Press Release

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Railway enthusiast gets taste of dream job

- *Avanti West Coast offer railway enthusiast a unique train driver experience*
- *Joshua Emmett, 11, takes on his dream job for the day at London Euston*
- *Surprise visit designed to support Joshua's learning and goal to become a train driver*

Avanti West Coast has given a young railway enthusiast the chance to experience his dream job during a special visit at London Euston station.

The train operator welcomed Joshua Emmett, 11, who is from Stoke-on-Trent, to become a rookie train driver for the day after discovering his passion for the railway.

Joshua spots trains every week – travelling between his local railway stations in the hope to see his favourite and rare trains, as well as hearing their horns. His visits to Crewe are those he likes best because of the friendly drivers and opportunity to see terminating and night trains.

Joshua's tutor, Lauren Rhodes, approached Avanti West Coast asking if a unique experience to support his learning and aspirations to be a train driver could be arranged.

Lauren explained that due to anxiety, these outings are some of the only times Joshua leaves his house and are one of the few activities that bring him joy, a sense of confidence, and social interaction.

"I'm a huge advocate for experiential based learning and felt a sneak peek into the railway would support Joshua," she said.

"As soon as I met Joshua, I could see his absolute love and passion for the railway. I found it truly inspiring. He taught me lots about trains and I could see how much they meant to him – it is beyond a hobby!"

The 11-year-old railway enthusiast established his own YouTube channel a year ago called 'The Secret Train Spotter' that features videos with tips and sounds of horns. He dedicates his spare time recording videos, editing and engaging the train enthusiast community.

Inspired by his story, the intercity operator invited Joshua for a day on the West Coast Main Line with his family – travelling on a Pendolino train from Stoke-on-Trent to London, where they enjoyed a tour of the driver's cab.

Joshua then took to the controls of a Pendolino train simulator and gained an insight into the job.

The sounds of trains is what the rail enthusiast is most passionate about. His favourite train horn is that of a Class 82 locomotive and during his trainspotting adventures he often gets the chance to sound horns.

"I love the railway – especially the sounds and different trains. My favourite livery is Avanti West Coast's Progress train because of the rainbow colours. I feel honoured to have been given the chance to drive a Pendolino," said Joshua.

"I want to become a train driver because I want to help people get to their destinations. I love looking out of the window and seeing the sights. Being able to have a view from the driver's cab would be amazing!"

Joanna Buckley, Avanti West Coast Community Manager, said: "It was a pleasure welcoming Joshua to Euston station to become a train driver for the day. His passion and enthusiasm for the railway was brilliant and he showed great potential in the driver's seat.

"Trains mean a lot to Joshua, which is why we were keen to make his experience special and spur him on to pursue a career in rail – it's especially fitting as the railway marks its 200th anniversary and wants to inspire the next generation. We wish Joshua all the best with his studying and hope his dream of becoming a train driver comes true one day."

Reflecting on Joshua's day as a train driver, Lauren said: "I'm amazed and so grateful to Avanti West Coast for providing this opportunity. This is a dream come true for Joshua and an invaluable experience for him – socially, personally, and educationally.

"I hope this experience will give him the confidence and reassurance the next stage of his education will be vital to help get where he wants to be. Hopefully, one day I will be able to travel on a train with him – maybe even one driven by him!"

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To watch Joshua's YouTube channel, visit: www.youtube.com/@thesecrettrainspotter

About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos returned to the rails in June 2024 following a £117m investment programme that's delivered the best in class comfort. Known as the UK's hardest working fleet, all 56 of these iconic trains have been transformed and now boast better seats, improved lighting, new interior carpets, customer-friendly passenger information screens, additional luggage space, power points at every seat and refurbished toilets.

Our new Evero fleet was introduced in June 2024. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, will serve routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West, leading to a substantial cut in carbon emissions with an increase in seats, and offering improved comfort. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, these new trains are the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

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