

News story: Hundreds of secure stations keeping passengers safe

- more than 170 stations accredited to Secure Stations Scheme in year since its major refresh, helping tackle crime and ensure safer journeys
- over a quarter of all Britain's stations now accredited by the British Transport Police
- refreshed scheme now assesses approaches taken to safeguarding and suicide prevention

Hundreds of Britain's railway stations are setting the standard in reducing crime, safeguarding vulnerable people and ensuring safer journeys for passengers, Rail Minister Andrew Jones announced today (21 January 2018).

On a visit to East Croydon Station, recently accredited as a secure station by the British Transport Police (BTP), the Rail Minister met with Southern station staff who are helping to make every passenger's journey safer.

More than 673 stations across Britain are now accredited by the BTP, with 172 stations either newly-accredited or re-accredited since the launch of the refreshed Secure Stations Scheme in 2017.

The minister also met with BTP officers and charities including Samaritans and the Railway Children, who all engage with passengers to ensure they feel supported and safe on Britain's railways.

Rail Minister, Andrew Jones said:

The Secure Stations Scheme forms part of the exceptional work British Transport Police, station staff and charities do every single day to give passengers the safe journeys they deserve.

More than 170 stations are now newly or re-accredited under the refreshed scheme, demonstrating an outstanding commitment to tackling crime and safeguarding passengers.

It is particularly poignant and important today to commend the incredible work being done on suicide prevention, ensuring we protect vulnerable people on our railways.

British Transport Police Chief Constable, Paul Crowther said:

Tackling crime and safeguarding the most vulnerable on the railway is one of our key priorities and we're pleased to see that more than 170 stations have now been accredited under the refreshed Secure Stations Scheme – helping passengers and staff feel safer

across the rail the rail network.

The chance of becoming a victim of crime whilst travelling or working on the network remains comparatively low – on average there are only 19 recorded crimes for every million passenger journeys. Secure stations is an important initiative, acting as a national benchmark that police, rail industry and government can work towards making stations an even safer and low crime environment.

Patrick Verwer, Chief Executive of Govia Thameslink Railway which operates Southern, Thameslink and Gatwick Express services through the station, said:

Achieving this accolade here at East Croydon once again is an important achievement. The scheme forms an important part of the excellent work our staff deliver with our industry partners to keep passengers safe and secure.

Samaritans Chief Executive Officer, Ruth Sutherland said:

Samaritans has been working with the railway industry since 2010 to prevent suicide and provide advice, training and access to our service. Samaritans has now trained more than 17,000 railway staff to spot vulnerable people on the network and intervene to help them.

We see partnerships as playing a vital part in achieving our vision of reducing suicide. They allow us to reach vulnerable groups that may not otherwise contact Samaritans.

We join up with organisations from a variety of sectors, including health, education/young people, transport, construction and the services. We look forward to continuing to do this and save more lives in the future.

Pete Kent, Programme Director at Railway Children said:

Railway Children is committed to supporting vulnerable children across the country who are using the rail network to run from violence, abuse and neglect.

Last year, BTP generated more than 8,000 referral reports in connection with vulnerable children they encountered at railway stations. Our partnership with them has enabled us to offer follow-up support to 350 of these children as well as intensive work with 40 of the most vulnerable ones. With ongoing support from the rail industry we will make stations safer places for many more children.

We are delighted that the Secure Stations Scheme includes

safeguarding as a key indicator and we congratulate East Croydon on their achievement in being given this award, and in making their contribution to ensure all children are safe on our railway.

Originally launched in 1998, the Secure Stations Scheme provides station operators with the chance to demonstrate how they are working with partners to make journeys as safe as possible.

The national scheme covers all rail networks which are policed by the British Transport Police. A range of factors are assessed before a station can be granted accreditation, including visibility, lighting, CCTV, safeguarding of vulnerable people and crime data at the station in question.

News story: Veterans' Gateway begins new trial proactive call service to support ex-forces community

The Veterans' Gateway, the first port of call for veterans' support, has begun a new trial outreach service for those who have served in the armed forces.

Supported by £108,000 of funding from the Ministry of Defence, the Veterans' Gateway will now proactively call ex-service personnel who have been in contact to ask for support.

Under the new initiative, the Gateway will identify the most vulnerable ex-service personnel who have previously contacted its helpline, and trained call handlers will get in touch to make sure they are receiving the support they need.

