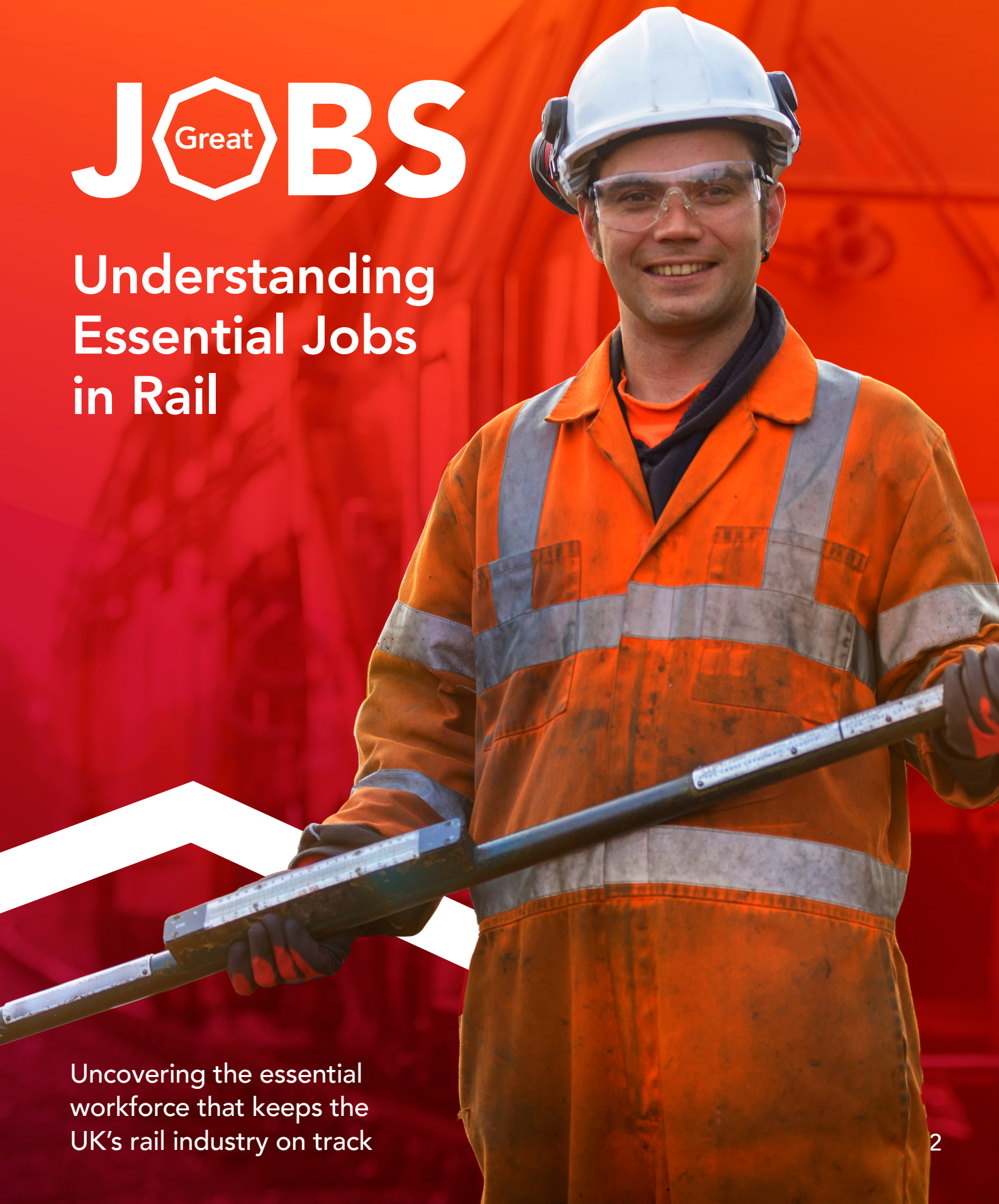
Emsi | burning glass

City & Guilds
Believe you can

Great JOBS

Understanding Essential Jobs in Rail



Uncovering the essential workforce that keeps the UK's rail industry on track

"The UK rail industry is set to see massive growth resulting in the creation of up to 120,000 new jobs in the next five years".

