



HS2

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report

2025-2026

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Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction: Why equality, diversity and inclusion matter to HS2	3
At a glance: EDI performance in 2025–26	4
Part One	
HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset	5
Part Two	
HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion	15
Part Three	
Supporting communities	29

Front cover: HS2 staff on site.
Right: Celebrating the Bromford tunnel breakthrough near Birmingham.



Foreword



Fabienne Viala.

Taking on the role of board champion for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) comes at a significant moment for HS2. The programme has been undergoing a fundamental reset during 2025/26, a process we expect to conclude in the first half of 2027. The government has approved a clear path to complete the railway, and HS2 is now operating from a more stable foundation.

Against that backdrop, I have been listening to colleagues and partners about their experiences

of working on the programme. What has struck me most is the genuine commitment to creating a more inclusive organisation and the recognition that EDI is fundamental to how we complete the railway at the lowest reasonable cost.

As the UK's largest infrastructure project, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to help shape the future of our industry. With around 31,000 people working across the programme, the majority within our supply chain, the standards we set today can influence the construction, infrastructure and rail sectors long after the railway is operational. The programme reset and the stability it brings strengthen the legacy we will leave.

Our approach to EDI is fundamental to this legacy, as we build a workforce that will benefit the industry, the economy and wider society for years to come.

This report outlines strong EDI performance across HS2. More than 2,000 apprenticeships have been created to date across the programme, helping to develop the next generation of skilled professionals. Women represent 36% of the

HS2 Ltd workforce, significantly above industry norms, while ethnic minority colleagues represent 32%. Across the organisation and our supply chain, many individuals and teams continue to champion inclusive recruitment, talent development and community engagement.

At the same time, this report highlights areas where further progress is needed. Women remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions, disability disclosure rates across parts of the supply chain remain too low, and representation in some construction roles continues to fall short of our ambitions. These are challenges we must address with honesty, focus and determination.

My ambition as EDI board champion is to help ensure that inclusion is built into our decisions, culture and expectations, both for ourselves and our partners. By continuing to challenge, learn and improve, we can build a workforce that better reflects the communities we serve.

Fabienne Viala

Board Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Non-Executive Director
HS2 Ltd

Introduction: Why equality, diversity and inclusion matter to HS2

This annual report sets out how we have met our responsibilities under the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty during 2025/26. However, it's about much more than that – it makes the case for why equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is fundamental to completing Britain's new high-speed railway.

During the year, we progressed the programme reset and established new cost and schedule ranges. Reset, which we will finish in spring 2027, has resulted in organisational redesign and a reduction in recruitment activity. But it has also brought greater stability to the programme and an agreed sequence of work to complete HS2. The data in this report should be read in that context.

With around 31,000 people working across the programme – the majority in our supply chain – EDI is not a peripheral concern. It is central to how we attract and retain the skilled workforce needed

for the railway, how we keep people safe on site, and how we maximise the social and economic benefits of HS2 for the communities and businesses connected to the programme.

The case for EDI is practical. A more inclusive workforce draws from a wider talent pool at a time of significant construction and engineering skills shortages nationally. HS2's apprenticeships and employment schemes are one of the clearest examples of the railway's social value. These programmes have brought more than 2,000 apprentices and 5,700 unemployed people into work. Together, they contribute over £315 million to the UK, with the benefits of employment being felt by families and households across the country.

Ensuring the railway is designed for everyone and that we build in inclusion from the outset, means HS2 will work for all its users without the cost of retrofitting accessibility. HS2 spend with

diverse-owned suppliers – £46.9 million in 2025/26 – spreads economic opportunity through businesses that might otherwise be excluded from major infrastructure contracts.

HS2 Ltd is a relatively small organisation. The majority of HS2's workforce sits with the contractors building the railway on the ground. This report covers both because the standards we set as the programme's client determine the standards applied across the whole – and it is across the whole programme that the real impact of EDI is felt.

We can only build a strong and sustainable workforce by reaching people from all backgrounds, creating opportunities, and unlocking talent. Diversity does not just benefit the people directly involved, it also leaves a positive legacy for the industry, the economy and wider society for years to come.

At a glance: EDI performance in 2025–26



36%

of HS2 Ltd workforce is female.



32%

of the HS2 Ltd workforce has an ethnic minority background.



19%

of HS2 Ltd staff successfully received reasonable adjustments in the workplace.



£315 million

contributed to the economy from employment programmes.



Over 2,000 apprenticeships started and 5,700 previously unemployed people supported into work.



Clear Assured Platinum status retained for third time.



Disability Confident Employer.



£46.9 million

spent with diverse-owned suppliers.

Part One
**HS2 Ltd:
Maintaining
EDI standards
during the reset**

HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

In 2025/26, we focused on strengthening inclusion and diversity, supporting people from all backgrounds, opening up careers, and ensuring the skills we need to build HS2 will benefit the wider industry.

The programme reset shaped our year. Organisational redesign and reduced recruitment activity meant we recruited 154 new starters, compared with 294 in 2024/25. Against that backdrop, our EDI performance was stable, maintaining standards through a period of significant change.

Women represent 36% of the HS2 Ltd workforce, well above industry norms, while colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds represent 32%, up one percentage point on the previous year. To support them in their roles, 19% of staff received workplace adjustments. Although recruitment reduced, the diversity profile of new joiners remained broadly stable, showing that inclusive recruitment practices are part of how we work across the organisation.

We also continued to invest in future talent and skills. Future talent includes early careers professionals, such as graduates and apprentices. Since 2017, HS2 Ltd has recruited 139 graduates

and 227 apprentices. They are amongst the 2,000+ apprenticeships that have been created across the overall programme, including opportunities in our supply chain. Developing the skills we need to complete the railway safely remains a priority. This is also helping build capability for future infrastructure projects and addresses long-term skills gaps in the construction industry.

Independent assessment recognised this progress. In 2025/26, HS2 Ltd retained Clear Assured Platinum accreditation for the third consecutive time. This externally verified standard assesses how organisations recruit, develop and support their people. Retaining it during a year of organisational change demonstrates that our EDI standards hold under pressure.

Challenges remain. Women are underrepresented in senior leadership roles, and ethnic minority representation at director level remains lower than elsewhere in the organisation. We are addressing these issues through a range of interventions. The data in the following pages sets out both the progress made and the work still to do.

Top: The Chiltern tunnel north portal team.
Bottom: A member of the HS2 land and property team at an event.



HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Gender

Why this matters: A stronger gender balance helps HS2 access the skills needed to complete the programme while supporting a more diverse construction industry.

In 2025/26, women represented 36% of the HS2 Ltd workforce, well above typical construction industry standards. The slight decrease from 2024/25 reflects the impact of organisational redesign during the reset. This reduced overall recruitment, rather than changed our approach to inclusive hiring. Despite fewer roles being recruited, the diversity profile of new starters changed little, demonstrating that inclusive recruitment practices have remained in place throughout the reset.

