



Jason, Operations and Transport Manager, First Bus

"I'm the operations manager for Larbert depot and also the transport manager for PM3 which covers Larbert, Bannockburn and Balfron.

So my job is to meet our daily objective of running our mileage, meeting customer demand, customer service and dealing with a workforce of 290 people. One thing I like about the bus industry is every day is different.

I do enjoy working with people, working from home I found challenging, but when I'm in the office you get the crack and the banter. You do get all the challenges that comes with being onsite but I also find that rewarding. I've got a fantastic team in Larbert Depot who are really customer centric. Its ok saying we all need to meet customer demand but if we're being customer centric in the first instance then it's natural to deliver that service and meet demand.

It's been tricky during the Pandemic as government guidelines have stated stay at home but the drivers have also needed me at the depot so it's a fine line.

So in the beginning I worked from home and came in just one morning a week, then as things changed/progressed and we started to lose close colleagues and friends I decided my presence was needed more in the depot firstly for my own mental health and others. I am the first aid & mental wellbeing champion for First Scotland East which covers Livingston Depot as well.

I recognised that people wanted and needed to see me! I bring another dynamic to the team and together we all gel well as a team. It was needed to boost morale so now I'm here for part of the day usually 6am-1pm for the face to face needs and I try to get home for the office based work, but it's been a challenge. I've not been able to get to the other depots due to travel restrictions and do the Transport Managers Review but I do it for Larbert and each of their respective Operations Managers are responsible for returning a report each month.

First Bus has been recognised by staff and customers for all the efforts made with Covid Safety Social Distancing measures. The biggest challenge for drivers has been the act of questioning [customers].

The biggest challenge in the depot has been being able to maintain social distancing, the premises are not set up for it. It's been a challenge to say the least. We are now going into phase 3 where staff can now do remote sign on whereby they phone in, confirm they are on the premises, confirm their temperature has been checked then we confirm where their bus is. And that's going to land on the employee app shortly so its minimising the number of people in the building. But the downside to this is our staff like the interaction of coming into work, arriving 20 minutes early to have a catch up together before they go on shift. It's a tough balance.

As we come out of the pandemic its important for us to let customers know we are still here and we are still a safe service for them to use. At the end of the day bus isn't a dirty word, bus is part of the solution for the environment and reducing emissions. It's the solution and if we just hide, we'll not sustain going into the future and whilst we're being funded right now its ok but when that stops how are we going to be positioned to continue and run.

Years ago I was Bannockburn & Livingston Depot and we went round the schools because of vandalism and we were trying to say to them this is your service, if you break a window, not only are you potentially injuring your granny or your friends granny, even worse the driver who could go off the road which could then injure everybody!

We were trying to make them see it's their service that is being affected. I like the idea of the 19 & under pass and extending it to up to 22's - so a government pass that allows young people to travel for free. That the best way of encouraging the younger generation into using bus as the norm going forward."

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