



WOMEN IN RAIL: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE GENDER BALANCE, EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN UK RAIL



Women in Rail (WR), a charity founded in 2012, comprises men and women from the UK railway sector, working together alongside major stakeholders in the industry to support the development, promotion and attraction of women in the UK railway sector and, more broadly, improve gender balance, equality, diversity and inclusion in rail.

With a more gender diverse workforce comes different experiences and skill sets, as well as new ideas and ways of working, all of which ultimately bring about positive changes and economic competitiveness. It is therefore crucial to develop female talent and promote the rail industry as an attractive career choice to young girls.

Support

WR holds regular networking events and workshops across the UK through its 8 regional groups, bringing together women and men from across the rail industry and providing them with a forum to expand their network and explore some of the key issues which they have identified as holding them back in their career.

WR runs a successful cross-industry mentoring programme where women receive guidance from senior professionals within the industry to develop their confidence and professional skills. Since 2020, the programme also welcomes male mentees to be mentored by a senior female mentor, to the extent possible.

Development

WR encourages key stakeholders to identify their female talent, engage with their employees and work with them to foster the next generation of female leaders, improve diversity and inclusion and help secure and retain talent.

Key partners of WR include NSAR, RSSB, RDG, BEIS and of course, the DfT.

The membership of WR currently includes 5,000 representatives of all grades and roles from a wide range of companies within the UK rail industry.

Attraction

By forging partnerships with like-minded groups and actively supporting their initiatives, WR aims to position rail as an attractive career choice for young women. This involves showcasing existing and upcoming female talent and role models, for instance, in its reports identifying the 20 Most Inspirational Women in UK rail (2016) and the 20 Rising Stars of UK rail (2017).

For the last 4 years, WR has hosted an awards ceremony, the Women in Rail Awards to celebrate the charity's core values and showcase inspirational colleagues, peers, managers, teams and organisations who are working hard to improve gender balance, equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK rail industry. The charity also runs the hugely successful Big Rail Diversity Challenge, a day of fun where diverse teams go head to head in physical and mental challenges.

Campaigning

WR was the first to release an industry-wide surveys of the male:female ratio and skills gap in the UK rail sector in 2015. The survey revealed that 16.4% of the workforce in UK rail are women, mostly in non-decision making roles, and identified the skills gap.

In 2019, WR launched SWIFT, a peer-to-peer network of senior men and women in rail whose purpose is to develop high potential women and foster the next generation of female leaders in UK rail.