



# NSAR Annual Report

## December 2019

[www.nsar.co.uk](http://www.nsar.co.uk)

The National  
**Skills** Academy   
**RAIL**



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# FOREWORD

## BY MIKE BROWN MVO

On behalf of the NSAR board, I am pleased to report a good year at NSAR, with a number of important developments. We asked for greater focus on customer service to individual companies, and we got it. As a board we asked for more added value in the data work, and that has started, with more analysis, especially on the economic value of the excellent training and recruitment that the rail and wider transport industry offers. Rail jobs in particular, score highly in economic value league tables. The board also asked that NSAR maintain and develop the rigorous quality assurance of training, without which we risk both safety and wasting money. I am pleased to report that the focus has been maintained and quality is steadily improving. It is of regret, of course, that in recent times, those companies with an excellent track record have received less attention as we focus on removing the poor element. We will re-address this balance.

Why does all this matter? The stakes could not be higher. Investment in rail and wider transport is at unprecedented levels, so NSAR's core mission of facilitating the supply and quality of skills to the industry is essential. It's good to see that the industry's performance is, with NSAR's support in the background, heading in the right direction. There are many examples that make up this positive trend, but

perhaps the most spectacular this year has been the rapid increase in the number of train driver apprenticeships. Another improvement which I can now announce, is data on recent diversity improvements, where females now make up 16% of the rail workforce (it was 8% four years ago). Still much more to do of course but this trajectory is beginning to show some encouraging signs.

None of this would be possible without the support of our members, and the financial support of our subscribing members (Network Rail, TfL, RDG, Angel Trains, Porterbrook and the larger suppliers). I am delighted to welcome East West Rail and City & Guilds as new members. This will be my last NSAR annual report as your chair. I shall miss the rail skills world, especially the passionate people who do so much, often behind the scenes, to change lives and ensure that our vital transport services have the staff they need.

Thank you to all involved.

Mike Brown MVO  
Chairman

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# INTRODUCTION

## OUR PURPOSE

Throughout 2019 we have remained true to our vision and values and have supported members in a key areas relating to people and skills as well as providing expert advice and insights to government on a wide range of skills matters including productivity, digital and Brexit.

We remain on course to achieve our performance targets for the year but we also are looking forward to future years and as the skills environment evolves we want to be well placed to maximise the opportunities that this creates.

## CREATING VALUE

If we are to deliver value to our members consistently and sustainably, we need to focus on those services that play to our strengths and afford the greatest opportunity for growth.

Members are demanding a higher value outcome from the work we perform. They require cost effective services but not at the expense of service excellence or risk assurance. Understanding that the needs of members vary according to their size, activity and sector expertise is critical, and they expect us to deliver solutions that support their core business needs.

## BUILDING OUR SERVICE CAPABILITY

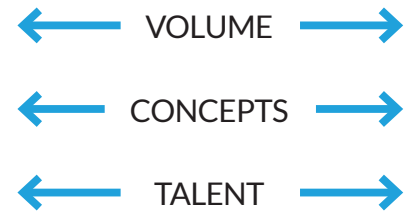
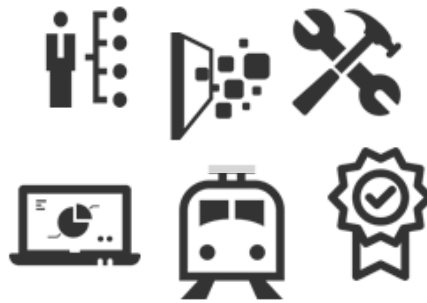
NSAR is evolving and changing and will continue to change over the coming years. We are building our capabilities across the vocational education and skills agenda and developing a suite of services to meet the needs of members and our customers. Whilst rail remains our core business and serving our members is critical, we are now expanding into additional sectors and attracting new customers.

We see this expansion as essential to secure our future and deepen the support and services we provide to our members. We are about to prepare our new 5 year business strategy in which we will strengthen our service capabilities even further.

