

Alstom launches supported internship programme in the UK to enhance job prospects for those with learning disabilities

- Scheme supports special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) students with hands-on experience at Alstom's Derby train factory
- Interns are working on Alstom's CrossCountry Voyager refresh project as part of ASPIRE

29 April 2026 – Alstom, global leader in smart and sustainable mobility, is proud to launch its first supported internship programme – ASPIRE. The scheme will support students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) through real workplace experience with structured support at the company's historic Derby Litchurch Lane Works in the UK.

Research reveals only 4.8% of individuals with a learning disability or autism spectrum conditions in England are in permanent paid employment. Alstom's supported internship programme provides the opportunity to achieve sustained, paid employment by equipping individuals with the skills they need through hands-on learning in the workplace.

In collaboration with Derby College – who provide a job coach and classroom-based learning in parallel to the internship – the students are working alongside colleagues from Alstom's Training Academy, with the latter delivering bespoke teaching that will enhance their work experience. Specifically, the interns are working on Alstom's CrossCountry Voyager refurbishment project which is seeing the operator's Class 220 and Class 221 trains receiving an interior refresh – including new seats and tables – while their exteriors are being repainted in a new livery.

“We've been genuinely impressed by the interns' knowledge of both historic and modern rolling stock – it's clear they're passionate about what they're doing, and it's a joy to have them on board. Working with Derby College has already shown how powerful collaboration can be, especially when it comes to creating meaningful opportunities for underrepresented groups. I'm excited to watch our first group of interns grow at Alstom – not just gaining valuable work experience, but also building life skills, confidence, and self-belief that will help them thrive and move into paid employment,” said Nina Atwal, Head of Social Value UK and Ireland at Alstom.

She added: “It's also a pleasure to be working on our first supported internship programme with such passionate colleagues at Alstom who want to make a difference.”

Valued at around £60 million, the CrossCountry Voyager project encompasses 312 cars that are being fitted with new carpets, improved lighting and a new passenger counting system. The interns are supporting the mechanical and electrical works scopes of the refurbishment project.

Owned by Beacon Rail, who are funding the upgrade, the Voyagers operate across the CrossCountry network, from Aberdeen, Scotland, to Penzance, England.

“We are delighted to be part of Alstom’s new supported internship programme, which will provide brilliant opportunities for Derby College students with special education needs and disabilities through real workplace experience. Playing their part in the refurbishment of our Voyager fleet will be the perfect springboard for the students on their journey into the rail industry – we look forward to working with them now and hopefully into the future,” said Amanda Hopkins, Management Development Advisor at CrossCountry

Students Aaron Donaldson and Harry Hedges are the first interns to take part in Alstom’s ASPIRE programme. Aaron was selected by Derby College for his engineering abilities, knowledge of trains and his keen focus on securing his future with employment. Meanwhile, Harry has a keen appreciation in rail that has spanned his entire life, from an interest in model trains as a child to now volunteering at Ecclesbourne Valley Railway.

In summer 2025 the interns were welcomed to the site for the first time alongside their Derby College tutors. During this visit they got to meet their new Alstom colleagues, learn more about the company and the site itself – Britain’s largest and oldest operating train factory. Since then Aaron and Harry undertook several ‘in touch’ days before commencing their supported internships in 2026, which will last for up to one year. Alstom plans to welcome an additional four ASPIRE interns – aged between 16 and 24 – at its Deby site later this year.

“We are incredibly proud to be partnering with Alstom on their supported internship programme. This collaboration is opening doors to truly life-changing opportunities for our interns, giving them a unique chance to gain real-world experience in a supportive and inclusive environment. Alstom have gone above and beyond to welcome our interns, working closely with them ahead of their placements to ensure a smooth and confident transition into the workplace. Their commitment to our interns and inclusion has made a real difference, and the interns are excited and eager to begin this next chapter,” said Amy Bacon, Supported Internship and Work Experience Lead at Derby College

She added: “This partnership is a powerful example of how education and businesses can come together to empower young people with SEND, helping them build the skills and confidence they need to progress into meaningful employment.”

Alstom is a Disability Confident Leader employer, and the ASPIRE programme further endorses the company’s commitment to attract and create a diverse workforce with tailored support to succeed. It is hoped the scheme will be rolled out to several others among Alstom’s 37 UK and Ireland sites over time.

Derby Litchurch Lane Works is the only UK facility that designs, engineers, builds and tests trains for domestic and export markets. It is also a major hub for train modernisation and signalling, and home to Alstom’s Training Academy. Opened in 2023, the Training Academy offers 1,600 m² of practical learning space – including a carriage and a cab – where apprentices can gain practical experience working on a train before joining a live manufacturing team.

Alstom™ is a protected trademarks of the Alstom Group.

Notes to Editors

Alstom's ASPIRE supported internship programme:

A – Access: Ensuring inclusive access to meaningful work experiences for all

S – Support: Providing tailored support through job coaches, mentors and employers to enable success

P – Progression: Focusing on personal and professional growth, leading to sustained employment or further opportunities

I – Independence: Empowering interns to build confidence and skills for independent living and working

R – Readiness: Preparing interns for the world of work through real-life experience and skill development

E – Employment: Driving towards positive employment outcomes and long-term career pathways

About Alstom

Alstom commits to contribute to a low carbon future by developing and promoting innovative and sustainable transportation solutions that people enjoy riding. From high-speed trains, metros, monorails, trams, to turnkey systems, services, infrastructure, signalling and digital mobility, Alstom offers its diverse customers the broadest portfolio in the industry. With its presence in 63 countries and a talent base of over 86,000 people from 184 nationalities, the company focuses its design, innovation, and project management skills to where mobility solutions are needed most. Listed in France, Alstom generated sales of €18.5 billion for the fiscal year ending on 31 March 2025.

For more information, please visit www.alstom.com.

Contacts

Press:

Ben GOODWIN – Tel.: +44 (0) 7935 348 065

ben.goodwin@alstomgroup.com