Contents

Foreword *Kirstie Donnelly MBE, Chief Executive, City & Guilds*	04
Essential Jobs – a country in search of skills	06
Rail – promise and opportunity Vs on-the-ground challenges	08
Revealing demographics – a 21st century industry stuck in a bygone era	10
The deciding factors for careers in rail	12
Uncovering solutions to railway skills shortages	14
Equality, diversity and inclusion as a skills solution in rail	16
Case studies	18
About City & Guilds	20

Foreword

When we embarked on our research for the Great Jobs report in 2021, we were determined to uncover the trends, challenges, potential, and opportunities for solutions that faced the various industries that are essential to maintaining UK society and way of life.

Of all the insights that we discovered about these essential jobs, what was most clear was just how misunderstood the railway industry is amongst working age people in the UK. It is a huge missed opportunity that rail is so often overlooked as a viable, long-term career – especially by young people, who are simply ill-informed about the incredibly vast array of opportunities that the sector offers.

We need to address the poor image that is discouraging people from considering these roles, by ensuring these jobs garner the respect they deserve in the future. With such fierce competition for talent, government and rail employers need to work together to consider other ways to make these essential jobs more attractive, including offering opportunities for skills development and more flexible working patterns.

Public transport is as critical to our livelihood as education, healthcare, energy and utilities, or retail and commerce. So, as we unpack the findings of the Great Jobs report, we've endeavoured to pull the key lessons that could serve the rail industry. Using this knowledge, we can collectively begin to generate measurable action plans that address the skills shortages in rail, while connecting people of all demographics to an industry rich in opportunity.

We present these ideas in the pages that follow and believe that these serve as starting points that are practical and relevant to where we stand today.

Kirstie Donnelly MBE
CEO
City & Guilds

It is a huge missed opportunity that rail is so often overlooked as a viable, long-term career.

Essential jobs

A country in search of skills

Although almost all respondents to the Great Jobs survey acknowledged the importance of essential jobs to society, only 25% admitted that they would take interest in pursuing their own essential job career. In other words, "it's a dirty job, but somebody (else) has got to do it."

65%
of essential jobs are filled by workers aged 35 years and older

Taking a bird's eye view of the UK's essential industries, we can identify some of the most prominent skills recruitment challenges faced by employers on the ground.

- 65% of essential jobs are filled by workers aged 35 years and older, compared to a younger non-essential workforce. Fewer young people are entering essential jobs, for various reasons.

- The effects of Brexit have reduced essential sectors' access to a wider talent pool.

- Misperceptions of essential jobs hinder diverse people from entering careers that are typically considered 'male roles', such as construction or transport and logistics, or 'female roles', such as education and social care.

- While salaries are sector-dependent, and often out of proportion to service value, essential job salaries are lower by £500 per year, compared to non-essential jobs.

- Essential jobs are assumed to require manual labour, or hands-on manpower. This creates the perception of inflexibility and stereotypical working conditions across entire sectors, in a society that has gravitated to flexi-hours and remote working.

- Essential industries suffer a typically higher staff turn-over. Currently, less than half (46%) of essential workers in the UK plan on staying in their roles for longer than 5 years.

Rail

Promise and Opportunity Vs. On-the-ground Challenges

Falling within transport and logistics, the UK's rail industry is set to see massive growth. Large-scale, once-in-a-generation infrastructural developments, such as High Speed Two (HS2) and the Northern Powerhouse Rail upgrades, are expected to create up to 120,000 new high-quality jobs over the next five to ten years.

120,000

high quality jobs in the next 5-10

This paints an optimistic picture of an industry full of promise and opportunity, and yet talent supply challenges threaten to put a great deal of this potential on the back foot. Factors that present the greatest challenges to the rail workforce include the following:

Ageing workforce:

More than 28% of the UK's rail employees are over the age of 50 years. As the industry prepares to lose more and more of its experienced workers through retirement, fewer young people are entering careers in rail. This means that lost skills are not being replaced.

Reduced talent pool:

Rail has historically relied on contract workers and overseas talent. As EU net migration continues to decline due to Brexit, rail employers will have to recruit just as many skilled workers from a smaller talent pool, which is likely to result in skill shortages.

Retention:

Rail employers also face the retention issues that are typical to so many essential jobs. Insecure contracts and short-term projects often lead to broken or incomplete apprenticeships, and many who start off in rail fail to realise their full potential through career advancement within the sector.

Perception:

A false reputation about careers and working conditions remains one of rail's greatest challenges. Aside from general lack of awareness about the many career opportunities available in rail, it's also perceived as a 'rough industry'.