What Our Members Ask of Us

Subject Matter Expertise

Leveraged Across Organisations, Sectors & Industry



Creating Value Outcomes

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# PURPOSE, VISION & VALUES

## OUR PURPOSE

The National Skills Academy for Rail is an employer-led, not-for-profit, member organisation established to enable the sector to deliver a modern and efficient, world class railway through the development of a highly skilled and productive workforce.

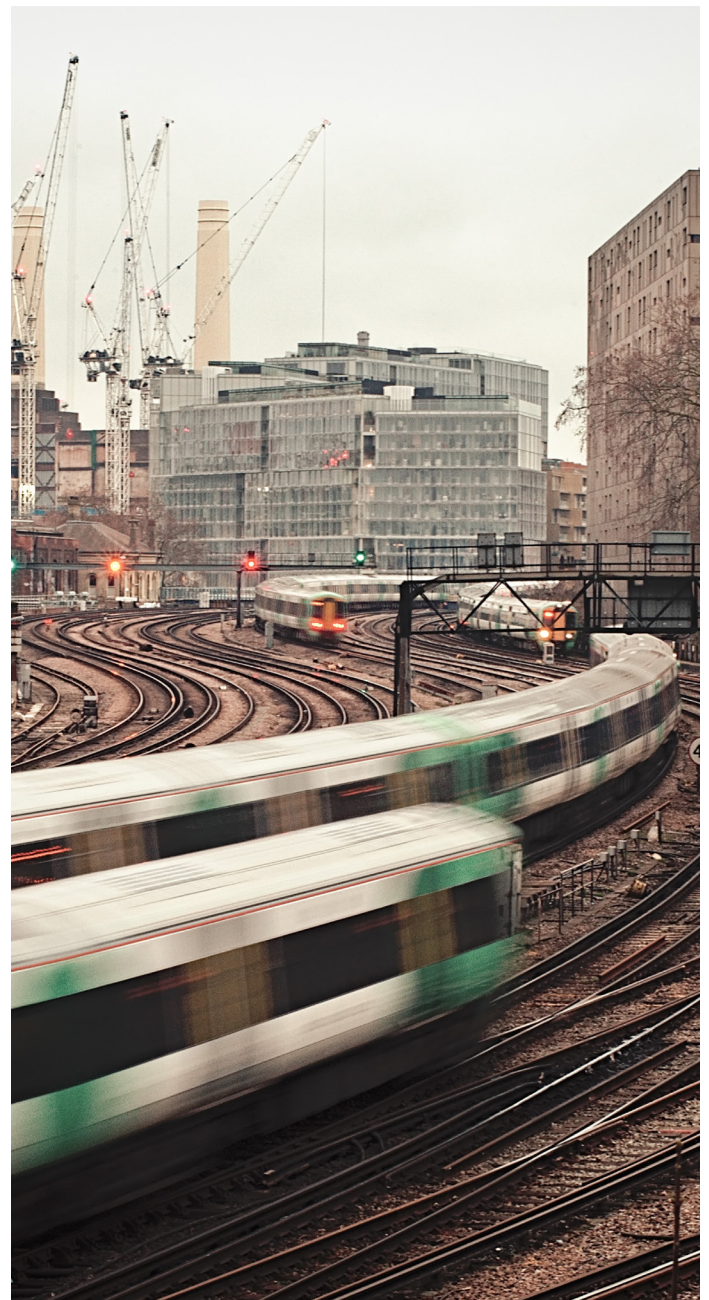
NSAR is trusted by the rail industry to provide workable solutions for the provision of skills needed for the increasing demands of a modern railway. We are all about developing people to excel every day, challenging the status quo and inspiring a change in the way skills and competences are delivered.

## OUR VISION

Delivering a world class rail system through a highly skilled workforce.

## OUR VALUES

Integrity, Passion, Trusted Partner, Foresight, Delivery and Expert.



# SKILLS & TRAINING



## NATIONAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP (NTP)

In 2019 the National Network of Colleges underwent a rebrand to make consideration for a wider scope of education establishments that can assist in the UK's future skills delivery plan for the rail and transport sectors. The inclusion of both HE and independent training providers allows for further promotion of degree level apprenticeship standards and also non-rail offerings affecting today's sector including digital and systems capabilities.

