



**PROTECTING
VULNERABLE
CHILDREN ON
UK TRANSPORT
NETWORKS**



**BRITISH
TRANSPORT
POLICE**

children RAILWAY

Fighting for street children

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN ON TRANSPORT (SCT)

PURPOSE

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

SCT will help you to:

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

VULNERABLE CHILDREN - THE SITUATION

- Nearly 200,000 reports of missing children are made to the police every year. *National Crime Agency Missing Persons Data and Analysis 2012/2013*
- British Transport Police (BTP) completes around 16 child safeguarding reports per day that's 5,840 children a year. *BTP data analysis 2015*
- Around 18,000 children sleep rough every year. *Still Running 3, The Children's Society 2011*
- It is estimated that 16,500 children were at risk of sexual exploitation during the period April 2010 to March 2011. *Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups: One year on, Office of the Children's Commissioner, March 2015*

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

Children can often be seen as behaving badly or causing trouble, but this can be a result of things that have happened, or are happening to them. Behaviours should be seen as symptoms of underlying issues.

BE AWARE:

Children who are at risk and vulnerable will frequent transport systems.

YOU SEE:

- AN ANGRY TEENAGER
- TEENAGERS CAUSING TROUBLE
- ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

WE SEE:

- FAMILY BREAKDOWN
- CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
- BULLYING
- NEGLECT
- ABUSE
- MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- RELATIONSHIP DIFFICULTIES

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.



RISK AND HARM

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 sex 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.



RECOGNISING BEHAVIOURS



BE CONCERNED

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

- **Inappropriate relationships**
 - Unusual age gaps or interactions between adult and child
- **Patterns of behaviour**
 - Children acting in a way that seems out of place
 - Seeing children at an unusual time of day or particular day e.g. school time
 - Misuse of alcohol or drugs

- **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

LISTEN AND REASSURE



The immediate needs of vulnerable children are not as complicated as you think. Here's what children say might help:

- Someone to talk to
- Someone to notice
- Someone to provide proper advice and support
- Somewhere safe to go

REPORT

If you are worried about a child or need any advice report your concerns to BTP who will respond positively to help and support any child at risk. **BTP – 0800 40 50 40 or text 61016.** In an emergency always call **999**.

If appropriate, you may want to approach the child yourself. Often, children may prefer to talk to someone other than the police. We recommend two organisations that are available 24 hours a day and are experienced at building relationships with vulnerable children and assessing the correct course of action.

Runaway Helpline - free, confidential and 24/7
Call or text 116 000
Email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk
www.missingpeople.org.uk

Childline - Call free on 0800 1111
have a 1-2-1 chat online or send an email
www.childline.org.uk

REMEMBER

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Be concerned about their welfare
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For more information about the Safeguarding
Children on Transport programme contact:

T 01270 757596

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