

**Press release – FINAL
March 2024**

Transport Skills Academy tackles gender disparity in the West Midlands transport industry

This International Women's Day (8th March) and National Careers Week (4th-9th March), the Transport Skills Academy (TSA) is encouraging women in the West Midlands to consider a career in transport.

The sector has historically been male-dominated and faces the challenge of attracting and retaining diverse talent. In 2023, women made up [21% of the UK transport and logistics workforce](#) – in an industry that employs over 1.5 million people.

The TSA – founded by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) – was launched in 2022 to inspire the future workforce to choose a career in transport, while upskilling the existing regional workforce.

In 2022, women made up just 19% of the West Midlands transport workforce, the TSA is combatting gender disparity in the region by providing equal access to learning and development opportunities and showcasing women who are delivering change within the industry.

In the first year of operation, the TSA engaged 32 local schools and colleges and attended 6 careers events, educating more than 1,656 learners on the range of roles available in transport. TfWM also offers a week-long work experience programme twice a year for the future workforce, with 14 completions to date during their first year.

As an organisation, TfWM is leading by example on diversity in the sector, with women representing 39.7% of all staff, and making up 36.4% of the senior leadership team. The West Midlands is the first regional combined authority to appoint a female Chief Executive and female Transport leader. Laura Shoaf CBE, Chief Executive at WMCA, is the first, and to date only women in the UK, to have led a Passenger Transport Executive body or an Integrated Transport Authority.

Following in the footsteps of Laura, Anne Shaw OBE, Executive Director at TfWM has made an impressive commitment to building a career in transport. Anne has inspired female professionals to achieve their goals in both the largest local authority in Europe and, on a regional level, in the second biggest urban conurbation in the UK (WMCA).

In 2021, the Government appointed Laura and Anne to lead efforts to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) on Transport, as the UK's first Transport Champions, striving to increase gender diversity in the industry and remove the bias of transport. Both are passionate about inspiring the next generation of women into the sector, supporting young women through mentoring and regular attendance at industry events to further increase representation.

Across Transport for West Midlands, work is being done to increase female representation throughout the project lifecycle, as well as to create a safer, more inclusive transport network. Dawn Hughes, Principal Performance Management Analyst has worked at TfWM for 26 years, working her way up through the organisation.

Dawn leads a team of four data analysts in the analysis and visualisation of traffic and public transport data across the West Midlands. On top of her role, she is a mentor, the women's officer for UNISON WMCA and the chair for the WMCA Women's Network Group. As part of

her role as UNISON rep, Dawn challenged several policies relating to maternity and support for women at work, which ultimately led to a policy refresh, increasing the generosity of the offer.

Through implementing stronger maternity, care and menopause policies, and flexible working patterns, more women are being encouraged to work in transport. The TSA encourages colleagues to undertake training and development opportunities and works closely with regional partners and support groups for women in the industry, including Women in Transport.

Michele Roberts, Head of Transport Skills at TfWM, said: “At the Transport Skills Academy, we’re on a mission to challenge gender stereotypes in the transport industry. While work is being done to increase female representation, there is more that needs to be done to bring young women into the sector.

“Through working with partner organisations, schools and colleges, we hope to inspire the next generation and encourage future entrants into the workforce. By ensuring the visibility of our female colleagues in the industry and providing access to free educational resources, connecting people to the right opportunities, we hope to bring about change.”

To find out more about the Transport Skills Academy, visit: <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/transport-skills-academy/>.