

“We are united by our passion to help others”, Rajinder Pryor MBE

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Rajinder Pryor, senior account manager, Network Rail Telecom (NRT), has been honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours for promoting diversity and inclusion across the rail industry and raising awareness around domestic abuse.

The Women in Rail (WR) Board Trustee has been awarded an MBE for her work over the years with WR, supporting Network Rail's Inspire and Cultural Fusion employee networks as well as the partnership with White Ribbon UK.

She has actively promoted the Rail to Refuge scheme, which provides travel assistance to victims of domestic abuse, and led the rollout of Online Safe Spaces within the industry, collaborating with Royal Mail Group (RMG) and charity Hestia's UKSAYSNOMORE campaign.

“This recognition has come as a complete surprise and I am absolutely humbled,” she said. “It is so important for me to commend the many inspirational colleagues across the rail industry who have also stepped up to support and drive positive change.”

"We are united by our passion to help others. I will continue to try and make things better for everyone where I can."

Rajinder's openly spoken about her personal journey of resilience, overcoming honour-based and domestic abuse. In doing so she has created a platform for conversations around mental health, various forms of abuse against women and the challenges affecting some women from BAME backgrounds at work and at home.

"I grew up unwanted because I was a girl, in an environment where I was too afraid to speak up," she said.

"This, and later an abusive relationship had a profound impact on me. Just seven years ago, I was reserved and lacking confidence. At work, I was reluctant to share my ideas. I felt trapped and couldn't progress."

Thankfully, that changed in 2015 when a workshop by Women in Rail's mentoring programme gave Rajinder the courage and confidence she needed to move forward with her life.

On International Women's Day 2017, she spoke publicly for the first time about her difficult journey – a decision which has paved the way for others to speak up and share their stories which helps inform and educate.

Rajinder said: "The rail industry is changing and it's great to see the increasing diversity and feel included as part of the railway family. So many have inspired me and been role models, so I endeavour to follow their lead.

"Helping others is what motivates me and gives me a purpose. . It's a privilege to represent being British, my Sikh heritage and to highlight the many opportunities across the rail industry."

Adeline Ginn MBE, Founder and Chair of Women in Rail, said: "By openly sharing her courage and resilience she has not only created a platform for conversations to be had on mental health and violence against women and girls, she is taking action and inspiring us all.

"Rajinder is showcasing how women can overcome challenges to thrive in the railway industry and I am absolutely delighted she is getting the recognition she so rightly deserves."

Simon Atterwell, managing director at NRT, said: "I'm delighted that Rajinder's work to drive equality and diversity has been recognised with an MBE. She's an inspiration to many of us at Network Rail, across the industry and beyond. I know she'll continue to be a strong role model for change going forward."

Her efforts have also been praised by Anthea Sully, Chief Executive of White Ribbon UK, working to end domestic abuse. She said: "It is essential that everyone men and women alike are aware of domestic abuse.

"Organisations who are White Ribbon accredited, like Network Rail, means that we can ensure that people know how to be allies to people experiencing abuse and violence, in workplaces, home and leisure.

“We especially focus on men thinking of their own behaviour, that they talk about issues of violence among their friends and look for change. We need everyone on board, men and women alike, to create a culture where domestic abuse is prevented before it starts.”

[Click here to read for the full feature with Rajinder from October's RailDirector.](#)

Photo credit: Network Rail