

ORR's partnership with Rail Safe Friendly described as 'monumental' in helping to promote the dangers of railway trespass to children

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The **Office of Rail and Road (ORR)** has partnered with the **Rail Safe Friendly programme**, which seeks to educate young people on the many dangers that are present on the railway.

Patrick Talbot, ORR's HM Principal Inspector of Railways, said: "Educational programmes such as Rail Safe Friendly, play an important role in ensuring that children and young people have the knowledge and skills to know how to keep themselves away from danger."

Rail Safe Friendly was launched in March 2023 and delivers Network Rail's video safety content about the dangers of trespassing on railways directly to schools via digital education provider Learn Live, which, since 2019 has reached over 21 million young people in over 12,500 schools across the UK in partnership

with the Trespass Improvement Team at Network Rail.

The programme was launched last year by Stuart Heaton, Learn Live and Rail Safe Friendly Managing Director, following the tragic death of 11-year-old Harrison Ballantyne who received a fatal electric shock after climbing over a fence to retrieve his football at a train depot.

Already, over 4,000 UK schools are on board with the Rail Safe Friendly programme and more than 70 industry partners from across the rail sector have sponsored and become partners in it.

Patrick added: "Ensuring the safety of Britain's Railways is at the heart of what we do at the Office of Rail and Road. Our inspectors are out on the network every day, ensuring that railway companies continue to make Britain's railways safe for passengers, workers and the public.

"Trespass remains a significant risk on the railway, and the law requires companies to take reasonable steps to prevent people from getting access. However, it is also important to ensure that people are informed about the risks, so they are equipped to act responsibly around the railway.

"I have seen first-hand the devastating impact that Harrison's death had on his family and friends."

The ORR's partnership with the programme will see young people from 150 schools educated on the risks of trespassing on or close to Britain's railways.

The Rail Safe Friendly broadcasts are delivered through live or on demand content digitally into classrooms and assembly halls via the Learn Live channel. The channel also has a moderated, GDPR compliant LIVE CHAT facility to promote interaction and involvement from the schools and colleges taking part in Rail Safe Friendly.

Stuart Heaton, Managing Director of Learn Live and Rail Safe Friendly, said: "It is monumental that the ORR, as the regulator for health and safety on Britain's rail network, has joined Rail Safe Friendly. The regulator's support of this vital rail safety project shows true leadership and an expectation of the industry.

"We are delighted to welcome the ORR to Rail Safe Friendly. The support of the rail industry is pivotal in rail safety education being delivered to as many schools and youth organisations as possible, across the country.

"I am heartened to say that, since Rail Safe Friendly launched in March 2023, it has been embraced by train operating companies, freight operating companies and small to large organisations working across the rail supply chain, with one goal, to ensure children receive vital knowledge to keep them rail safe."

The programme seeks to educate children and young people on the many dangers that are present on the railway. For example, nearly half of the UK rail network is electrified and more than 30 per cent uses a third rail to power the train. The third rail has 750 vaults running through it, which is enough to kill or seriously injure someone if they stepped on it. Overhead cables that power trains carry 25,000 volts, more than 100 times the power of electricity in the average home. Electricity from overhead lines can also jump or arc through the air, meaning someone does not have to be touching the line to be electrocuted

and killed.

Businesses and organisations that want to partner with Rail Safe Friendly, or schools that want to be certified, can register their interest at www.railsafefriendly.com.