

# PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK ON UK TRANSPORT



**children** RAILWAY  
Fighting for street children

# SAFEGUARDING ON TRANSPORT

## PURPOSE

There are thousands of vulnerable people in the UK and many of them use our transport systems to escape a range of issues. By increasing your awareness of children and adults at risk and helping you to respond, we can make public transport a safer place.

**The Safeguarding on Transport programme will help you to:**

**Be aware** of vulnerable people on transport

**Be concerned** about their welfare

**Listen** to what they have to say

**Reassure** showing kindness and consideration

**Report** any concerns to BTP

Call BTP **0800 40 50 40** or text 61016. In an emergency always call **999**.



## CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK - THE SITUATION

- The police received over 400,000 calls about missing children and adults in 2018/19. (*National Crime Agency*)
- Estimates suggest that around 220,000 children in England and Wales have experienced sexual abuse. (*Govt. report 2017*)
- In 2019/20 BTP officers submitted over 8,500 reports on children who had come to their attention. In 59% of cases there was a concern for their wellbeing or a risk of harm and 28% had run away from home or care (*BTP data*)
- There were 306 suspected suicides on the Railways in 2019/20 (*BTP data*)
- Around 850,000 people in the UK suffer from dementia (*Alzheimers Society 2019*)
- Approximately 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability (*Govt estimate*)
- Around a quarter of the population experience some kind of Mental Health problem in any one year (*Mental Health Foundation*)

# WHY DO CHILDREN RUN AWAY OR END UP IN VULNERABLE POSITIONS?

Children run away for many different reasons, including family conflict, abuse, neglect, drug and alcohol issues, and problems at school. They may also run away to be with someone who has been grooming them. All children are vulnerable to some extent because of their age and different perception of risk, but some children are more vulnerable than others because of things that have happened, or are happening to them. Children can often be seen as behaving badly or causing trouble, but these behaviours should be seen as symptoms of underlying issues.



A photograph of a young man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a black zip-up hoodie and blue jeans, standing on a train platform. He is looking off to the side. In the background, there are train tracks, a red pillar, and a digital sign showing "9/11 10".

## **BE AWARE:**

Children who are at risk and vulnerable may use transport systems.

### **YOU SEE:**

- **9/11 10.**
- **AN ANGRY TEENAGER**
- **FARE EVASION**
- **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**
- **WITHDRAWAL OR ISOLATION**

### **WE SEE:**

- **FAMILY BREAKDOWN**
- **EXPLOITATION**
- **BULLYING**
- **NEGLECT**
- **ABUSE**
- **MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**
- **POOR RELATIONSHIPS**

## **RISK AND HARM FOR CHILDREN**

Going missing is a clear sign that a child is experiencing problems and struggling to cope. A child who is not in a safe environment is at increased risk of harm and will often have to resort to dangerous tactics to survive.

'Survival offending' is sometimes the only way to get food, shelter or attention and it may also be a way of deflecting abuse. During desperate times, they may be forced to swap sexual favours and/or commit criminal offences for food or shelter.

## **HOW WELL CAN CHILDREN LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES?**

Children often perceive risk in different ways to adults, failing to see that certain situations are dangerous. This can lead them to take risks like staying with people they have just met, getting involved in crime or using drugs. Sometimes, this can be caused by peer pressure and they may be in a situation they don't know how to escape from.

Children in need of care and affection will often seek or accept this in inappropriate places, which is how paedophiles and abusers operate to groom children without them realising.



# **WHY DO ADULTS GO MISSING OR END UP AT RISK?**

Adults may have mental health issues, a learning disability and/or dementia. They may be misusing alcohol or drugs, sleeping rough, or escaping from a violent partner.

## **BE AWARE:**

Adults who are vulnerable and at risk may use transport systems.

## **YOU SEE:**

- LOITERING
- AGGRESSION
- CONFUSION

## **WE SEE:**

- MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES
- ADDICTION
- LEARNING DISABILITIES
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- DEMENTIA
- MODERN SLAVERY



## CASE STUDY

Janet was grieving the loss of her husband of 40 years when she turned up at the ticket office and asked for a ticket to anywhere.

