Bystander intervention against gendered harassment and gender-based violence in public transport

Transport and Health Integrated Research Network

A guide for bystander trainers and campaigners

In this guide:

- Understanding the need for intervention in public transport and related spaces.
- Identifying different forms of gender-based violence and harassment of women relating to accessing, using and waiting for transport.
- Lived experiences and case studies.
- Support available and reporting mechanisms for public transport use in the UK.
- Barriers to bystander intervention that are contextually specific to using public transport.
- Intervention techniques applied to public transport spaces.
- Representation and bystander intervention.

Warning: this guide includes descriptions of sexual harassment and violence against women including case studies of lived experiences. All names used in case studies are pseudonyms.

The Gender+ Bus project

This guide is informed by research undertaken by Dr Lucy Baker, Aberystwyth University, as part of a project titled Gender+ Bus : Tackling harassment, sexual harassment and violence against women for a gender-inclusive bus service in Wales and the UK.

By tackling inappropriate sexual and violent behaviour, the Gender+ Bus project aims to reduce women's isolation in communities because of fear of harassment and violence, which negatively impacts their wellbeing.

Gender+ Bus is exploring what policies and practices are used to tackle harassment against women and girls in Wales and the UK across bus services, public spaces, such as routes to buses, bus stops and stations, and in digital spaces.

In partnership with the public, local authorities, police constabularies and transport operators, the project is developing guidance on industry practices and policies that are suitable to improve women's safety in – and accessing – buses.

The project is also developing intervention training for transport staff in partnership with industry operators and the public to ensure staff working in transport are able to provide equally secure and comfortable spaces for both passengers and employees.

The project is supported by the Waterloo Foundation, the Transport and Health Integrated Research Network, and Health and Care Research Wales. For more information, please visit: Project webpage

A need to tackle gender-based harassment and violence

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (2023) [1] evidenced that more women (13%) than men (7%) experienced at least one form of harassment that made them feel upset, distressed, or threatened in the last 12 months. The result reflects the differential experiences of sexual harassment, which is experienced by 8% of women compared with 3% of men. Prevalence of non-sexual harassment was also slightly higher among women (8%) compared with men (6%).

Our research project and training intervention therefore specifically focuses on taking steps to reduce gendered harassment and violence against women, non-binary people and people presenting with a feminine gender. Without interventions that are gender-sensitive in their approach, the visibility of the differences and inequalities in how and where harassment and violence occur and its impact on women is lost. There is also a need to consider the intersectionality of women's experiences, while gender and femininity interact with other identities (race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality) and/or demographic variables (age, socio-economic class).

For example,

- The likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment was highest among younger age groups. This was particularly the case for women, with 23% of those aged 16 to 24 and 16% of those aged 25 to 34 experiencing some form of sexual harassment in the previous year compared with 5% of those aged 35 and over [2].
- Disabled people, people of ethnic minority identities and LGBTQIA+ people experience sexual harassment more frequently than non-disabled people, white and heterosexual people.

Both criminal and non-criminal forms of gendered harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence (GBV) are harmful in the short-term and long-term. They can cause women feelings of fear and anxiety, distress, anger, shame, embarrassment, confusion, self-doubt, and/or a sense of powerlessness.

A note on definitions

How people choose to define violence changes over time and is to some extent subjective and is experienced differently by different individuals and groups of people. Throughout this guide harassment, sexual harassment and GBV are all referred to, to reflect that harassment and sexual harassment are forms of violence. The term GBV is here used to include criminal acts of sexual violence, such as rape and assault, exposure and voyeurism and other harassment behaviours that are not necessarily currently illegal in the UK, such as starring, invasion of intimate space, provocative sounds, non-consensual sexual advances and intrusive questioning that intimidate and harm women, non-binary people, transgender people, and are experienced less frequently by cis-gender men (men assigned male sex at birth).

Public transport – a space for intervention

Public transport is one of the most common places where sexual harassment and gender-based violence occurs. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (2023) [3] reports,

- 19% of those who had experienced sexual harassment said they had done so on public transport.
- Most sexual and non-sexual harassment occurs in public spaces (72.5%), including on the street as people access, wait for, and leave public transport on their onward journey.

The Government Equalities Office (2020) [4] study indicated,

- More than a quarter of people in the UK who had experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months experienced it on public transport (28%). The study estimated in one year alone, 13% of the whole UK population had experienced sexual harassment on public transport, the 3rd most common place it occurs outside of the workplace, following on-the-street or in a pub, bar, or nightclub.
- A similar proportion of people experience sexual harassment in universities and colleges and other places of study (24%).
- The same study finds that people are slightly more worried about experiencing sexual harassment on public transport than in outdoor public spaces and are significantly more worried of experiencing it there than in their workplace, despite that more occurrences are reported to occur in the workplace than in public transport.

Many incidents are normalised and go unchallenged. Many women feel that several harassment behaviours are tolerated on public transport and that there is a general lack of care for their safety needs. It could be this, coupled with the environments encountered when using public transport, in which there is often no immediate or quick escape, that makes experiencing GBV in this context particularly concerning for women.

How does gender-based violence impact women's mobility and wellbeing?

Behaviours that harm women, non-binary people, and other vulnerable groups of people, negatively impacts people's mobility. Not only those who have been a victim, but also those who witness incidents and any of the more vulnerable groups of the public can distrust spaces shared with others if those spaces have become hostile.

Women commonly avoid travelling at night and to unfamiliar places, especially in the dark, because of incidents of GBV and sexual/non-sexual gendered harassment. Industry watchdog, Transport Focus [5], asked over 1200 women in the UK if they avoid certain ways of travelling for fear of their safety; half avoid walking, 39% avoid using the tube or metro, 36% stated they avoid using the bus and 33% avoid train and 30% avoid cycling.

Our research finds that women make themselves unavailable to others by listening to music, or reading, and by putting their heads down or avoiding eye contact. They tell others their travel plans and make plans that take their personal safety into consideration such as route choice. Women are adapting their travel behaviour for fear of harassment in ways that sacrifice their freedom of movement and that lead to isolation. In turn, this limits women's access to education, employment, and services, as well as their wellbeing.

Women often expend additional costs, such as getting a taxi in the early and late hours, or when getting off a train or bus prior to their destination to get away from an incident, purchasing a first-class rail ticket or a more expensive service with a safer reputation or with a more direct route with fewer passengers boarding, or with a more frequent service, or they may begin using a car following an incident on public transport. Women often take detours on their route that they perceive to be safer, or to flee an incident, adding time and disruption to their journey.

