

# Press release: HS2 supports unemployed people back into work

- 256 unemployed people enter into training and employment on HS2
- 2,000 businesses have now won work and 7,000 job roles are already supported

HS2 Ltd's procurement models encourage a step change in the approach to skills and employment, ensuring supply chains work flexibly to provide opportunities for the unemployed, disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including women and BAME communities. As a result, HS2 is helping individuals return to work, start new career pathways and enter the world of work for the very first time.

Kate Myers, HS2 Ltd's Head of Skills, Education and Employment, said:

HS2's legacy will extend far beyond the revolutionary rail network it creates, thanks to the skills, employment and education opportunities it is opening up for people right across the country.

HS2 is much more than just a railway and we are committed to ensuring that the 30,000 people we'll need to design and build it represent a diverse, talented and highly skilled workforce.

Ensuring that unemployed individuals receive training and support to help them get on the job ladder is one of a number of commitments that HS2 Ltd made when it launched its [Skills, Employment and Education strategy](#) last year.

Graduate engineer, Andreea Cojocaru, joined LM JV in June 2018.

The sheer scale of HS2 coupled with the programme's multiple delivery phases, which range from ground preparation works, design and major construction, means there will be a wide variety of jobs, training and placement opportunities available right across the UK. These could be as diverse as ecology, archaeology, design management and civil engineering.

In the West Midlands, HS2 Ltd's early works contractor LM joint venture (JV) and main works contractor Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV) JV are leading by example. LM JV is playing a key role in ensuring that the Midlands retains its local talent and attracts more women into the construction sector, by reaching out to local graduates who have struggled to find work.

Graduate engineer, Andreea Cojocaru, joined LM JV in June 2018, having graduated in Civil Engineering from the University of Birmingham the previous year. Andreea is now part of the design management team focusing on the design of environmental mitigation sites to ensure that species, including

great crested newts, are protected and relocated as construction of HS2 gets underway. Andreea said:

This is a really challenging role, but I am learning so much and feel like I have a definite advantage over my peer group. It's great to be part of the team working on HS2 and I'm delighted to be starting my career working on such a transformational project.

Omar Khalid studied Mechanical Engineering at Birmingham City University and joined LM JV as assistant digital engineer in January 2018. Having struggled to find work on leaving university, Omar began volunteering before following the graduate route into employment on Europe's biggest construction project. Omar said:

This role has given me the best possible start to my future. LM JV embraces, supports and promotes diversity and I'm proud to be part of a team that draws on experience from across the world.

Having struggled to find work on leaving university, Omar is now assistant digital engineer at LM JV.

LM JV Skills, Employment and Education Manager, Claire Brough, explains:

At LM JV, we've helped over 25 people into employment so far, from all sorts of different backgrounds. HS2 is a fantastic vehicle to create employment, and build skills and knowledge, and we're proud to be part of it.

HS2 Ltd's main works contractor BBV JV is also playing a key role in ensuring that local people, struggling to find work, secure employment on the project.

After job hunting for over 12 months, Paul-Kelly Blazquez joined BBV JV at their head office in Birmingham as a receptionist in July 2018 and has now started a Level 3 Apprenticeship in Business Administration. Paul-Kelly said:

The experience and skills I'm gaining has lifted my confidence level from a 1 to a 10. I have learnt so much. I know I'm making a valuable contribution and it's great that I can be open about my disability.

When you're out of work for a long period of time it can be really difficult to find a new role. Thanks to the HS2 project, I've finally found a job where the work is exciting and I know that I'll progress as a result.

For more information about careers and opportunities, visit the [HS2 careers](#)

[website](#).

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## **News story: The Independent Chief Inspector invites suggestions for inspection topics in 2019-20**

David Bolt writes:

As required by the UK Borders Act 2007, I will be writing to the Home Secretary formally before the beginning of the new business year with my Inspection Plan for 2019-20, with the aim of publishing the Plan on my website on 1 April 2019.

I will be writing shortly to the stakeholders with whom the inspectorate is in regular contact to give them the opportunity, while the Plan is in draft, to suggest any topics they would like to see included or prioritised. However, I would also like to extend that invitation to anyone who wishes to suggest an inspection topic.

This will be the final year of my 2017-18 to 2019-20 3-year Plan, which was last updated in [April 2018](#). From my discussions with the Home Office and with stakeholders, I believe the 3-year Plan's five themes continue to serve as a useful structure for my work, and therefore I intend to retain them for 2019-20.

However, this still leaves a lot to be decided in terms of the scope and focus of particular inspections, including any new topics, and their timing.

Copies of the [inspection reports](#) published during 2018-19 can be found on my website, together with the [Home Office's responses](#). Also available on my website is a [list of the reports](#) that have been submitted to the Home Secretary and are awaiting publication and the inspections that are currently underway.

I am aware that the completed inspections will not have covered every possible issue or angle of concern to stakeholders, because there always has to be a trade-off between scope, resources and time, and, of course, things change.

So, I am happy to receive suggestions to take another look at an area I have already inspected, and I will in any event be carrying out a number of re-inspections to check that the Home Office has implemented my recommendations. But, I am also interested in identifying 'new' areas for inspection, drawing on others' experience and knowledge. The only stipulation is that it falls within my [statutory remit](#).

Please email the Chief Inspector: [chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk)

or write to:

2019-20 Inspection Plan  
ICIBI  
5th Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London  
SW1V 1PN

The closing date for suggestions is 19 March 2019.

