



OPERATION YOUTH VOICE

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE UK

WHAT IS OPERATION YOUTH VOICE?

Operation Youth Voice is a research project designed to help understand the views of young people using public transport in the UK.

Railway Children were asked to lead and carry out this study in 2025 by **British Transport Police (BTP)**, to help them to understand the perceptions of young people in the UK around safety on public transport, particularly when on rail. We engaged with 67 young people across the UK, using a variety of engagement methods to ensure the participation of as wide a cross-section of young people as possible. Working with BTP and Railway Children's Youth Forum we developed a series of questions, designed to understand:

- the thoughts and feelings of young people in relation to safety on the railway and the wider transport network,
- their relationship with the BTP
- what changes, if any, they would like to see.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

We asked what young people had experienced when travelling on a train or at a station, and here's what they said:

RAILWAY
children

No child lost to the streets



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WHY WAS THIS RESEARCH CARRIED OUT?

The purpose of this research was to give young people who may not usually have a voice the opportunity to be heard and to inform improvements on the rail network.

Have you experienced any of these things whilst travelling on a train or at the station?	% young people answering 'yes'
Anti-social behaviour	38%
You or other young people being drunk or under the influence of drugs	30%
Feeling generally unsafe	23%
Bullying	20%
Adults intimidating you or trying to recruit you into gangs, selling drugs	18%
Threats of violence or robbery	15%
People using a knife or showing you they have a knife	13%
A sexual assault, violence or intimidation	13%
Being physically harmed or assaulted	10%
Experiencing hate crime	8%
Being robbed of phone, cash or clothing	8%
Other: verbal assault	3%

HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL ON THE RAIL NETWORK?



Young people shared several changes they'd like to see - ranging from more thoughtful language and approaches from professionals, to wider improvements across the rail network, transport services, and local communities.

Some young people highlighted the need for a dedicated campaign to help children and teenagers better understand who BTP are and what they do. They felt this would be most effective if developed collaboratively with youth groups and BTP. Others suggested using social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, noting examples such as the "61016" bead wristbands handed out at Taylor Swift concerts in 2024 by BTP.

They also emphasised the importance of targeted campaigns on issues that matter to them, including phone theft, bike crime, and Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG). Co-creating these campaigns with young people and displaying them across the rail network was seen as a powerful way to make them relevant and impactful.

The report highlighted 5 key recommendations:

1. A consistent approach by staff to engagement with children and young people
2. Targeted communications towards young people on the rail network
3. Understand the impact the behaviour of others has on young people using the network
4. The importance of building community guardianship
5. Increasing safety across other transport networks (buses, tram networks etc).

Railway Children have also taken valuable learning from this work, which is already shaping our practice in the UK. It is strengthening our youth participation approach, as well as the training and consultancy we provide to transport partners. Our aim is that these improvements will ultimately create safer, more positive experiences for young people travelling on public transport across the UK.

Railway Children

Unit 1, Unipart Rail, Gresty Rd, Crewe CW2 6EH.

T: 01270 757596

E: hello@railwaychildren.org.uk

W: www.railwaychildren.org.uk



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"There should be an even distribution of officers at all stations, there are too many at some and not enough at others, so people at isolated stations can experience more [anti-social behaviour]"

One young woman told us,

"I have female friends who won't travel by themselves"

"their parents track their phones so they know where they are and safe".

"Night times are different and have a different [bad] vibe compared to the daytime."

Read the full report [here](#)



Learn more about [Railway Children's Youth Participation work here](#)



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