Movement To Work Awards Submission 2022  
  
**Breakthrough Star Award**– a recent (3 – 12 months) graduate from a Movement to Work placement who has shown great potential at the start of their career journey

Why do you believe this person (or organisation) should be celebrated for their work and success in making a difference to young people? Where possible, make specific reference to challenges posed by COVID-19 and how these were overcome:

No max words, please structure this as you see fit including relevant context and evidence where necessary. Please email any further information (eg. statistics, case studies, photos) to [info@movementtowork.com](mailto:info@movementtowork.com)

**Our Nominee.**

We would like to nominate Naman Chandra is who is currently a Level 4 Data Analyst Apprentice at Thames Water. Naman is a brilliant example of a young person with a positive attitude, resilience, and bags of potential who was finding it hard to break into the world of work. Naman reached out for employability support, made the most of the opportunities given to him and embraced workplace learning to start building his career with Thames Water.

Naman’s strengths lie in his determination and motivation. He enjoys analysing large datasets and identifying trends and inconsistencies. He has knowledge of data insights tools such as Advanced excel, Python, SQL, and Power BI.

**Naman’s Journey with Thames Water.**

Naman originally discovered Thames Water through ‘Give Someone a Start’, our three-week work experience programme designed to give individuals meaningful insights into the workplace, to build their confidence, and to improve employability skills. The scheme has helped over 250 individuals in the last 7 years and Naman was an enthusiastic and positive participant with the HR Training team. Naman explains why he joined our ‘Give Someone a Start’ work experience programme:

“I was diagnosed with severe autism when I was 18 months old. I went to a special school and later, with support, to a mainstream school. Although I struggled due to my autism, I went on to achieve good A levels and then got a BSc degree in Maths.

After I finished my degree, I started to apply for jobs. I was invited to interviews but a successful outcome was a challenge, even despite my degree. I struggled to remain hopeful.

I eventually came across a disability careers fair where I was introduced to Thames Water and signed up to join the GSAS Programme. It was through this that I gained invaluable work experience to support my future. I felt not only appreciated but understood, and I saw that this would be a company where different backgrounds were valued.”

Like many people, Naman’s permanent job search was impacted by the affects of the pandemic and in 2021 he applied for a six-month role on Thames Water’s Kickstart scheme. Naman joined the Bulk Metering team working with his mentor and Service Delivery Manager, Rosie Rand. Naman was responsible for customer contact data analysis and producing regular reports for the team which he was able to deliver on time and with good accuracy. An area that was identified as one to work on, was producing data insights, and Naman’s mentor Rosie arranged for him to spend time with another team to work on this skill. As part of the Water Network Data Insights team, Naman was able to learn some new skills in SQL and Power BI in a very short period.

Each of Thames Water’s Kickstart positions were created to make the most of the candidate and mentor’s skills, and Naman was supported by the Skills and Emerging Talent team with wrap around care. In addition to his day job, Naman and the rest of his Kickstart cohort were enrolled on an accredited Level 1 Employability Skills course delivered by West London College, and a Diploma in Sustainable Development Goals delivered by Academy One. Naman’s confidence really grew over the six months, and he was a vocal participant in his weekly college classes with his Kickstart cohort, a skill which does not come easily to Naman. Naman’s social and work-related progress was notable in the context of the Covid pandemic, as he was mostly working and learning from home, joining meetings via Teams.

**Watch this video to hear from Naman and his Kickstart mentor here:** [**Naman Chandra and his Kickstart mentor Rosie**](https://youtu.be/OV90fTguV6c)

Naman’s mentor Rosie recognised Naman’s potential and worked with the Skills and Emerging Talent team to support him with his permanent job search at Thames Water. Many of the existing vacancies seemed like too much of a jump in experience, and an apprentice route seemed ideal to give him the practical experience he needed, in a supportive learning environment. Naman successfully interviewed for a Level 4 Data Analyst Apprenticeship and is now a few months into his role. Naman explains:

“My Kickstart mentor Rosie was very supportive and understanding, as she saw my potential and understood my needs. She suggested I apply for a Data Analyst Apprenticeship as I was already familiar with the database, and it would enable me to learn and develop. A new manager Leena Vincent from the Data Service Team agreed to support me as an apprentice, and I’m now continually learning a variety of new data analysis skills within a very supportive team.”

Naman’s current manager believes he has gained many fundamental skills from the Kickstart Programme, which has paved the way to his apprenticeship. She says,

“I believe the confidence that was gained through these employment programmes has allowed Naman to jump into his apprenticeship with drive and enthusiasm. Naman works to continuously improve whilst still being inquisitive and adding his perceptive personality to projects.”

**In Summary**

We believe Naman has shown great potential at the start of his career. He has displayed resilience and determination throughout his education and is now displaying that in a work environment. Leigh Maxfield, Employment and Skills Partner summarises by saying:

“Naman was a pleasure to support on his job search due to his hard work ethos and determination to build a career with Thames Water. He took on board feedback and showed a positive attitude even when faced with setbacks. It is a pleasure to see him developing in his new role and I look forward to seeing him progress.”