We continued to focus on developing and retaining female talent. Coaching, senior leadership mentoring and talent programmes supported development towards more senior roles. Recruitment and onboarding data helps us understand where barriers remain and where further action is needed.

Women are well represented at manager and adviser level, accounting for 50% and 48% of roles respectively. Women make up the majority of colleagues in some directorates, including Business Delivery (69%) and External Affairs (53%). However, women remain underrepresented at director level and head of function, where they account for 18% and 25% of roles respectively. Addressing senior gender imbalances like these requires more work. In addition, we will continue to nurture emerging talent and support the leaders of the future.

The tables show representation by directorate and role in 2025/26.*

Gender		
Directorates	Male %	Female %
Rail Development	52	45
External Affairs	45	53
CFO	59	39
Programme Office	70	28
CCO	53	45
Railway	71	27
Business Delivery	31	69
Future Talent	70	29
HS2 overall	62	36

Roles by gender		
Roles	Male %	Female %
Director	82	18
Senior technical/ functional lead	94	6
Head of function	74	25
Senior manager	68	30
Manager	49	50
Adviser	51	48
Assistant	41	59

*Data does not always total 100%, as respondents have the option to not disclose personal information.

HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Ethnicity

Why this matters: The new railway will affect a broad spectrum of communities, including those with diverse ethnic and cultural identities. A workforce that reflects that diversity helps ensure the programme's jobs, skills and supply chain spend reach those communities, not just the industries already connected to major infrastructure.

In 2025/26, ethnic minority colleagues represented 32% of the HS2 Ltd workforce, an increase of one percentage point from the previous year, and significantly above construction industry norms. Representation is strong across manager, adviser and assistant grades, where ethnic minority colleagues account for 38%, 47% and 42% respectively. However, there are no ethnic minority colleagues at director level and only 11% at head of function, meaning the diversity seen elsewhere in the workforce is not yet reflected at the most senior level.

The REACH (race, ethnicity and cultural heritage) employee network continued to create space for honest discussion through Courageous

Conversations – regular sessions that give ethnically diverse colleagues a safe space to share lived experience and give allies the opportunity to learn.

Our commitment extends to how HS2 spends money. In 2025/26, £24.3 million was spent with ethnic minority-owned businesses – part of £133.5 million spent cumulatively since 2016/17, directly supporting ethnic minority-owned businesses through the HS2 supply chain.

The tables show ethnic minority representation across directorates and roles in 2025/26.*

“
These sessions go beyond numbers. They help us understand our people – and build a more positive, productive workplace.”

Natalie Rose
Corporate health, safety and security manager

Ethnicity		
Directorates	White %	Ethnic minority %
Rail Development	64	32
External Affairs	72	23
CFO	60	35
Programme Office	60	34
CCO	62	34
Railway	70	26
Business Delivery	74	26
Future Talent	49	47
HS2 overall	64	32

Roles by ethnicity		
Roles	White %	Ethnic minority %
Director	100	0
Senior technical/functional lead	94	6
Head of function	84	11
Senior manager	64	31
Manager	60	38
Adviser	50	47
Assistant	55	42

*Data does not always total 100%, as respondents have the option to not disclose personal information.

HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Disability

Why this matters: Creating an environment where disabled colleagues can access support and progress in their careers helps HS2 build a stronger and more sustainable workforce. When colleagues feel confident disclosing a disability and accessing the support they need, they are more likely to stay and perform at their best, reducing the costs of absence, lost productivity and unnecessary turnover.

In 2025/26, 5% of HS2 Ltd colleagues disclosed a disability, consistent with the previous year. Some 19% of the workforce receive moderate to substantial reasonable adjustments, reflecting a culture where colleagues feel confident requesting support once they are in post.

We support employees to make adjustments through our display screen equipment (DSE) process and monitor profiles to ensure everyone has the tools they need to do their job. Improving confidence in disclosure is important because colleagues can only access support when their needs are understood.

HS2 Ltd holds Disability Confident Employer status, which includes a commitment to guarantee interviews for disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria for a role. In 2025/26, knowledge-sharing sessions and disability awareness events provided opportunities for colleagues to share lived experience and build understanding across the organisation.

“

I am proud of the culture we are helping shape at HS2 Ltd – one that actively challenges stigma, values difference, and creates safer, more inclusive spaces where everyone can thrive.”

Nic Seeney

Assistant project manager and
2gether Network co-chair

Top: Apprentices at Old Oak Common.
Bottom: Staff at a construction site safety briefing.



HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Pay gaps by gender, ethnicity, disability, workplace adjustment and sexual orientation

We publish pay gap data annually to understand how pay differs across different groups of employees and identify where further action may be needed.

In 2025/26, our mean gender pay gap fell from 19% to 18.1%. Our median gender pay gap increased slightly from 22.9% to 23.3%, reflecting the grading

and gender profile of employees promoted during the year.

The table shows our mean and median pay gaps across gender, ethnicity, disability, workplace adjustments and sexual orientation.

	Gender %	Ethnicity %	Declared disability %	Workplace adjustment %	Sexual orientation %
Mean	18.1	23.1	6.1	15.3	12.4
Median	23.3	22.8	2.8	17.3	21.5

Mean pay gap = difference between average hourly earnings.
Median pay gap = difference between the middle hourly earnings values when employees are ranked from highest to lowest paid.

Top: Taking part in a women in engineering event in Warwickshire.
Bottom: Staff meeting at a BBV office.



HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Workforce profile: Age

Over 60% of HS2 Ltd’s workforce is over 40.

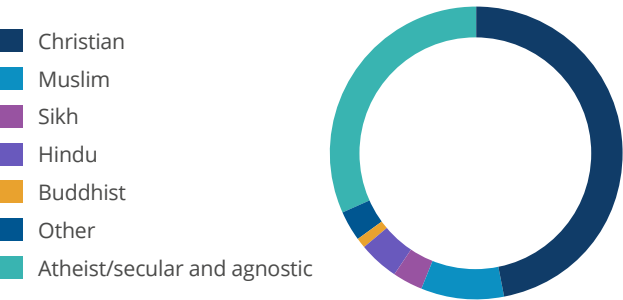
Age ranges	Percentage
18 or under	0
19-29	12
30-39	24
40-49	31
50-59	23
60-64	7
65 and over	3



Workforce profile: Religion and belief

42% of HS2 Ltd’s workforce is Christian.

Religion /belief	Percentage
Christian	42
Muslim	8
Sikh	3
Hindu	4
Jewish	0
Buddhist	1
Other	3
Atheist/secular and agnostic	28



Workforce profile: Sexual orientation

4% identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBTQ+).

Sexual Orientation	Percentage
LGBTQ+	4
Heterosexual	88



Data does not always total 100%, as respondents have the option to not disclose personal information.

HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Promotions

Promotions include any role change resulting in a higher grade during the year, including regrading, secondments and internal moves. In 2025/26, the diversity of people that received promotions broadly matched the overall diversity of the workforce.

EDI markers	Workforce promotions 2025/26	Workforce diversity 2025/26
Ethnic minorities %	31	32
Females %	38	36
LGBTQ+ %	4	4
Disability %	5	5
Non-Christian %	22	20
Adjustments %	26	19

Development

Investing in the development of a diverse workforce builds the long-term skills the industry needs. We develop colleagues through professional memberships, technical training, coaching and mentoring, leadership programmes, and internal apprenticeships at levels 3 to 7. Development pathways are designed to be accessible and support progression at every level.



Top: An office-based member of staff.
Bottom: A graduate/apprentice awards event.

HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Apprentices and graduates

In September 2025, we welcomed 21 new apprentices and graduates to HS2 Ltd. Since 2017, we have recruited 227 apprentices and 139 graduates. This figure rises to over 2,000 when combined with those employed by our construction partners and suppliers. Roles span a vast range of areas including quantity surveying, project management, construction, environment and programme controls, helping apprentices and graduates develop.

Graduate and apprentice diversity

EDI	Graduates %	Apprentices %	Future Talent %
Male	64	79	70
Female	33	21	29
Ethnic minority	57	32	47
Disability	0	7	3
LGBTQ+	2	7	4

Data does not always total 100%, as respondents have the option to not disclose personal information.

“
I've never been made to feel different, and it is that kind of environment that allows women and early careers professionals to succeed.”

Ellie Swetman
Graduate project manager

New apprentices at the HS2 Ltd offices in Birmingham.



HS2 Ltd: Maintaining EDI standards during the reset

Case study

From apprentice to project manager

Clara Lenzi joined HS2 in 2017 as one of the organisation's first project management apprentices. Eight years, two qualifications and three promotions later, she is now a project manager working on Britain's biggest infrastructure project.

The only student in her sixth form not to go to university, Clara chose an apprenticeship route. Having managed a hairdresser's, she joined HS2 with no previous experience of the rail industry or engineering. During her apprenticeship, she worked on the programme's London tunnels with Skanska Costain STRABAG (SCS), developing the technical knowledge and practical experience needed to progress.

By the time she completed her apprenticeship, Clara was leading ground investigations at 50 locations along the HS2 route. She later became an assistant project manager at Old Oak Common station before being promoted to project manager in 2022. She is now studying for a university degree in project management alongside her role.

Clara's journey from school leaver to project manager is exactly the kind of career HS2's apprenticeship programme was designed to create.



Clara Lenzi, project manager at SCS.



Part Two

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Through our supply chain, HS2 creates jobs, develops skills, supports businesses and sets standards that will shape the wider construction and infrastructure sectors for years to come.

Most of our workforce, spend and social value sits in the supply chain. The standards we set for the programme's construction partners determine the standards applied across 31,000 workers and 350 sites – and it is here that EDI has its greatest reach and impact.

In 2025/26, HS2 spent £46.9 million with diverse-owned businesses – £22.6 million with women-owned suppliers and £24.3 million with ethnic minority-owned businesses. This brings the cumulative diverse supplier spend to £369 million since 2016/17, helping extend the economic benefits of HS2 to businesses that have historically had less access to major infrastructure contracts.

Supply chain spend fell from £6.3 billion to £5.3 billion in 2025/26, reflecting the programme reset and reduced construction activity. Diverse supplier spend reduced in line with this and reflects the programme's profile rather than a change in approach.

Workforce diversity across contractors exceeded industry benchmarks for ethnicity. Main works civils contractors collectively achieved 22% ethnic minority representation against a 9% benchmark, while station construction partners achieved 25.5%. Overall female representation across construction sites remains below the 21% benchmark, reflecting a long-standing challenge across the sector. We continue to work with contractors to improve the recruitment and retention of women in construction roles.

We are building inclusive design into stations, infrastructure and trains from the outset, helping ensure the railway works for everyone while avoiding costly changes later. This provides benefits for both taxpayers and future passengers.

A safe, respectful and inclusive working environment supports better reporting, stronger workforce engagement and improved performance. Programmes such as RESPECT, led by Balfour Beatty VINCI SYSTRA (BBVS) are helping create environments where people feel able to raise concerns, report problems and contribute safely and effectively.

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Diverse suppliers and economic opportunity

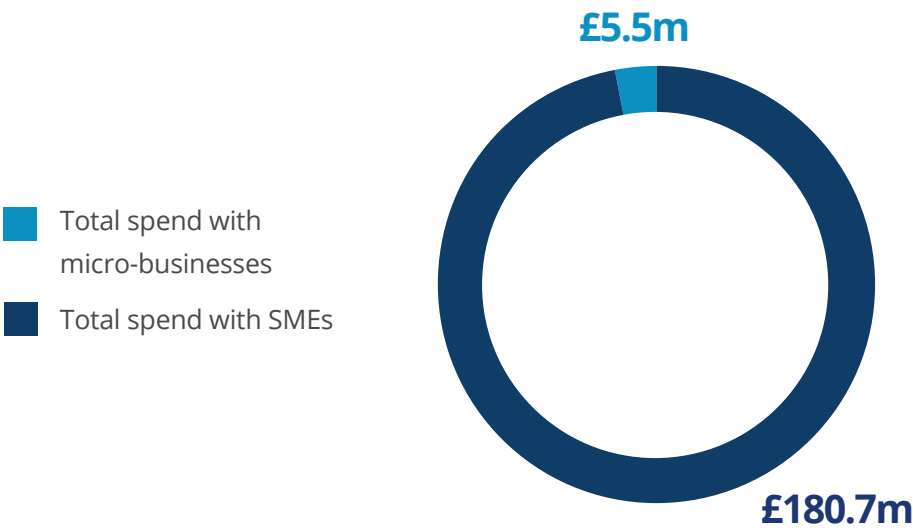
Why this matters: A diverse supply chain helps spread the economic benefits of HS2 more widely and creates opportunities for businesses of different sizes and backgrounds.

In 2025/26, HS2 Ltd spent £5.3 billion across 204 suppliers – a reduction from £6.3 billion in 2024/25, reflecting the programme reset and revised delivery approach. Large businesses¹ accounted for 97% of spend (£5.2 billion), while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)² received £180.7 million and micro-businesses³ £5.5 million.

Of the total, £46.9 million was spent with diverse-owned businesses in 2025/26 – down from £61.1 million in 2024/25, again reflecting lower programme spend. Women-owned businesses received £22.6 million (£227 million cumulatively since 2016/17) and ethnic minority-owned businesses £24.3 million (£133.5 million cumulatively). Spend with disabled-owned businesses was significantly lower at £25,000 (£9 million cumulatively).