The assistant could see that she was distressed and confused, so sought help from a supervisor, who managed to get details of a family member to contact. Afterwards

Janet could not clearly remember the incident or what her intentions were but was thankful that staff had shown her extra care at a time of crisis.

## RISK AND HARM FOR ADULTS

You will come across vulnerable adults who may need assistance or may be challenging in other ways. In all cases there is a duty of care upon staff to ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be whilst in the transport environment.

Whilst adults are free to make their own choices some may lack the capacity to do so, for example people with dementia or mental health issues.

Making decisions about whether or not to take action about adults who are, for example evading fares or displaying poor behaviour will depend to some extent on your organisation's policy. The needs, comfort and safety of other passengers or customers will also have to be considered in these situations.

While some situations may be resolved easily by offering assistance, if you are alarmed by someone's behaviour, do not approach them but contact BTP.

# RECOGNISING BEHAVIOURS

## BE CONCERNED

Look out for things that are unusual, out of place or that make you concerned, for example:

- **Worrying relationships**
  - Inappropriate relationships and interactions between an adult and child
  - Aggressive exchanges
  - Adults unable to care for their children
- **Patterns of behaviour**
  - Acting in a way that seems out of place
  - Seeing children at an unusual time of day or particular day e.g. school time or late at night
  - Misuse of alcohol or drugs (especially dangerous if it involves a child)
- **Appearance**
  - Unkempt or unwashed
  - Injuries, self-harm
  - Sexualised behaviour
- **Demeanour**
  - The way in which they are acting; furtive or scared
  - Emotional, anti-social, suicidal

# **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT MAKES YOU QUESTION WHAT IS HAPPENING, DO SOMETHING**

## **CASE STUDY**

A ticket inspector came across two girls in their early teens travelling without a ticket. While taking their details, he made an effort to get them talking and thought their stories sounded odd. They were very vague about where they were going. He decided to alert BTP at their destination, who discovered that the girls had run away from home and were heading into London with little money and no clear plans.



# **LISTEN AND REASSURE**

The immediate needs of vulnerable people may not be as complicated as you think. If it seems safe to do so, strike up a conversation and listen to what they have to say.

You could make a comment about the weather or ask one the questions below.

Examples of things you could say:

*Where are you travelling to?*

*Are you okay?*

*Do you need any help?*

## **KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE**

As well as knowing how to be aware and respond to vulnerable people it is important to recognise the boundaries of your role.

As an employee you are there to help but it is also important to keep yourself safe and remain within your professional boundaries.

If you are concerned, seek further support from BTP or the police.



## REPORT

If you are worried about a child or adult or need any advice report your concerns to BTP who will respond positively to help and support any child or adult at risk.

Call BTP **0800 40 50 40** or text **61016**. In an emergency always call **999**.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

If appropriate, you may want to approach the person yourself and tell them about other people that can help. The following organisations are experienced at supporting vulnerable people.

**Missing People** - Call or text 116 000  
Email [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)  
[www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)

**Missing People** also run Safecall for young people who are involved in county lines.  
[www.missingpeople.org.uk/safecall](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/safecall)

**Childline** - Call free on 0800 1111  
or have a 1-2-1 chat online [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Samaritans** - 116 123 Helpline for emotional support [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Alcoholics Anonymous** helpline 0800 9177 650  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**National Domestic Violence Helpline**  
0808 2000 247  
[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

**Streetlink** Support rough sleepers 0300 500 0914  
[www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)

**National Dementia Helpline** Call 0300 222 11 22  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Modern Slavery Helpline**  
Report suspicions on 0800 012 1700  
[www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org)

**MIND Infoline** Information about mental health issues Call 0300 123 3393, [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

## **REMEMBER**

**Be aware** of vulnerable people  
**Be concerned** about their welfare  
**Listen** to what they have to say  
**Reassure** showing kindness and consideration  
**Report** any concerns to BTP

Call BTP 0800 40 50 40 or text 61016. In an emergency always call 999.

**For more information about the Safeguarding on Transport Programme contact:**

Railway Children  
1 The Commons  
Sandbach CW11 1EG

T 01270 757 596  
E ST@railwaychildren.org.uk  
W www.railwaychildren.org.uk/ST

Registered charity number 1058991

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