Press Release

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Avanti West Coast employee blows the final whistle on 35-year railway career

- *Avanti West Coast Station Manager, Karen Grimshaw, retires after 35 years' service*
- *Karen joined the railway in January 1989 to embark on a career change*
- *Colleagues celebrate her achievement at Stockport station*

An Avanti West Coast employee has completed her final working day on the railway after a notching up a 35-year career covering a multitude of roles.

Karen Grimshaw, Avanti West Coast Station Manager at Stockport, led the team of 47 people for the last time at the Greater Manchester station, which sees over 400 trains depart each day.

Karen joined the railway in January 1989, aged 24, after a desire to change careers when she saw a job advert in the local newspaper. She previously worked at a McVitie's factory packing biscuits.

Her first role on the railway was a carriage cleaner at Longsight depot – where Avanti West Coast's Pendolino fleet are now maintained. Karen then moved to Davenport station working in the Ticket Office before taking up the role of 'chargewoman' at Manchester Victoria station, which involved dispatching trains and leading a team of platform assistants.

Following maternity leave, Karen returned to the railway as a mobile cleaner that saw her cleaning trains while in passenger service. She took the of 'chargewoman' again but at Stockport station, before travelling the West Coast Main Line as a Revenue Protection Inspector.

Karen then worked as an Onboard Manager – looking after traincrew based out of Preston and Carlisle, followed by Liverpool and Manchester.

For the last 15 years, she has worked as a Station Manager at locations in the North West and Midlands, including Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield, Crewe, and Stoke-on-Trent.

While working in these roles, Karen attained a Level 5 Diploma in Management and Leadership – one of her proudest achievements.

Karen's son, Adam, followed in her footsteps - joining the railway nearly 10 years ago as a Customer Service Assistant on the platforms at Macclesfield station. He is now a Train Manager at Manchester Piccadilly and credits his mum for choosing a career in rail.

"My mum inspires me. She's shown me that hard work and dedication outweighs anything", said Adam.

"Since starting on the railway, I've received amazing comments from colleagues in various roles telling me how much respect and appreciation they have for my mum. This inspired me and showed just how much of an impact my mum has had on the railway and colleagues", he added.

Karen said: "It's been a true pleasure working alongside colleagues and I'm incredibly grateful for the memories I have from my time onboard and at stations. It's the teams I've worked with that have made my time on the railway a special one. There's way too many of them to thank and I'm so privileged to have been part of the journey. While I'm excited for this new chapter, I'll miss being part of the team."

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About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos returned to the rails in June 2024 following a £117m investment programme that's delivered the best in class comfort. Known as the UK's hardest working fleet, all 56 of these iconic trains have been transformed and now boast better seats, improved lighting, new interior carpets, customer-friendly passenger information screens, additional luggage space, power points at every seat and refurbished toilets.

Our new Evero fleet was introduced in June 2024 and will replace our Voyagers. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, will serve routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West, leading to a substantial cut in carbon emissions with an increase in seats, and offering improved comfort. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, these new trains are the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

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