



Author Jason Bryan, driver Michelle Nicholson, head teacher Sharifan Nasa and a school child

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West Midlands Railway: My Mummy is a Train Driver book launch tackles stereotypes in rail industry

A brand-new children's book aimed at tackling stereotypes in the rail industry was launched at a West Midlands Railway (WMR) station today (Thu 24 Nov).

The event at Wolverhampton saw school children and rail industry representatives gather for the launch of 'My Mummy is a Train Driver', the latest in a series of children's books promoting diversity and inclusion.

WMR and sister company London Northwestern Railway joined with partners across the rail industry to co-fund the book – and one of the company’s own drivers offered her insights on life in the driver’s cab during its creation.

West Midlands-born authors Jason and Kerrine Bryan collaborated with the industry to highlight why careers in rail are open to all and how the railway is striving to better represent the communities that they serve.

At today’s event, invited guests including children from Graiseley Primary School in Wolverhampton, heard first-hand from a number of women train drivers and had the chance to sit in the driver’s seat of a real-life train.

Jo MacPhail, HR director at WMR, said: “It was a pleasure for West Midlands Railway to host the launch of ‘My Mummy is a Train Driver’ at Wolverhampton station today. It is important to highlight diversity and promote inclusion in the rail industry, something this book captures perfectly.

“I hope Kerrine and Jason Bryan’s wonderful series will inspire young people - such as the children from Graiseley Primary School - to go on to become the next generation of drivers.”

Jason Bryan, the book’s co-author, who gave a reading at the event, said: “Like many sectors, the rail industry can sometimes face misconceptions that some of the jobs are not suited for certain people.

“In reality the industry has done an awful lot to improve diversity and inclusion through various initiatives and this book aims to inspire young children and anyone who reads it to consider a future career in rail.”

Sharifan Nasa, head teacher of Graiseley Primary School, said: “It was a huge privilege for our children to be part of this inspiring event. It is so important for young children to not only have a love for reading but to understand that the job of a train driver is something every child can aspire to.

“The children loved every minute of their time on the station – many of them had never sat in a train before and I am sure this event will have a long-term benefit for our young people.”

One of a series of children’s books, ‘My Mummy is a Train Driver’ is available

to buy [now](#).

MY MUMMY IS A TRAIN DRIVER | CASE STUDY

Carol Burns, West Midlands Trains

My first job in the rail sector was in the ticket office. Prior to this, I really wasn't too sure what I wanted to do career-wise. I left school at 16 and worked in retail. Entering the rail industry was more by accident than design.

I quickly outgrew my role at the ticket office after a few years, but I was reluctant to leave the industry because the job security and benefits were great. When I saw a job advert for a train driver, my husband encouraged me to apply.

I qualified as a train driver in 2002. Back then, there were only about five female drivers out of about 200 at our depot. Whilst I didn't experience any obvious hostility in the workplace, I'd notice that, when I entered the messroom, male colleagues would fall silent. I definitely felt that I had to work harder to prove myself. Things have changed for the better since then.

After driving trains for a year, I became pregnant with my first daughter. There was a perception among some drivers, at the time, that my training had been a waste of money. They assumed I would leave to become a full-time parent. But I've had two daughters and I'm still here; in fact, my eldest has just started university - so not such a waste after all!

I'm from a very normal working-class background. My dad worked in warehouses and as a lorry driver during the day and my mum worked evenings. Certainly, in my generation, women train drivers were unheard of and no one before me in my family has ever worked on the railway. It was actually my dad who mentally prepared me to be resilient in a male-dominated industry. He had a great work ethic, believed in education, and always encouraged my sisters and I to do our best. Although he said that we could do and be whatever we wanted to be, he warned us that being women, we might have to work a bit harder to prove ourselves.

A perception definitely exists, among some people, that women are being

given roles as drivers for the sake of diversity. But we still have to pass the same exams as men; we still have the same responsibilities and are doing the same job just as well, if not better, sometimes. There's still also the idea that it's a hard, physical, dirty job and that women aren't up to the task, but these misconceptions are definitely changing. However, changes to attitudes about job roles and what makes a 'man's' job versus a 'woman's' job needs to happen earlier in life. That's why it's so important to read books to children heroing a diversity of role models and one of the reasons why I am very much supportive of UK railways sponsoring the production of *My Mummy Is A Train Driver* – a book targeting 4 to 7-year-olds.

During my daughter's first year at primary school, they were doing a topic about what they wanted to be when they grew up and discussed what their parents did for work. My daughter proudly announced that her mummy was a train driver to which her teacher responded: "Are you sure you don't mean your daddy is a train driver?" She replied: 'No, he's a postman, my mummy is the train driver!' People just don't naturally see women as train drivers. That incident wasn't even a one-off. Someone once said to my mum: "I didn't think they allowed women to drive trains!"

My career in the industry has progressed and I'm proud to be a role model to my girls. I've since become the lead Instructor for our depot. That means I have responsibility for coordinating all our training. We have a large number of trainees and it's very rewarding to see them develop and become drivers, especially given the challenges faced over recent years, particularly with the pandemic.

About West Midlands Trains

For further information on this release, email press.office@wmtrains.co.uk

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast Main Line to and from London Euston.

- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Snow Hill.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

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