

## Kier to offer apprenticeships to prisoners following ground-breaking law change

3 years ago



Kier is one of the first employers in England to offer apprenticeship opportunities to prisoners, following a crucial law change, which means prisoners can now earn while they learn.

Announced earlier this year, the law has changed this month (October) and it means that prisoners at open prisons will be able to take advantage of apprenticeships, giving them access to high-quality apprenticeships with direct routes into jobs with leading employers.

Kier will be taking on the first ROTL (Release on Temporary Licence) apprentice, into its Highways business. The scheme is designed to support prisoners to gain the skills needed to secure employment after they are released, assisting their rehabilitation, and reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

Helen Redfern, chief people officer at Kier, said: "At Kier, we're committed to having a more diverse workforce, with colleagues who have skills from a range of backgrounds; reflecting the wider community. This pioneering scheme allows us to diversify our workforce further, whilst benefitting prisoners who are nearing the end of their sentence, as well as reducing the likelihood of reoffending, benefitting communities across the country.

"Being one of the first employers to take part in the scheme builds on the work we have already done through Making Ground, our prison engagement and employment programme, which is designed to support serving prisoners and prison leavers into sustainable employment in the construction industry."

Skills Minister Andrea Jenkyns said: "This ground-breaking change to the law will not only help us to rehabilitate offenders, it's also plugging the skills gap for the future.

“Apprenticeships give employers dedicated new workers in sectors like construction and hospitality and it’s great to have such high profile companies sign up to help prisoners turn their life around through work and training.”

The Kier ROTL apprentice, added: “This opportunity means a lot to me and I was over the moon when I found out I had been successful. It gives me the chance to prove to myself, my friends, family and the wider community that I am worthy and capable of being successful. I am appreciative to Kier and the team I have worked with during this process, it has been made clear to me that my convictions aren’t a barrier to my success or progression.

“I look forward to gaining as much experience as I can during my apprenticeship and in the future I would like to stay with Kier, work my way up and hopefully gain further qualifications.”

Kier will be working in partnership with Inside Connections, a Community Interest Company, to provide, support and mentoring to their apprentices.

John Burton, Founder of Inside Connections said: “We are proud to be working with Kier on this exciting initiative. The change in the law opens up apprenticeship opportunities to prisoners, enabling them to gain important skills and employment, which can play a significant part in reducing reoffending. From our experience we know that employers hiring prison leavers find them to be good at their job, punctual and trustworthy and we would encourage more employers to get involved.”

Other employers taking part in the scheme are Greene King and Timpsons. From 2025, the scheme is expected to be rolled out more widely, offering up to 300 prisoners, who are out on license and nearing the end of their sentence, the chance to transform their lives and get a head start to a brighter future.