

# Network Rail takes on first cohort of placements under Government's Kickstart scheme

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12 young people have become the first to join Network Rail under the Government's Kickstart scheme, with more to follow in the weeks and months ahead.

Working across all areas of the business – including HR, communications, finance and project management – the Kickstarters will be developing their skills and gaining valuable experience while playing their part in delivering a safe and reliable railway for passengers and freight users.

While all employers participating in the scheme can apply for funding to cover 100 per cent of the National Minimum Wage, or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant, Network Rail is voluntarily going further by paying its Kickstarters in line with the Living Wage Foundation.

Network Rail's aim is to take on at least 100 Kickstarters in total.

Joe Guy, Network Rail's HR Director, Talent and Resourcing, said: "We are delighted to be taking part in the Kickstart scheme – investing in, and providing real opportunities for, young people at risk of long-term unemployment due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Through a combination of real on-the-job experience and high-quality training, we hope to make a real difference to the lives of our 100 applicants and boost their future employment opportunities, either at Network Rail or elsewhere.”

Minister for Employment Mims Davies MP said: “It’s fantastic to see Network Rail brilliantly backing the Government’s Kickstart scheme – helping our next generation of workers to really get back on track and develop the key skills they need to thrive in work.

“This is still a challenging time, but right across the country our Plan for Jobs is creating opportunity, supporting people to retrain and getting jobseekers into work as we push to build back better – including in the rail sector.”

Skills Builder Partnership has agreed to provide employability training and resources for applicants as part of the programme. The training will be underpinned by Skills Builder Framework, which breaks down progression of eight essential skills, including teamwork, creativity and problem solving, into 16 skills steps. Every Kickstarter will benefit from 10 90-minute training sessions over the course of their placement and will be able to log and track their progress using an online platform. Following successful completion of the Skills Builder learning log, they will receive an accredited certificate allowing them to demonstrate their skills and accomplishments to potential future employers.

Rosa Morgan-Baker, Director of Development at Skills Builder Partnership, said: “We’re proud to be working together with Network Rail to ensure Kickstart participants leave the scheme equipped with not only valuable insights and experiences, but also highly transferable, essential skills to support their future progression. There is growing evidence linking higher levels of the essential skills with better career outcomes, higher wages and higher levels of wellbeing.

“The Skills Builder Partnership brings together employers, educators and non-profits to establish a common language and a shared outcomes framework to help young people identify, develop and articulate these essential skills in a robust and consistent way. We are thrilled to be working closely with Network Rail towards this ambitious vision.”

Network Rail has also signed a contract with National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR) to provide support for the programme, including supporting business areas with the recruitment process, helping to prepare staff for their placements and providing ongoing support to young people throughout their time at the company.

NSAR CEO, Neil Robertson, said: “We are delighted to be supporting Network Rail in rolling out the government’s Kickstart initiative. Network Rail has been quick to respond to Kickstart and ambitious in its pursuit of eventually creating a large number of opportunities for young people.

“I know the power that a helping hand has, and I know the difference creating opportunity for those that need it, will make. In helping Network Rail to provide work opportunities to those at risk of long-term unemployment, we help to drive greater diversity in rail, and ensure we keep social inclusion and levelling up at the forefront of what we do as we move forward.”

- Network Rail signed up to the Kickstart scheme in September 2020. The scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment, and who have been some of the hardest-hit by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Kickstart scheme is expected to create hundreds of thousands of new job placements across the UK, with referrals running until December 2021.
- The Skills Builder Partnership brings together more than 700 organisations towards a common mission: that one day everyone will build the essential skills to succeed. We work with educators, employers and impact-led organisations to establish a shared language, principles and outcomes for eight essential skills which drive learning in school, underpin success in employment and foster life-long personal and professional development. Visit [skillsbuilder.org](https://skillsbuilder.org) for more details.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*