Since 2016/17, HS2 has spent £369 million with diverse-owned suppliers, helping a wider range of businesses participate in the programme and ensuring the economic benefits of public investment are shared more widely across the regions and communities served by the railway.

Total HS2 spend with SMEs and micro-businesses in 2025/26



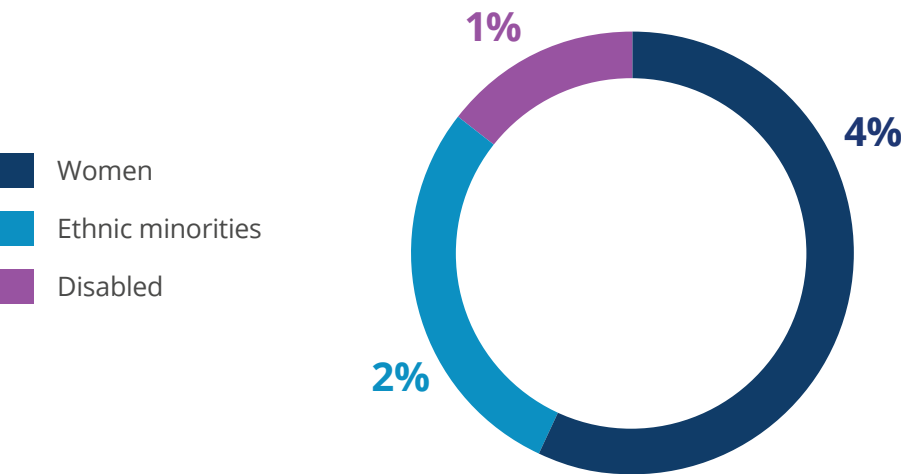
¹A large business is defined as having more than 250 employees.

²An SME is defined as having 10-249 employees.

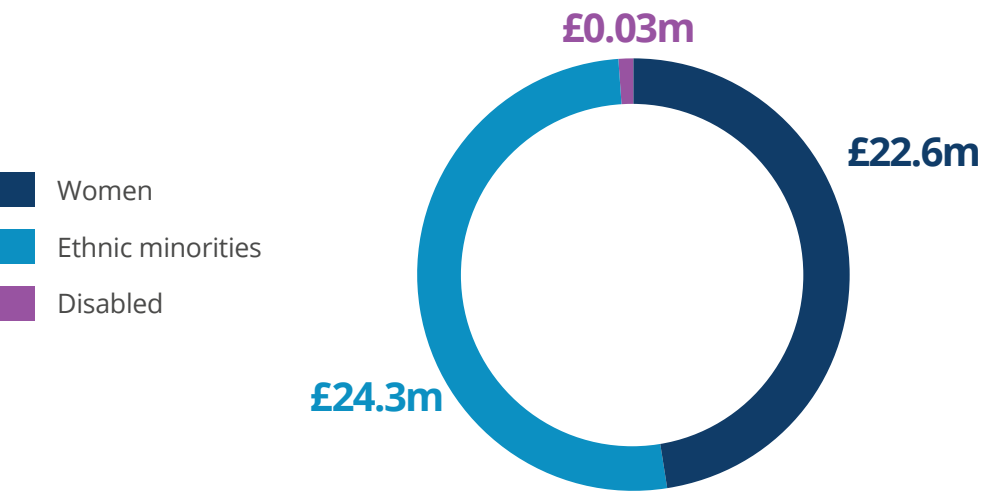
³A micro-business is defined as having fewer than 10 employees.

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Representation of diverse-owned suppliers in 2025/26



Total HS2 spend with diverse-owned suppliers in 2025/26



HS2 spend with diverse-owned suppliers, 2016/17 to 2025/26

	2016/17 ,000	2017/18 ,000	2018/19 ,000	2019/20 ,000	2020/21 ,000	2021/22 ,000	2022/23 ,000	2023/24 ,000	2024/25 ,000	2025/26 ,000	Total ,000
Women	£5,600	£4,500	£2,800	£77,500	£24,700	£14,200	£14,200	£22,300	£38,600	£22,600	£227,000
Ethnic minority	£6,500	£3,200	£200	£13,800	£20,000	£10,000	£11,600	£21,700	£22,200	£24,300	£133,500
Disabled	£2,800	£1,900	£300	£200	£2,700	£700	£100	£100	£200	£25	£9,025
LGBTQ+	£20	£0	£0	£0	£20	£0	£0	£0	£120	£0	£160
Total	£14,920	£9,600	£3,300	£91,500	£47,420	£24,900	£25,900	£44,100	£61,120	£46,925	£369,685

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Workforce diversity across the supply chain

Why this matters: Inclusive practices help HS2 attract and retain a skilled workforce and create working environments where people can contribute safely and effectively.

In 2025/26, around 31,000 people worked across the programme, completing 71 million hours of construction work – a 7% decrease on the previous year. Building and retaining a skilled workforce at that scale – across hundreds of sites in a sector facing long-term skills shortages – requires contractors to recruit from different backgrounds, support people to succeed, and retain valuable skills and experience.

We set common EDI standards for HS2's supply chain, assessed every six months, with the same requirements applied to subcontractors. Contractors must demonstrate good practice across recruitment, workforce monitoring, supplier diversity and training, and obtain an independently verified EDI standard.

Our Safe at Heart Strategy places inclusion alongside consistency, openness, challenge and planning as one of the behaviours underpinning safe working across HS2. The principle is straightforward: people are more likely to raise concerns, support colleagues and make sound decisions when they feel respected and included. This connection between inclusion, safety and performance can be seen across several initiatives across the supply chain.

Apprentices at Curzon Street station.



