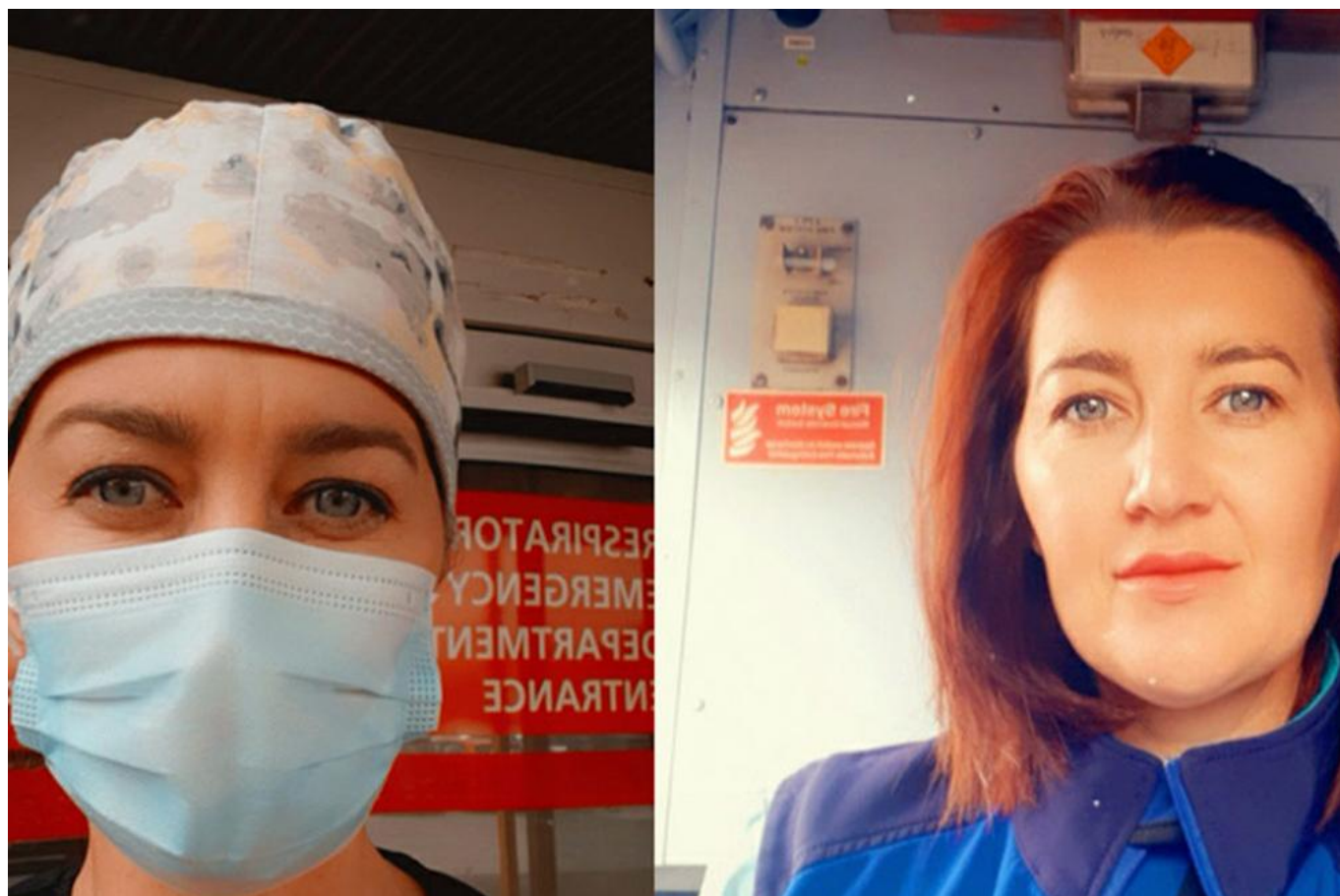


Northern train driver awarded BEM for work as paramedic during COVID-19 outbreak

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A Northern train driver who worked as a paramedic during the COVID-19 outbreak has been awarded one of the country's highest civilian honours.

Jolene Miller, from Stockton-on-Tees, is celebrating after she was awarded a British Empire Medal for services to the NHS during the coronavirus pandemic.

The British Empire Medal is given in recognition of service to the community which can include charitable or voluntary activities.

Jolene said: "It's been so surreal, I can't believe it, I'm really proud but still in shock. There's still lots of people I know working in the NHS and fighting corona virus day in day out while I spent a few months working back in a hospital. I just wanted to use the skills I had."

As the government started implementing lockdown measures to try and stop the spread of COVID-19 Jolene spoke with her bosses at Northern about utilising both her skills as a paramedic and as a train driver.

From March to the end of June, Jolene was driving Northern trains for one week transporting key workers to their workplace, including driving the route to James Cook Hospital station.

She returned to her previous role of paramedic with the NHS.

Jolene worked at Darlington Memorial Hospital's Accident and Emergency department as a hospital liaison officer. She triaged patients as they arrived by ambulance, enabling them to get the most appropriate care, and looked after the patients until rooms became available. This allowed the full-time paramedic crews to get back out on the road to respond to the next emergency

She said: "I made sure I had days off at the end of each week so that I was ready for the next job and help to keep everything safe. It was quite stressful at times, but I enjoyed getting back to working in the NHS – though I think I'll stick to train driving in the future."

Jolene worked with the North East Ambulance Service for 12 years from 2006, starting as an ambulance technician, before training to be a paramedic.

However, in 2018 she decided she would like a career change and, having seen how much her husband enjoyed his job as a train driver for Northern, decided she would apply too.

She said: "Northern has been amazing throughout this, they didn't have to let me do it, but they did and have been so supportive of me from the very first phone call I made to HR. It's a great company to work for and I am glad I made the change."

Tony Baxter, Regional Director for Northern, said: "We're so proud of Jolene and everything she has done during the COVID-19 outbreak and for her hard work. We always want to support our colleagues in any way we can, and we are delighted to have been able to give Jolene the flexibility she needed to help out the NHS."

[We spoke to Jolene earlier this year about her work. Click here to read the article.](#)

Photo credit: Northern

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