Bystander intervention - a collective responsibility

The support victims receive from staff and passenger bystanders in the short and mid-term will help to minimise the impacts of incidents for victims and in the longer term will help to prevent incidents by creating a culture in public transport, on the street and elsewhere, that does not tolerate GBV and harassment. Bystander intervention reduces the impact incidents have to a victim's future mobility choices and sense of safety. It can turn a negative experience into an empowering one in that women feel more supported because action is being taken against GBV. Receiving support may give people more confidence to intervene themselves in future.

Several stakeholders must take responsibility to ensure the safety of everyone. But, given finite resources and the legal framework in which they operate, there is a limit as to what transport operators, the police and local authorities and other stakeholders can do to ensure the safety of passengers and to encourage caring behaviour among communities. One of our study participants from the bus and coach industry emphasises the need for collective action to prevent GBV:

> ***"Part of the solution has got to be other passengers as well who see this happening and bring it to the driver's attention and then the driver can radio in […]. It's on everyone […] so it's the driver to do their bit, the people boarding the vehicle to do their bit, the perpetrators not to do what they're doing. And the observers - the bystanders - to challenge and create that unacceptable environment."***
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> **Departmental director of a large coach and bus companies in the UK**

Encouraging active bystander intervention is a priority in creating safe and caring public transport spaces. For example, Transport for West Midlands Transport Champions for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls [6] makes recommendations to improve the safety of public transport and includes bystander training to staff and the public. The London Travel Watch (2022) [7] sets out helping passengers to be active bystanders as the number one priority for improving passenger personal security. Passengers need to be guided on when and how to be active bystanders safely and to feel like they are able to act with agency to help others without being victimised themselves.

Situating bystander intervention in public transport and access/departure spaces

Incidents of GBV occur situationally. This means that different spaces, and how they are used and designed interact in producing certain incidents or behaviours by offenders and responses by victims and bystanders. Incidents also occur and are experienced relationally. They are influenced by factors beyond the space itself including cultural, legal, political, economic, and institutional arrangements and practices.

Although many of the women we interviewed felt safe on familiar routes, particularly in the day, and when confident of where they are going, there are times when women do not. For example, during evenings when passengers have been drinking alcohol and are rowdy, when waiting in isolated places, in isolated buses and trains, and when transport is crowded.

Bystanders can be aware of the following:

1 Opportunities for discretion afforded by public transport enable certain behaviours to arise.

Incidents, such as frottage (rubbing of genitals on another person) and sexual assault can be trickier to identify because of hidden spaces and crowding. Ambiguity is created by the movement of transport as people sway and bump into each other, and by crowding passengers. The ambiguity gives rise to self-doubt and prevents victims and bystanders from taking action.

Bystanders can look out for passengers looking concerned and vulnerable in crowded situations and instances where a man appears to be standing closely in a woman's intimate space, taking opportunities to touch them.

Women often act indifferently and try to ignore and avoid the person intimidating them to minimise further harm to themselves. Bystanders could be witnessing an incident whereby the victim appears to be coping, fearless, or unaware and therefore unharmed, but could be feeling fearful, anxious, angry, and upset. This can create doubt as to whether a bystander should intervene. Bystanders can be advised to try an intervention technique that is non-confrontational without waiting for a request for help or a sign from the victim.

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In shared and confined spaces there is a limited chance for victims and bystanders to distance themselves from an incident.

The fewer opportunities (stops) for victims to alight from the transport, the less able the victim and any bystanders are to get away. Opportunities are less on more peripheral intracity urban routes, rural routes, and intercity coach and bus services. The risk of calling out behaviours increases for victims and bystanders who may be more fearful to intervene without being able to leave the transport.

The need to wait for transport can also prevent people from leaving or speaking up in waiting areas. This becomes more pertinent in places where services are not very frequent.

The inability of a victim to remove themselves is heightened in situations where they are hemmed into seating or in a crowded standing arrangement in which they cannot move. This could create a stronger fear response and the victim may be exposed to harassment longer than they might in another space. Some women may fear asking for help when confined.

Women often fear asking a perpetrator to move so they can get out of the seat and further away. They worry this could aggravate the perpetrator or create a scene in which they then become the focus of attention.

Women often seek out aisle seats to avoid becoming entrapped by another passenger and seek out standing spaces where they can back up to a wall or seat. A corner offers the most surrounded protection and visibility.

Passengers can be absorbed in their own worlds and often attempt to shut out the experience of sharing transport.

This can occur more so in larger cities, than smaller urban and rural communities. London transport is commonly referred to as a place where this happens. In these situations, people suggests they feel less supported by fellow passengers and less likely to ask for their help.

Bystanders can be encouraged to be aware of their surroundings, showing others too that they are somewhat present and approachable. In doing so they can help create a culture of care in public transport spaces.

Incidents may occur more frequently on certain routes and times of the day.

Some regular commuters could be witnessing incidents several times in a year on public transport and in other settings and may not be able to intervene in every incident they see.

Communicating that it is okay to act only if bystanders feel able to - when they have the mental capacity and can care for themselves or seek support after an intervention. Communicate that it's okay if, when bystanders assess risks, they decide it is too risky to intervene in any way. This demonstrates you as a trainer have empathy for the potential bystanders too and is teaching by demonstrating this skill to them.

Lived experiences of gender-based violence and harassment

Bystander training should aim to include lived experiences of victims that will inform people's awareness of what to look out for and to understand the impacts of certain behaviours, to act accordingly and to give appropriate support.

Below is list of behaviours commonly experienced in public transport or while accessing it. They may be either directed at individual women or groups of women or may not be directed at one person specifically.

- Rowdiness - shouting, swearing, shoving each other, showing aggression either playfully, or with intent to harm another.
- Sexually explicit conversations made audible to other passengers that degrades women by sexually objectifying them and can include descriptions of violent and predatory behaviours.
- Banter, sexual innuendos and jokes directly or indirectly experienced by women.
- Approaching another person for intrusive conversation often as a sexual advance. Questions to listen out for include "Where are you going?", "On your own?", "Where's your/do you have a boyfriend?", "Can I take you out?". Conversations may involve compliments toward the victim or statements like "cheer up/smile love". Such intrusions may be seemingly innocent but could still be unwanted and intimidating, particularly if the victim has indicated they do not want further conversation by requesting them to stop. The victim may then look away, or at their phone and ignore the other person. The victim may move their position away from the person intruding. Bystanders should look for indications that the conversation is one-sided and unwanted.
- Following a person in, or getting off, the bus/train. It may be difficult to identify someone being followed off transport, since passengers would leave together. This is another example of how incidents can be invisible in public transport settings. A bystander can look for signs of distress as the person suspected of being victimised is leaving. If a bystander suspects someone is being followed because they have seen a victim being stared at or harassed by another passenger, they should notify staff and/or call the police on 999 because the victim could be in danger.
- A man sits/stands unnecessarily close to a female passenger even though there are several other empty rows of seats available. The male may/may not engage in any conversation and has not committed a crime. However, this is threatening behaviour because women feel intimidated, scared, and uncomfortable. If a man has no intention of harming a woman travelling alone on public transport and wants to befriend them with good intentions, it would be more appropriate for them to make friendly and non-threatening conversation from nearby - not in very close proximity.

