



16–18 Operational Readiness Guide

PREPARING FOR FUTURE TRAIN DRIVER OPPORTUNITIES

From 30 June 2026, the minimum age for domestic train driver licensing in Great Britain is scheduled to reduce from 20 to 18. This is an eligibility change, not a lowering of standards. Existing safeguards remain central, including psychometric testing, training, supervision, medical standards and fatigue management.

WHAT TO BUILD BEFORE APPLYING

A strong young applicant should be able to show evidence of:

Reliability Good attendance, punctuality, meeting deadlines and keeping commitments.

Responsibility Examples from school, college, part-time work, volunteering, cadets, sport or caring duties.

Concentration The ability to stay focused, avoid distraction and complete tasks accurately.

Rule discipline Following instructions properly, checking before acting and avoiding shortcuts.

Communication Listening carefully, speaking clearly, asking for help and passing information accurately.

Risk awareness Noticing hazards early, thinking before acting and knowing when to escalate.

Self-management Being prepared, organised, honest about fatigue and willing to learn from mistakes.

RSSB FRAMEWORK

These areas align closely with the RSSB non-technical skills framework, which covers situational awareness, diligence, communication, decision making, cooperation, workload management and self-management.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Do not wait for a trainee driver vacancy before preparing. Start an evidence log now. For each example, write down what happened, what you were responsible for, what action you took, what standard you followed, and what you learned.

Useful evidence can come from ordinary activities if explained properly: turning up consistently, handling pressure calmly, following rules in cadets or sport, checking work carefully, supporting others, or challenging unsafe behaviour.

SUGGESTED TDF PATHWAY

Age 16: Start with **Developing Operational Maturity** to understand responsibility, reliability and safety-critical behaviour.

Age 16–17: Develop the right mindset with **Operational Thinking Level 3** to learn the realities of train driving, shift work, concentration, communication and rules.

Age 17–18: Use **Risk Based Decision Making Level 3** to strengthen judgement, escalation and pressure-management examples.

Age 18+: When vacancies open, use **TDF psychometric readiness**, **CV support** and **interview preparation** to approach selection professionally.

FINAL MESSAGE

The strongest young applicants will not simply say they want to drive trains. They will show evidence of maturity, discipline, concentration, communication and safety awareness before they apply.