**Strategic context – company information.**

Thames Water is the UK’s biggest water and wastewater services provider. We have over 6,500 hardworking and dedicated staff, these key workers provide essential services around the clock to 15 million customers across London, the Thames Valley and surrounding areas.  For an average of just over £1 a day for our households, we provide 2.6 billion litres of drinking water and safely remove 4.6 billion litres of wastewater every day.  We invested more than £1 billion in our infrastructure in 2019/20, leading to a total of £16 billion in the past 16 years, and we will continue to spend wisely on improving resilience, service and efficiency, as well as provide more support for customers in vulnerable circumstances.  We also have additional responsibilities to society and the natural environment. What we do and how we do it delivers significant public value, which is why we have ambitious plans to self-generate more of our own power, reduce our carbon emissions and increase biodiversity across our sites.

One of the biggest people challenges for Thames Water is securing the core skills required in the business today and for the future; particularly those skills which are either industry specific or in high demand and short supply.

We have an opportunity to engage our workforce and ensure it is reflective and diverse of the local communities we serve.  We already have several great initiatives within the business; however, many projects are run independent of each other, with a limited joined up approach or strategy alignment. There is huge pride within Thames Water for being a custodian of the environment, we want to broaden this thinking to include benefits that can be offered to communities in terms of skills, jobs and careers. Diversity and Inclusion is well established across the business; however, we want to create a more socio-economic diverse workforce that supports emerging talent strategies.

**Programmes to support young people in particular**

***Kickstart***

In line with our strategic direction and workforce profiling data findings, we signed up to the government’s Kickstart scheme. Thames Water has boosted its commitment to unemployed young people aiming to kickstart their careers during the pandemic. We initially offered 50 placements under the government’s £2 billion Kickstart scheme – but this has risen to 100. The scheme funds six-month placements for unemployed 16 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit.

As well as gaining valuable experience of the workplace, our Kickstarters also benefit from internal training, coaching, and mentoring.

Each of the placements offered, are of the highest quality and cover a variety of roles across the company from our HR and corporate teams to our operational and site-based roles. Each of the placements was individually tailored to the candidate to ensure both the young person and the hosting team maximise the benefits of the placement. Throughout the 6-months placement, the candidates all receive robust wrap around support. Our dedicated Kickstart team facilitate employability and soft skills training as well as regular check-ins with the hiring mentors and the Kickstart candidates. Additionally, all Kickstart colleagues are enrolled onto an accredited Level 1 Employability Skills course delivered by West London College as well as a Diploma in Sustainable Development Goals delivered by Academy One.

To date we have successfully filled all 100 roles offered under the scheme. 76% of our Kickstart completers so far have secured a permanent role within Thames Water with over 81% securing employment in total. (i.e., outside of Thames Water).

Karima Khandker, Thames Water’s Head of Resourcing, Skills and Emerging Talent, said: “*One of our principles is building a pipeline of skills from our communities and education sector. It’s important because we want to make a positive impact on society and play our part in educating and inspiring future generations. We’re committed to securing quality outcomes for as many Kickstarters as possible, for example through apprenticeships or employment.”*

Mentors assigned to each Kickstart placement also benefit from ongoing support and can sign up to a professional development Level 3 mentoring qualification.

***Apprenticeships***

Our Apprenticeship programme at Thames Water has been running successfully for many years, generally recruiting apprentices to Engineering and Science pathways with circa 20 starts per year. For the period 2021/22 our intake will be circa 126 apprentice starters offering more diverse apprenticeship opportunities including degree level opportunities. These are expanding from 2-3 pathways to over 20 pathways for 2022. New opportunities include Civil Engineering, Project Management, LGV Driver, Customer Service, Quantity Surveying, Engineering Technician to name just a few.

Our current apprentice opportunities went live in February 2022 and successful candidates will join the business in September 2022. We want to attract candidates from all social and economic backgrounds and will be applying diverse recruitment panels to our interview process and applying positive action to all roles.

We are also offering internal employees the opportunity to complete an apprenticeship to develop them in their current roles to reach higher and be better. Employees are completing various programmes from Learning Mentor, IT solutions to Senior Leaders MBA programmes.

**Covid 19 challenges and solutions**

The implementation of the ambitious skills strategy has been made more complex through the challenges posed by the Covid 19 pandemic. Being a provider of life’s essential service, we have continued to be operational throughout the pandemic with differing levels of impact to our ways of working, depending on the types of roles and the changing government guidelines.

Within our corporate functions we moved fully to distance working and are now implementing hybrid working. This can result in limitations to those who are already disadvantaged in the workplace such as those who struggle due to limited digital skills or lack of access to reliable Wi-Fi and adequate working space at home.

We have put measures in place to identify challenges and offer solutions to remove these additional barriers. A good example is our work experience programme which was run on site pre-pandemic. In 2021 this was undertaken via a virtual route. Working with a couple of referral and delivery partners, we were able to offer a work experience programme to eight Care Leavers from East London. Each of the candidates spent three weeks with a local college working on employability topics and then spent the subsequent three weeks with us where they were given daily interactive talks and tasks via Microsoft Teams from various departments around the business. Each candidate was also offered a one-to-one mentorship with a Thames Water employee and the opportunity to apply for any positions they found interesting.

The impact of the pandemic will be felt for years to come, including the impact on young people’s mental health needs. This is something we are keen in assisting with. With the introduction of our back to work programmes we can give young people hope for the future. The pandemic challenged us to undertake worthwhile and safe experiences for our candidates and staff. We worked with those who had digital barriers such as limited WIFI and access to a computer and have overcome these challenges by providing equipment, access, and digital training.