RailBusinessDaily

QTS and East Ayrshire Council launch new Rail Skills Academy

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QTS and East Ayrshire Council are looking for enthusiastic young people, aged 18 to 24 years, to join Scotland's first Rail Skills Academy.

The Academy, which is being delivered by QTS Training and funded through the Council's Young Person Guarantee programme, will help to combat the skills shortage and lack of diversity in the rail industry. With over 48% of railway workers aged 50 or over and women making up just 16% of the current workforce, action is being taken to create a knowledgeable, diverse and qualified workforce for the future.

Based at QTS' Drumclog HQ, the course will equip participants with the competencies, skills and experience required to thrive in the railway maintenance sector. From employability and core skills to health and safety awareness and PTS track induction, young people who complete the academy will be on track to start their new career.

Each academy session will run for nine weeks, with transportation provided to and form the site for participants.

As a proud supporter of young people, and an Investors in Young People Gold Award employer, QTS aims to help them discover the wide range of possibilities that the railway sector has to offer.

An initial assessment event was held on 6 May at the SL33 Hub in Kilmarnock with over 40 young people in attendance. This was a great opportunity to raise awareness of the Rail industry and the QTS Rail Skills Academy and from these attendees two cohorts of 12 candidates were selected for the first two Skills Academy programmes.

Director of QTS Training, Lorna Gibson said: “Network Rail and its supply chain are creating many initiatives to combat the skills gap within our industry and, as a lead contractor working in this sector, QTS has been developing a range of programmes, including apprenticeships, traineeships, graduate development, and Kickstart programmes to encourage young people to join the industry.

“The work we currently do with young people has made it evident that most are completely unaware of the employment and wide range of career opportunities offered by this industry.

“The introduction of the QTS Rail Skills Academy programme will bring further opportunity for young people to be introduced to rail and to gain the qualifications, competencies and initial experience required to progress through a career in what is a thriving industry.”

Linda McAulay-Griffiths, chief education officer and head of education, said: “I am delighted that QTS has been appointed by East Ayrshire Council to deliver Scotland’s first Rail Skills Academy. Our Young Person’s Guarantee team recognised that the rail industry held real career opportunities for our young people and that an Academy would be the perfect way to address the current skills shortage the industry is facing.

“In East Ayrshire, our focus is on preparing our young people for employment and ensuring that they have the skills and experience to reach their full potential. Education isn’t about fitting our young people into boxes and expecting them to achieve. We need to think innovatively, identify opportunities and work in partnership with local employers like QTS who are committed to encouraging young people to join their industry.”

Head of assessment and skills at the National Skills Academy for Rail, Barry Smith said: “In establishing the QTS Rail Skills Academy, QTS is really showing the way to create opportunities for young people and to support the creation of a more diverse workforce for the rail industry.

“This is an exciting and innovative new opportunity for East Ayrshire and a great way for young people to start a career in rail.”

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