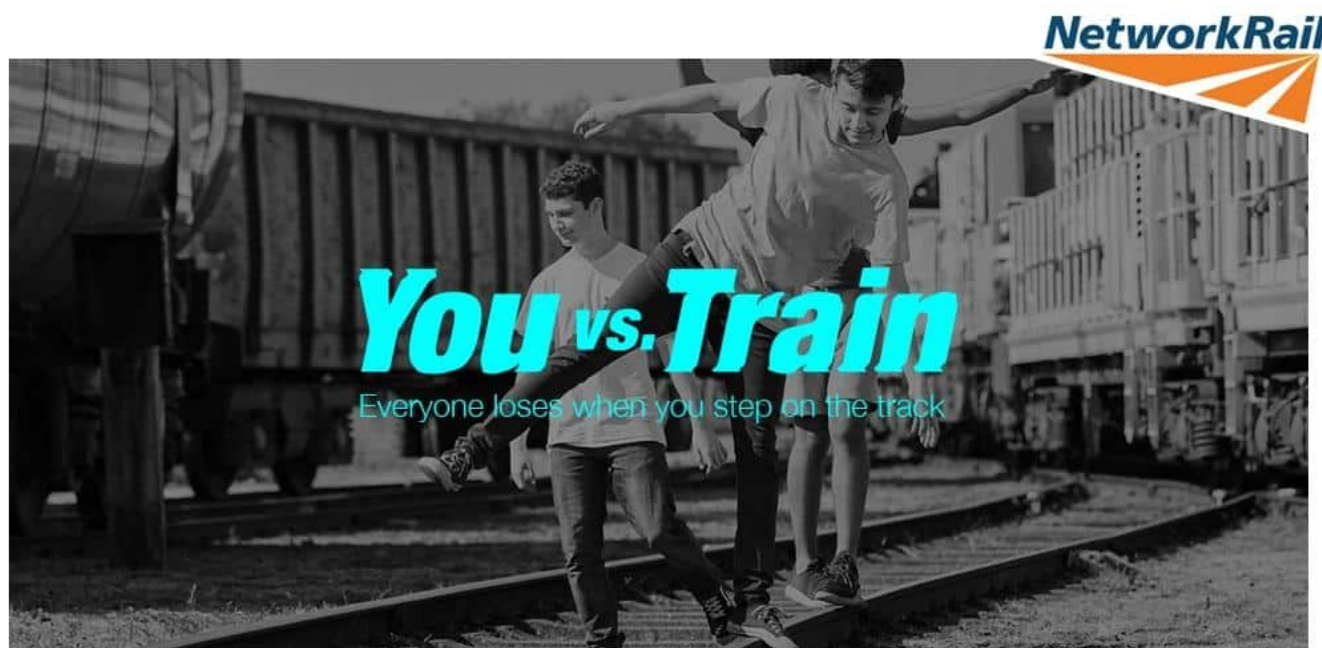


Colchester United helps to kick the trespassing habit

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Working with Colchester United Football Club, Network Rail is encouraging young people to kick the habit of trespassing on the railway, particularly with the late summer bank holiday this weekend.

Earlier this year, the company launched a partnership with the British Transport Police (BTP) the English Football League Trust (EFL Trust) and StreetGames to help tackle the growing number of people risking their lives on the railway across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

The latest figures show 15 incidents of trespass at Colchester station in 2018/19, which is a decrease of two thirds on the previous year. These incidents resulted in almost 900 minutes or 15 hours of delays to trains.

During the first four months of 2019/20, there have been 10 trespass instances so far, with 3 involving a young person.

In Chelmsford during 2018/19, there were 13 instances of trespass with trains being delayed by 224 minutes. During the first four months of 2019/20, there have been 13 so far with 6 incidents involving a young person.

Figures released in May reveal that nationally, over 250 incidents of people taking risks on the railway are recorded per week. Incidents ranged from people taking short-cuts, capturing photos and 'train surfing' – sometimes with tragic consequences. A third of all recorded trespass incidents involve people under the

age of 18.

Network Rail is working closely with Colchester United Football Club and StreetGames, harnessing the power of sport to educate, engage and encourage positive change for the lives of disadvantaged or vulnerable young people in the area.

As part of this initiative, the club is going to involve members of its first team squad to engage with young people on social media. There are also plans in place for Network Rail, Colchester United Football in the Community and Colchester United Football Club to work together to help raise awareness amongst the supporters of the football club.

This will include activity on club matchdays, as well as in the U's community delivery across the local area.

Rupert Lown, director of safety, health for Network Rail's Anglia route, said: "Children, and adults alike, continue to risk their lives by going onto the track and it has to stop. Last year, 1645 people in Anglia went on the railway and each one could be a potential catastrophe leading to life-changing injuries or even death.

"Sport is a powerful vehicle for communicating with this hard-to-reach audience. Working in partnership with these sports charities across the hotspots in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk, we hope to be able to reach children and teens in those communities most at risk with this incredibly important safety message."

Tom Tayler, Community Development Manager at Colchester United Football in the Community, said: "We are really pleased to be working with the EFL Trust and Network Rail on the You vs Train programme from Autumn 2019 onwards. Young people across Colchester and North Essex depend on the many rail networks for travel and it's important that they also know the associated risks that go alongside this.

"As the statistics clearly demonstrate, there have been a number of incidents across Essex over recent years and we hope that our interactive and educational You vs Train programme can help raise awareness around the dangers and ultimately keep young people safer within our communities."

BTP Assistant Chief Constable Robin Smith said: "The lack of knowledge about the potential dangers seems to be why children choose the tracks as a place to take risks, so our main focus is on providing much-needed education. By working closely with The EFL Trust and StreetGames, it will give us the best possible chance of ensuring that the message resonates where it is most needed."

The EFL Trust is the official charity of the English Football League and StreetGames is a charity that runs a network of local projects.

Mike Evans, Director of Operations at The EFL Trust, said: "Bringing about positive change in the community is at the very core of The EFL Trust's values. Football can be an enormous force for good and have a profoundly positive impact on communities – so we are looking forward to helping tackle this issue in those areas where children and young people are particularly vulnerable."

Stuart Felce, StreetGames Head of Community Safety, said: “We were alarmed to hear how many young children unintentionally risk their lives on the railway every year. Our projects involve working closely with disadvantaged children and young people every day and so we are perfectly placed to help deliver this safety message in a way that we hope will resonate.”

To watch the new video and find out how to keep your children safe on the railway visit:

www.YouVsTrain.co.uk.