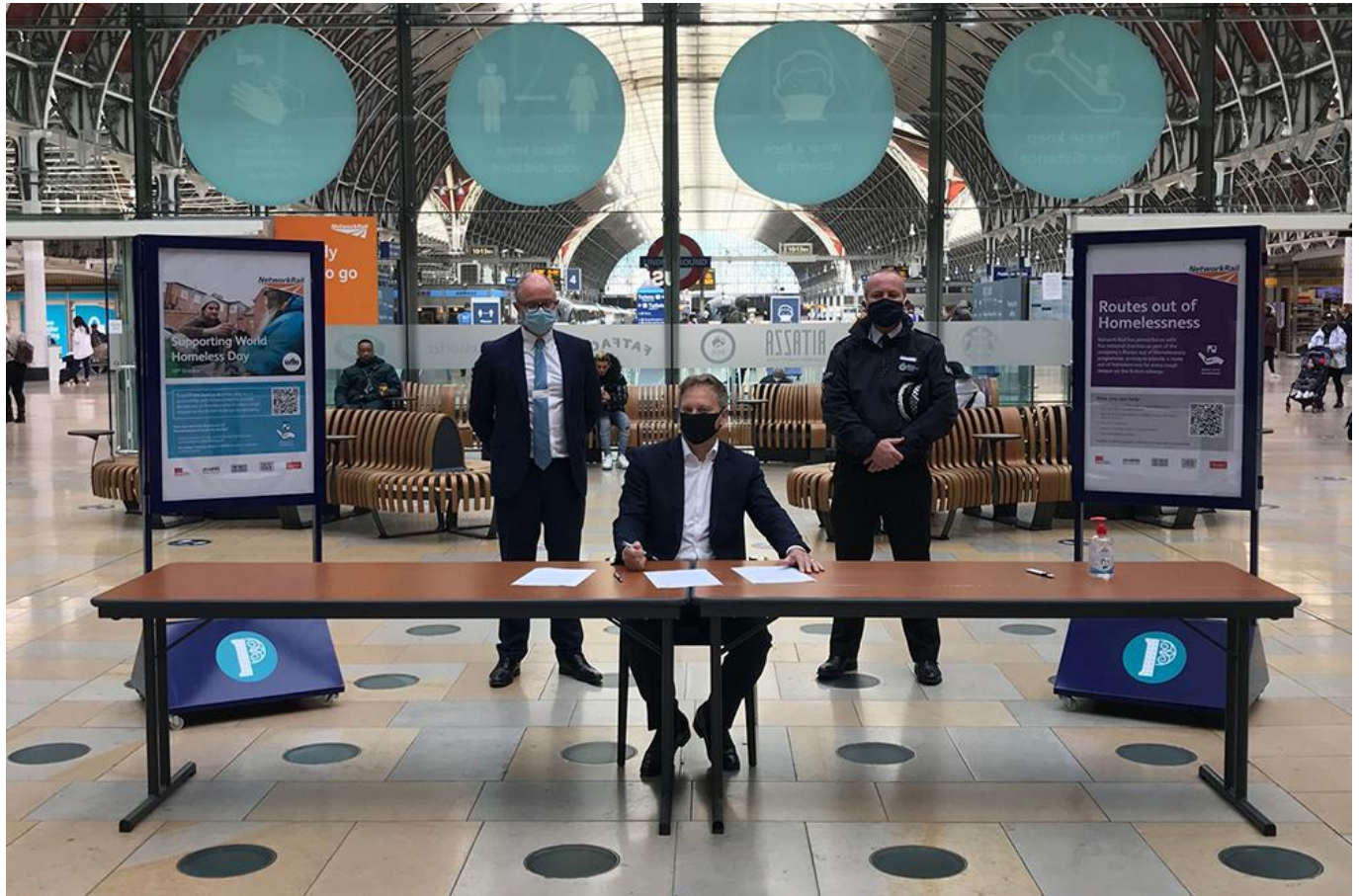


Rail industry and charities join forces to tackle street homelessness with new Rough Sleeping on Rail Charter

October 8, 2020



Network Rail chief executive Andrew Haines was joined by transport secretary Grant Shapps and British Transport Police assistant chief constable Charlie Doyle to sign the first pan-industry homelessness charter at London Paddington station as part of a wide-reaching programme of efforts to support a route out of homelessness for every person sleeping rough around the rail network.

The Government is committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness and ending rough sleeping for good – that’s why the rail industry is to play its part by introducing a charter setting out how it will help safeguard vulnerable people and communities.

This includes working closely together with charities to create bespoke plans and training for station staff so they can give the right advice and support to people sleeping rough around the railway.

Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail, said: “We know that homelessness is a real problem and many vulnerable people are drawn to the rail network. We are committed to working with communities

and charities to improve how we work together to address the challenges involved in supporting some of the country's most marginalised people."

Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, said: "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.

"This new charter demonstrates the rail industry is committed to taking meaningful action. Having helped take StreetLink online with the popular app as Housing Minister, I'm delighted that it will now be used to increase reporting of rough sleeping in order to rapidly bring expert help to those who are vulnerable.

"We must fight homelessness on all fronts, and I am proud the railways are playing their part in our ultimate ambition of ending rough sleeping within this Parliament."

Charlie Doyle, assistant chief constable at British Transport Police, said: "Tackling homelessness on the railway and helping those in need is a very important issue to us, and we welcome this charter to galvanise the collective efforts of Industry, police and partners to support often the most vulnerable people with a route out of homelessness.

"As part of our commitment to this cause we continue to work with industry and charitable partners to support outreach provision and our officers and staff are encouraged to use the StreetLink app in the course of their patrols. In addition I would encourage the travelling public to download and use the App to sign-post when and where they see those in need of help. This simple action may change someone's life."

Kelly Tolhurst, minister for rough sleeping and housing said: "It's vital we do everything we can to support the most vulnerable people in society - that's why we took decisive action at the height of the pandemic to protect hundreds of lives by bringing nearly 15,000 of the most vulnerable into safe accommodation.

"I welcome the signing of this charter today, which marks an important partnership between Network Rail staff and the police to do their utmost to tackle homelessness and give support to those who need it most.

"The Government is determined to break the cycle of homelessness and end rough sleeping once and for all."

In a change of approach to the company's charitable endeavours, Network Rail has partnered with The Big Issue Foundation, Crisis, End Youth Homelessness, Railway Children and Shelter to focus on this important societal issue.

The national Routes out of Homelessness initiative will feature a number of events to raise awareness for the charities, as well as fundraising and a new outreach programme at stations to support the government's ambitions to end rough sleeping.

The outreach programme is being piloted by Shelter at Manchester Piccadilly and includes new dedicated outreach teams at stations who will help offer support to those in need whilst ensuring a safe environment for them, as well as railway staff and passengers. It will also launch at Birmingham New Street in

December and further stations in 2021.

Murals representing each of the charities were unveiled today at Glasgow Central, Leeds, London Charing Cross and Manchester Piccadilly to mark the occasion ahead of World Homeless Day this Saturday. A piece will also be created live by artist and Big Issue vendor John Cahill at London Paddington today (Thursday) and will be installed in Reading station's new Assisted Travel Lounge when it opens in 2021.

Network Rail has worked to support homeless people and help fundraise for associated charities in recent years.

This includes Railway Children's Sleepout events, hosted at stations across the country, teaming up with industry partners and charities to host Christmas Day lunches for homeless people at London Euston and Birmingham New Street, providing pitches in stations across the country for Big Issue vendors and working with charities to provide operational guidance to employees to help vulnerable people in and around Network Rail stations and infrastructure.

Photo credit: Network Rail

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