

Missing young girls found by train conductor on-board Northern service

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A quick-thinking train conductor has helped return two missing young girls to their home in Blackpool.

Paul Wilkinson, who works for Northern, found the girls, who are both under the age of 16, on-board a service heading from Blackpool North to York on the evening of Wednesday, 22 March 2023.

He was able to ascertain they had, in their words, 'run away from home' and immediately alerted British Transport Police (BTP) who intercepted the train at Leeds and took the girls into their duty of care.

Paul Wilkinson said: "I've worked on the railway for nearly 16 years and you meet hundreds if not thousands of customers every day – but through experience and training you can feel when something isn't quite right – and you know that you need to call BTP. You should always trust your instincts."

Chris Jackson, regional director for Northern, said: "Paul responded as any one of our staff would do when getting the sense that something wasn't 'quite right' – and I applaud his actions.

“We work closely with British Transport Police to ensure the safety of everyone on-board our services – and I’m glad these young girls were found and returned home.”

Inspector Pete Wilcock said: “As guardians of the railway we are constantly working with and training rail staff on how to look beyond the obvious and spot the signs of children who are vulnerable or at risk.

“And we continue to work together, sharing intelligence and knowledge, to create a network of people who can understand, identify and help support and safeguard children.

“That’s exactly what this conductor did and, thanks to his quick thinking the girls were returned home once safeguarding checks had been completed.

“Members of the public can also play an important role by reporting any concerns about vulnerable children to rail staff or ourselves by texting 61016.”

In 2022, Northern began the process of training its 7,000-strong workforce in how to spot vulnerable people on the railway and have the confidence to intervene.

The training is provided by the charity ‘Railway Children’, whose work focusses on identifying individuals at risk and helping with early forms of intervention.

Anyone can contact British Transport Police via text message on 61016 or call 0800 40 50 40.

Photo credit: Northern