

The mum and daughter duos proving the railway runs in the family

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Southern's Denise Bloom and her daughter, Jayne Collins, from Sussex, didn't set out to work together on the railway but are both enjoying long-term careers in the industry. On Mother's Day, Denise is encouraging more people to consider following in their parent's footsteps, after Jayne did exactly that 18 years ago.

65-year-old Denise struggled to make her first steps in the world of work. She often found herself taking on dead-end jobs where she felt side-lined for being a young mother and wasn't given the same opportunities as others to receive training or promotions. She decided to get a job in rail as a stopgap, with the plan to go back to college to try and gain what she considered much-needed qualifications.

However, Denise fell in love with the railway from day one and immediately cancelled her place at college, feeling like she'd found her place in the world. When her daughter found herself at a similar loose end career-wise, Denise suggested she join her at Southern Rail.

Jayne, 47, said: "I was working as a tours and promotion assistant for stand-up comedians in London. I really loved it, it felt like I was really living my dream, but it all came crashing down in 2000 when I was

made redundant aged 26. I was a bit down and had to start job-hunting. I managed to get a job with the police, but it was an admin job and involved quite a lot of work with domestic abuse cases, which I found quite difficult to handle.”

It was then that mum Denise stepped in and put forward some suitable roles on the railway. Jayne initially joined the industry with Network Rail when she was 30 years old, moving over to Southern in 2006. She’s tried her hand at various roles and is now a conductor instructor. She continues: “Having my mum on the other side really helped to give me an insight into life on the railway, there were no surprises when I joined, which is perhaps why I felt quite comfortable from the beginning.”

Denise wants more women to realise the potential of a career in rail. She added: “I was really pleased when my daughter decided to join me at Southern. There are such a variety of roles available and I don’t think women realise how many opportunities there are for them.”

Although they can bond over their shared career path, due to the nature of their shift work, Denise and Jayne don’t get to see each other as much as they’d like.

Denise said: “It’s difficult to fit in meeting up around our work schedules, but because we both know what our jobs involve – it makes it easier to understand. We’ve gone through many Mother’s Days without seeing each other but at least when we’re both working, it’s nice to know we’re not too far from one another on the network.”

Despite working in a traditionally male-orientated industry, both Denise and Jayne agree that they’ve never been made to feel unequal in the workplace and Denise in particular feels that she has been encouraged to progress and apply for different roles to get her to where she wants to be.

Meet Megan and Jaqui, Southeastern’s mother and daughter duo

This Mother’s Day Southeastern is showcasing the mother and daughter duo, Megan Farnan and Jacqueline Johns.

Megan first joined Southeastern, where she works as a Station Team Leader at Waterloo East, in 2014. Thanks to her love of the industry, she convinced her mum, Jaqui, to get onboard and become part of the railway family too.

As platform staff at Waterloo East and Charing Cross since 2019, Jaqui has supported passengers through the stations.

Working for Southeastern together has its perks, as Megan and Jaqui often have the same shifts, travelling to and from work on the same train from Orpington.

At first, their colleagues were surprised to hear Jaqui was Megan’s mum. Megan said: “They could instantly see the resemblance, though they always say she doesn’t look old enough to be my Mum. I’m not sure if that’s a good thing on my part!”

Close both at work and at home, the pair go bike riding in the summer together and share many of the same friends from the station. Though, as they spend so much time together, they credit the strength of their relationship to their ability to separate work and home and a shared love for their roles.

Jaqui shared: “The best thing about working at Southeastern is that every day is truly different. I’ve made a lot of new friends and the station is such a happy place to work.”

Megan agreed, she said: “Waterloo East station really is like a family. We all work together so well as a team.”

This Mother’s Day, they have both have time off to spend the day together to go out for a meal. The inseparable pair have a shared source of inspiration, Megan’s grandmother and Jaqui’s mother, who survived a brain haemorrhage and breast cancer over the past few years.



Megan and Jaqui at work. Photo credit: Southeastern