Revealing demographics

A 21st-century industry stuck in a bygone era

In 2021, the City & Guilds' new Back on Track survey and report uncovered that – largely due to lack of information – rail jobs are being overlooked by the majority of the UK's working adults.

27%
minority ethnicities would consider a career in rail.

However misleading, the public's archaic perception of rail is indicated by the report results:

Would consider a career in rail

32%

Only 32% of respondents would consider a career in rail.

47%

Nearly half (47%) said they would never consider a career in rail.

24%

Of those who would consider a career in rail, only 24% were female.

26%

26% of 18-24-year olds report that they would consider a career in rail, compared to 39% of 35-44-year olds.

27%

Only 27% of minority ethnicities would consider a career in rail.

Think a career in rail is desirable

6%

Of all respondents, a tiny 6% say that rail careers are "desirable".

2%

Only 2% of females consider rail careers to be desirable.

16%

Only 16% of the current rail workforce is female.

Why wouldn't people work in rail?

41%

Over two fifths (41%) said it was because they don't know enough about available careers in the sector

35%

More than a third (35%) of people believe that they don't have the necessary baseline skills to enter the rail industry.

Speaking at a Rail roundtable event in November 2021, Paula Gibson (City & Guilds) says; **"Despite the growth of STEM fields, rail is just not considered a career of choice and there's very little understanding of the potential to develop and progress into management roles. If we want to see change, we need to correct these perceptions first."**

The deciding factors for careers in rail and other essential jobs

Rail workers want good salaries from a stable income source

For the rail employer – what do workers want?

Top career deciding factors according to Back on Track 2021:

- Good salaries from a stable income source.
- Healthy work-life balance and flexible working conditions. This has become especially important since the COVID-19 pandemic allowed employers and employees to experience the benefits of remote and/or hybrid working.
- Opportunities to pursue career progression in multiple fields.
- Opportunities to obtain transferable skills and certifications.
- A sense of pride and confidence about work and contribution to society.
- A sense of belonging – employee candidates want to see "someone like me" succeeding in a role, as this inspires confidence in their own ability to reach the same potential.

For the candidate employee – building a case for rail

Factors that favour rail careers:

- Survey respondents acknowledge that there are well-paying jobs in rail and it is also deemed a stable industry.
- Working conditions in rail can be flexible, depending on the role applied for and the willingness of the employing company – however, people who don't work in the sector don't appreciate this is the case.
- There are abundant training and career progression opportunities but this is not widely recognised.
- While most people associate rail with predominantly manual track-side jobs, modern rail development requires a wider variety of skills than ever before. Careers can be as diverse as quantity surveying, architecture, technology development, environmental protection, and even archaeology.
- Because of the diversity of career opportunities, and the fact that rail is marked as an 'essential job' in the UK, the industry offers incredible training and upskilling opportunities through bootcamps, apprenticeships and in-house training. Most of these skills are transferable.
- Contrary to general public perception, rail careers are high skill and varied and are essential to the growth of the UK and its economy.
- The rail industry has shown positive dedication to increasing its talent diversity through Equality Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and by targeting minority ethnicities, as well as reaching those with limited experience with the opportunity to find entry-level work and develop skills.

Uncovering solutions to railway skills shortages

According to an analysis of the UK's rail workforce skills gap, an additional 7,000 to 12,000 additional people will be required every year from 2020 to 2025. Already two years into this period, the skills shortage continues to stack up. What's more, as the industry moves towards a greener future, rail will require a variety of new skills to fill roles that could attract a younger, more green-conscience workforce.

According to City & Guilds' Back on Track report, some of the jobs with the highest vacancies are:

- Customer Service Assistants and Supervisors
- Train Drivers
- Maintenance Operatives
- Technicians
- Operations Managers
- Project Managers
- Engineering Managers
- Business Managers

Facilitating growth – how to make rail's essential jobs attractive

1. Change perceptions and raise awareness

Jobs in rail are often overlooked, especially by Gen-Z, due to a lack of information about career paths that exist within the industry. Rail organisations, training providers and the government should ramp up their recruitment initiatives, including awareness campaigns that communicate to schools, colleges, universities and the general public about the benefits of working in the rail sector – stable income, learning and development opportunities, variety of roles available, and career longevity, to name a few.

2. Invest in the workforce

According to a National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR) analysis, opportunities within rail will peak at around 2025, with the biggest skills gap due to open at Levels 3 and 5. Those filling these roles would need to be recruited as early as possible, so as to equip them with the necessary skills to achieve industry goals. On-the-job learning is a powerful, efficient solution to skills shortages, while contributing to the further development of this essential sector. Additionally, training and skills development opportunities serve to attract and retain diverse talents.