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- Women have asked to have space to get off the bus/train and the male declines to move, or does not move enough to allow the female to exit without touching or climbing over them. In trains where there are four seats around a table, women may find themselves in this situation having chosen to sit where they can work with a laptop, or otherwise.
- Touching another passenger while sitting or standing. Incidents include: brushing past, standing/sitting unnecessarily close, sexual assault, and frottage (a person rubs their genitals against another person). Women report feeling a man's erect penis touching them, often questioning themselves if it is an object although knowing with more confidence after it is over, what was happening to them. These behaviours can be discreet and are usually disguised by movements of transport and proximity of standing/sitting passengers, particularly during busy journeys and queuing. The victim may be physically unable to move, or may put a bag or rucksack between themselves and the perpetrator to protect and distance themselves.
- Exposure of genitals with or without masturbation. This may be obvious flashing or discreet, in which case bystanders could look out for a perpetrator staring at victim and could investigate what the starring passenger is doing. The victim is likely to make out that they are unaware and ignore the perpetrator. This does not mean they don't want help. They may be fearful and or embarrassed, or feeling disgust, or shame, or a combination of any of those emotions, which can prevent them for speaking up, challenging the perpetrator or seeking help from a nearby passenger or staff.
- Staring to intimidate and instigate discomfort. A victim may try to show they are unaware and ignore it. Bystanders should be mindful of prolonged and/or frequent stares/looks and discomfort in the person this behaviour is directed to.
- Verbal abuse (this may be a standalone incident or may indicate an escalation following the victim having challenged the perpetrator for any of the behaviours listed)
- Taking a non-consensual image/video up a woman's dress/skirt (upskirting), or from above, of their body. This is a criminal behaviour and constitutes a sexual offense.
- Filming/photography more generally without a person's consent to intimidate/bully a person or to joke at their expense.
- Passing a note with explicit content/a sexual advance on it.
- Showing explicit sexual/violent content on a phone/in print to another person.

Case Studies

Below are 5 case studies that could be used to help understand how the situated aspects of public transport interact in women's experiences, how victim-survivors feel and are impacted by the different incidents.

Trainers might use these to explore with their students what they think about the different case studies and what their emotional reaction is. Can they put themselves there as a witness and consider their thought process and what they might do in each scenario? What might hold them back from intervening and what might encourage them? What support would they like if they were the victim involved? How could different intervention techniques play out in each scenario?

Man sits next to woman on a quiet rail service and makes a sexual advance

Jules: There's been unwanted male attention. You know, when they sit next to you and they start [talking] you know, you think "ahh go away". But they don't stop, they just keep on and on. So that's happened. I don't know how many times that's happened. It's regularly, really.
Researcher: And how does that make you feel?
Jules: "It's uncomfortable and it's, you know, I don't want it. I was travelling back and forth to London and Wales, so I would have had a long day. I'm on a train going home from 7 to 9/10 o'clock and the train would be quite empty, and you'd just have one or two people on there. So, these blokes would inevitably end up sitting next to you just to come on to you and yeah it was never very nice. There was one stand out. He was just relentless, you know, talking to me all the time. I remember I moved because I had my lovely little booked seat and my little table. But I left it. I went to another carriage then because he was too much. It was quite an empty carriage and in fact I don't think there was anybody else in there by that point, so I did move.
Researcher: And what do you mean by too much? He just kept talking to you?
Jules: Just really coming on to me, "oh, do you fancy going out with me one night?" "No". "Oh go on I'm nice really". "No thanks". "Oh, come on. You never know 'till you try". And because it doesn't matter how many times you say no, it didn't stop. It was just really uncomfortable, so I did move. It's unsettling isn't it? When you know that they're coming onto you and they're not going away. I said something to him along the lines of "oh, I'm gonna go and get a cup of tea." So it's not even like I felt I could just move.

Jules emphasises that these incidents occurred for her “inevitably” over the long journeys she was commuting as she expresses the normalisation of the intrusive behaviour. She remembers moving that time and implies at other times she had not moved, but this one was particularly unrelenting.

Jules did not think to report this at the time commenting “who would you report it to, I suppose train staff. But then, you know, it just comes back to that thing ‘oh don’t make a fuss he was only chatting you up’ and all the rest of it and it’s that minimising stuff we do all the time isn't it?”

This case study demonstrates the challenge of determining the boundary of what is and is not acceptable. It can help people to look out for instances when intrusive questioning is crossing over a boundary that requires intervention and could be reported. Jules indicated clearly to the aggressor, she was not wanting further conversation. She felt isolated and decided to find a safer place on the train. If Jules had the support of a bystander during or after the incident, she may have had the confidence to report this as harassment to the British Transport Police.

Two incidents of frottage

Two accounts of the same sexual offense of frottage were given by two different research participants. The first demonstrates how difficult it is for some women to speak out, especially in such close proximity and trapped next to the perpetrator, and the second to demonstrate that women do challenge perpetrators and for some it is important they take action. By sharing both experiences we are able to represent both possibilities and limitations of agency.

First incident – victim does not challenge perpetrator

Jasmine: I lived in Fulham, so it was all really, really busy stations and you'd avoid certain times of the day or you’d end up literally rammed up against everybody in the middle and standing up. There was this guy and he literally was pushing himself into me and it was horrendous. I was trying to back away, but I had nowhere to go. And it's almost like, I can't remember what I did. I was right in the middle. We all were, and I think he purposely stood next to a woman so he could do that. It was horrible and I'm not gonna say it but it was blatantly obvious what he was doing by a certain part of his body basically. And I was just trying to hold my bag down there. I was trying to like move backwards but you couldn't move. There were so many people on there. It's like it all the time.

Researcher: Did you think to report it?
Jasmine: No I didn't report it. It wasn't in my mind. I would now, or would I? It might have been a bit embarrassing. Maybe not so anymore, but it might have been then, it didn't occur to me to report it. I was angry. First of all, I thought I was imagining what was going on because I kept looking down because I thought the guy had like a briefcase or a rucksack or something like that was digging into me. There wasn't. And I'm like, you know at first because you couldn't see down you know, you just couldn't see. So initially, it was like, hang on a minute.. and he was facing me. So it's like, it's there, I was just like "shit!" and then I'm like, stuck you know, because I couldn't move my arms.

In this incident Jasmine cannot get distance from the perpetrator and does not ask for help. She does not challenge the perpetrator, possibly because there is nowhere for her to move and/or because of the shame of it happening to her and may not have wanted other passengers to know. She did not want to continue the trauma by going through an embarrassing reporting process.