Each individual who contacts the helpline will be asked for their consent to receive calls from the Veterans' Gateway team, who will be able to provide support and advice, and make referrals where necessary.

Veterans will receive calls from the same advisor, and can decide how often they hear from the Gateway, so they are supported in a way that suits their specific needs.

This new proactive posture follows the US Marine Corps veterans service, who make six proactive calls for every one that they receive.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The Veterans' Gateway already makes a huge difference to the ex-

forces community, helping thousands of people across the country access the support they need.

I'm delighted we are now able to enhance this service, boosting the support we offer veterans and making sure that no one who has served this country suffers in silence.

Assistant Director of Veterans' Gateway Mark Collins said:

This funding will allow us to build on our service, offering a more holistic service to the veteran community which will be a positive step.

We will be monitoring the outcome to see how this trial impacts our users but hopefully it'll mean those most vulnerable will be able to access help from Veterans' Gateway supporting organisations, on their journey to getting the right help.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

We are committed to making sure everyone who has served knows where to turn in times of hardship, and this new trial will allow us to go one step further.

By maintaining regular contact with any veteran who needs help, we can offer them the support they deserve, as and when they need it.

Available 24 hours a day, the Veterans' Gateway signposts ex-forces personnel to the wide range of support available to them, including housing and financial advice, career guidance, and medical care from the NHS. Since being set up in 2017, the Veterans' Gateway has already received over 20,000 calls, advising ex-forces personnel and their families.

The funding for this new trial was announced by the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson last year, as part of a wider package of support for veterans. This included the creation of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund – a grant programme where charities will be able to apply for funding from the £10 million awarded to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to support the mental fitness of ex-service personnel.

Press release: Girls' education should be a development priority for the Commonwealth

A new report into girls' education in the Commonwealth has highlighted the gap between ambition and reality, calling on leaders from all sectors of society to make this a national development priority and get behind cost-effective investments such as early childhood education.

The Platform for Girls' Education, co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, commissioned the report, which assesses the state of girls' education across the 53 Commonwealth countries.

Many Commonwealth countries have made good progress towards achieving gender parity in education, with girls out-performing boys in some countries. However, girls remain particularly disadvantaged in a large number of countries and there is a compelling case for targeted efforts to support them.

The report, published by Cambridge University, suggests that governments across the world need to target more funding to the early years of education, especially for girls in remote rural areas. It also highlights the need for targeted approaches to help girls overcome the many challenges they face as they reach puberty.

The Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The importance of investing in girls' education cannot be overstated. Educated girls are a powerful force for building more prosperous, fair and resilient societies based on an "invisible chain" of shared values. Our shared vision of 12 years of quality education for all girls can only be achieved through a much greater collective effort to dismantle the barriers, driven by leaders from all sectors of society.

This first report is a significant step to identifying what actions are needed to ensure disadvantaged girls are supported to stay in school.

Professor Pauline Rose, the author of the report and the Director of the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge said:

The Report presents clear evidence on what works to enhance educational access and learning for marginalised girls. The Platform for Girls' Education presents a key opportunity to promote

political leadership backed up with resources in order to translate this evidence into action at scale.

The Platform for Girls' Education is a group of 12 leaders with a shared commitment to 12 years of quality education for all girls. Its membership includes government and civil society representatives from Canada, Fiji, Ghana, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, Trinidad & Tobago and the UK, as well as heads of leading multilateral agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education).

Notes to editors:

- Please see the [press release](#) with details from the first meeting of the Platform for Girls' Education
- Please see the full [report](#)

Further information

[Press release: Girls' education should be a development priority for the Commonwealth](#)

New report finds that helping girls stay in school requires leadership and action by all sectors of society.

[News story: Government publishes landmark domestic abuse bill](#)

The landmark draft Domestic Abuse Bill has been published today (Monday 21 January), aimed at supporting victims and their families and pursuing offenders. It comes as it is revealed domestic abuse issues cost the country £66 billion a year.

To help tackle the crime, new legislation will:

- introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse – this will enable everyone, including

victims themselves, to understand what constitutes abuse and will encourage more victims to come forward

- establish a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to drive the response to domestic abuse issues
- introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders
- prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts
- provide automatic eligibility for special measures to support more victims to give evidence in the criminal courts

The Home Office has published a [report into the economic and social cost of domestic abuse](#), which reveals the crime cost England and Wales £66 billion in 2016 to 2017.

