

Viola's Blog; My experience of the ODP Buddy Scheme

Ever wondered what support is available for people studying for an Operational Delivery Profession qualification? Look no further than this blog from Viola who tells us about her experiences and why she would recommend it;

"Always step into education", advised my Mum and my late Auntie.

The journey follows with resistance and acceptance. Any enthusiasm? It comes with change and knowing that nothing is permanent.

I started my Operational Delivery Profession (ODP) qualification while still in HM Revenue & Customs, I first completed level 3 then I was lucky enough to be able to apply for a CMI level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management.

As soon as I started the level 5 Diploma, I achieved a promotion and moved to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). I knew that the course would be transferred which is one of the benefits of ODP.

On my arrival at DWP, I realised how difficult it would be to carry on studying whilst training for the new job. I also very soon realised that my office had not heard of ODP, what it even meant and more so what my course was about, so I got lost for a while.

However, I had the desire and passion to complete the course, I explained the details to my manager who accommodated my needs as long as I knew what I was doing. I relied heavily on the Internet, CMI pages, Cap premiership, Intranet, ODP website, management and work colleagues.

When I completed the course, all of my struggles above led to my decision to register to become a buddy both in DWP and also through the ODP Cross-Government Buddy Scheme.

My reason was simple; to work with others to help them achieve their qualification and to keep on strengthening my skills and knowledge.

We are now a team of eight, a few from within DWP and one from the Crown Prosecution Service. Every member who joins the team feels relieved and pleased to belong somewhere, we have all been in similar situations; being unsure how and where to start. Some people in the group have completed some papers and others had not started yet when they joined.

We have telekits monthly and have agreed on a few objectives such as sharing and proof reading to help everyone to get on track. Other objectives we agreed include:

- Motivating each other
- Supporting each other
- Being open minded

- Checking in on each other – (we call it a nudge)

This is going very well, that nudge the members give each other is always a reminder or reality check and it's also interesting to see members seeking each other's advice on specific questions.

I feel that using the brain storming method tool together is a big highlight, raising and discussing any issues is making it easier to communicate with one another.

Many members of the team have different skills, one of the members is an interviewer and success profile trained for higher grades therefore this enables us all to share her knowledge and advice.

However, the main one is having that platform where members express their fears, where they are in their studies, their obstacles and we discuss this together and come up with solutions.

Individually; this is strengthening my communication and leadership skills, I lead the team and organise the meetings. This experience and education led to a management opportunity in my office.

I feel a sense of satisfaction sharing my journey, experience, knowledge and how I overcame the obstacles I was facing.

I would definitely recommend becoming a buddy, we all have different journeys and experiences and the more we have to share with each other the stronger we become as a profession and as human beings.

It's a never-ending rewarding experience which can create positive change and vibe even in my personal life."

Viola Namugenyi

You can find out more about the Buddy Scheme here [ODP Buddy Scheme](#).

You can also explore how to connect with your cross-government colleagues on our Loans, Secondment and Interchange tool here [Listr](#).

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Project cuts pollution in Northumberland

A £2 million engineering project at a nationally important archaeological site is cutting pollution in the north east of England.

Mining took place for 200 years at Carrshield in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but the wastes – known as tailings – left behind after processing lead and zinc ores were being washed into the River West Allen and damaging the environment.

The site was on Historic England's register of at risk scheduled monuments because the 19th Century dry stone wall that kept the mine tailings out of the river was beginning to fail and at significant risk of suddenly collapsing, which could have caused 1,000 tonnes of lead, zinc and cadmium to severely pollute the river.

The Coal Authority and Environment Agency carried out investigations over several years to decide how to cost-effectively stop the river being polluted, while preserving the unique industrial heritage at the site.

The river was eroding the wall and, at the same time, rain falling on the mine tailings was washing about 3 tonnes of metals into the river each year.

Set in a remote location, the area has the potential for rapid changes in weather conditions and river flows, which increased the difficulty of construction, and a large crane was used to allow staff to work safely next to the river.

The very high concentrations of lead and zinc in the tailings meant rare calaminarian plants were growing in some areas, which needed protecting as they are an important part of the biodiversity of the area, and specialists made sure the work was carried out without damaging the archaeology and ecology.