Second incident – victim challenges perpetrator

Researcher: What happened? Somebody rubbed up against you?
Sofia: Yes. And he obviously had an erection. You know, and was rubbing when we were queuing to get off the bus. You know, so as I say, I just turned around and started shouting because, you know, I, I didn't want to feel like a victim. And I wanted to speak out […] People can speak out to make other people aware of what can be happening and if you need help, or to stop the person doing it again.
Researcher: How did you feel at the time?
Sofia: I was angry. And then after when I thought about it, I got a bit upset. Because it's like, "Why me?" I mean, it could have just been a random thing, and it probably was, but you can't help going there, can you? You know, to think "why would he pick on me? Did I look is if I wouldn't have said 'boo' to a goose?" No one reacted in anyway, not even the bus driver. It was like it hadn't happened. People don't want to get involved because they don't want it to affect them. I suppose people are more intent on getting on with their own lives, you know, if something doesn't directly affect them, why get involved? I mean, they might have thought that I was the nutter. Which I suppose I could have been. Do you know what I mean? Or perhaps they thought it was overreacting.
Researcher: Did you report it at the time?
Sofia: I should have reported it. But then how do you prove it? Can you say who caught this bus? Who would come forward if they didn't do anything at the time? Would they actually speak to the police about it? Which I thought about later, but as I say when it happened in the swimming pool, I did call the police and strangely enough, other people had complained about this bloke. So you know, it was, as I say, I was glad I did it then. Yeah. And then I wished looking back that I'd reported what happened on the bus.

The incident occurred on an 8:00am bus on Sofia's commute to work in Bristol as the bus pulled into the station and the doors were opening. Sofia no longer uses the bus and commutes by walking, which she described as a positive outcome of the incident. It is important for her to not take the position of victim, giving her story of how she spoke out and confronted the perpetrator. Sofia was regretful about not reporting the incident at the time. Sofia demonstrates the doubts people have about the possibility of an investigation and prosecution and being taken seriously by the police and/or the transport staff. Sofia would have benefited from bystanders acknowledging the incident, seeing if she was alright and validating her experience and response. She may have had more confidence to report the offense if bystanders had approached her and offered witness statements. The driver could have made sure CCTV was made available.

LGBTQIA+ participants' experiences of harassment and violence targeting their sexuality and gender non-conformity

One interviewee described being dragged by their hair and receiving verbal abuse. The impact of the incident was compounded by inaction of police officers they had reported to at the time.

Another participant, Anne, described having had a bottle thrown at her while queuing to enter a bus because she was presenting as lesbian with her girlfriend.

Anne: When I was about 17, I was at the main bus station in the town, waiting for a bus. And I was there with my girlfriend at the time. And this guy was sort of looking at us a bit odd and I was aware of him but just tried to sort of ignore him. And as I got up to walk to the bus, he threw a glass bottle at me. I don't know whether the bus driver saw it or not. But there was another passenger on the bus, who did see it because he came and sat with me afterwards to make sure I was okay. And he shared that he had had experiences himself, of like homophobia as well. So that kind of reassured me. Maybe for the best. Like we had a whole conversation on the bus ride home because he'd experienced similar things with his partner. I didn't get hurt physically, but it still had an impact on me. And it still has an impact to some extent now. Because I had quite a few experiences, the experience of homophobia shaped my life and I guess my experience with trusting people. So, it does have a lasting effect on people even if you think it's something small. It can have such a significant impact.

Anne's story demonstrates the positive experience of receiving support from a bystander who identified with her because he was a gay man who had experienced similar homophobic attacks. But all bystanders can use empathy to put themselves in the shoes of another gay woman or man who is the victim of a violent hate crime, even if they have not shared the same violence based on an identity, such as sexuality, as in the case of Anne and her bystander. Anne shared the lasting impact of homophobic incidents on her ability to trust others.

4 Sexually explicit conversations in public transport

Valerie shares her experience of travelling by bus with a group of rowdy men who are having a sexually explicit conversation in which derogatory comments were made about other woman outside, which then escalates to be directed to passengers on the bus.

Valerie: The last incident tends to stay with me. So it was a group of four, maybe five, adult males that came onto the bus having been out around town. They'd had a few to drink and were clearly merry. They walked on, or staggered on, but they weren't being carried on. You know, they weren't that kind of state, but they were being vocal about somebody they saw through the window, a young lady that looked very nice. I'll put it that way. And so the conversation kind of went on. So kind of demeaning.. what she looked like, you know, she was fit, using swear words as well, you know, so we had to listen to that. And then it went on to what they would do to her. Like "really?" you kind of wondered, "do you remember you're sat on a bus? There're other people on the bus." It wasn't full. Sort of a few of us dotted around on the large bus. There were conversations between them about what they would like to do to her sex-wise. It didn't get violent. It was just what they would like to do. It was just like "how old are you?"

And then suddenly it moved on to somebody else on the bus, I think they must have given them a look. You know? Like, this isn't on kind of look and so they picked on her for a little while. So, obviously, I looked around because I was worried for that person. Thinking like, "are they safe?" and trying to gauge where they were because I couldn't see from the reflection quite where they were up the bus. And then that was the biggest mistake I made because I turned around, so they thought I was looking at them. And so then I got some you know, some might say it's complimentary things but then it moves on to sex. And so, I just ignored them, listening to my heartbeat in my ears. It was pounding so hard that I don't even know how long this went on for. It felt like ages.

Valerie's experience demonstrates how this behaviour intimidates others. Valerie expressed it can be difficult to intervene such situations because of the physical stress response that can be experienced. Valerie was not sure the driver was aware of the harassment given that no one reported it to the driver. The men left the bus after some time with no further comment to Valerie. She thought about asking to sit next to the other female passenger, or approaching the driver, but didn't know what to do and was fearful to move, but decided it too risky to confront the men.

In this case one or more passengers could have notified the driver to assist in an intervention, or the driver could have refused entry to the vehicle in the first instance.

What support bystanders can expect from a bus driver

Bystanders can be advised it is a good idea to approach the driver to notify them what is happening and to ask for their assistance.

However, there is no statutory guidance across the bus network in the UK that will determine a consistent response from driver to driver. Each bus/coach company may offer different guidance to their drivers.

- Drivers are likely advised to pull over and stop the vehicle at the first safe opportunity if they see a passenger causing harm to others or are damaging the vehicle.
- They must also take reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of passengers on board and while boarding and alighting.
- A driver is advised to assess the risk of each situation or incident.
- A bus/coach driver can, by law, request a perpetrator to leave, and are legally entitled to remove a passenger causing nuisance or harm to another passenger (see the legislation p. 31-32).
- A bus/coach driver can also ask the police to remove a passenger.
- Although possible, it is unlikely a driver would remove a passenger from the vehicle. They may want to avoid harm to themselves or litigation.
- The bus driver/conductor can ask a person not to board their vehicle but may not be able to enforce this request without police or trained security licensed to support.