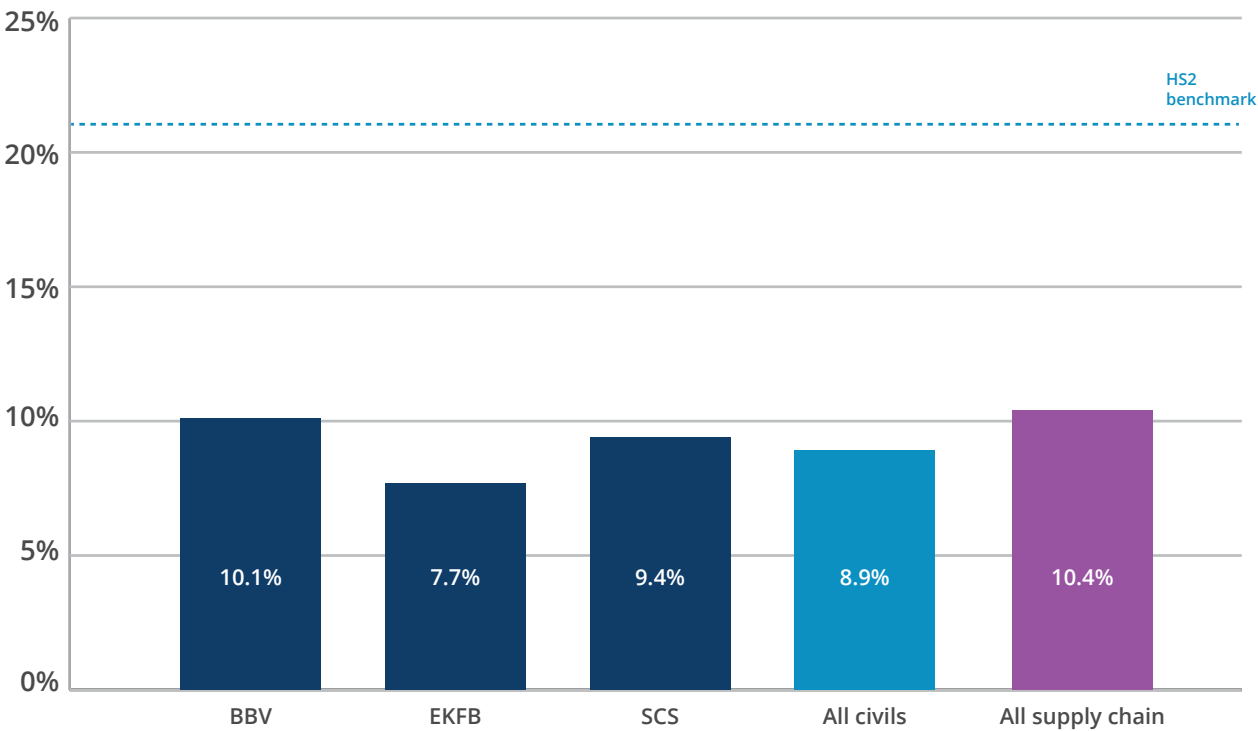
HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Main works civils contractors

HS2’s main works civils contractors (MWCCs) are responsible for building the railway between the West Midlands and London. The following data covers each contractor and their subcontractors combined. The Align Joint Venture is not included as it is no longer reporting on workforce diversity due to the stage of its contract.

Women accounted for 8.9% of the MWCCs' workforce overall in 2025/26, below our benchmark of 21% and the combined supply chain figure of 10.4%. Balfour Beatty VINCI (BBV) achieved the highest female representation at 10.1%. The gap largely reflects increased construction activity with a low proportion of female site operatives relative to office-based workers, which is a recognised industry challenge. All MWCCs are developing initiatives to improve female representation across all roles.

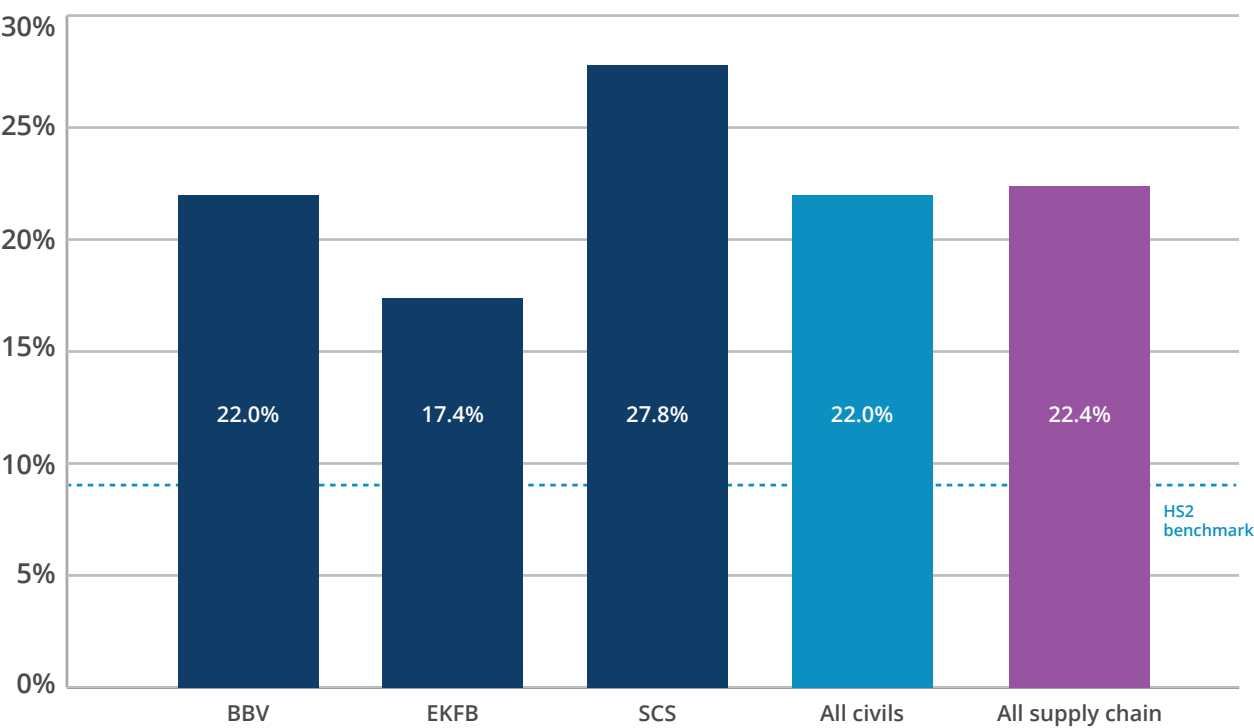
Female workforce representation across MWCCs



