

On The Buses



Photo: Susanne Jacobs

“I’m literally living my dream. I know that is going to sound odd to some people, but I have always wanted to do this, and now I’m finally doing it!”

Susanne is one of the most enthusiastic bus drivers you’ll ever meet. She loves every aspect of the job; from learning the routes, to conversing with the customers, to working closely with the control room and the wider team. But perhaps her favourite part (the part that makes her eyes light up when she talks about it), is getting to drive the 14-tonne bus (the weight of about 4 midsize cars) around hilly Sheffield.

“What is not to love about that! The bus is a beast, and it feels great to drive it. I’ve always wanted to be behind the wheel of a big vehicle. I used to pass wagons on the motorway and dream about working as a truck driver. This is even better though, because I get to interact with people too.”

Susanne didn’t take her driving test until she was 41, and aged 45, she has found her perfect job; working for First Bus. After growing up in Liverpool, Susanne moved to Sheffield in her late 20s,

to be close to family. She has done various jobs over the years, but nothing that has given her the satisfaction that she gets today.

This new job has been a lifeline for Susanne and her family. After experiencing difficulties in her last role, where she worked in manufacturing, Susanne visited her GP and was signed off with work related stress.

“It’s hard to explain how bad it got, mainly because things are so much better now, so I suppose that it is a good thing that I can’t fully recall it. I had some serious concerns about health and safety at work, which I had raised with my employer, and I suppose the long and short of it is that I didn’t feel ‘listened’ to. I started to panic about going to work. I felt like it was dangerous, that people were at risk. I felt like I was the only one speaking out about it and nothing was being done. It was like I didn’t exist. The longer it took for my managers to respond to the issues I’d identified, the more stressed I became. In the end, I visited the doctor because I was crying all the time, not sleeping, and I had become fearful about going to work. I feel so different now though.”

Accessing counselling and other support through her GP meant that Susanne was able to talk about her feelings with trained professionals and start her journey to recovery.

“My husband had been telling me that I needed to change jobs for a while, but sometimes it’s hard to take advice from the people closest to you. Once I’d started to feel better, and I felt like I was being listened to finally, I realised that this was exactly what I needed to do. My stress was related to the environment I was in, and by taking positive steps to change that environment, I could take back control of my health and wellbeing. So that is what I did!”

You may well see Susanne driving her bus around South Yorkshire. If you do, be sure to say hello – chatting with customers is one of the best parts of her job. She also loves the culture of her new organisation, the way the team support each other, and the fact that the health and safety of employees and customers is paramount.

“I feel so safe in this new job. The training has been fantastic, and I’ve excelled in areas that I never thought I would. This has given me a fantastic first impression of the company and the culture. I also really appreciate the sense of community that they have created. Even when I’m driving the bus alone, I’m in constant contact with the control room and get safety alerts and news flashes to keep me informed. We have a private Facebook Group for employees, so we can chat to each other, swap shifts and share tips. It’s all simple stuff I suppose, but when a company gets the basics right, everything else just works.”

Susanne signed up to Working Win earlier this year. Supported by NHS England, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Department for Work and Pensions; Working Win is a free trial testing a new type of support for people with mental or physical health conditions that are affecting their work or their ability to find a job. If you live in South Yorkshire or Bassetlaw, you can learn more and refer yourself to the trial [here](#).