According to the research, the vast majority of this cost (£47 billion) was a result of the physical and emotional harm of domestic abuse, however it also includes other factors such as cost to health services (£2.3 billion), police (£1.3 billion) and victim services (£724 million).

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

I have heard absolutely heartbreaking accounts of victims whose lives have been ripped apart because of physical, emotional or economic abuse they have suffered by someone close to them.

The draft Domestic Abuse Bill recognises the complex nature of these horrific crimes and puts the needs of victims and their families at the forefront.

This government is absolutely committed to shining a light on domestic abuse to ensure this hidden crime does not remain in the shadows.

It is estimated that around two million adults experience domestic abuse each year, affecting almost 6% of all adults. Women are twice as likely to be victims than men.

The draft bill will introduce measures:

- to address coercive control and economic abuse, and how domestic abuse affects children
- to transform the response in the justice system

The bill will also ban the distressing practice of domestic abuse victims being cross-examined by perpetrators in the family courts.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Domestic abuse shatters lives and tears families apart. It can happen anywhere, to anyone.

Protecting victims, as well as supporting survivors, is at the heart of our strengthened response to this horrific crime.

Our draft Domestic Abuse Bill and wider package of measures, unveiled today, will bolster the protection for victims and will help expose and bring the vile abusers to justice.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Domestic abuse destroys lives and warrants some of the strongest measures at our disposal to deter offenders and protect victims.

That is why we are barring abusers from cross-examining their victims in the family courts – a practice which can cause immense distress and amount to a continuation of abuse – and giving courts greater powers, including new protection orders, to tackle this hideous crime.

By pursuing every option available, to better support victims and bring more offenders to justice, we are driving the change necessary to ensure families never have to endure the pain of domestic abuse in silence.

Between the draft bill and its consultation response, the government is making 120 commitments to tackle domestic abuse. Amongst these are a series of non-legislative measures which include:

- £8 million of Home Office funding to support children affected by domestic abuse
- a new crisis support system for those with no recourse to public funds
- additional funding and capacity building for services for disabled, elderly and LGTB victims
- updated support, training and guidance on economic abuse
- new and additional training for job centre work coaches, police, social workers and probation staff to help them recognise and effectively tackle abuse
- improved support for victims in the family court
- additional £500,000 funding for provisions for male victims

Sandra Horley CBE, Chief Executive of Refuge, said:

Refuge welcomes the draft bill announced by the government today. Refuge staff deal with the human misery of domestic violence every day. The cost to women and children's lives is devastating. But now the immense cost to the taxpayer has been laid bare, too. Domestic violence is truly everybody's business.

This bill represents a once in a generation opportunity to address domestic violence; but in order to do so, we must ensure its aspirations are matched by adequate resource. We will continue to work closely with the government to ensure the final bill meets the needs of the women and children we support.

Suzanne Jacob OBE, Chief Executive of SafeLives, said:

We welcome the government's set of proposals, particularly putting a greater focus on perpetrator accountability, both through the legal system, civil powers, and programmes that seek to change abusive behaviour.

The government estimates today that perpetrators cost the economy £66 billion – more than the cost of alcohol and drug misuse, cigarettes and obesity combined. It affects more than 2 million people every year.

For too long, we've expected victims and children to uproot their lives while the perpetrators remain invisible and unchallenged by the system. The new change in approach reflects what hundreds of survivors told SafeLives they wanted – we're pleased the government is listening.

Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

Domestic abuse costs lives and it costs money. It is happening at epidemic levels yet it has been largely hidden behind closed doors. Now is the time to bring it out into the spotlight and address the impact of domestic abuse properly once and for all.

The Domestic Abuse Bill has the potential to create a step change in the national response and this must be backed up with sustainable funding for our life-saving network of specialist support services to make a real difference to survivors' lives.

We look forward to working with the government, our member services and survivors themselves to make sure survivors have the resources and support they need, as well as address the root causes of domestic abuse so that every woman and child can live free from fear and abuse.

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Director of Surviving Economic Abuse said:

Economic abuse can prevent victims from leaving an abuser and thwart their efforts to rebuild their lives safely – it can even create new risks.

Through committing to ensure that practitioners have access to training and guidance on economic abuse, the government has recognised that physical and economic safety are entwined.

These new measures will help bring economic abuse out of the shadows and will transform responses, ensuring that victim-survivors are able to access the support they so desperately need.