**Railway fan becomes Virgin’s youngest train driver**

* *5 year old railway fan joins Virgin Trains (for the day)*

Virgin Trains welcomed its youngest ever train driver to its driving school in Crewe to give a train fan an unforgettable experience.

Lincoln, 5, who has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy – one of the most common and severe forms of Muscular Dystrophy (a genetic condition that gradually causes the muscles to weaken) mainly affecting boys in early childhood – became a train driver for the day, as part of a surprise visit organised by Virgin Trains to make precious memories with his family. Lincoln adores trains and his love for them comes from both visiting local stations and his own train set which he can sit and play all day long no matter how tired he is as a result of the Muscular Dystrophy.

Family friend, Phil Bateman – a member of the Institution of Railway Operators (IRO) – approached Chris MacKenzie, a Driver Trainer and Assessor at Virgin, to give the train fan a unique behind the scenes look at the railway.

After hearing Lincoln’s story, the Virgin Trains Driver Team invited Lincoln, who is from Sandbach in Cheshire, for an exclusive test drive of the simulator used for training at Virgin’s Talent Academy - home to its Driver Training Centre.

The rookie driver took control of the Pendolino simulator, sounding the horn and along with his mum, Rebecca, played out different scenarios in the roles of the signaller and driver.

Lincoln was also gifted with some railway goodies, including a Hornby steam locomotive and a tour of Crewe station by Virgin’s Station Manager.

Speaking of his youngest recruit, Chris said: “We had a brilliant time welcoming Lincoln to our Driver Training Centre to join us as a trainee driver for the day. He showed great promise. Trains are a big part of Lincoln’s life and it was a privilege to create some memories for him and his mum with a slightly larger train set than Lincoln is used to.”

Rebecca Singleton, Lincoln’s mum, said: “I would like to express the biggest thank you to Phil and Virgin Trains for putting together such a wonderful experience for Lincoln. He had such an amazing afternoon playing a trainee train driver and is really looking forward to touring Crewe station. Memories like this are extra special to our family. Duchenne means Lincoln misses out on so much already but his relationship with trains is special because even if he’s tired, he can sit and play or design tracks. Trains have inspired his creativity, imagination and ingenuity and I’m sure they will continue to have a very special place in our home and hearts for a long time to come.”

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**About Virgin Trains**

Stagecoach and Virgin are working in partnership to operate the West Coast inter-city route under the Virgin Trains brand, revolutionising travel on one of the UK’s key rail arteries.

The network connects some of the nation’s most iconic destinations including Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and London.

Virgin Trains is committed to delivering a high speed, high frequency service, offering shorter journey times, more comfortable travel and excellent customer service. Customers consistently rate Virgin Trains ahead of other long-distance rail franchise operators in the National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) commissioned by industry watchdog, Transport Focus.

Virgin Trains has a proud record of challenging the status quo - from introducing tilting Pendolino trains, to a pioneering automated delay repay scheme, introducing the industry-leading onboard entertainment streaming service, BEAM, and becoming the first franchised rail operator to offer m-Tickets for all ticket types.

Virgin Trains operated the East Coast route between March 1, 2015 and June 24, 2018. In that time, we invested £75m to create a more personalised travel experience, including over £40m in the existing fleet. Customers have benefitted from 48 additional services between Edinburgh and London every week, and an extra 22 Saturday services between Leeds and London – a total of 1.74 million additional seats since May 2015.

Working together, the partnership railway of the public and private sectors has published a long-term plan, called *In Partnership for Britain’s Prosperity,* to change and improve Britain’s railway. The plan will secure almost £85bn of additional economic benefits to the country whilst enabling further investment and improvement, and contains four commitments which will see rail companies: strengthen our economic contribution to the country; improve customers’ satisfaction; boost the communities we serve; and, create more and better jobs in rail. For more information go to [Britain Runs on Rail](http://www.britainrunsonrail.co.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAr_TQBRB5EiwAC_QCq9OA-y_Al1Voo4ZvYjMvSBs86kuvjZLD8MfFvnOUU9UeVZ1T5CObLRoCasIQAvD_BwE).

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