

National 'Train Driver Apprenticeship Programme' meets demand and saves train operators £19m

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New data from the annual National Rail Workforce Survey, undertaken by NSAR revealed for the first time that the rail industry's dedicated *Train Driver Apprenticeship Programme* has been so successful that it is already meeting demand and is on target to meet future industry growth, saving train operating companies £19m per year on training.

Research by NSAR revealed that 35% of the UK's current 17,000 train drivers will leave the sector within the next 5 years as a result of retirement and the sector's aging workforce profile. In order to meet demand, NSAR has estimated that 1,000 new drivers are needed each year until 2028, if we are to simply maintain current service levels.

In 2021-22, 925 new apprenticeship drivers started their training and have now entered the workforce. NSAR believes that if the programme continues at the same rate, it will meet the industry's train driver demand requirements.

A train driver is a sought-after role across every train operating company for which the number and calibre of applicants is very high.

Kirsty Derry, Chair of Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group and HR Director (NW&C), Network Rail said, "It's brilliant that so many highly talented people are enjoying and benefiting from apprenticeships, right across the country. The Trailblazer team, made up of members from freight and passenger operators, Network Rail and our trade unions, remains dedicated to ensuring the industry's skill needs are met and that we keep pace with the changing world of work."

Mick Whelan, Secretary-General, ASLEF said, "ASLEF is supportive of the train driver apprenticeship programme, and we are pleased to see it being used widely by industry. More impetus should be given to reducing the minimum driver age requirements to improve diversity and increase the numbers of new entrants."

Martin Thayne, People and Culture Director, GBRTT said, "Really pleased to see that cross-industry collaboration is helping to manage the challenges rail faces in planning for the railway of the future. I look forward to seeing the progress made in creating a simpler, better railway for everyone in Britain".

Hilary Tysoe, Chair, Train Driver Academy and HR Director, Arriva said: "I am delighted that the rail industry has been able to take advantage of Government funded Apprenticeships to enable a robust pipeline of train drivers to meet our future needs. The Train Driver Academy takes pride in promoting the Train Driver Apprenticeship and encouraging the industry to work together to improve diversity within the train driver role.

"Apprenticeships provide excellent opportunities for anyone considering, or wishing to develop, a career in rail. We must continue to commit to increasing the number and variety of apprenticeships across the rail industry to create a sustainable, modern, diverse and skilled workforce."

Neil Robertson NSAR CEO said: "It's our mission to improve the entry path into the rail sector for anyone considering their next career move. We have had a dedicated team working with the Government and rail organisations for the past 3-years to prioritise a step change in the number and quality of rail apprenticeships across the sector. Our research reveals the success of targeting investment, creating jobs and improving diversity."

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