

Looming lockdown lift sparks youth rail safety warning

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Network Rail and British Transport Police are urging parents to talk to their teenagers about rail safety and the devastating potential impact of trespass to them, their friends and family, and the wider community ahead of the Easter school holiday and the easing of lockdown restrictions.

The calls come as newly released data reveals there was a surge in reckless behaviour on the rail network when the nation emerged from the lockdown last summer, which continued right through to the end of year. Alarmingly the numbers increased most sharply in the under 18s age group, with a 40% increase in the number of incidents recorded between July and December 2020, compared with the same period in 2019 (and a 29% increase on 2018). November 2020 was the worst November on record for trespass incidents, and saw a staggering 75% increase in youth incidents on the previous year.

Allan Spence, head of public and passenger safety at Network Rail, stated: "These are truly worrying figures. The number of young people going on the tracks had been going down since we launched the You vs Train campaign in 2018. But lifting the lockdown restrictions in 2020 has reversed that trend. We cannot afford to see this continue. Every time someone strays onto the railway they are putting themselves at risk of serious, life-threatening injury. I ask parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles to sit

down and talk to their loved ones today about the dangers on the railway, and urge them not to risk their futures by straying onto the track.”

Superintendent Alison Evans, British Transport Police, added: “We often warn families at this time of year as the evenings get lighter and children prepare to enjoy school holidays. However, this year our concerns are more acute, especially as we are not able to get into schools ourselves to pass this message onto children directly. Trespassing on the railway can have serious, life-changing consequences for the individual, their loved ones and the wider community. Please, make sure you know the rail safety basics and pass that knowledge onto your loved ones. Lead by example and stay off the tracks.”

Trespass is a cause of serious concern for Network Rail, which is why the You vs Train campaign was created in partnership with British Transport Police in summer 2018. Primarily concentrating on young people, the number of incidents across the railway had been significantly decreasing year on year since the campaign’s introduction.

To help combat the expected seasonal climb in trespass, a new You vs Train film – Parallel Lines – has been launched to get children to not only think about the devastating consequences that their actions can have on them and their loved ones, but the wider, sometimes hidden harm caused to the community, in particular to rail staff. The new film will be streamed into schools on 18 March as part of a rail safety broadcast by Network Rail’s education partner – LearnLive. Further information, including how to sign up for the broadcast, can be found on the [LearnLive website](#).

Information on the dangers of railway trespass and the new campaign film can be found on the [You vs Train website](#).

Photo and video credit: Network Rail