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

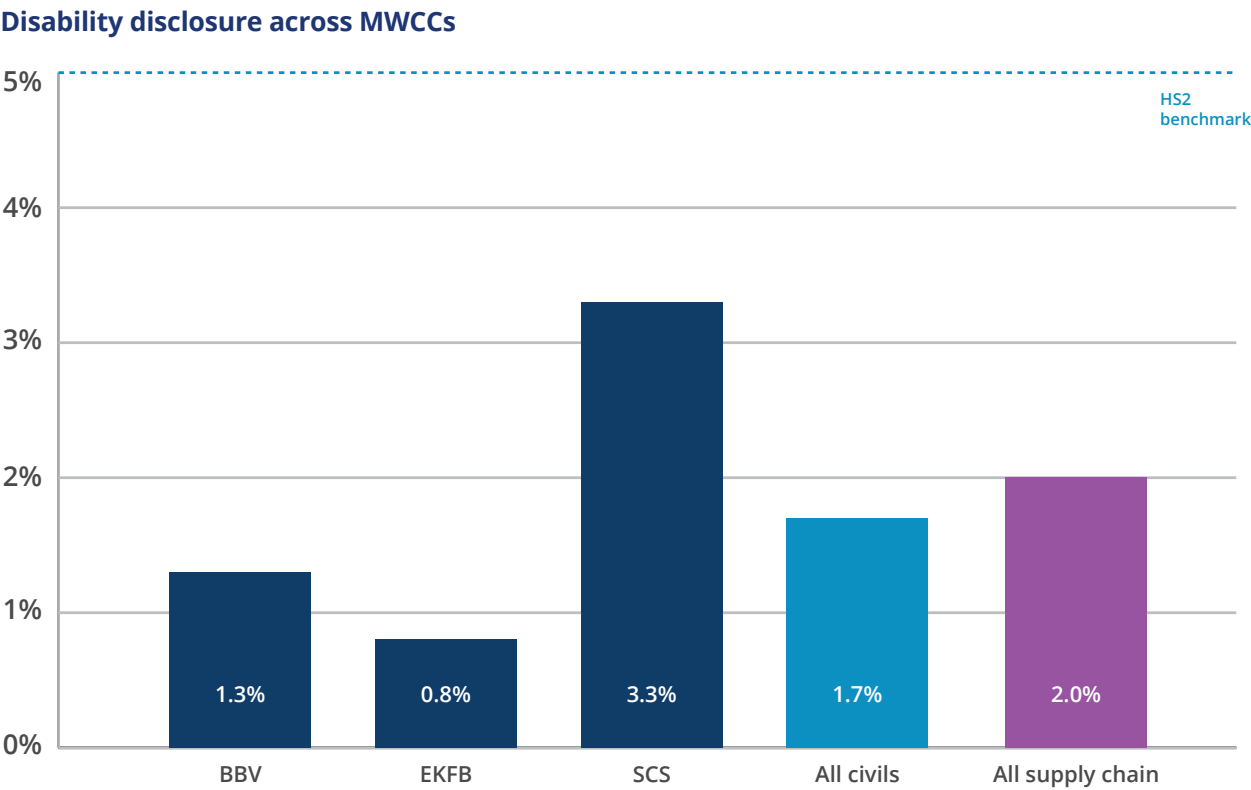
Ethnic minority representation across MWCCs collectively reached 22% – significantly above our 9% benchmark. Individual performance ranged from Skanska Costain STRABAG (SCS) at 27.8% to Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall (EKFB) at 17.4%, with all exceeding the benchmark. Some disclosure challenges remain, with a portion of the workforce selecting 'prefer not to say'.

Ethnic minority workforce representation across MWCCs



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Disability disclosure across MWCCs collectively reached 1.7%, below our 5% benchmark and the combined supply chain figure of 2%. Disclosure remains a challenge across the sector. MWCCs are developing training and awareness to help colleagues disclose and access appropriate support.



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Case study

Women in construction: creating new routes into employment

Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) are Department for Work and Pensions initiatives that help people receiving unemployment benefits move into new careers. In 2025/26, BBV's Skills Academy at South and City College Birmingham ran women-only programmes combining six weeks of training with a 10-day paid placement on a construction site. The courses were open to women aged 19 and over in receipt of Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance.

The programme helped women from very different backgrounds take their first steps into construction. Aisha Choudhury joined after struggling to find work following university. She found out about the programme through Washwood Heath Jobcentre and the BBV recruitment team – one

of several routes through which women are being directed towards construction careers.

Catherine Bridges entered the industry after a career break and more than six months of unemployment, later receiving a safety award in recognition of her performance. Ngoneh Ndow joined after finding it difficult to secure a role despite holding a degree and now wants to challenge misconceptions that discourage women from considering careers in construction.

Their routes into the programme were different, but all three secured employment as traffic marshals, demonstrating how targeted training and work experience can help open construction careers to people who might not otherwise have considered the industry.



Aisha Choudhury, traffic marshal.



Catherine Bridges, traffic marshal.

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

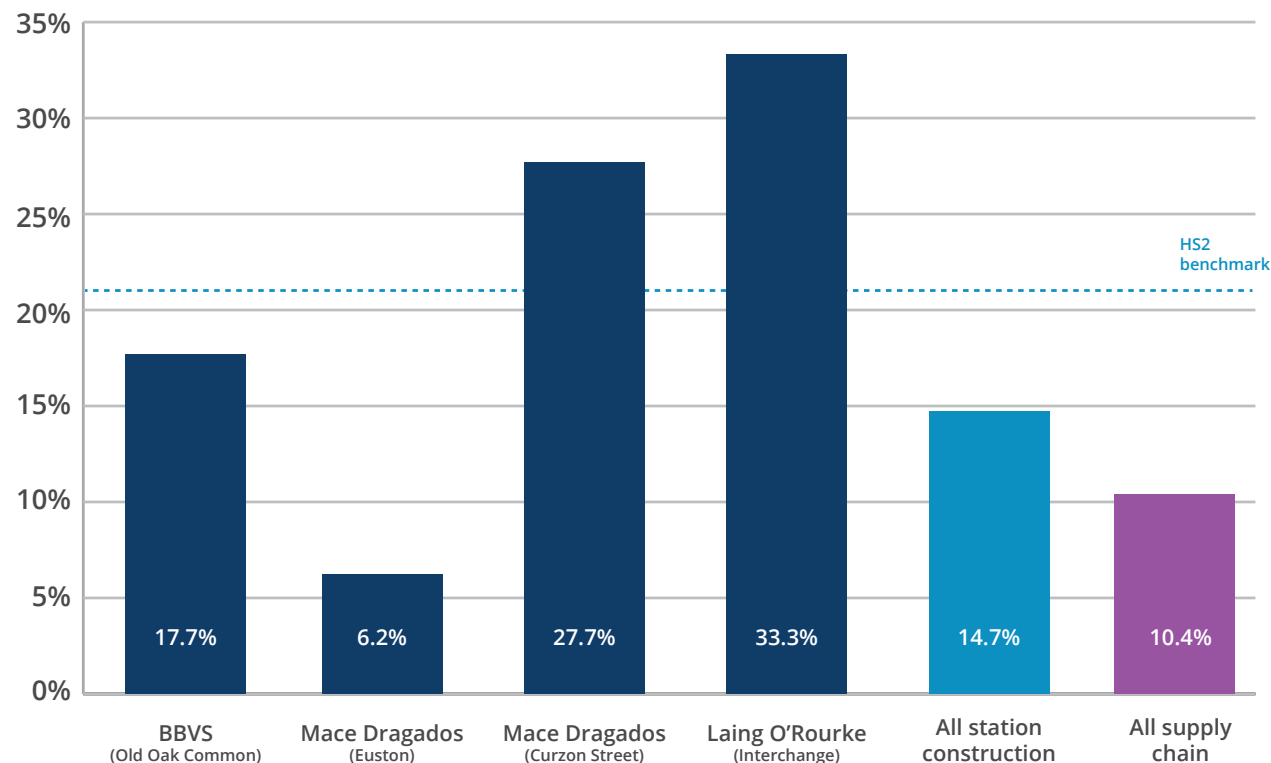
Station construction partners

The station construction partners (SCPs) – Balfour Beatty VINCI Systra (BBVS) at Old Oak Common, Mace Dragados at Curzon Street and Euston, and Laing O'Rourke at Interchange – show a mixed picture of EDI performance, with some stations at earlier construction stages where roles remain predominantly office-based.

