

Mary Sithole

**Customer Service Assistant
National Express**



How did you enter the transport industry?

I was looking for a part time job while studying for a degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. During this time I was also a mother of one and needed a job that would help keep my skills up to date whilst I was studying. I applied and joined the transport industry as a Customer Service Assistant.

What does your job involve?

My job is to deliver excellent customer service and improve the customer's experience. My role involves selling train tickets and assisting customers with making decisions about the tickets they want to buy. I am also responsible for providing information relating to ticket types, train running times, links with other transport operators and up to date information about disruptions and engineering works. As the first point of contact for customers who may need to raise any concerns with our products or service, I also have the responsibility of resolving problems which include refunds, replacing lost tickets, dealing with delay issues and escalating problems whenever necessary.

Why do you like working in transport?

It is rewarding to be part of an industry that keeps the city moving for business and leisure interests. Although I work in the customer service section of the industry, the transport industry is very large and includes other rewarding careers. There is room for career progression into other areas of the business.

What would your advice be to someone interested in your role?

I would say customer services is an exciting and challenging role; no day is the same. There is a lot to learn because you are dealing with people from all walks of life. The diversity of customers challenges you to adapt to a variety of customer needs. These could range from business travellers, to leisure travellers, vulnerable travellers or visitors. As long as you enjoy meeting and helping people you can build a rewarding career.

How can we attract more young people into the industry?

This could be done by increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities in the transport industry. We could also have mentoring programmes within the transport sector that are championed specifically with young people in mind. We need to make careers in transport visible to young people so that they can be seen as attractive and we could do this by celebrating and sharing the successful stories in the transport industry.