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## **[News story: Health minister: NHS must lead the world in genomic healthcare](#)**

The government will today announce a new National Genomic Healthcare Strategy to ensure the UK is able to offer a predictive, preventative and personalised health and care service for people with rare diseases.

The strategy will set out how the genomics community can work together to make the UK the global leader in genomic healthcare.

The government will also set out how it will improve services for people with rare conditions. These include:

- every person with a rare disease will have a dedicated person responsible for co-ordinating their care
- every patient with a rare disease will be given an 'alert card', including information about their condition, treatment regime and contact details for the individual expert involved in their care
- every child with a rare condition will be transferred to appropriate adult services when they reach the age of 18, even if that adult service is not the commissioning responsibility of NHS England

Minister for Innovation Nicola Blackwood will launch the strategy in a speech to thank NHS staff who helped her to manage her own genetic condition, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), which went undiagnosed for 30 years.

She will speak about the difficulties of coping with undiagnosed disease, including her experiences of collapsing in Parliament on several occasions.

The new strategy will build on Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock's [ambition to sequence 5 million genomes in the UK by 2023 to 2024](#).

The NHS will from this year offer whole genome sequencing to every adult and child in the UK with certain cancers and rare genetic conditions. This will

be used to provide personalised treatments specific to the patient to improve their chances of recovery and quality of life.

The focus on genomics follows the success of the [100,000 Genomes Project](#), which helped 1 in 4 patients with rare diseases receive a diagnosis for the first time.

One in 17 people, or almost 6% of the population, will be affected by a rare disease at some point in their lives. This equates to approximately 3.5 million people in the UK and 30 million people across Europe.

Nicola Blackwood will say:

I owe so many NHS workers – nurses, doctors, my GP, pharmacist, paramedics and more – my stable health today. I am not sure I will ever be able to communicate to them quite how dramatically they have changed my life.

But this process has also taught me indelible lessons about how important it is to improve care for rare diseases for everyone – not just the lucky ones like me.

This is why we must never relent in our campaign to bring an end to the ‘diagnostic odyssey’ – it is pernicious and even after diagnosis the damage it does to mental health of patients and their families must not be forgotten. We must press even harder on clinical awareness and groundbreaking research so more patients can be diagnosed and treated earlier.

Co-ordinating your care can feel almost impossible when you are ill and the complexity of services for rare disease must not act as a barrier to access for care.

On the National Genomic Healthcare Strategy, she will say:

Through the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) we want to lead the world in the use of data and technology to prevent illness – not just treat it.

We want to diagnose conditions before symptoms occur. And we want to deliver personalised treatment, informed not just by our general understanding of disease but by our own personal, de-identified medical data – including our genetic make-up.

In order to make this a reality, I am delighted to announce that we will be working with the National Genomics Board and the broader genomics community to develop a National Genomic Healthcare Strategy.

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## [Press release: WTO agreement secures £1.3 trillion market for British contractors](#)

British businesses will be able to continue bidding for public sector contracts around the world worth more than £1.3 trillion a year after we leave the European Union.

World Trade Organization (WTO) members have today (Wednesday 27 February) confirmed that the UK will join the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) as an independent member if we leave the EU without an agreement.

This is a significant step in the UK establishing its independent trade policy for the first time in more than 40 years. The UK has already submitted its own tariff schedules to the WTO and will take up its independent seat in Geneva after exit day.

The UK will join the GPA as an independent member as soon as possible if we leave the EU without an agreement, or will remain a member under EU schedules if we have an Implementation Period.

The GPA is an agreement within the WTO framework between its 19 members, including major economies such as the United States, Canada, the EU and Japan. The UK's independent membership gives British businesses the certainty that they will be able to continue bidding for public sector contracts overseas on almost the same terms as they do now.

Overseas businesses will be able to bid for £67 billion worth of public sector contracts in the UK every year. In return, British suppliers will be able to bid for £1.3 trillion worth of government contracts overseas in a wide range of sectors from large infrastructure to professional and business services.

It will also ensure that British taxpayers and public sector organisations, including government departments, continue to benefit from increased choice and value for money on contracts which are open to international competition. The agreement will continue to protect vital public services such as the NHS.

### **International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:**

I'm delighted to have confirmation from the GPA Committee today that the UK will be an independent member of the agreement as we leave the EU. This is a hugely successful global agreement which will give British businesses certainty that they can continue bidding for £1.3 trillion worth of government procurement contracts

overseas.

This is an important win for British diplomacy as we take our place on the world stage, and we are looking forward to continuing to play a committed and active role in the GPA Committee and the WTO as a whole. I'd like to thank our colleagues in the GPA for working with us to achieve this excellent result.

While there may be a short period of less than a month before the GPA takes legal effect in a no deal scenario, disruption to businesses is likely to be minimal.

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## [News story: Abandonment of credit-score checking merger](#)



This follows the companies' decision to abandon the transaction.

Experian and ClearScore provide credit-score checking and financial product comparison services in the UK. These services allow people to understand their finances and choose loans and credit cards online.

In November 2018, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published [provisional findings](#) as part of its in-depth, Phase 2, merger inquiry. These set out concerns that the merger of 2 of the largest credit-score checking firms in the UK could result in less intense competition in the sector.

The CMA provisionally found that the merger could stifle product development, by substantially reducing the pressure to continue to develop innovative offers and to make other improvements in services, and so negatively impact consumers.

Experian and ClearScore have now decided not to continue with the deal.

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