The long-term solution involved re-profiling the mine tailings and installing an impermeable capping layer and perimeter drains to stop rainfall washing metals out of the wastes.

Damaged sections of the walls were rebuilt using concrete blocks and then faced with local stone to blend in with the existing walls.

A thin layer of mine tailings was placed on top of the cap and planted with local seeds, including the calaminarian plants, to increase the biodiversity and maintain the industrial nature of the site.

Unfortunately lots of wastes containing high concentrations of metals have already entered the West Allen, so a trap was installed in the river downstream of Carrshield to capture contaminated sediments so they can be removed from the river.

The project is part of the [Water and Abandoned Metal Mines \(WAMM\) programme](#), a partnership between the Environment Agency, Coal Authority and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, to make our rivers cleaner and healthier to benefit people, wildlife and the economy.

The Carrshield project received additional funding from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund, as part of the [River Tyne economic development](#) project.

Nick Cox, the Coal Authority's metal mine programme lead said:

This is a nationally important archaeological reminder of Britain's industrial past, which is set within a very challenging environment.

Thanks to the planning and management of the scheme and good partnership working, it has proved that a scheduled monument site can be sensitively, but robustly repaired.

The work was essential and will protect against catastrophic failure and the long-term erosion of contaminated mine wastes directly into the local river system.

The Environment Agency's Dr Hugh Potter, manager of the WAMM programme, added:

This is one of our many projects within the North Pennines that are designed to clean up more than 150km of rivers in the South Tyne catchment, which are polluted by cadmium, lead and zinc from abandoned metal mines.

These metals harm fish and river flies, and ultimately end up contaminating sediments in the Tyne estuary.

Historically this industry played a major part in Britain's history, but these mines are the source of half the metals found in our rivers and around 1,500 km of rivers are polluted in England.

The government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and the [Northumbria River Basin Management Plan](#) make it clear that cleaning up this chemical pollution is a priority.

[£2 million scheme at Carrshield to prevent major river pollution in the north of England](#)

More than 19,000 jobs created by Kickstart Scheme so far

- 19,672 jobs created for young people so far by landmark Kickstart Scheme
- jobs in tech, film and TV, communications, fitness, and the charity sector among the roles on offer
- more than 4,350 applications from employers and gateways

The landmark scheme, which gives 16-24-year olds a future of opportunity and hope by creating high-quality, government-subsidised jobs across the UK, began last week.

The Scheme has also received 4,359 applications from employers across Great

Britain, with a wide range of jobs available, including in tech, construction, communications, fitness and media. New applications from employers are being accepted each week.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

Our country's future will be built by the next generation, so it's vital that we harness the talent of young people as we rebuild from the pandemic. But this isn't just about kickstarting our economy, we're giving opportunity and hope to thousands of young people, kickstarting their careers and offering them a brighter future.

Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

Every job created by the Kickstart Scheme is a potentially life-changing opportunity for a young person, and the heartening response of employers shows they recognise the huge value in giving youth a chance.

The pandemic has hit young people hard, but we are doing everything in our power to give them hope and the chance to find their place in the world of work.

Employers from all corners of the country have signed up, creating thousands of new and interesting jobs and helping us to level up as we build back better.

Young people have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic and unemployment can have longstanding implications for their future jobs and wages. The Kickstart Scheme runs until December 2021 and is expected to create more than 250,000 high-quality jobs for them.

On a visit with the Prime Minister to a Tesco warehouse yesterday (11 November), the Chancellor met some young people who are set to start their Kickstart placements next week. Other businesses including Bloomberg, British Chambers of Commerce, Network Rail, Barnardo's, YMCA, LADbible Group, Tech Nation, The Royal Mint, KFC, and Farrow & Ball have also committed to support the scheme. Over 500 [gateways](#) – organisations that act on behalf of employers offering 29 or less vacancies – have registered to help the smallest businesses to hire young people too.

Each job placement lasts six months and is fully funded by the government, helping young people build their confidence and experience in the workplace, while earning a regular wage. Young people on Kickstart will also get additional employment support and training to help them progress during their placement, with £1,500 available to employers to cover this training as well as other onboarding costs.

