual support to school and college leavers.

Male and female students from Birmingham, Solihull, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Walsall, Worcestershire, Manchester, Rochdale and Leeds were amongst those HS2 was invited to support by the SMF, as the

students all aspire to a future career in engineering.

Richard Winter, HS2's Education Manager said: "HS2 will deliver huge benefits for future generations, but we're focused on what we can do here and now to support young people through this hugely difficult time.

"Providing access to professional mentoring and work experience, at a time when pupils have missed out on large parts of their education, is just one of the ways in which we strive to give something back to communities through our education and responsible business programmes."

Over 180 young people have benefited from work experience placements with HS2, and many more have received ongoing professional support, including speed networking, from its 30-strong team of volunteer mentors within its engineering, environment and project management teams.

Following completion of his work experience placement with HS2 last year, 18-year-old Thomas Flaherty from Walsall kept in touch with the team and sought their professional support with his personal career development this summer.

Thomas said: "When I was applying to university and for apprenticeships the HS2 staff were happy to help with my CV and personal statement, which was really useful. They also gave me advice on interviews for the Dyson apprenticeship that I was applying for, which really helped me to prepare."

Thomas was successful with his application and is now about to start a four-year degree apprenticeship at The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology in Wiltshire.

Thomas added: "I'll be a part-time student studying two days a week with the University of Warwick and work as an undergraduate engineer for three days a week. This will provide me with lots of experience for my CV and if I work hard and get a 2:1 or a 1st class degree, Dyson will guarantee me a job as a full-time engineer.

"I cannot wait to start and am grateful to the team at HS2 who helped me to prepare for this amazing opportunity throughout the application and interview process."

The Social Mobility Foundation has commended HS2 for the positive role it is playing in supporting young people and helping them to reach their full potential.

Emily Hodgson, Head of Employer Relations and Business Development at The SMF said: "Disadvantaged students and their futures are set to be disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, so we are pleased to have seen our employer partners step up to the plate and continue to offer valuable opportunities online this year.

"The young people we support are unlikely to be able to access high quality work experience without the support of our programme and employers such as HS2. For this, and their championing of social mobility, we are incredibly grateful for HS2's continued support."

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd

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