

Back to work boost as quarter of a million workplace training places delivered

2 years ago



More than a quarter of a million workplace training places for benefit claimants have been delivered in just three years, new data reveals.

The latest figures show that in the last financial year 81,190 places were delivered – smashing the 80,000 target two months ahead of schedule. It brings the total number since the Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) was set up to 266,330.

As part of the government’s long-term plan for growth, these programmes give jobseekers a unique work opportunity with six-weeks on-the-job training and experience before a guaranteed interview, helping them prepare for and move into work.

There has been 266,330 starts on a SWAP since 2021, with 81,190 in the latest financial year – smashing an 80,000 target for the year two months early.

Unlike traditional work experience, SWAPs are often backed by employers looking to fill active vacancies. Businesses help craft these programmes, so that participants gain the skills and experience right for their roles.

Some of the most popular places were in sectors with the highest number of vacancies including:

- 36,810 in construction;
- 25,900 in security;
- 21,250 in hospitality;
- 19,930 in logistics and freight

Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, Mel Stride MP said:

“Hundreds of thousands are taking full advantage of SWAPs and it’s easy to see why – these programmes are a great way for people to learn new skills and gain on the job experience, giving them the very best

opportunity to get back into work and succeed.

“Whether it’s over 50s returning to work or those just starting out, SWAPs are not only getting thousands onto the career ladder, they are helping businesses fill vacancies with staff who can hit the ground running.

“Building on this delivery milestone, our £2.5bn Back to Work Plan will help over a million people to start and succeed in work.”

From coding to matchday stewarding, becoming a fitness instructor or learning to mix cocktails in hospitality, there’s a breadth of courses backed by big industry names to appeal to jobseekers of any age, background and experience out there.

20-24 year olds made the most starts on SWAPs of any age group at 40,700, while 38,040 starts have been made by workers over 50 providing practical experience to kickstart professional careers at any age.

London saw the highest take up of SWAPs with 45,630, followed by the South East region with 28,250. This was followed closely by the North West with 28,130.

Mark, from Truro who secured a full-time job in the NHS after his SWAP said:

“When I became unemployed the support I received through my local Jobcentre really improved my confidence and helped me to identify the transferable skills I had.

“My Work Coach told me about the NHS SWAP which I didn’t think would be for someone like me. However, here I am back in work with a full-time role as a Clinical Imaging Assistant. I would encourage anyone looking for a new line of work to do a SWAP as it opens so many doors for a brighter future.”

Diane, 58, from Devonport also secured a role with District Health Care and said:

“When I first visited the Jobcentre I was low on confidence as I had been told by an employer that they were looking for someone younger. I was lacking motivation but with the support from my Work Coach I was helped to update my CV and they encouraged me to take part on a care SWAP. The SWAP helped to boost my confidence, identify the skills I had and the future is looking bright as I have now secured a fulltime role thanks to the support that I was provided with.”

A further 80,000 starts are expected to be delivered next year which will see even more benefit claimants supported into work.

The milestone comes as the DWP’s Back to Work Plan is set to help over a million people, including those with disabilities and long-term health conditions to break down barriers to work.

Mary Macleod, Chief Executive of Business in the Community, said:

“Offering pre-employment support to jobseekers is critical in helping more people into work and to transform their lives. With many job seekers facing barriers to employment and employers struggling to recruit, programmes like DWP’s SWAPs have done a great job of tackling two problems with one solution.

“Giving jobseekers the holistic and effective employment support needed to help them find and stay in

work will also enable employers to tap into a wider talent pool of candidates, showing the clear business benefit for getting involved.”