The scheme is just one part of a package of support for young people. The

government has invested £1.6 billion in increasing the number of apprenticeships, traineeships and employment support schemes, helping people to build the skills they need to get back into work.

Further information

- on 31 August, 523,000 jobs were furloughed where the employees were 24 and under
- in August 2020, there were over 600,000 16-24-year-olds not in employment on Universal Credit
- [BBC Panorama](#) found people aged 16-25 were more than twice as likely as older workers to have lost their job, while six in 10 saw their earnings fall
- the scheme is open to people 16-24 years old, who are claiming Universal Credit, and are at risk of long-term unemployment
- referrals to the scheme will run until December 2021 with the Kickstart Scheme expected to create hundreds of thousands of jobs for young people on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment, with those eligible referred through their Jobcentre Plus Work Coach
- the government will fully fund each Kickstart placement – paying 100% of the age-relevant National Minimum Wage, National Insurance and pension contributions for 25 hours a week.
- employers will be able to top up this wage, while the government will also pay employers £1,500 to set up support and training for people on a Kickstart placement, as well as helping pay for uniforms and other set up costs
- more than 500 bodies have signed up to serve as gateways on the £2 billion programme, providing assistance to employers offering fewer than 30 vacancies under the scheme.
- referrals to the Scheme will run until December 2021 – to find out more visit the [Kickstart Scheme page](#)

Here's what some of the organisations involved in the scheme have to say:

Peter Grauer, Chairman, Bloomberg L.P. said:

The coronavirus crisis has taken an enormous toll on job markets around the globe, with young people some of the worst affected.

As we turn towards the future, the UK Government's Kickstart Scheme offers an innovative solution to helping young people back into the job market. We are proud to be part of such an ambitious initiative and look forward to welcoming a promising array of young talent across our UK business.

Gerard Grech, CEO, Tech Nation said:

Kickstart is a fantastic enabler for the economy. Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not, so it's really important we all do our best to help everyone fulfil their potential. I'm delighted

to see the Kickstart Scheme embraced by UK scale ups which will inspire a new and diverse generation into tech. Digital tech now accounts for 9% of the UK workforce and more than a fifth of the workforce in the UK's biggest cities, plus over 90,000 jobs a week in tech were advertised in August.

James Martin, Director of Policy, British Chambers of Commerce said:

The Kickstart Scheme will help firms create and support thousands of opportunities for young people, maintaining their access to the job market and driving the UK's economic recovery.

Rooted in local business communities across the UK, Chambers are playing a leading role in connecting businesses with young people to create long-term quality employment opportunities. They will want to see the application process simplified.

Hayden Wood, co-founder and CEO of Bulb, said:

We're proud to be giving more young people the opportunity to work inside a high-growth company building new technology to bring simpler, cheaper and greener energy to 1.7 million homes.

As the UK's biggest green energy company, a B Corp and one of the fastest growing firms in the country, we hope to play an important role creating jobs and building a greener way of living and working.

Sarah Barnes, Bauer Media's People and Culture Director said:

At Bauer we work hard to level the playing field so that all can access opportunities within our teams, and so we were really drawn by the government's fantastic new Kickstart programme that aims to give unemployed young people a future.

These promising young individuals will have the unique opportunity to apply for placements that provide on-the-job training, skills development and mentoring from some of the UK media industry's most well-respected professionals, giving them the well-deserved first break that can so often be hard to come by, particularly in the ongoing climate.

Anne Jessopp, Chief Executive of The Royal Mint, said:

We are delighted to join the Government's Kickstart Scheme, and provide valuable work opportunities for 16 to 24 year olds. We

recognise the importance of providing practical placements and mentorship for young and diverse talent – helping them gain experience and to develop their careers.

As one of the largest employers in Wales, we have a wide variety of opportunities available in areas such as design, IT and marketing – and look forward to welcoming our first placements later this year.

Denise Hatton, Chief Executive of YMCA England & Wales said:

YMCA welcomes the Government's Kickstart Scheme, its renewed focus on job placements and recognition of the additional support young people need in order to mitigate the economic impacts of COVID-19 and find a job.

Young people continue to face deep uncertainty about what is next for them in the wake of this pandemic. Equally so, businesses are facing challenges around finances and sustaining themselves as they grapple the everchanging economic landscape. The Kickstart Scheme is a brilliant opportunity to provide young people with experience, employment, and pay to succeed in the future, and we are thrilled to see local YMCAs across England and Wales come together in order to help deliver this opportunity.