2019 has seen an additional 3 FE colleges, 2 universities and four independent providers that further expands our geographical reach and portfolio of learning opportunities.

A new Quality Assurance process has been developed and implemented that has allowed for an increased focus on rail and rail-related capability, motivation and aspiration whilst continuing to ensure key themes regarding learner experience, employer engagement and internal quality practices around OTLA are monitored to meet our overall high standards.

A series of Employer Engagement Events have commenced using data from our Skills Intelligence Model (SIM) to promote the benefits of the NTP, and how NTP members can support employers deliver their strategic workforce plans.

### APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS

Work has continued on the development and delivery of two key apprenticeship standards – Train Driver and Passenger Transport Onboard and Station Team Member (PTSOTM). The driver academy is now seeing a significant increase in intake for apprentice train drivers in the sector and standards of delivery and performance for passenger transport staff have raised the overall professionalism of the roles across the industry. Work continues with the employer groups of these two standards to ensure the outputs from delivery continue to meet the standards of performance expected by the sector.

Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IFATE) has also launched a review of Engineering and Manufacturing standards which will include the rail engineering apprenticeship standards. The purpose of the review is to ensure that apprenticeship standards continue to meet our occupational requirements, are relevant and up to date, and deliver for employers and apprentices. NSAR is working with the industry to both push rail-based companies to feed into the review. Feedback from the value of the level 3 is positive but uptake at levels 4-7 are currently below anticipated levels, in part due to limited providers for Level 6 and Level 7. The consultation period closes on the 8th January 2020. We encourage employers to get involved and contribute to the review. For details contact Mark Ballington, NSAR Head of Skills or go to the IFATE website.

### NORTHERN IRELAND

We successfully bid and were awarded a contract to work with employers from across Northern Ireland to develop a suite of level 3 rail engineering apprenticeship frameworks

to better cater for future skills needs across the country.

Work on Track, Signalling and Traction & Rolling Stock frameworks continues and these apprenticeships will be ready for first delivery from April 2020.

### APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

This year has seen number of changes to the legislation and regulations around apprenticeships delivery in England and we have worked with member organisations to help manage the impact of these changes.

In March Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) announced that from August 2019 that all training providers assisting in the delivery of apprenticeships had to be registered on the RoATP. We have worked with a number of TOC's on an individual basis, providing advice and guidance on how best to determine the right approach to RoATP registration, and have assisted four TOC's and FOC's through the application process.

August also saw the introduction of the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and which came into effect for all new inspections from September 2019. NSAR has developed a quality assurance process aligned to the new framework and have already used this to great effect with a key NTP member.

We continue to develop and deliver workshops and training symposiums for the wider sector and have delivered packages including Trainer Observation training, RoATP application guidance and readiness as well as Human Factors understanding as a key focus area for improved corporate efficiency.



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# SKILLS INTELLIGENCE

During 2019 we have continued to push the boundaries of our work into new areas and new research. Our products and services are now more mature and generating more interest, not only in UK rail, but also in other sectors and countries around the world. Our work now supports key targets in the space of productivity and economic analysis, as well as supporting the industry in predicting how future technology can be deployed in the sector and what effect that will have on the workforce.

## STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING (SWP)

We have continued to work extensively with a number of organisations in helping them shape their own SWP strategies, through the deployment of our Skills Intelligence Model (SIM). Through this work, we are supporting them in their quest to improve productivity levels through the provision of recruitment and training plans.

We use data analytics in a practical way to provide a meaningful base for critical decision-making to positively influence and support the industry meet its skills and workforce targets. For example, we have worked extensively with Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce (STAT) and a number of other organisations to support their efforts in shaping sector and individual organisation strategic workforce plans. Our STAT work

involved looking at issues faced by the industry on Brexit, digital technologies and the capabilities of the supply chain to deliver multiple capital projects simultaneously.