Most drivers want to ensure their passengers are safe and no matter what other difficult tasks the driver is undertaking they have a responsibility to ensure the safety of passengers. But they also have a right to be safe. If they can't respond themselves when risks are considered too high, bystanders could request they radio to their depot for support or call the police.

Best practice response for drivers

Our research has investigated measures undertaken across the bus and coach services to ensure passenger safety and the instructions given to drivers in response to incidents.

Aligned with current best industry practice we advise bus drivers to:

- Take a disclosure seriously
- Act without judgement
- Listen while being supportive
- Reassure the victim they've done the right thing, validate their experience and inform them that support can be offered without over promising
- Call the police on 999 (British Transport Police (BTP), in relation to rail services, suggest to report incidents that are a threat to life, of assault or rape)
- Inform their depot/manager and seek their guidance, if available
- Challenge perpetrator if safe to do so, demonstrating the company does not tolerate the behaviour and point out it is a criminal offense if relevant (depending on incident)
- Ask victim to sit nearby the driver or another bystander offering support
- Ask victim if they feel safe departing at a bus stop or station if it is a safe space
- Clarify with the victim they have understood the victim's account of what happened and what the victim would like to happen
- Ask if the victim needs anything else
- Provide them with information to access further support
- Confirm the victim knows how to report the incident to police and/or to Bus Users UK and the transport company
- Provide details of the bus service
- Report the incident to the police on 101 as a third party and report to their manager

Reporting improper responses from drivers

If bystanders or victims experience a negative or inadequate response from a driver, such as a refusal to help, or denying the experience of a victim, or blaming a victim, they can make note of the time, route/ route number and consider making a later complaint to the charity Bus Users UK here: Complaints Process for Bus and Coach Passengers.

Bus Users UK offers 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' services for domestic disputes on consumer contracts initiated by a passenger against a bus or coach operator. As part of this service, Bus Users UK will communicate with industry regulators (Traffic Commissioners) and relevant government departments. The bystander or victim could consider contacting the transport company to raise a complaint.

Factors that may influence a bus/coach driver's response

- Transport companies emphasise their duty of care to protect the safety of their drivers and customers. The two requirements are often in conflict, which can compromise response to incidents.
- Some drivers are advised not to leave their cab before radioing to their company's depo for further instructions or assistance.
- Drivers will usually have been trained in de-escalation techniques and how to respond to emergencies. However, some drivers are more confident than others to confront passengers, particularly in response to incidents the driver does not consider presenting a severe risk or warrant a 999 emergency call to the police. How they handle the situation is subjective and based on their assessment of risk.
- Drivers may not recognise some behaviours as sexual harassment, or GBV, or harmful to a victim. Training on awareness and response specifically to gendered and/or sexual harassment is currently very limited across the bus network although this could change in future if training is added (in the UK) into the Drivers Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training syllabus.
- Some bus and coach drivers may not have adequate support from the police or the companies they work for to respond and intervene in incidents. Some large bus/coach companies buy into support from local police constabularies in the form of officer hours, a roaming emergency support vehicle, preventative educational campaigns, and 24-7 CCTV monitoring, for example. These are sometimes supported by local authorities forming a collaborative 'Travel Safe' partnership to improve passenger safety, however, funding for these schemes is not consistently available across the UK.
- Large cities may be more likely to operate control rooms with CCTV monitoring of bus stops and stations.
- Police response times to 999 call outs may be quicker in places where police officer numbers are higher and at times when they are less busy.
- Bus drivers may not identify an incident because they are also focusing on driving the vehicle safely, ensuring passengers have purchased tickets/have a pass, and are looking out for vulnerable passengers at bus stops who may require travel without a fare.

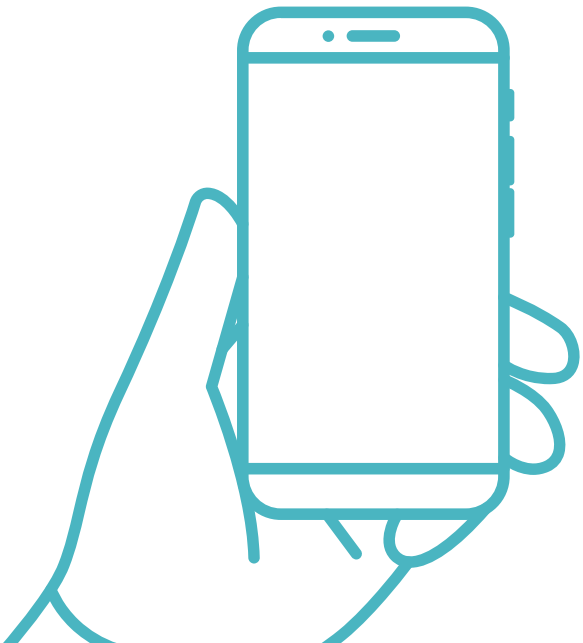
Reporting incidents in the context of public transport

Under-reporting of sexual harassment in public transport makes it impossible to monitor trends, to evaluate interventions and to convict perpetrators of sexual offenses, harassment and hate crime. The 2019 YouGov survey finds reporting to the British Transport Police or transport staff in London is only 2% in both cases regardless of campaigns to encourage reporting (YouGov, 2020).

Barriers to reporting include:

- A lack of trust in the police, transport companies and local authorities to act in response to individual cases or to use the data generated through reporting.
- Information on reporting procedure is not usually apparent, particularly in buses, or at bus stops, which reduces confidence women have in being able to report.
- Older women are less inclined to use an app, or text, to report an incident.
- The issue of phone signal being unpredictable also prevented one study participant reporting to the police.
- Phone battery has run out or is low and reporting is not continued later due to lack of motivation and trust
- People are put off by questions asked on reporting. This can lead to retraumatising for victims.
- People perceive reporting to be laborious and not worth the effort due to lack of trust, difficulty getting a call answered on 101, cumbersome procedures or lack of communication of what is involved.

Bystanders could be encouraged to ask if a victim would consider reporting an incident and signpost them or could report the incident themselves as a third-party. Bystanders should be trained on relevant reporting mechanisms to police, local transport companies and other campaigns that might be operating locally. **This includes instruction that the British Transport Police do not cover the bus network.**



Reporting on the rail network, trains and stations

The British Transport Police (BTP) can be texted on 61016 to report non-emergency incidents or contacted through the Railway Guardian App, or called by phone to report non-emergency incidents on 101 or for reporting emergencies to 999 in the same way as above and the incident would be directed to the BTP. BTP have useful information about reporting sexual harassment to them: BTP report harassment.

