

[Building back better with apprenticeships](#)

Today (8 February) marks the start of National Apprenticeship Week 2021, which this year shines a light on the apprentices and employers who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

To kick off the week, the government has announced brand new sector specific traineeship pilots in construction and rail to start this summer so more young people can gain the skills and confidence they need to get a job, or progress into an apprenticeship in key sectors of the economy. The experience from these traineeship opportunities will enable more young people to fast track their career, with many able to potentially complete their apprenticeship more quickly as a result of prior learning covered in the traineeship programme.

Apprentices from all walks of life have been working on the front line and many have played a key role in supporting the country throughout the pandemic, including on the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine that is helping the country overcome the virus. [Emilia Reyes Pabon](#), an apprentice Technician Scientist at the University of Oxford, worked on the UK's first COVID-19 vaccine to enter clinical trials. This vaccine, which Emilia worked on, gives people good protection against the new coronavirus variant which is now dominant in the UK.

Advanced Engineering Apprentices [Jack Day, Christopher Robinson and Christopher Young](#), at the Science and Technology Facilities Council, helped in the national effort to produce 20 years' worth of mechanical ventilators in just 12 weeks.

Elsewhere, [Ethan Brennan](#) has worked during the pandemic on a respiratory ward, carrying out daily healthcare duties. As with all apprentices he was offered the opportunity to move to a more low risk area, but declined as he wanted to remain in his original placement to care for the elderly patients and support the team.

Apprenticeships and traineeships play a vital role in making sure people have the skills they need to get a well-paid job. They play a key part in the government's Plan for Jobs, designed to protect, support and create jobs for all ages as we build back better from the pandemic.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan said:

Coronavirus has had a huge impact on lives and livelihoods. As we build back better from the pandemic, we need to make sure people are able to take advantage of the opportunities apprenticeships provide.

"Whether it's the benefits to the individual – the chance to earn

while you learn, opening up new career paths that can transform lives. Or the benefits to business giving access new talent from all backgrounds.

This National Apprenticeship Week we should celebrate the apprentices up and down the country who have been stepping up throughout the pandemic to support the national effort. I am calling on everyone to get involved in to raise awareness of all the fantastic opportunities that are out there and share their inspiring stories.

Employers across the country including BT, Amazon, Accenture and Metropolitan Police have also continued to invest in and recognise the benefits apprentices are bringing to their workplaces, by pledging to offer thousands of exciting apprenticeship opportunities.

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries – everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management and banking. They are also supporting businesses of all sizes up and down the country to future proof their workforces, helping the country and the economy to build back better.

The highly successful traineeship programme has already helped nearly 120,000 young people get on the path to a great career since 2013. [Recent figures](#) show that 66% of trainees get a job, take up an apprenticeship or go on to further study within 6 months of completing their programme.

The programmes last between 6 weeks and 12 months, and focus on developing vital employability skills, alongside additional English, maths and digital skills, combined with a work placement lasting a minimum of 70 hours.

Steve Radley, Director of Strategy and Policy at CITB said:

Getting more college students into construction jobs is a big challenge which the new Construction Traineeship should make a lot easier by providing a springboard for learners to start work or an apprenticeship. With job opportunities currently growing faster in construction than in many other industries, this is the right time for industry, Government, colleges and CITB to work together on practical solutions to bridge the gap between FE and work. Starting with bricklaying and moving on to the other occupations in a few months, we can make real progress this year.

Neil Robertson, Chief Executive at the National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR), said:

Through Traineeships NSAR is delighted to be creating new opportunities for talent to access the Rail sector. At a time of

great challenge for Business, young people, and our future workforce, it is critical that we accelerate our ambitions to engage, attract and recruit for industries future skills needs. The development and delivery of high quality Traineeships will be a key entry point for members alongside, Apprenticeships, T-Levels and Kickstart. I am pleased that NSAR, with the support of side key industry leads and government, has been able to establish this provision in a collaborative, coherent and timely manner.

At its heart, the new Rail Traineeship gives employers more opportunities to create relevant, engaging and work relevant training, alongside quality partners.

[Thousands of virtual events](#) will take place throughout National Apprenticeship Week with leading employers including Rolls-Royce, Capgemini and Virgin Media, giving people the chance to find out more about the amazing benefits apprenticeships offer.

To support employers to take on more apprentices the government is offering up to £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire. Almost nineteen thousand applications have been submitted by employers. The cash boost is available until March 2021, so businesses can create even more opportunities and give more people the life changing chance to start a great career.

Employers can also now apply for a [£1000 cash boost](#) to help them take on new trainees.