## DIGITAL ANALYSIS

In 2018, we conducted analysis into the shape and scale of future needs in Rail for digital skills. Our research estimates that the digital rail programme will affect 250,000 of the rail workforce - 55% upskilling, 40% re-skilling and 5% new entrants. Following up on this initial work, in 2019 we looked at a new and innovative way of training people in digital skills, through the provision of a virtual digital academy, which we called Orchard, and generated some thought-provoking industry proposals.

## ENHANCING THE BUSINESS CASE

Throughout the year, we have worked with some of our large member organisations using the the SIM to predict future workforce levels which the organisations have included in their internal business cases as part of the justification for investment when assessing return of investment. The importance of skills gaps and skills shortages and we are noticing that funders are becoming acutely aware of the need to carefully plan for these eventualities. The risk to successful delivery is significant by not having the right number of staff or the wrong skills sets. We are also able

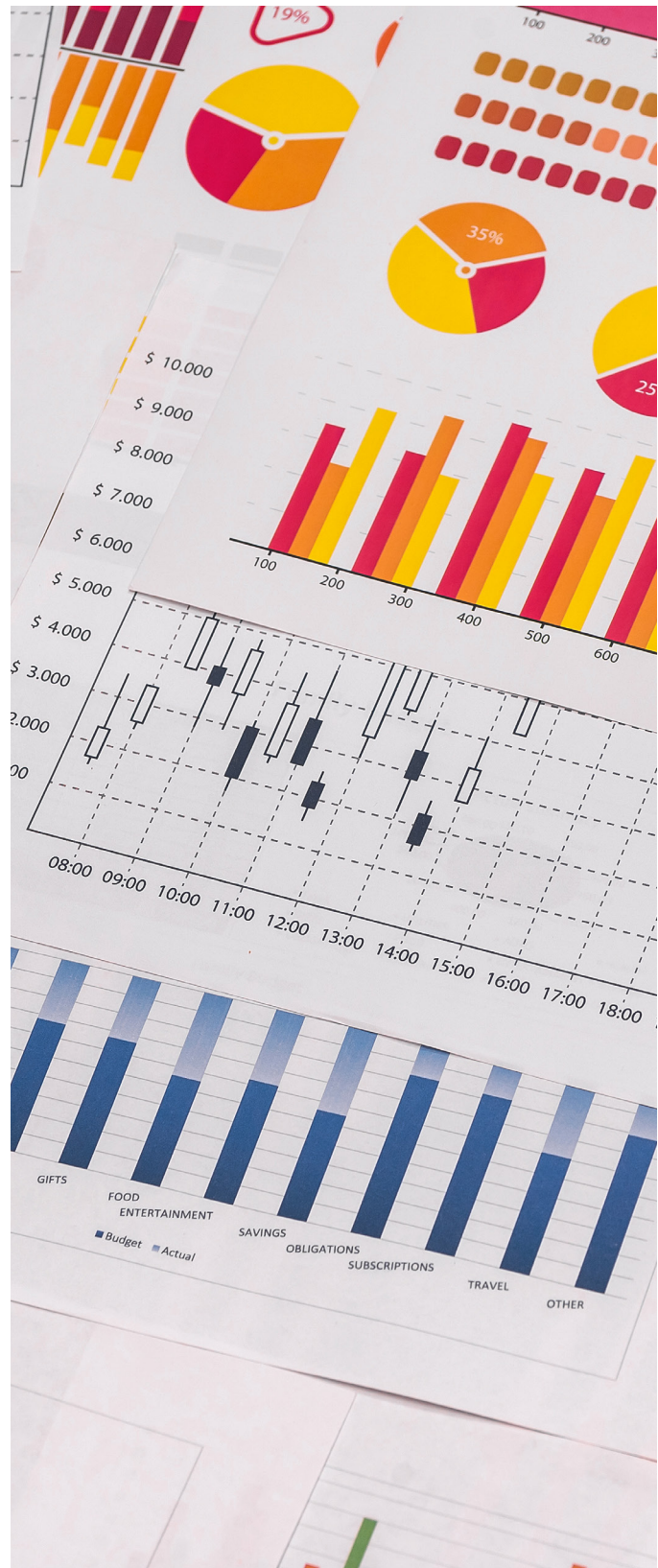
to help member organisations to develop solutions to close skills shortages and we work with them to model social and economic benefits.