YMCA believes that all young people deserve the right to be paid a decent wage and the opportunity to develop a career to ensure they thrive now and into the future. It is very encouraging to see the government's focus on equipping young people with the skills they need in order to do this.

Andrew Haines, CEX of Network Rail said:

We're proud to be supporting the Kickstart Scheme. It fits perfectly with Network Rail's aim to develop a diverse range of talent and to provide opportunities for younger generations in STEM careers. We want to help develop skills and open future career paths for the next generation and we are delighted to help make a difference to many young people facing unemployment and uncertainty during these difficult times. This is an exciting opportunity for us as a business to showcase careers and develop future talent.

Nick Wells CEO, Whistl, said:

The Kickstart Scheme enables future talent to join Whistl and begin their career in the fast growing logistics and e-commerce fulfilment sector. The initial 30 people who are joining us will gain valuable on the job training to develop their employability

and worked based skills at our facilities across the UK.

Amanda Stainton, HR Director, Portakabin said:

With a core focus on offering transferable skills, we are best placed to introduce a new audience to fresh opportunities within the modular construction industry. We are also looking to use our position within the market to make a positive impact and open up avenues to these young minds to help them consider a future career in any industry.

Youngest ever officer rewarded for heroism at sea

- 20 mariners to be recognised with Merchant Navy Medals
- youngest ever recipient saved 3 lives at night-time call-out on rough waters
- others praised for work in promoting diversity and protecting the environment

Third Officer Max Bingle, who at 24 years old stands as the youngest ever recipient of the prestigious Merchant Navy Medal, has today (12 November 2020) been recognised for saving people's lives in dire straits at sea.

Max, from Devon, is joined by 19 other mariners awarded for outstanding service and contribution to the sector, including services for fishing safety and training throughout their careers.

While at sea, Third Officer Max Bingle responded to the distress call in pitch black, rough waters to save 3 men on a sinking boat. Despite his own boat becoming endangered during the rescue mission, he drove forward and, with the help of 2 others, saved the lives of his fellow mariners.

Another recipient is Fazilette Khan who has received the accolade for her services to the marine environment. Fazilette began her career as a Radio Officer in 1984, and set up the marine environmental charity [GreenSeas Trust](#) in memory of her mother Haida Khan as she saw an increase of litter around the coast. The charity has overseen the successful BinForGreenSeas campaign, which has seen nautically themed recycling bins placed in every coastal town because of her actions.

Maritime Minister Robert Courts said:

I am delighted to announce the recipients of this year's Merchant Navy Medal. They have all gone beyond the call of duty to provide an invaluable service to our sector and our country.

It's a special honour to award the medal to Max, its youngest ever recipient. He showed incredible bravery in saving 3 fellow sailors from drowning in rough seas, and this award is a recognition of his incredible selflessness that night.

The Merchant Navy awards celebrate the vital role of Merchant Navy seafarers and the contribution they continue to make to our country, as well as their well-known service during wartime.

Third Officer Max Bingle said:

This recognition is completely out of the blue. Everybody on board acted in the highest maritime tradition by going to the aid of fellow sailors in peril on the sea. Saving lives is what we are trained to do as seafarers, and I'm grateful for this recognition.

Other recipients of this year's medal include Captain Chris Locke, who first went to sea as a Deck Cadet in 1977. His seagoing career spans over 35 years and took him around the world, with multiple deployments including the 1982 Falklands War.

Guy Platten has also received the medal for his services to the maritime sector, stretching from outstanding services for life-saving projects and most recently, his extraordinary efforts in supporting the government to resolve the crew change crisis during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government has led the charge to safeguard British maritime workers, including successfully repatriating 1,500 UK seafarers from overseas and a further 15,000 foreign national seafarers from 110 nationalities, whose movement was restricted due to closed borders and have been flown home from UK shores. To ensure their swift repatriation, the Maritime Minister held the world's first summit with the United Nations and secured recognition for seafarers as key workers.

The [2020 Merchant Navy Medal awards recipients are available, and nominations for the 2021 awards are now open](#).