Reporting on buses, bus stops and stations

Either a phone call to 999 (code red, perpetrator on board, seriousness of incident assessed by driver, victim or bystander) or 101 (code amber after the incident, perpetrator has left, less serious incidents as assessed by driver, victim, bystander) to the police.

Bear in mind many people under assess the seriousness of incidents and the harm inflicted on victims. The British Transport Police consider it relevant to use 999 for emergency reporting for incidents of “rape or serious sexual assault” (see Speak up, interrupt | British Transport Police (btp.police.uk))

Collecting information from transport staff to assist reporting

Bus drivers and rail conductors and other station staff present can give information to assist reporting and intervention. Drivers can request their manager to download the relevant CCTV footage. Bystanders and victims should request this for reporting along with details of the service, noting time and route, place it occurred, nearest stop for example.

Bystanders can ask a bus driver to print a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Report, which will have the necessary details to identify and save CCTV footage and to identify the driver who may be a witness to the incident. The bystander could take details of any witnesses and some information on the victim’s physical appearance and demeanour that might help in any future police investigation. Sometimes repeat offenders are arrested and prosecuted later and each report and CCTV could be useful.

Perceived risks and barriers to passenger bystander intervention

When behaviours are ignored, a message is communicated that these behaviours are tolerated and accepted as normal even if they are harmful to women and other groups of people. If there is no intervention these behaviours are likely to continue, particularly those that are not currently defined as criminal.

What stands in the way of intervention?

Many victims show they are unaware of a behaviour or incident and so do bystanders. They may not want to give the perpetrator attention, or show their distress, but commonly victims and bystanders will avoid challenging a perpetrator as a method of self-care to limit the harm they may experience.

Harm can be escalated for a victim if they do something to try and make others aware of the situation (e.g. by making eye contact with those around or asking for help, or challenging the perpetrator), but receive no support. Harm for the victim can be increased if the perpetrator becomes confrontational, aggressive, or denies their involvement and challenges the victim or bystander, or refuses to stand-down and move, or continues with the behaviour, for example.

- Both victims and bystanders may not have flexibility to arrive later than planned to their destination. They may be concerned of missing their stop or getting off transport when intervening. Similarly, this can deter victims from acknowledging, challenging, and reporting an incident.
- Bystanders may be concerned about their onward travel, particularly if the service frequency is low, and/or they may need to wait somewhere unfamiliar and potentially isolated, which puts them at risk.
- Bystanders may be concerned that they will be required to give a statement to the police, which could disrupt their journey.
- Bystanders may be unsure in which situations and incidents they should act.
- Bystanders worry they will make a situation worse for the victim and that they also could be victimised.
- Bystanders worry others, including the driver, will not intervene with them. Transport staff may appear unapproachable, for example, a bus driver may not have given the passengers a greeting on entering the bus. Passengers may come across as vacant and not wanting to be approached.
- Bystanders worry how they will be perceived by others and fear for their reputation in their community or employment given an awareness that incidents can be filmed and posted online.
- Sometimes bystanders wait for, or leave it to, others to intervene.

Intervention techniques applied to public transport

Awareness and approachability

Passengers often switch off from their surroundings. Being aware of what is going on is necessary for active bystander intervention. Looking up and around occasionally not only helps passengers to identify opportunities to help others, it also could help to create atmospheres on public transport where passengers feel like they can approach others for assistance.

If a person tells a bystander they need help or that something is happening to them the bystander should listen and then respond in such a way that lets the victim know they are believed by reassuring them, letting them know their experience is valid and they will be taken seriously, and they are supported. For example, responding by nodding as they speak, saying “right okay” and not contesting or minimising or downplaying what they are experiencing. Communicate any plans of assistance and see if they would like or need some other form of support.

Assessing risk

Bystanders should choose the best course of action that does not place themselves, other passengers or transport staff at risk of injury or harm that outweighs benefits of intervention.

Bystanders could consider the following:

- How safe does the bystander feel in the area they are in and/or in relation to other passengers around them?
- Is the offender behaving violently or likely to?
- What would the repercussions be if the offender is known to the bystander? Is there a chance they could victimise the bystander verbally or be physically violent in future at a different time and place?
- If the situation were to escalate, what would the bystander do next?
- What support is available? Are there other passengers around? Are any staff present?
- Is there somewhere nearby to go for safety if necessary, or an approaching stop at which they and the victim could leave?
- Is this a rural location isolated from the support of police?
- Is there CCTV? Is the area reasonably well lit?
- Could the police reach the place quickly?

If there is no one around and the only support is a 999 call to the police, this is not a situation in which to be telling an aggressor how wrong they are. It may not be safe to intervene in incidents of a higher degree of violence. In situations of physical violence, rape, severe sexual assault, or threat to life a bystander could be advised to call 999 for police assistance, try to witness from a safe place and if safe, try to discreetly film the incident for police investigation/prosecuting evidence (victims should always be asked for their consent before publishing any video online), or leave if they are unsafe and call 999 at the first safe possibility.

Minimising risk

Bystanders can be encouraged to consider seeking the support of others before challenging an aggressor. Questions to ask “Did you see what happened?”, “Do you think that was inappropriate?”. If they agree, ask if they are willing to intervene and/or support if the offender challenges/victimises the bystander. A collective intervention could have the effect of intimidating the offender to stop what they are doing and reduces the possibility of them becoming aggressive toward the bystander, or harassing them.

A small gesture can help people to feel supported, such as showing the victim you are aware and disapprove of the offensive behaviour directed at them and asking if they’re okay.
Intervention can be effective without a direct challenge. Consider could a less confrontational method stop an incident and could it be tried first?

Distraction and diversion techniques

Tell a victim or offender they dropped something, consider showing a small item you have and ask if it belongs to either of them.

Drop something on the floor, or create some other minor commotion say “oops. I’m sorry” and see if that makes the aggressor stop harassing the other passenger. If not, consider asking the victim if they want to swap places or move to another place. That could be followed up with checking they’re okay and if they need anything, if they would consider reporting the incident, and if they need a witness statement if they report it. Ask if the victim would prefer to be left alone. If they do, the bystander can remain vigilant and supportive while on the transport, or station/bus stop.

Ask a question such as 'do you have the time?' or 'what's the next stop?', ‘ do you know how I can get to….?’. This can provide a distraction and help to defuse the situation.

Being present

Getting closer to an incident could put off an aggressor and gives a chance to see and hear more clearly what is happening if the bystander is at a distance. Bystanders could:

- Place something in the overhead racks nearby
- Drop an object nearby
- Get up to look at signage such as a station map
- Take a walk down the carriage appearing to stretch their legs
- Take a seat nearby
- Stand in between and ask the victim a question following the distraction technique or in support, asking if they are okay.

