

Govia Thameslink Railway is UK's first rail operator to sign new homelessness charter

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Homelessness in the UK is increasing year-on-year and has been heightened during the pandemic, with reports of rough sleepers up by 36%[1]. The issue is particularly prevalent on the railway, which is why the UK's largest rail operator has signed a new charter to help safeguard vulnerable people and communities.

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), is the first train operating company to put its name to the Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter, **introduced by Network Rail**. The charter is a first for the industry and forms part of a wide-reaching programme of collaborative efforts to support a route out of homelessness for every person sleeping rough around the rail network. It was signed by Chief Operating Officer, Steve White, and witnessed by **NOAH** – a homeless organisation in Luton and along standing official charity partner for GTR.

Signing the new charter is another positive step from GTR, which is committed to helping the vulnerable communities it serves. Last year, GTR launched the '**Great Sock Appeal**', which collected more than 4,000 pairs of socks for homeless shelters across its route. This year, in addition to signing the charter, GTR is rolling out e-learning to all colleagues to help them support homeless people.

Steve White, Chief Operating Officer at GTR said: "Homelessness is a significant issue for society. As

another winter approaches, I am proud to be signing the charter on behalf of Govia Thameslink Railway to support the ambition to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping for good. Our intention is to support the most vulnerable and collaborate with others to offer routes out of homelessness.”

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, added: “Every signature on the Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter moves us one step closer to our goal of ending rough sleeping in this Parliament. Everybody should have the safety, comfort and security of a home. For those sleeping rough in our railway stations, particularly as we approach winter, life can be cold, challenging and uncertain. It is hugely welcome that GTR has stepped forward to play their part in supporting the vulnerable people who sleep rough on our rail network.”

David Morris, Chief Executive of NOAH Enterprise, commented: “We have worked with GTR for a number of years and in this time have collaborated on various projects to help disadvantaged people in the local community. It’s great that the new training will educate staff about StreetLink, which is a key tool in helping someone begin their journey out of homelessness by connecting them with relevant services and outreach support. We applaud GTR for adopting the Charter at this early stage, and for committing to partner with NOAH’s new social enterprise Rainbow, through which more disadvantaged people will access jobs and training.”

Rachel Hopkins, MP for Luton, also commented: “I’m pleased to see GTR sign up to the Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter and commit to working to end homelessness. Equipping their staff with the skills to support those in need is vitally important. NOAH is an integral part of our community, and the commitment to the new Charter will enable them to continue working with GTR to help those who have nowhere else to turn.”

The Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter was announced by Network Rail on 7th October 2020. It focuses on educating staff and empowering them with the tools to support homeless individuals as well as homeless charities.

[1] Alerts by members of the public about rough sleepers increased by 36% year on year between April and June 2020 – Streetlink

Photo credit: Govia Thameslink Railway

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