3. Develop robust career paths

Short-term, project-based contracts tend to be one-dimensional, and often result in longer-term skills gaps and high recruitment costs. Organisations can attract and retain talent – and increase productivity – by investing in learning and development that helps employees progress towards greater career goals. Take a long-term, multi-dimensional approach to hiring, by allowing new recruits to imagine and pursue exciting career paths.

4. Create better career transition opportunities

As rail infrastructural developments in the UK ramp up over the next decade, organisations are encouraged to find ways to assist workers to enter the industry from other sectors. This can be achieved through 'skills bridges' training courses that help people to re-frame and transfer their hard-earned skills, while developing new, sometimes-technical abilities applicable to their new jobs.

5. Facilitate better work-life balance

All research points towards work-life balance as a key to attracting skilled workers to the rail sector, and other essential jobs. As far as possible, organisations should consider how to implement more sociable working hours, flexible work conditions and consideration to daily commute.

6. Recognition and reward as a driving factor

Over and above salary considerations, workers thrive on opportunities to earn recognition for accomplishments achieved. Through recognition programs, such as digital credentials or public validation, organisations within essential job sectors can increase productivity, nurture staff loyalty and become a brand of choice for future recruitments.

"If we can't reach young people before they've finished school, we've probably already lost them. They will move quickly into more 'attractive' industries. That's why it's so important to capture them as early as possible. We can support schools by providing role models and accurate information about the opportunities within rail. But what's really critical is that there is no role model stereotype."

Lydia Fairman (Lead Capability and Development Manager – Network Rail).

Equality, diversity and inclusion as a skills solution in rail

According to City & Guilds' Back on Track report, the rail industry remains an enigma to minority groups, with many claiming that they're simply not aware of the opportunities available to them.

16%

Only 16% of the rail workforce is female.

53%

of respondents from minority ethnicities said they don't know enough about jobs in rail.

40%

of women, and 43% of minority ethnicities individuals, believe they don't have the right skills.

According to further research and round table discussions with leaders in the rail industry, there are several practical actions that can be taken to further diversify the talent pool. Employers are creating more gender-inclusive job advertisements to reach a wider audience, and role models being depicted on marketing collateral are more diverse, showing women and minority ethnicities. Other organisations are 'starting at home', by creating more inclusive company cultures through positive, passionate representation and shared values that ensure that all people feel welcome.

Being deliberate and driven is the key, and rail employers are encouraged to set measurable EDI goals that are intentionally pursued.

Alex Pond, Managing Director, Intertrain, comments:

"The UK rail sector is going to be offering a huge number of new opportunities available over the coming years. For the population to miss out on these highly paid career opportunities would be a travesty. We have to be innovative in how we attract talent. We also have to be intentional about attracting a more diverse workforce – women and people with disabilities and from ethnic minority groups. There's immense, untapped potential right there."

Case Studies

Bailey Johnson
(22 years, Engineer, Central Rail Systems Alliance)

Leaving school, Bailey Johnson knew that she didn't want to go to university or college, but knew she had an interest in engineering.

Bailey decided to join the railway industry early on. She started by doing trackwork on the weekend and now has an exciting and varied role as an engineer for Central Rail Systems Alliance (CRSA) – an alliance between Network Rail, Balfour Beatty, Atkins and TSO). Bailey enjoys working both in the office and on the tracks. "No two days are the same," says Bailey. "You're always doing something new and learning something different to solve different challenges. There are so many opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills."

Bailey admits that there are still challenges faced by women in rail, due to the stereotypical image that people have of rail, as 'a man's work.' While at first Bailey felt that the men who worked around her struggled to accept her, once she showed herself as capable, they rallied to help her wherever they could.

Giving advice to girls and women who are interested in rail, Bailey encourages them to pursue their dreams. "Just do it. Don't hold back. If you're willing, and put the hard work in, you don't need massive qualifications. As long as you're going to push yourself, you can get there in the end."

"You're always doing something new and learning something different to solve different challenges. There are so many opportunities to develop a wide variety of skills."

Cuthbert Cassell
(30 years, Trainer & Assessor, Intertrain)

Cuthbert Cassell grew up on a council estate in Birmingham. He faced numerous challenges entering the UK workforce and admits that at one point he felt at risk of going down 'the wrong path' owing to the lack of opportunities available to him.