Overall, SCPs achieved 14.7% female representation. Mace Dragados (Curzon Street) and Laing O'Rourke both exceeded the 21% benchmark at 27.7% and 33.3% respectively. BBVS, which is further advanced in construction with a higher proportion of site-based roles, achieved 17.7%. We are working with all SCPs to improve recruitment and retention of women as construction activity progresses.

At Euston, the Women in Euston Network organised a community safety walk with colleagues from HS2, Mace Dragados, SCS, subcontractors, Camden Council and local community members – identifying improvements to lighting, visibility and pedestrian routes that will inform future safety planning across the project.

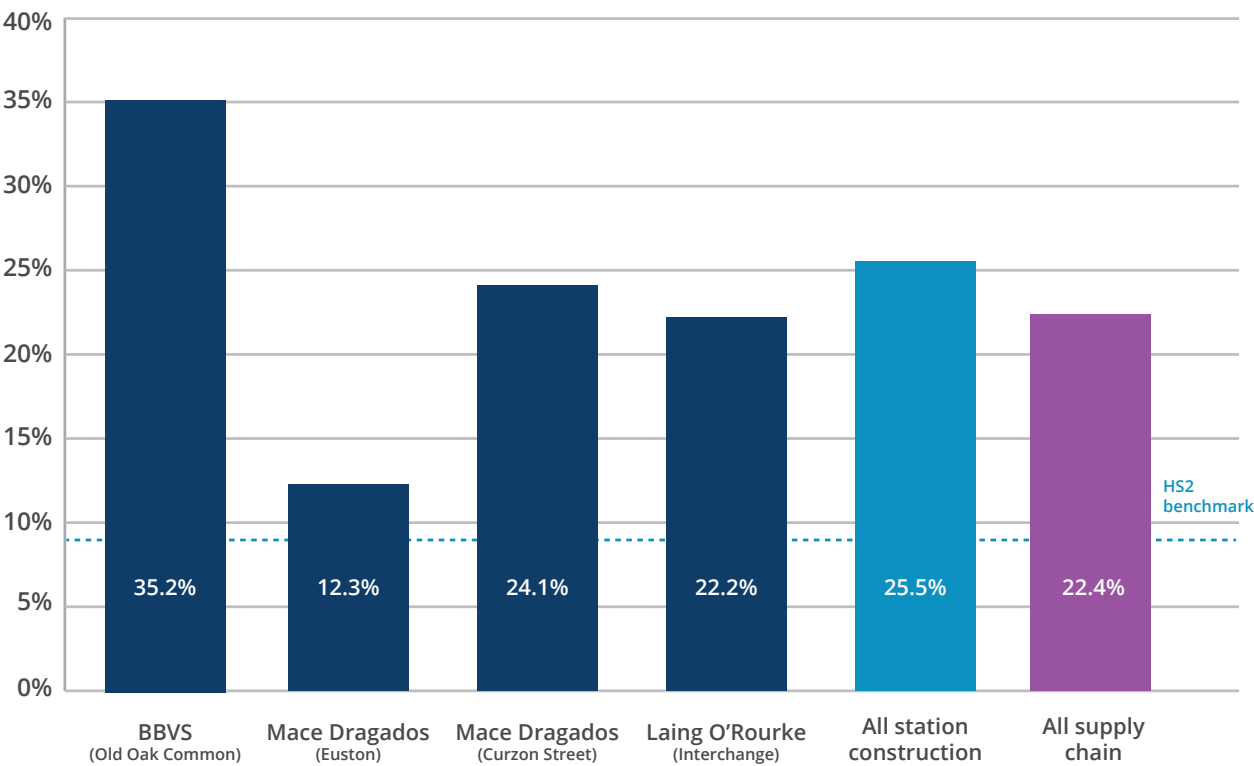
Female workforce representation across SCPs



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

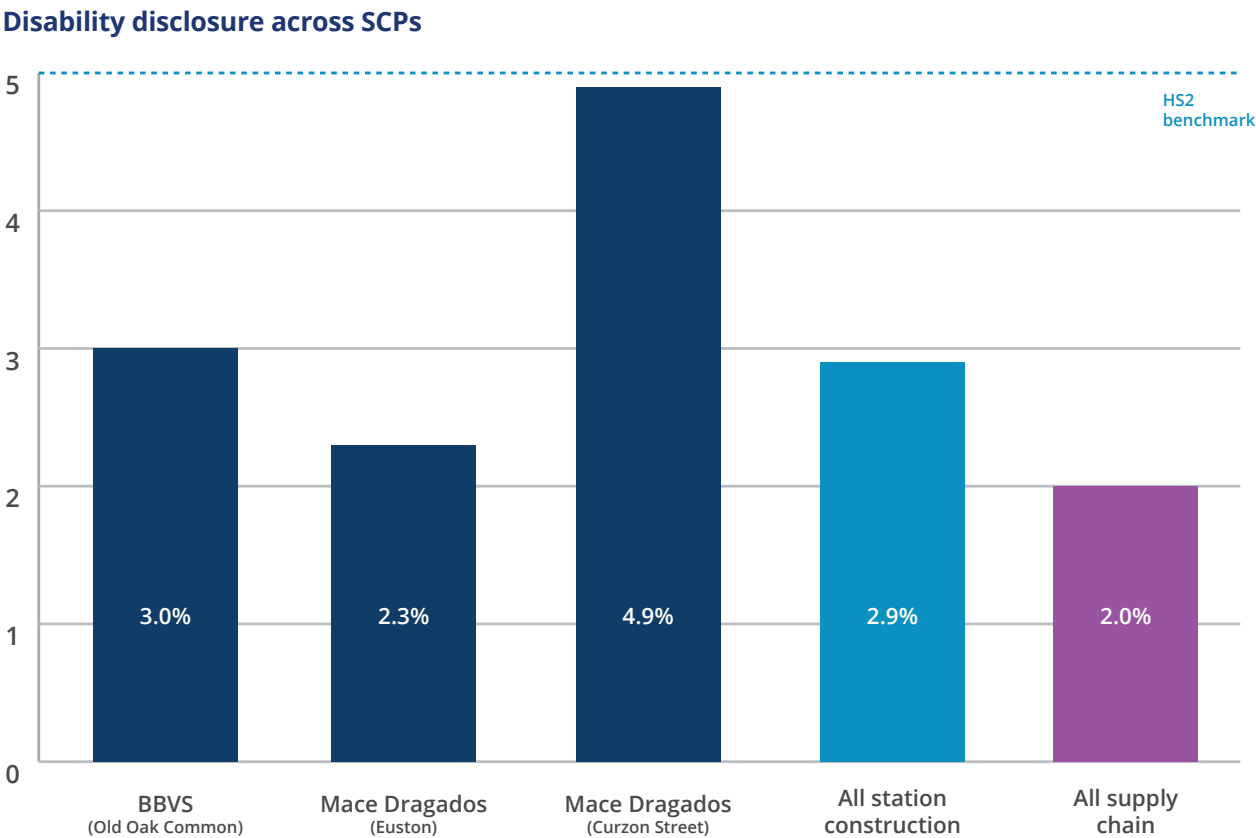
All SCPs exceeded our 9% ethnicity benchmark, achieving 25.5% collectively. Individual results ranged from BBVS at 35.2% to Mace Dragados (Euston) at 12.3%.

