

Railway Children launches campaign to protect vulnerable children on the rail network this Christmas

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Railway Children is calling on the rail community to come together to protect hundreds of vulnerable children who will go missing from home this Christmas.

The charity's Christmas campaign – which launched this week – focuses on its UK programme to raise awareness of vulnerability on the rail network and help children and families facing crisis.

Every day, 28 children are found lost, alone and vulnerable at transport hubs across the UK*. Many are using the railways to escape problems at home, including family conflict, abuse and neglect – and with each hour that a child is missing, the risks increase. Reports show that 25% of children who run away will face exploitation, violent crime or alcohol and drug abuse**.

Railway Children work with the rail industry, British Transport Police (BTP) and the public to identify children at risk on the railways and ensure they receive the help they need. Once a vulnerable child is referred by BTP, the charity provides tailored, one-to-one support for them and their family for as long as they need.

Rob Capener, Group Chief Executive Officer at Railway Children, said: “For many of the children we work with, Christmas means more stress, more fighting, more abuse and more fear. Sadly, where vulnerable children hope to find relief from the chaos of home, what they often find instead are people seeking to exploit them.

“Our UK programme has the people and the systems in place to help children and families facing crises this Christmas, but we need your help to reach them all. That’s why, this Christmas, we’re asking you to play your part to keep these children safe.”

The campaign highlights the important role of the rail industry in helping to identify young people alone and at risk this Christmas. As part of the Safeguarding on Transport programme, Railway Children provides training to rail staff across the country to help them spot the signs of vulnerability and know how to respond.

Georgia Payne, Safeguarding and Trespass Prevention Lead at Greater Anglia, said: “After receiving the Safeguarding on Transport training from Railway Children, I feel confident that I can identify when a child is vulnerable and in need of urgent support.

“The railway is an easy way for children to escape difficult situations at home and young people who are at risk of exploitation will often gravitate towards busy transport hubs. By working with Railway Children and BTP, together we can help to make the railways safer for vulnerable young people and respond quickly before they come to harm.”

Railway Children has five Safeguarding on Transport projects across the UK in London, Yorkshire and Humberside, the West Midlands, North West England and Glasgow. At locations where a high number of children at risk are reported, they have established Safeguarding Action Groups which bring together the station community to raise awareness of vulnerability and develop local solutions to ensure no child goes unnoticed on the railways.

Support Railway Children’s campaign by giving a gift or pledging your support to help protect children this Christmas. Find out more by visiting <http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/ItStartsWithYou>.

*[Annual Report and Accounts \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

**[Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)