

Young people 'Kickstart' their careers with Metro

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A successful scheme to help unemployed young people in the West Midlands is set to see another cohort of recruits take the first step towards a rewarding career on the region's expanding tram network.

Over the last few months Metro has been busy recruiting a number of candidates to its team as part of the government's Kickstart scheme, following in the footsteps of previous participants who have since gained permanent positions on the network.

A four-way partnership between West Midlands Metro, the Department for Work and Pensions, West Midlands Combined Authority and training provider Release Potential, the Kickstart programme is providing a valuable boost for skills and training in the region supporting employers with six months of wage costs for young people they take on and support.

At a recent event to welcome the new recruits, West Midlands Mayor Andy Street commented: "One of the key issues we face is ensuring that young people get the right training for a career for life, enabling them to hopefully stay in the region and fulfil their hopes and dreams."

“Schemes such as Kickstart will help them to acquire the skills needed for the jobs of the future, and I urge the young people to seize the opportunity with West Midlands Metro as it looks forward to further expansion.”

Jack Walton and Shannon Mann are two young people to have already benefitted from the programme and they say joining Kickstart has proved a real boost to their prospects.

Jack, who is building a career in civil engineering with Metro’s landscaping team, commented: “Since starting in July, I’ve learnt a lot and colleagues have been very supportive. Before joining Kickstart I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do but now I enjoy working outside and helping to make sure that the tram network is kept safe and tidy, free of obstructions caused by lineside vegetation.”

Meanwhile Shannon started work as an HR administrator at the Metro’s offices in Wednesbury after the coronavirus pandemic left her feeling that she needed a change in direction. “The process of applying for a Kickstart placement was very easy and straight forward, and since then the Metro team has treated me like part of a family. I always come into work with a smile on my face!”

The Kickstart initiative is part of a wider recruitment campaign launched by the Metro ahead of the opening of extensions to Wolverhampton Railway Station and Edgbaston later this year, part of a wider £1.3 billion expansion programme.

Claire Scrimshire, Metro’s Head of HR, explained: “These ambitious plans present a wealth of employment opportunities for local people looking for a rewarding career.

“As well as providing young people with practical experience of working in a light rail environment, Kickstart also aims to equip them with a wide range of useful skills and the chance to move onto a formal apprenticeship scheme.”

Over the course of the Kickstart programme, the network plans to provide opportunities for 46 young people in a diverse range of roles including as driver/customer representatives, administrators, customer service officers, stores operatives and assistant maintenance technicians and many more.

Vacancies are available to anyone aged 16-24 that meet the Kickstart criteria and to find out more they should log into their Universal Credit account where they can send a message to their work coach.

“Kickstart offers a fantastic opportunity for unemployed young people to get their careers on track as part of a diverse and enthusiastic team that’s dedicated to providing a safe and secure, reliable and sustainable service for customers,” Claire said.

Cllr Ian Ward, WMCA portfolio holder for transport and leader of Birmingham City Council added: “This is a period of huge expansion for Metro with the network being extended in Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell and Wolverhampton and 21 new trams joining the fleet. This training offers our young people to a chance to start an exciting new career and share in that success.”

Photo credit: West Midlands Metro