Ethnic minority workforce representation across SCPs



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Disability disclosure across SCPs reached 2.9% collectively, below our 5% benchmark. As with MWCCs, contractors are working to strengthen workforce confidence and trust to improve disclosure rates.



HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

Case study

Creating a safer and more respectful workplace

At Old Oak Common station, BBVS launched RESPECT in response to strengthened legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 requiring employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

RESPECT equipped 900 office-based and 300 site-based staff with practical tools to help create a more inclusive workplace. Trained volunteers provide peer support and guidance, while progress is monitored through staff surveys and incident

reporting. The programme combines inclusive leadership, a communications campaign, RESPECT training and a dedicated reporting mechanism.

The aim is to create a working environment where people feel confident raising concerns, treating colleagues with respect and contributing safely and effectively.



RESPECT Programme diagram.

HS2 supply chain: Skills, opportunity and inclusion

HS2 and inclusive design

Why this matters: Inclusive design built into the railway from the outset costs less than retrofitting accessibility later. HS2 has one opportunity to get this right, and the standards set here will shape the experience of millions of passengers for decades.

Inclusive design is integrated into every stage of HS2's development, helping ensure stations, depots, trains and surrounding infrastructure work for as many users as possible. By identifying and removing barriers during design, HS2 aims to create a railway that can be used safely, independently and with dignity.

Carriage design has been shaped by user testing, producing features including reprofiled grab handles, audio announcements and visual display screens in onboard toilet cubicles. Passengers travelling with mobility aids will have greater freedom to choose where they sit, while wheelchair users can expect equal access to onboard facilities.

Stations and infrastructure are reviewed by the Built Environment Accessibility Panel (BEAP), which brings together accessibility specialists and people with experience of disability. In 2025/26, the panel reviewed the detailed design of Curzon Street station and the intermodal area at Old Oak Common, and has provided ongoing input into active travel routes, parking and drop-off facilities, customer toilets, and colour contrast for partially sighted users.

By addressing accessibility during design rather than after construction, HS2 can provide better outcomes for passengers while avoiding costly modifications in the future.



Top: Mock-up of a high-speed train interior.
Bottom: Focus group members trying out the facilities.

A photograph of two women wearing hijabs sitting at a dining table. The woman in the center is wearing a floral-patterned hijab and a light green button-down shirt, laughing heartily. The woman to her left is wearing a white hijab and a white turtleneck sweater, also smiling. The table in front of them is set with various dishes, including a bowl of soup, a plate of bread, and a glass of water. In the background, other people are seated at tables in a restaurant or event space.

Part Three Supporting communities

Supporting communities

Why this matters: Building a railway on the scale of HS2 inevitably affects local communities. Our responsibility is not only to reduce disruption, but to ensure the opportunities created by the programme – jobs, skills, investment and targeted support – reach those most affected.

Supporting affected communities

We recognise that some residents need additional help to understand complex issues or explain how construction is affecting them. Through PoHWER, a free independent advocacy service, we support people whose personal circumstances, disability or long-term health conditions affect their ability to address issues relating to the project. The service offers advice and help to understand our documents and complete paperwork. By March 2026, 135 people had used the service.

Where standard support is not sufficient, an independent expert panel assesses individual cases and identifies alternative options and reasonable adjustments. To date, we have supported 412 households with additional help – including 91 in 2025/26 – covering temporary rehousing, extra noise insulation and mobility assistance.



PoHWER provided professional, empathetic support at a time when I felt particularly vulnerable. My advocate kept me fully informed throughout the process, and their commitment directly contributed to a positive outcome for my case.”

Advocacy service user
September 2025

Investing in communities

The £40 million HS2 Community and Environment Fund (CEF) and Business and Local Economy Fund (BLEF), independently administered by Groundwork UK, provide funding to communities and local economies demonstrably disrupted by construction.

To date, £21.43 million has been awarded to 383 projects between the West Midlands and London.

Funded projects have supported inclusive sports opportunities for young people with additional needs, digital skills for older residents, and practical assistance for homeless people in Birmingham.

Supporting communities

Case study

Helping young people build skills and find work

Honest Grind Coffee is a Camden-based social enterprise that helps young people gain skills, experience, and routes into employment.

Working with Camden Youth Justice Services, it supports young people at risk of offending or reoffending through barista training, customer-facing work experience and behind-the-scenes production roles.

Supported with £99,924 from HS2's Business and Local Economy Fund, the project demonstrates how community investment can create opportunities for young people, while providing lasting social value in an area affected by construction. During 2025/26, HS2 Ltd CEO Mark Wild visited the project.



HS2 Ltd CEO Mark Wild with Marsha Brown, Honest Grind Coffee's youth employability programme lead.

Supporting communities

Skills and employment

In 2018, we published our Skills, Employment and Education strategy to address skills shortages and help people living near the railway start careers in construction. Working with tier one contractors, education providers and the Department for Work and Pensions, we have created dedicated training academies and bootcamps giving new entrants the skills to begin a career in construction. Fast-track routes have helped people secure jobs in as little as two weeks.

Over 5,700 previously unemployed people have now found work on the programme, contributing to regional economies along the West Midlands to London growth corridor. More than 2,000 apprenticeships have been created, helping develop the skills HS2 needs today while building the skills for future infrastructure projects across the UK.

EKFB's Making Tracks into Construction event invited over 1,900 local school and college students to explore careers in infrastructure. It featured sessions for students with special educational needs and disabilities, addressing the long-term skills pipeline.

Mohammed Sharif, 19, became HS2's 2,000th apprentice in January 2026. Growing up in Birmingham near Curzon Street station, he followed HS2's progress before discovering a T-Level course offering placements with BBV. He now studies civil engineering at the University of Wolverhampton while working on site.

“

I used to look out of my bedroom window and see all the work taking place on HS2 – now I'm helping to build it. In the past, getting a job like this would mean travelling to London, but this project is opening up opportunities on the doorstep for young people like me in Birmingham.”

Mohammed Sharif
HS2's 2,000th apprentice

Top: A student taking part in a virtual reality activity at the event.
Bottom: Mohammed Sharif.



HS2

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