

Defence firm Leonardo launches engineering 'returnship' scheme at Yeovil site

Leonardo has launched a new job scheme at its helicopter manufacturing site in Somerset for engineers who have taken a career break to re-enter the industry.

The aerospace giant has partnered with the STEM Returners organisation for the 12-week programme, which will offer paid placements working on the design and development of aircraft at the Yeovil site.

Experienced candidates considering the 'returnship' will be able to apply for roles including structural design engineer, aerodynamics analyst and system safety engineer.

Leonardo said the scheme was part of its ongoing commitment to improve diversity and address a skills shortage within the industry.

STEM Returners, an initiative that helps workers return to the science, technology and engineering sectors, said more than half of the professionals it was assisting were female, while almost 40% were from black or minority backgrounds.

It added that 10% of the current workforce within STEM industries was female while 6% were from ethnic minority groups.

Leonardo said successful candidates may be offered full-time positions at the company on the completion of their placements.

Mike Overd, chief engineer of military aircraft UK at Leonardo

Helicopters, said: “Our work with STEM Returners is aimed at finding exceptional talent to help us deliver our first class engineering and technical services.

“Diversity drives innovation and gives us the competitive edge, so experienced engineers from a diverse range of backgrounds are very valuable to our business.”

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The new STEM Returners initiative in Yeovil follows the successful roll-out of STEM Returner programmes at Leonardo’s sites in Basildon, Edinburgh, Luton and Southampton.

Natalie Desty, director of STEM Returners, said: “This is the third programme we have launched with Leonardo UK and we are very proud to be continuing our work with them to return highly skilled people back into the industry they love.

“Only by partnering with industry leaders like Leonardo, will we make vital changes in STEM recruitment practices, to help those who are finding it challenging to return to the sector and improve diversity and inclusion.”

Defence firm Leonardo, whose helicopters are used by the British Army and Royal Navy, employs more than 3,000 people at its Yeovil site, where it is also building a [£30m logistics hub](#) this year.

Last year Leonardo said it had achieved an [equal gender balance](#) in its engineering graduate intake at its Yeovil plant for the first time.

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