

Following the launch of our new TSSA Equality Handbook at conference, we want to highlight how equality issues impact all TSSA members. For Father's Day, Organiser Amy Keirl caught up with TSSA Rep and father, Andy Squires, who tells us why our equality agenda is so important to him.

TSSA Rep and Father - Andy

Amy: I hope you had an enjoyable Father's Day Andy and that you were able to spend some of it with your family. Thank you for taking the time to share information about your life and experiences in the rail industry with our members. Firstly, could you tell me about your role in the rail industry?

Andy: I work in Control, no call is the same, it could be anything from a hole in a fence, to a major incident and anything in between making it hugely varied role. In any given circumstance my team and I must know what to do, who to involve, who to call and what actions that we need to take as an organisation. In July this year, I will have worked on the railway for 35 years.

Amy: Wow, that is an incredible amount in years of experience, no doubt TSSA members benefit from this when you are representing them. On behalf of TSSA and members, we'd like to thank you for your contribution to the union. Now that we've learnt a bit about your working life can you tell us about your family?

Andy: I am husband to Andrea who works in the rail industry as a railway guard and I am lucky enough to have 4 girls aged 28 to 11. My eldest daughter lives and works in Birmingham so I don't get to see as much of her as I'd like. My second eldest has just given us our first grandchild and at just a few weeks old he is giving us a lot of joy!

My 15-year-old daughter is a normal teenager with make-up and social media being the main areas of her life, as I'm sure is typical of girls her age. My 11-year-old has been diagnosed on the Autistic Spectrum; we have known of her unique differences from an early age, but diagnosis takes time. We try our best to protect her whilst allowing her the freedom to make her own choices in the world.

Amy: Congratulations on becoming a grandfather Andy, what wonderful news.

TSSA recently launched a new Equality Agenda which champions our work in progressing equality in the workplace. Why is TSSA's equality agenda important to you?

As I mentioned before, I have a daughter on the Autistic Spectrum which formed part of my decision to become one of the first Neurodiversity Champions when they were introduced by TSSA. I strongly advocate for anyone with a hidden disability being supported in the workplace. I am currently working with members to make that happen, this involves using positive discussion and reasonable adjustments to enable the person to find their place in their team and the industry. Neurodiversity should be celebrated, individuals who are neurodivergent provide positive value to the industry and when they are supported effectively this improves their own wellbeing and self-worth.



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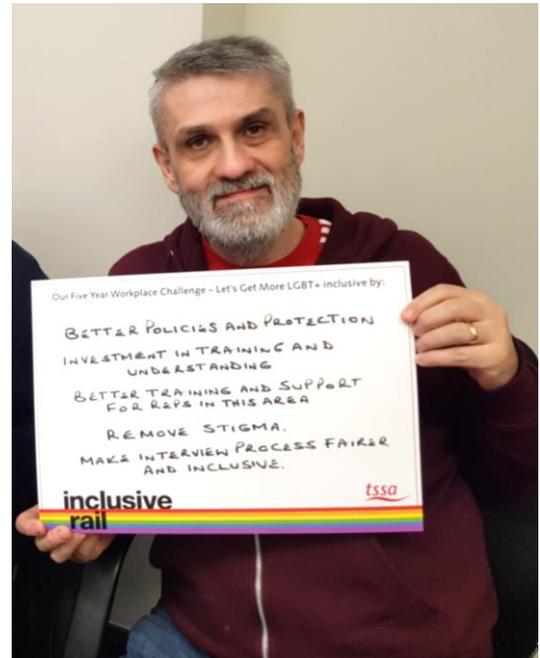
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Andy: TSSA's equality work is vital, as without our union and reps, underrepresented groups of people that rely on us championing their issues, would not have a voice. From LGBT+, Neurodiversity, mental health, female workers in a male dominated industry to young workers who are trying to find their place at work: they all rely on us to give sound judgement and advice gained from high quality training and time served in the industry. Sometimes just listening to someone and their individual needs is the most powerful thing you can do.

Amy: It's a really important point that you make about listening to our member's needs. TSSA is committed to listening to our members and supporting them in the workplace by addressing what is important for them. Do you have any advice for members or anyone thinking of joining TSSA, who may relate to the topics that we've discussed?

Andy: You are not alone, whether you are a member or a rep, reach out and speak to the people around you. I don't know it all, despite approaching 35 years in the industry I am still learning, still looking to make the workplace more accepting of those perceived to be different from the norm. What I hope to do as a rep is to empower people within the workplace, sometimes only small changes are needed to make a huge difference to someone's working life.



Amy: It is great to hear how strongly you feel about championing equality Andy, which leads me onto my next question. Other than being a Neurodiversity Champion, what is your specific role as a representative for TSSA?

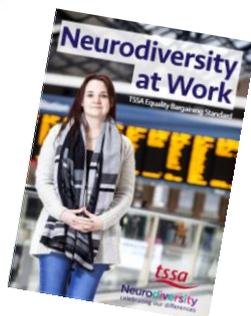
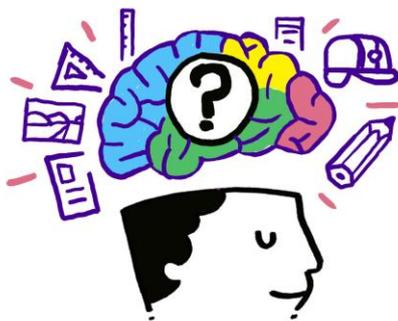
Andy: I am currently a Lead Equality Rep, I sit on the National Group along with other senior reps and together we look to progress important issues which affect our members and our industry. I am also an LGBT+ Ally and fully support everyone being able to exist as an equal in the workplace.

I enjoy the challenge of working in the rail industry and I like working with my colleagues. Control can be quite a dark place to work in where humour and moods can be different from other working environments but that's what makes it an enjoyable job to be in! I certainly wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

Amy: Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us Andy.

If you are reading this and would like to speak to TSSA about your own experiences and story then please get in contact with us by2025@tssa.org.uk

NEURODIVERSITY



See our '10 Reasons to Join & Support Equality' Video www.tssa.org.uk/equality

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For more information about our equality agenda and how you can get involved please visit www.tssa.org.uk/equality