



Michelle Bus Driver – First Aberdeen: March 2021

In her first interview, Michelle shares more of her story, becoming a bus driver and her experience through the pandemic.

"I'm a Bus driver for First Aberdeen. A typical day for me, I stop pick up my passengers with a big smile and you're always greeted back with a smile! You'll sometimes see somebody standing at the bus stop that looks a bit grumpy, early morning and I say 'morning' and they always change. Although everyone's wearing face masks now, you can tell by their eyes that they're smiling and I always get a goodbye at the end of it.

I love my job. You're working on your own but we are a team, all bus drivers give one another a nice wave as they pass each other, it's sort of like a little family. But you're not having to rely on anyone else. You know your bus is yours, your passengers are yours and I treat them all as if I would treat my kids. If your bus is running Late its running late! You can't help it if you've had a wheelchair on and a wheelchair off which takes time. Or there's been an accident where the police have shut the road. There's no point stressing, you can't go anywhere, you've just got to explain your passengers and once they realise then they understand.

I'm a Mum and Granny, my daughters were Champion figure skaters, So I've done hair and make up. I went to college and I did a HND in fashion hair and I did hair and makeup at the theatres, so I've done lots of a little jobs and this is my ideal job. I love driving I even chose to drive from Aberdeen to Minehead a few years ago rather than taking the plane as I love driving so much.

One day I decided on my way home from work that I didn't want to work in an office anymore! So when I was driving to work the next day, I saw a poster on the back of the bus saying 'become a bus driver'. As I arrange all the buses and tickets for the local football supporters club, Away games, I was speaking to one of the bus drivers and said I need a job like yours

where I get paid for smiling and he said you should, First [Bus] are looking for drivers! I came home and thought I'm going to do it! So I applied and I think I spoke to Alan Cheyne for about 12 minutes and he said 'the jobs yours'. Since then I've never looked back! I've done many jobs, bar manager, office manager, I was a health and safety coordinator. I used to be a Youth Worker and drug counsellor for Aberdeen City Council and this is the most stress-free job that I've done!

The First Bus training was phenomenal. First tailor the training to what you need. I've got a unique way of learning, if I'm driven around a route once and I take my own shorthand notes, that's all I need. I know the route. So last year, after only being a bus driver 4 months, I went to Glasgow for three months to help out down there. Two big long routes that went from outside East Kilbride into East Kilbride into Glasgow City Centre and then back. Then Covid happened, So I came home.

Then three months before Christmas I was in York for five weeks and then in Halifax for six weeks. In Halifax I was driving through to Bradford and Huddersfield. I love my Aberdeen depot but it's been good experiencing other depots and seeing how they run. The Halifax depot, the management and the training there was phenomenal and I think the best drivers come from there as those roads and streets are so tight!! So in total, I now know over 50 routes.

As a female bus driver I love it because the passengers are more smiley. And when they come on the bus you always get, 'it's nice to see a lady, the ladies always smile. The men are always grumpy!' I say they're not really! But as a female driver it's a lot easier to defuse a situation especially with the odd drunken passenger that's not in the best place! As soon as you say 'afternoon', they tend to shrug it off.

As a bus driver, First Bus have looked after us 100% with regards to Covid19. With the wipes, the hand sanitiser, masks and everything. So I feel safe going to work. I think being a bus driver we are always a little more at risk but no more than standing next to someone on the street. Customers are happy enough to wear masks and they've responded well to the changes. You will get the odd one but I always carry spare masks.