**ENHANCING THE CASE FOR PRODUCTIVITY**

A study conducted by NSAR in conjunction with the UK Government in 2018 looking at productivity, highlighted six key areas where productivity can be improved, two of which (People and Resourcing) are directly relevant to the outputs that the SIM can generate. Productivity improvements of up to 15% are achievable and the SIM is a key evidence-based model to achieve this.

**NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

We are developing a new application which will allow us to search data from the ONS quickly and filter in the same way as the SIM and work with the SIM. Once built, NSAR can provide a 360° view of the labour and skills market reporting on both the demand and supply.



# QUALITY ASSURANCE

During the year we undertook a review and update of some of our key services. Skills Backbone was enhanced to provide a fresh and intuitive user experience for increased efficiency for managing day to day activities. Improvements to the system allowed us to identify a low rate of CPD submissions by training providers and assessors leading to discussions as to how to address this.

Five workshops and training provider forums were conducted during the year covering topical subjects such as Health & Wellbeing and Virtual Reality in Training and new COSS courses, all with positive feedback.

We have continued to promote improvements in the quality of educational aspects of the training delivery and has been good to note that many providers of Safety Critical training have recognised that improvements were needed. Trainers have also worked hard to ensure that the learner experience is engaging making major efforts to improve the communication and employability skills for all. Learners have often congratulated trainers on their subject knowledge and approach to training delivery.

We will continue to work with industry to support the professionalisation of the workforce, with the training community contributing significantly to deliver a secure and sustainable business. In 2020 our focus includes:

- Continuing to expand our quality assurance work whilst working with existing training providers improving the quality of provision
- Assist organisations in understanding the National Training Partnership and sourcing quality training companies
- Introduce a voluntary Quality Mark for non RTAS training providers and trainers.

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# EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Last year, we reported that we had been appointed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) as the EQAO for Rail, Freight and for the Digital Industries. This meant NSAR provided external quality assurance across 15 digital standards (from January 2019), 5 rail standards (from March 2019) and 4 freight standards (from May 2019).

Our EQA service ensures that the end-point assessments are compliant with the employer-created assessment plans for the apprenticeship standards, and are consistently applied and comparable across the different end-point assessment organisations offering assessment for these standards.

We run the employer-led external quality assurance model and works with three different employer boards, leading on each of the three EQA areas.

Digital and rail engineering apprenticeships are now under review, with digital standards now being rewritten

in light of their review consultation process and set for a September 2020 launch. The rail engineering standards are currently subject to an open consultation period running until early January 2020.

We hold the key data showing how each of the apprenticeships has performed in their respective end-point assessment service market places. We will be making a formal submission to inform the consultation and recommendations process that will inform the redevelopment of the rail standards.

During July 2019, we adopted the newly launched Framework for External Quality Assurance launched by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE), and began implementing from 1st September 2019.

NSAR was invited to present to the IFATE Quality Assurance Committee in October 2019, discussing our approach and findings, and to answer questions on



apprenticeship findings, to date. This represents the first time an EQA other than OfQUAL or the IFATE's contractor carrying out their EQA responsibilities has been invited to address the IFATE Quality Assurance Committee, and is a clear demonstration that IFATE have confidence in our EQA model.

IFATE has awarded NSAR a 'Green:Green' rating for our capability and quality of implementation.

With the success of our employer-led, external quality assurance model, we are expanding the range of sectors that we will deliver EQA services to. From the start of 2020 we will be the external quality assurer for seven screen and media standards. This will grow to twenty of these standards by the end of 2020.

From January 2020, we will also be working with the Care Apprenticeship Board and will become the employer-led, external quality assurer for two adult care standards (adult care worker, level 2 and lead adult care worker, level 3). This will firmly establish NSAR as the third largest provider of apprenticeship external quality assurance, next to the IFATE and OfQUAL, and the largest employer-led EQA provider.

