



MY TFL JOURNEY

Joan Saunders-Reece, operational emergency planning officer at TfL, on a career of challenges and achievements

+ I DIDN'T HAVE A SET career path. When I joined Transport for London (TfL), I was thinking about joining the aviation industry or the Army, but then London Underground came along.

Early on in my career, I spent nine years in the Territorial Army and was attached to the Parachute Regiment. Being the only female among a lot of men in the Paras was definitely challenging, but I learned how to deal with that.

It was the same with a lot of the jobs I've had at London Underground, but I've used the skills I learned in the Army to make the most of my time there.

TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

As an operational emergency planning officer at TfL, my role is to ensure that London Underground has plans to deal

with every possible eventuality, whether that's how we operate on a day-to-day basis or coping with one-off events or more exceptional circumstances. That could be anything from bad weather to acts of terrorism – we have to ensure that we have a plan to operate a safe service for all our passengers and staff.

One of the most challenging times I've had at TfL was during the Covid pandemic. I worked throughout the pandemic and as soon as the first lockdown was announced, I had four days to completely rewrite the plans for all 272 stations in the London Underground network.

Then there was the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Just before she died, I got a message that it wasn't looking good. I was on holiday in Majorca at the time and had my

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laptop with me. As soon as the confirmation came through, I had to start work on updating the plans for her funeral.

A LIFETIME OF PRIDE

When I look back over my career, there are a number of things I'm proud of. Being the first female train driver on the Victoria Line is one of them. That was amazing and something I couldn't believe that I'd achieved. At the time, these jobs just weren't advertised to women – they didn't even have female toilets for drivers.

Coming through the grades and achieving what I've achieved as a woman has been lots of mini-achievements combined into one. London Underground has come a long way in terms of diversity and inclusion. And it's not only about gender or colour; it's about the LGBTQ+ community and other groups. We still have a way to go but we've done an awful lot of work since I first joined.

AGE APPROPRIATE

One of the EDI areas in all organisations that needs more attention is ageism. At London Underground, as long as you're fit to work then you can work. But while we have the policies in place, people will still comment on your age and whether it's time to retire.

Comments such as 'Don't you think it's time you retired?' really aren't appropriate. It's like asking someone when they're going to have a baby. I find it quite offensive. As long as someone can do their job then age shouldn't be an issue.

The other day, someone actually called me a dinosaur! I said "I might be a dinosaur but I'm a sassy dinosaur, so get over it."



CONTINUE THE JOURNEY
To read the full Transport for London Diversity & Inclusion policy, go to bit.ly/TfL-DI-policy