Cuthbert completed his training to become a plumber but soon discovered that he couldn't practise, as he didn't have a driver's licence and was dependent on public transport. After a difficult 6-month period of unemployment, Cuthbert's interest was piqued by a rail apprenticeship opportunity at a specialist training provider Intertrain, which would enable him to learn and earn at the same time.

Cuthbert excelled at and completed his apprenticeship, and immediately secured full-time employment at the rail company McGinley. He started off trackside, repairing the tracks, but gradually increased his health and safety knowledge and skills and – through demonstrating exceptional leadership skills – Cuthbert's career progressed to site safety control, a supervisory position.

In all, Cuthbert spent 8 years at McGinley, developing his skills set, which included teamwork, working to schedule, leadership skills and trackside health and safety. When given the opportunity to work at Intertrain as an apprenticeship trainer and assessor in 2021, he was delighted to accept and says, "This is a really great chance for me to 'pay it back' and help other people who are just like me to enjoy the opportunities that I had and get a foot into an industry that really does offer a lot of possibilities."

Although Cuthbert grew up in one of the most deprived areas of Birmingham, the support and opportunities that were offered to him by Intertrain have opened up doors that he never thought he would be standing in front of.

"This is a really great chance for me to 'pay it back' and help other people who are just like me to enjoy the opportunities that I had and get a foot into an industry that really does offer a lot of possibilities."

About

City & Guilds – Bringing skills to rail

Our vision is for a world in which everyone has the skills and opportunities to succeed. We support 5 million people each year to develop skills that help them into a job, develop on that job and to prepare for their next job. As a purpose-led organisation, we're proud that everything we do is focused on achieving this purpose.

Through our assessment and credentialing, corporate learning and technical training offers, we partner with our customers to deliver work-based learning programmes that build competency to support better prospects for people, organisations and wider society

We create flexible learning pathways that support lifelong employability, because we believe that people deserve the opportunity to (re)train and (re)learn again and again – gaining new skills at every stage of life, regardless of where they start. Our foundation activities amplify our purpose by helping to remove barriers to getting into a job, celebrating best practice on the job, and advocating for jobs of the future.
For more information, visit
www.cityandguilds.com.

In partnership with Intertrain

Established on a foundation of people-centric values, Intertrain is the largest commercial Railway Training provider in the UK. The innovative, private training and assessment provider is predominantly involved in the rail sector, delivering Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeships in Rail Engineering.

Adult Rail Operative Training - Training which assists individuals who are currently claiming state benefits or on low income. This training is designed to build, stretch and embed rail knowledge through extensive training, with a guaranteed interview on completion of the training.

Rail Study Programme - 16 to 18 part-time provision. This training is developed to help candidates successfully move into their chosen career route which could be an Apprenticeship, Employment or Further Education Opportunities.

Apprenticeships - 18+ Apprenticeships combine practical training whilst employed and earning a wage. Gain extensive skills and knowledge with on the job experience.

For more information, visit
www.railway-training-courses.com.

City & Guilds
Believe you can

Designed by:
7nine.uk
City & Guilds In-House Design Team

Leadership and management with ILM

ILM's purpose is to enable people and organisations to develop their leadership skills for personal and economic growth. They do this by helping employers and training providers to develop, assess and accredit leaders with the right blend of skills.

As the UK's top leadership and management qualifications specialist, ILM helps to develop more talented leaders than anyone else, giving managers the skills to make a real difference in their organisation and beyond.

Through a global network of over 2,000 approved centres and City & Guilds colleagues, ILM sets the highest benchmarks for leadership and management performance. This is achieved through a range of products and services tailored to training providers, employers, learners and universities.

For more information, visit **www.i-l-m.com.**

City & Guilds Recognitions services

Our international qualifications offer learners great opportunities for career development as well as progression into higher and professional education. They are widely accepted by employers around the world as the benchmark for workplace excellence and provide learners with the skills they need to succeed in today's fast changing economic environment.

We work with governments to embed our qualifications into the national education system and curriculum which enables them to create a mobile and flexible workforce.

We work with employers to promote career opportunities within various industries, helping organisations find suitably qualified workers and hence reduce their recruitment and training costs

For more information, visit **www.cityandguilds.com/what-we-offer/learners/recognitions/**

City & Guilds
5-6 Giltspur Street
London, UK
EC1A 9DE
cityandguilds.com

City & Guilds
Believe you can