Overcoming uncertainty

Public transport enables certain kinds of sexual harassment to occur such as rubbing up against a victim, because these acts can be concealed in crowded spaces and spaces with seating, as well as the unsteady movements. This makes victims and bystanders uncertain about what they are experiencing, or seeing, and they may not react or intervene at the time of the incident.

Bystanders should not anticipate incidents will necessarily be clearly visible or obvious. Bystanders could approach to intervene even if they are uncertain. A closer look and a taking little time to assess could reveal and reaffirm what they suspect is harassment or GBV. A more subtle diffusion or distraction technique would be more appropriate than a challenge. For example, asking the offender or vulnerable person a question about the route, or the time, or discreetly checking in with a vulnerable person could be appropriate when a bystander is unsure if they are witnessing sexual assault/harassment.

Supporting a get-away

Bystanders could consider:

- If there is a way to help get the vulnerable person an opportunity to get away.
- Offering a safer space like a standing spot against a wall/corner in a train or a seat to help the person out of the situation. It could be a direct offer, such as, “do you want to stand or sit here?”, or a discreet opportunity for the victim to move/get away, such as, “I think you’ve left an item/dropped an item on the seat/floor over there”.

Bus drivers are usually advised to take vulnerable passengers without payment if they cannot pay to travel. If at, or near to, a bus stop and a victim does not have payment to travel, a bystander could wait with a victim (with their agreement) for a bus to take them closer to another safe space rather than them walking alone.

A direct challenge

Calling out behaviours by saying they are not acceptable and asking a person to stop it, or to not do it again, helps to deter behaviours. It helps support the victim and is particularly relevant for stopping normalised behaviours considered acceptable and/or unlikely to be investigated by the police or result in prosecution (under current legislation), such as catcalling, or shouting out misogynist degrading comments including sexist banter, starring, invasive conversation or sexual propositions. A direct challenge could result in an aggressor denying the accusation, or perhaps apologising (e.g. for standing too close to someone), and then moving on and leaving the situation.

Challenging the aggressor could escalate the situation, however. A direct challenge could cause emotional harm to the bystander who could then be targeted. Furthermore, some women may not appreciate another person intervening in a very confrontational way because it could further traumatise them if the situation escalated.

It is very important the bystander should take time to assess the risk of the situation.

If it is safe to do so, a bystander could calmly ask the aggressor/perpetrator to stop what they are doing and to leave the person alone. Consider suggesting the vulnerable person does not want to talk to them if it's a case of intrusive questioning, or saying "that's not a joke" or "that isn't funny. It's not okay to say that" in response to sexualised banter or a derogatory comment.

A bystander may need to ask an aggressor to let a vulnerable passenger move by getting out of their seat or moving aside. Or asking an aggressor to give the other person some more space if they are standing very close and may be touching or bumping a victim.

Delegating to other passengers and staff, police or security

If the behaviour has continued despite an attempt to intervene by distraction, diffusion, discretion, trying to get the victim away, or a calm direct request, it may be that the incident is escalating and additional support from a staff member is needed. Is there another passenger nearby who could notify a staff member or nearby security or police if on a station platform/in the street, while the bystander stays close to the victim, or vice-versa?

Alarm apps

Passengers may use an app on their phone that can set off an audible panic alarm. On hearing this, bystanders should immediately investigate and ask if the vulnerable person needs help and be ready to call the police on 999 and seek assistance from others around, such as a driver/conductor or passenger.

Reporting and signposting to support

Make sure the victim is okay. Assure them that what happened isn't okay. Check if there's anything else that can be done to help the victim and let them know the bystander will report the incident too. This can make the victim feel less isolated and more confident to report it themselves.

Gather information

- Make a note of what is happening, where they are (what train line, station, bus number or train carriage number, ask bus driver for road traffic collision report for details), what time it is, what the perpetrator looks like, what they're wearing and any details of the incident they may forget.
- Ask bus drivers/rail conductors to ask their supervisor to ensure CCTV footage is retained, but should report to the police and not assume a driver will report it to the police.

Offering a witness statement

Bystanders can consider giving their details to the victim should they be needed as a witness later, but bystanders should not feel like this is necessary and not wanting further contact/involvement should not deter people from intervening.

Use these details to report what's happened and check if the victim knows where to report it if they choose to.

- For Tube and rail, text the British Transport Police on 61016 or use the Guardian Railway app.
- On buses call the police on 101 (non-emergency) and for London buses reports can be made online at met.police.uk. Report to 999 in emergencies. The bystander can let the driver know what has happened and ask for them to report it to their manager/director.

If the bystander did not intervene before the victim left, they could still report it to the police later on but should not delay for too long to ensure CCTV is retained.

Signposting to support

Bystanders can let a victim know where they can access support. When bystander training is offered in a specific region, or place, trainers could research local support available and share this with the attendees. Otherwise, trainers/campaigners can encourage bystanders to identify local support available. This could be through rape and sexual assault support centres that offer advice, call lines, messaging services and face-to-face counselling services. In the North-West of England support can be found here: Find Specialist Sexual Violence Support in The North West . Across the UK the Enough campaign have a useful search tool to locate specialist support organisations and have support for victims of abuse and sexual violence: Get support | ENOUGH

Universities and colleges may have staff trained and employed to support victim survivors within their wellbeing and counselling services.

Asking for Angela – what can bystanders do?

Ask for Angela began as an initiative used in bars and nightclubs to enable people to discreetly get help during incidents of sexual harassment. It can be used in incidents relating to sexual harassment and domestic violence in public places.

A passenger at risk may ask for Angela to **discreetly** ask for help. They might ask,

“Is Angela not with you today?” or “How is Angela?” or without seeming like they know the person ask, “have you seen my friend Angela?”, and follow on with a description to help the person identify Angela.

If a passenger uses the code Angela (or Annie or similar, and there is an Ask for Clive scheme too supporting LGBTQIA+ people), a bystander should firstly listen to what they say carefully and read their body language.

They could ask the passenger to repeat the question if it catches them off-guard to give more time to think of a response.

Responses advised differ depending on if the aggressor is or is not known. If unsure a bystander could be cautious and act with discreet techniques.

Aggressor appears to be unknown to victim

If a vulnerable passenger is being victimised by someone causing them harm that is unknown to them, a bystander could:

- Try to distance the victim from the aggressor. Consider asking if the passenger wants to wait/travel with them/sit or stand near to them, move carriages with them, or go to a safe space (café, library, shop) with them if they are outside?
- Could the bystander call a taxi and have the victim collected from the current location or the next stop if on transport?
- Ask the victim what assistance they need.
- Phone the police on 999 if it is an emergency and a crime is in progress.

