

YOUR GUIDE TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ACROSS THE TRANSPORT NETWORK

Did you know that every hour, British Transport Police respond to another child found vulnerable, alone and at risk on the rail network?



There are many forms of vulnerability – and they're not always easy to spot. Many young people run away from home or care to escape conflict, abuse or violence. Some are being groomed or exploited, often by criminals and county lines gangs. Others are struggling with their mental health or being bullied at school. We are working with staff across the rail network to identify young people who may be vulnerable and keep them safe – and we need your help.

children RAILWAY
No child lost to the streets

How you can help: be our eyes and ears

We can't always be there to spot every child at risk. Everyone has their part to play, and by being vigilant and knowing how to identify vulnerability on the railways, together we can help keep more young people safe before it's too late.

Please help us by looking out for the following signs of risk when you're travelling on the transport network:



Behaviour or conversations between an adult and child that don't seem right



Children who look frightened, unkempt and are with older people



Aggressive or violent exchanges



Behaviour that seems unusual, anxious, distressed or scared



Children who are alone at an unusual time of day e.g. during school or late at night



Children who are keeping out of sight in stations or avoiding ticket barriers



Children who are potentially under the influence of alcohol or drugs



Children who seem emotional, depressed or even suicidal

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

We do not expect you to intervene and approach anyone on the rail network, but if you have any concerns, or notice any of the above signs, please:

- Alert a member of rail staff, or a British Transport Police Officer
- Call 0800 40 50 40, or text British Transport Police on 61016 with any information
- Or report your concerns on the Railway Guardian app
- **In an emergency always call 999**

Scan here to download the Railway Guardian App





REASONS WHY CHILDREN RUN AWAY OR GO MISSING

Children go missing for a variety of reasons, often when they are experiencing some sort of crisis and feel that they have no other option. Whatever causes them to run away from home, these young people are at risk of serious harm – and the longer they are missing, the more vulnerable they are to abuse and exploitation.

Scan here to
download the Railway
Guardian App



WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW:

- Download the Railway Guardian app so you are ready to quickly and easily report any concerns on the rail network
- Visit **www.railwaychildren.org.uk** to find out more about our work in the UK
- Spread the word – share this guide with your friends, family and colleagues to expand our network of eyes and ears

To help keep them safe and ensure they get the support they need, it's important to understand some of the reasons why children go missing in the first place. Here are some of the most common reasons:



Running away from care

Children in care are more likely to run away or go missing, with 1 in every 10 children in care being reported missing each year in England*. Some may be running away because they are unhappy in their care placement, or because they are trying to reach family and friends from home.



Problems at home

Relationship breakdown – whether it's conflict with parents, family members or carers – is a common reason for children to go missing from home. In some cases, they might also be experiencing abuse, violence or neglect and feel that running away is the only way to protect themselves.



Problems at school

Sometimes, children may be running away because they are experiencing bullying or are worried about something at school. For many young people, school and education can cause significant stress and leave them feeling that their only option is to run away to escape the situation.

**Missing People, 'When Harm Remains' report, 2022.*



Exploitation

Young people can also go missing while involved in child exploitation or trafficking activity. This can take the form of sexual exploitation, where a child is lured away from the safety of home by groomers and abusers. It can also be criminal exploitation, where young people are often forced into transporting drugs around the country for county lines activity.



Mental health issues

Poor mental health is one of the most common reasons why children and young people are found missing. This can include anxiety, depression, or self-harm and risk of suicide. Children in care are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues which can increase the risk of them going missing.

Together, we can all play our part to keep children and young people safe across the rail network.



Scan the QR code to find out more information about the Railway Children



children RAILWAY

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Registered Charity Number 1058991