

Access to Opportunity

Through inclusive Access Training, c2c and the OPC have helped equip young people with the skills, confidence, and support to succeed in rail

When twelve young people from The King's Trust joined c2c's 'Get into Railways' programme earlier this year, few imagined that four of them would soon secure permanent roles with the train operator. But that's exactly what happened, thanks to a unique partnership between c2c, The King's Trust, and the Occupational Psychology Centre (OPC).

The initiative, now a regular feature of c2c's recruitment calendar, was designed for 18- to 30-year-olds facing barriers to employment. Over three weeks, participants gained practical work experience across c2c's business, from customer service and ticketing to HR, while building the confidence and understanding needed to step into a professional work environment.

To support this journey, c2c partnered with the OPC to deliver their tailored Access Training, an evidence-based programme designed to help candidates feel confident and prepare for formal assessments and interviews. The programme began by demystifying psychometric testing, explaining what it is, what to expect, why it matters, and how candidates could prepare effectively. Participants then practised using the OPC's Core Skills Verbal (CoreV) and Core Skills Numerical (CoreN) tests under timed conditions.

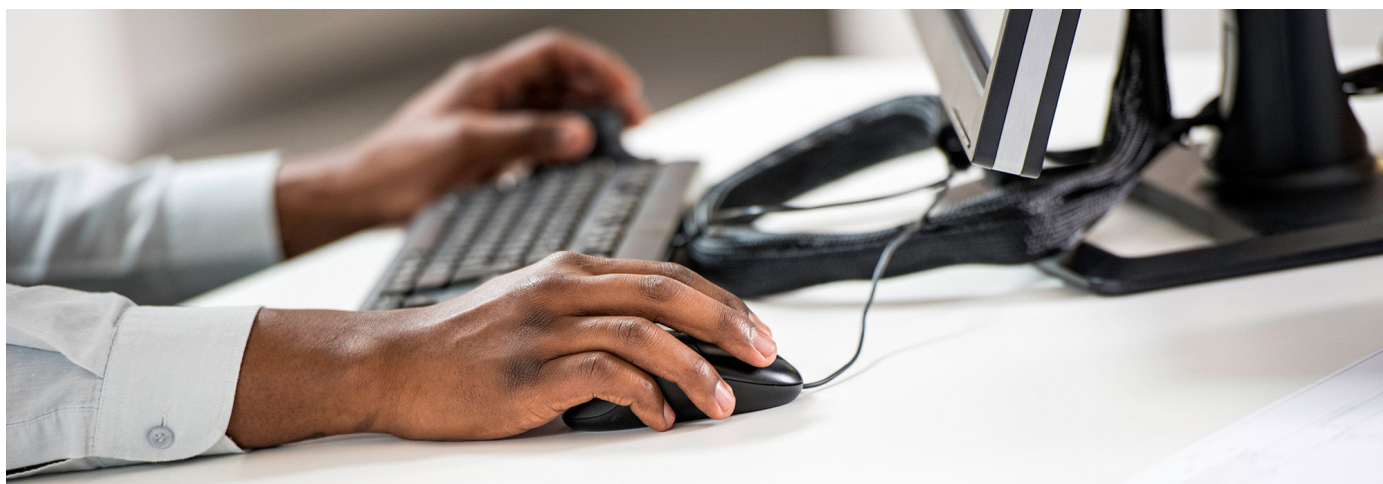
'Being part of the project was incredibly rewarding, and I learned a great deal too' said Becky Griffiths, Talent Assessor at the OPC. 'Delivering the presentation and supporting the applicants gave me valuable, new insights into how important it is to create a candidate experience that is both engaging and genuinely supportive.'

Following their practice tests, each participant received one-to-one feedback. It was a chance to explore their strengths, look at areas for development, and build self-belief and confidence ahead of the official assessment day. Together with c2c's coaching, this preparation helped candidates prepare for c2c's official assessments, including OPC Assessment's Railway Written Communication Exercise (rWce) and Ticket Office Selling Test (TOST).

'The group were really enthusiastic and eager to get involved' Becky added. 'Doing the practice tests helped them understand what a real test environment feels like – and how quickly time passes! They responded really well to feedback, genuinely wanting to do well and make the most of the opportunity.'

The OPC's Access Training approach recognises that not everyone begins their





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career journey with the opportunities to practise assessments or participate in structured recruitment processes, whether down to educational differences, access to training, or workplace experience. The low-pressure, supportive format helps reduce anxiety, build confidence and aims to level the playing field enabling individuals to perform their best on the day.

That support can make a real difference. Research by The King’s Trust reveals that 25 per cent of young people identify repeated rejection as a major barrier to employment, 23 per cent report low confidence, and nearly one in five (18 per cent) struggles with the application or job interview process. Confidence-building, cited by 38 per cent, was the single biggest factor young people felt would help them secure work. For many of the nearly half a million young people in the UK not currently in education, employment or training, initiatives like the OPC’s Access Training could be the difference between being overlooked and being hired.

‘Not everyone starts from the same place’ said Jo Lawrence, Joint CEO at the OPC. ‘Access Training helps remove unnecessary employment barriers. Having four people secure jobs from a shortlist of twelve is a fantastic outcome, especially for these King’s Trust candidates. It’s a strong example of how inclusive recruitment can open doors for untapped talent.’

For participants, the experience was transformative. Lindsey Keeling, one of this year’s successful candidates, shared: ‘I really enjoyed the chance to complete the two OPC Assessment tests as part of the ‘Get into Railways’ programme. It gave me the opportunity to explore different career avenues, and the OPC team were really helpful in providing practice papers and tips that helped me feel ready for my assessment day.’

The partnership has also brought tangible benefits to c2c’s recruitment approach. Jessica Lake, Head of Learning and Development at c2c, reflected: ‘Partnering with the OPC on The King’s Trust scheme has been a pivotal step in our mission to develop young talent and build a more inclusive workforce. Their assessment and selection expertise has helped us identify individuals with real potential, giving candidates a meaningful pathway into rail, regardless of background. Not only has the partnership supported our social mobility goals, it’s also brought fresh perspectives and enthusiasm into c2c, enriching our culture and strengthening our future talent pipeline. We’re incredibly grateful for the OPC’s insight, support and collaboration throughout.’

Gen Garfield, Youth Development Lead at The King’s Trust, added: ‘Access Training like this plays a crucial role in helping young people take their first steps into employment. With the right support and preparation, their potential shines through. Working with c2c and the OPC has given our candidates invaluable insight into the world of work, and the confidence to succeed in it.’

The collaboration stands as a strong example of how inclusive recruitment can shape futures, helping young people

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overcome barriers to employment while enabling rail organisations to welcome diverse, motivated new talent into the industry.

Interested in supporting emerging or under-represented new talent into your organisation? The OPC’s Access Training programme can be tailored to meet your recruitment needs, giving candidates the confidence and preparation to perform their best.

Get in touch to find out how the OPC could support your next inclusive intake. 



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