NSAR will be responsible for the EQA of 33 standards in 2020, with upwards of 45 000 apprentices starting on these apprenticeships next year.

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# MEMBERSHIP

A key focus of this year was to increase our engagement with members and we have worked hard to achieve this goal through getting out and about to meet with as many of you as time allowed and through various means of communication. Through the year we saw welcomed 7 new NSAR members, 7 new NTP members and 2 new training providers.

Through our many conversations with members we have identified some common themes ; Apprenticeship support , digital skills, leadership & management training, diversity and career and succession planning. Watch for more on these topics through out 2020.

We have continued to develop our competence management system, SkillsID offering employers a modern management tool that will save them time and money and the level of interest in this new version is very encouraging. The latest upgrades are increased speed; configurable dashboards allowing employers to choose performance metrics important to them at an individual, team and organisational level ; ability to undertake observational assessments on site (with GPS tagging) ; career planning. If you would like a demo , please contact us.

October 2019 saw the launch of Skills Live, our online recruitment tool that uses instagram videos and gamification to promote roles within the rail sector. The launch was part of Rail Diversity Week held from 23rd – 27th September 2019 by the DWP, across all of its Job Centre plus offices. Thanks to Network Rail, Hitachi and EMR who all took part in the live employer chat with potential job candidates. The DWP have agreed to host Skills Live on their internal IT systems are keen to make Rail Diversity Week and annual event. Skills Live offers HR and Hiring Managers a time efficient and cost effective way to recruit. If you think it could help your business with recruitment please contact us.

As part of Promotion and Attraction, we have been engaging with members to co-ordinate and fund activities, central to which is the development of career web portal to increase awareness and understanding of scope and breadth of rail and careers within rail , increase understanding of how talent can join rail and apply for roles and to improve the image and perception to influencers e.g. teachers, career advisors and talented people themselves. We invited quotations from a number of suitably qualified external organisations to aim to decide on a partner before Christmas and to launch the we portal by the end of Q1, 2020.



112 Direct Member Contacts



8 Face-2-Face Meetings Per Month



Increase in demonstration of NSAR IT Tools (SIM, SkillsID, & Levy Planner)



3 New business development plans to support promotion and attraction activities



Increased social media presence and activity



A consistent marketing campaign to promote jobs and careers in TOC's



A targeted marketing campaign to promote "Rail Diversity Week"



Seminars focussed on topics of interest to TOC's



Digital Skills initiative with the launch of the Data Analyst and Data Scientist Apprenticeships

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# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

After a lengthy bidding process, we have been re-appointed to the DfT STAR 2 Framework for a further 2 years. As part of our business plan we targeted growth within our core rail business across all parts of the UK and early in the year we successfully secured a place of the Apprenticeship Standards and Frameworks contract awarded by Skills Development Scotland which is responsible for commissioning revisions and development of apprenticeships across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Subsequent to securing a place on the Framework, we bid and won a contract for the development of a new engineering apprenticeship standard for Northern Ireland and are also in discussions with the Operator, Translink to provide additional services including Skills ID. As mentioned earlier, we are expanding the range of services over which we will provide EQA services to, and will be adding screen and media as well as adult care from January 2020.