Aggressor appears to be known to victim

If a vulnerable person is accompanied by someone causing them harm and they cannot leave the aggressor because they are known to them (e.g. partner, relative, neighbour, friend), a bystander could:

- **Use discretion** and go along with the Angela code question.
- Consider asking the driver/conductor to **discreetly** phone the police on 999, and/or report it to their depot or manager. They could step out of the vehicle to call.
- Ask driver/conductor to ensure the CCTV footage is saved.
- Or, bystander **discreetly** phones the police away from the sight of the person the vulnerable person is travelling with.
- Or, bystander delegates to another passenger to call police **discreetly** and/or to stay near victim if the bystander seeks distance to make the call.
- Keep an eye on the situation. A bystander could delegate this to another person nearby if they need to leave.
- Apply the same risk assessment outlined from page 22 and consider using a distraction technique, or continuing with presence (being nearby).
- Record details of what the bystander is witnessing, when and where.
- Consider if it is safe to discreetly video or audio record the incident for assisting an investigation.
- Confronting the aggressor in this situation could cause further harm to the victim either at the time, or later in another place.

If the incident is domestic violence, the victim-survivor may be worried the aggressor will punish them for reporting, or asking for help. Non-confrontational techniques and discretion could help to avoid escalation and further trauma.

Representation and bystander intervention

Bystanders may be motivated to act because of how we consider our responsibility for others' wellbeing in relation to those others.

Bystander trainers and campaigners may be aware of the roles of, a) chauvinism embodied in masculine gender identity and intervention and, b) solidarity and intervention, which emerges through shared gender identity, shared experience and empathy.

From the perspective of women passengers involved in our research, two further points were raised regarding the representation of bystander responsibility in creating safe and inclusive spaces:

1) Bystander intervention should avoid using representations of protective masculinity that tend to portray women as victims in need of assistance from men. This would reproduce an imbalance in power and agency.

2) There should not be a burden, or pressure, on women to feel like they must step-in to support other women as bystanders.

For example, the below quote cited by London Travel Watch given by a 'young woman transport user' [8] highlights the positive impact of bystander intervention, but emphasises the role of men assigning responsibility to men to help women:

"It's really helpful when men speak up. So in one instance when I was being followed, two men were like "excuse me, are you alright?" and "what are you doing?" to the guy who was kind of freaked out by it [the two men challenging him] after following me for about 10 minutes all the way through to the end of the train. So sometimes men can stop other men."

There is a need for balance in representing bystanders. Expectations of/for and representation of bystander intervention should be gender neutral, and equally applied across genders. The same understanding could be applied to ethnicity, race, sexuality and (dis)ability avoiding potentially harmful representations of victim/hero binaries.

It may be helpful to consider communicating that we all can give and receive care at various times and that skills learned can be applied to help anyone who is the victim of harassment, violence and hate crime. It could be beneficial to monitor the audience of bystander training programmes, and to consider if the skills are received by a diverse audience. If they are, it could be worth communicating this to help women and men understand there is no gendered expectation of responsibility placed on passengers to intervene as bystanders.

A handy tip card

---------- This wallet sized tip card can be printed.

Presence

Bystander superpowers

Distraction - get close, drop an item, interrupt - “does the train stop in...?” “are we near...?”

Support - ask a vulnerable person if they are ok, if they need help, or offer a seat. Find others to support you.

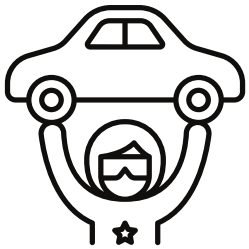
bus - 101
rail - text 61016
or call 999

Or, why not take a screen shot? Save it. Share it.

Presence

Bystander superpowers

Distraction - get close, drop an item, interrupt - “does the train stop in...?” “are we near...?”



Support - ask a vulnerable person if they are ok, if they need help, or offer a seat. Find others to support you.

bus - 101
rail - text 61016
or call 999

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Ymchwil Iechyd a Gofal Cymru Health and Care Research Wales

Further details - legislation specific to public transport

The following legislation determines how transport staff and operators respond to incidents.

The Rail Bylaws (made under Section 219 of the Transport Act 2000) empower rail operators, their staff, and the police to manage passenger behaviour within the railway. Under Section 6 (Unacceptable Behaviour) the legislation states:

(1) No person shall use any threatening, abusive, obscene or offensive language on the railway.
(2) No person shall behave in a disorderly, indecent or offensive manner on the railway.
(8) No person shall molest or wilfully interfere with the comfort or convenience of any person on the railway.

It also enables under Section 4., the removal of intoxicated people 'unfit' to use or be in the railway, or to carry alcohol into the railway.

The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990 No.1020, Part 2, Regulation 5. (1) states bus/coach drivers "shall take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of passengers who are on, or who are entering or leaving, the vehicle"

Drivers must complete 25 hours of training every 5 years to maintain their licence, which covers response to serious criminal incidents and customer service, within which drivers are trained to consider accessibility for disabled people, the needs of vulnerable passengers and assisting people in distress.

The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 gives the right to bus/coach drivers to remove or to request the police to remove from a bus or coach passengers in breach of regulatory conduct of passengers.

The Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers) Regulations 1990, No. 1020, Part 2, Regulation 6. states,

No passenger of the vehicle shall

(b)put at risk or unreasonably impede or cause discomfort to any person travelling on or entering or leaving the vehicle, or a driver, inspector, conductor or employee of the operator when doing his work on the vehicle;

(k)remain on the vehicle, when directed to leave by the driver, inspector or conductor on the following grounds–
(i)that his remaining would result in the number of passengers exceeding the maximum seating capacity or the maximum standing capacity marked on the vehicle in accordance with the Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984(1);
(ii)that he has been causing a nuisance

And Regulation 8. states,

(1) Any passenger on a vehicle who is reasonably suspected by the driver, inspector or conductor of the vehicle of contravening any provision of these Regulations shall give his name and address to the driver, inspector or conductor on demand.
(2) Any passenger on a vehicle who contravenes any provision of these Regulations may be removed from the vehicle by the driver, inspector or conductor of the vehicle or, on the request of the driver, inspector or conductor, by a police constable.

Rail passenger charters set out the service expectations for passengers and each company is required to have one.
Bus Passenger Charters (BPCs) and/or passenger 'conditions of carriage' are increasingly used across England. BPCs are a requirement of recent funding made competitively available to local authorities in England to work with operators to improve bus services. Some local authority and operator partnerships and private transport companies published passenger conditions of carriage prior to this round of funding from the Government.

Our analysis identified 41 BPCs or 'conditions of carriage' and of these 68% mentioned safety, security or safeguarding at least once (2 mention safeguarding). This demonstrates local authorities and transport companies are concerned for passenger safety and the security of buses. However, none of the charters refer to harassment or violence against women. The focus of unwanted passenger behaviour is anti-social. The BPCs indicate there are few operators going beyond CCTV and vehicle position tracking in the measures they state are used to ensure the safety of passengers and there is no indication of how the impact of safety measures are audited, which indicates little evidence of accountability.