

# Quality over quantity: why the rail industry needs a different kind of recruitment service

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*In this guest writer feature, Terry Robbins, operations manager at Railsafe, discusses the business's 'quality over quantity' approach*

When it comes to recruiting contingent staff for rail projects, quality, rather than quantity, is key. Agencies shouldn't be striving to 'get bums on seats'; instead, their focus must be providing talented, committed, and qualified candidates to an industry sorely in need of them.

Rail Safe Group's 'quality over quantity' philosophy is one of the reasons I joined the business two months ago. After 13 years in rail recruitment, I jumped at the chance to work for a contingent labour specialist whose values align with my own.

And clients appreciate these values too. The rail industry needs a different kind of recruitment service – one founded on diversity, training, high standards, 24/7 coverage, and joined-up thinking.

**Diversity and inclusion in rail recruitment**

Of all these factors, diversity is particularly important to Railsafe – and with good reason. As NSAR (The National Skills Academy for Rail) noted in its [2018 Women in Rail report](#), “A diverse workforce is a productive workforce.” People from diverse backgrounds bring new skills, new ideas, and new perspectives to the table.

While initiatives like the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Charter](#) are helping to create a more balanced industry, we’re not there yet. And it’s important to ensure EDI doesn’t become a box-ticking exercise; at Railsafe, we follow through on our promises, working closely with organisations like Women in Rail, Jobcentre Plus and the Probation Service to reach candidates from diverse backgrounds. It’s about tapping into different talent pools – something that will benefit the wider rail industry.

My role as operations manager involves making working practices more efficient. With this in mind, we recently digitised the registration process, allowing candidates to sign-up remotely. While we still carry out thorough interviews (often on Teams), digitising this initial stage has dramatically increased our capacity to recruit.

It’s also made the registration process more accessible, enabling us to reach candidates who might have struggled to attend our Essex headquarters at short notice.

### **Stringent interviewing process**

And it’s crucial that these candidates are competent and qualified. While Railsafe supplies a wide range of personnel (from track and civils teams to worksite managers and safety-critical staff), we ensure that every individual is a ‘known quantity’. Again, recruitment is about quality – particularly when the personnel in question will be working on some of rail’s largest infrastructure projects.

To ensure that our contingent labour meets the high standards clients require, we vet individuals carefully at registration stage, checking they have the correct competencies and qualifications.

We also carry out rigorous face-to-face interviews, gaining an understanding of their abilities and experience level.

### **Training the next generation**

And, if recruitment agencies are to play their part in addressing the industry’s ongoing skills crisis, they must be willing to invest in candidates.

At Railsafe, we’re working to foster a new generation of rail talent, and offer NVQs and training opportunities through our training division. Delegates are supported and mentored for the duration of this training, which often leads to job opportunities; we’re proud of the fact that we can help individuals, not just to upskill, but to find work when their course ends.

Railsafe’s training division supports the whole workforce, ensuring that staff can access relevant learning and development opportunities and realise their full potential. And, [with NSAR recently reporting that almost 50,000 rail employees are expected to retire by 2030](#), the need to invest in new talent is more

pressing than ever.

### **24/7 resource coverage**

It's not just about finding the right candidates. The rail industry never sleeps – and neither should recruitment agencies.

At Railsafe, we recently implemented a new control centre, which enables us to oversee Sentinel compliance, remote site access, fatigue management and resource requirements around the clock. We can pick up on any late notice requirements, and are able to mobilise quickly – crucial in an industry that often doesn't respect office hours.

### **Package works**

And, building on this recruitment offering, Railsafe is now able to deliver package works for clients. We can take a project from its planning stages through to completion, incorporating existing services like access planning, labour supply, project & construction management, and training.

Indeed, as the skills crisis continues, today's rail recruitment companies need to do more – without compromising on quality, of course.

To learn more about Railsafe Group, visit <http://www.railsafegroup.co.uk/>.