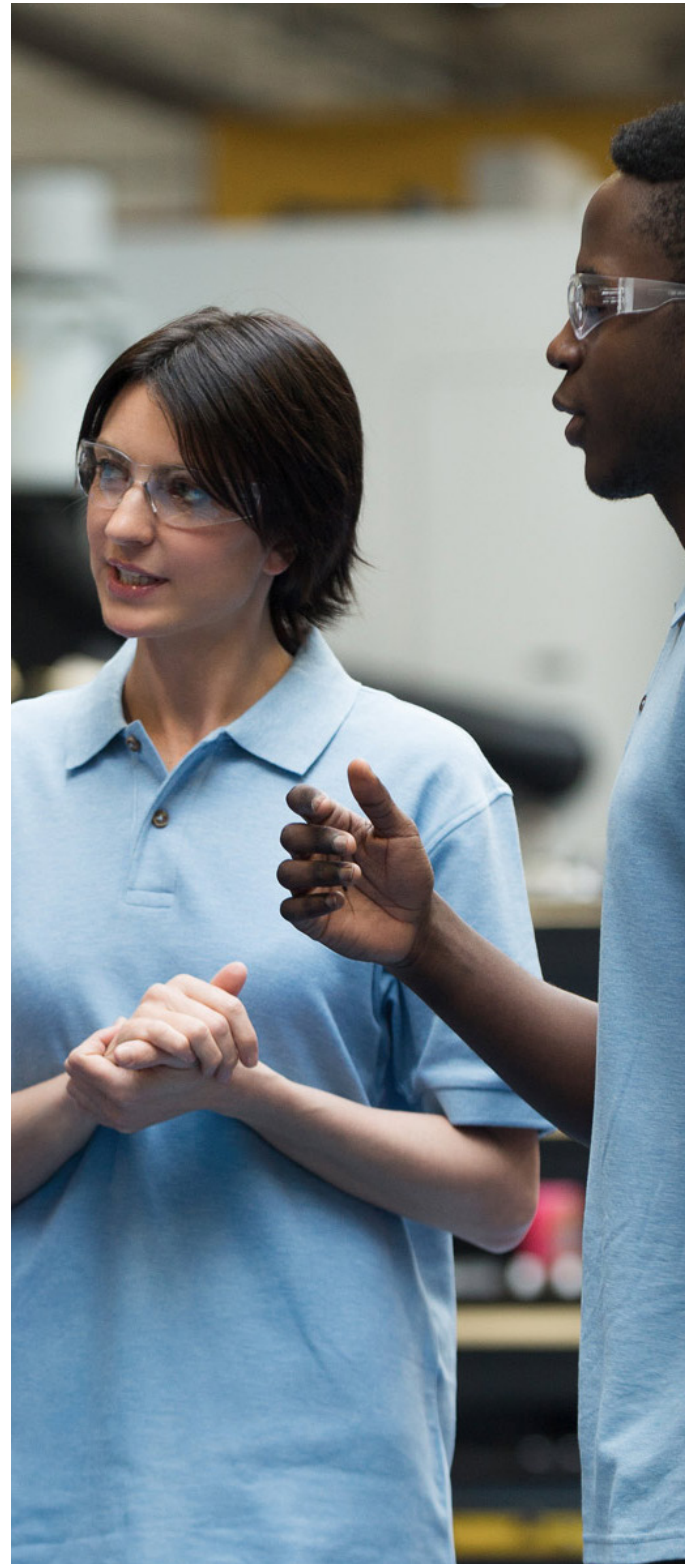
In November we were awarded a contract by DfE, funded by the ESFA to deliver support on Apprenticeships to SME businesses across England. The support will include the development of informational materials for the National Apprenticeship Service, a toolbox to help SMEs and a series of webinars and events.





This is one of the biggest contracts that NSAR has been awarded and is high profile, involving NSAR working closely with intermediary organisations such as, LEPs, Combines Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, Forum for Small Business, Institute of Directors and Professional bodies to reach SMEs. In addition we will be engaging with our NSAR SME members and reaching out to RIA and Rail Alliance.

We have also been successful in securing a contract with Medway Council to deliver Apprenticeship advice which will commence in Q1, 2020.



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# INTERNATIONAL

We continue to follow the international strategy agreed by the NSAR Board with SE Asia, China and the Middle East being target countries to develop business. Throughout the year we have continued to discuss how NSAR can support these countries address their vocational skills training needs as they invest in infrastructure, particularly in rail systems.

Following award of a contract through the FCO Prosperity Fund in December 2018 , we successfully delivered workplace training in China and organised a study tour for a Chinese delegation who visited a number of our NTP partner colleges to learn more about apprenticeship training provision. We have continued our engagement with the FCO and the DIT following the success of the project , both of whom are very supportive of NSAR and skills remains a high priority export for the UK.





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