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Go North East shows support for female colleagues on International Women's Day

Today (Monday 8 March) is International Women's Day and Go North East is celebrating the day by sharing the stories of some of its colleagues and joining in with this year's theme of 'Choose to Challenge'.

Team members across the company have been striking the 'Choose to Challenge' pose to show support and solidarity for female colleagues, and also to call out inequality.

Below you can read stories from two Go North East bus drivers and another from a member of the company's recruitment team.

Sharon – a bus driver at Go North East’s Gateshead Riverside depot

“After leaving school, I became a sewing machinist, working for CWS in Pelaw and then J Barbour’s until I had my first child in 2002. After I’d had my second child in 2008, I started working as a part-time cleaner, doing this alongside raising my children. When they’d grown a bit older, I decided I wanted a new challenge which was when my husband, Shaun, an engineer for Go North East, suggested I give bus driving a try. To be honest, I was really apprehensive at first; I thought that it was a very male-orientated job. But Shaun kept on encouraging me to apply, and so I did, and ended up getting the job; I started my new career as a bus driver in 2018! I’ve noticed there aren’t many women in the company, but those that I have met here have made my new career journey very enjoyable (with one or two hiccups along the way!). It’s a very rewarding job – no two days are ever the same.”

Helen – a bus driver at Go North East’s Chester-le-Street depot

“I left my job as manager of a pub kitchen in May 2019 to help get my mam’s business off the ground, but sadly due to my mam becoming unwell this was not to be, meaning I was out of work and as a single parent I am the sole bread winner for our household. I saw an advert on Facebook saying Go North East were recruiting - I applied, not really expecting to hear back, but I did and I joined the training school in 2019. Becoming a bus driver is definitely one of the best things I’ve ever done, no two days are the same and there are always new challenges and opportunities. I’d say to any women out there who fancy it, go for it! It’s not just the guys who can drive buses.”

Jayne – recruitment and training co-ordinator, based at Go North East’s Gateshead Riverside depot

“I started with Go North East around five years ago, and my time with the company has flown over. I remember telling everyone I had applied to go to GNE and most people laughed at me and said the buses are too big for someone like me to drive. My first day I was beyond nervous, but excited at the idea of doing something different. After around a year of driving the buses I had the chance to go onto a programme called the Talent Development Programme, and although driving was something I loved, I figured I’d take the chance. This programme opened so many doors for me, from having time in engineering to working behind the scenes in various different departments. Whilst I was on the Talent Development Programme a job became available in the Recruitment and Training department where I had already spent some time. I applied and got the position, starting in the role by doing the pre-employment administration. It’s an amazing and very busy role, which has now developed to include me doing interviews for new colleagues. The company has really helped me to develop my skills and I am

excited to see what the future holds.”

Martijn Gilbert, managing director at Go North East, said: “I’d like to thank Sharon, Helen and Jayne for sharing their stories.

“The tide is turning on the traditional stereotypes of roles such as bus driving and we are continuing to work hard on diversity and inclusivity matters, ensuring that we better reflect the communities that we serve.

“Our parent company, Go-Ahead, are looking to increase female representation from 11% to 20% by 2025, and we hope that raising awareness of career opportunities, and sharing stories like these, will help encourage more women to consider working in the bus sector.

“We have an excellent training school to teach people how to drive a bus, but having great customer service skills is an important first step attribute.

“With the current challenges affecting the retail and leisure sectors, we are particularly keen to hear from people who may now be looking for work and have a strong retail or customer service background.”

To find out more about working for Go North East and to check the latest job vacancies, visit www.gonortheast.co.uk/join-the-team.

[Go North East website](#)