

# Recommendations published to end violence against women on public transport

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Two female transport experts have said more female staff, better design and checks for frontline staff are key to ending violence against women on transport.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) chief executive Laura Shoaf and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) executive director Anne Shaw published a new set of recommendations on making the transport network safer for women and girls.

Commissioned by the Department for Transport, the recommendations set out how the Government can improve safety for women on the railways, at bus stops, and stations.

The recommendations have been developed independently following extensive input from over 200 stakeholders including charities, women's safety advocates and transport experts.

They come alongside shocking findings which show that almost half of women have felt threatened when travelling on public transport – stopping them from accessing opportunities such as education and employment as well as socialising.

They are being presented to Transport Minister Trudy Harrison today by the UK's first Violence Against Women and Girls Transport Champions.

Laura Shoaf and Anne Shaw were appointed by the Department for Transport (DfT) last summer, tasked with identifying best practice to tackle violence against women and girls on our transport networks. Six months on, their 13 key recommendations, include:

- **Involve women in the design of public infrastructure** such as Metro stops to make them safer
- **Encourage more women to work in the transport industry** so there is a greater representation of women in the transport industry across all types of roles
- **Review current safeguarding practices** including standardising Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all front facing staff across the transport industry
- **Making staff more visible on the network** including deployment of police forces at locations which will have the greatest impact on our transport networks

Transport minister Trudy Harrison said: "Far too often we hear stories of women and girls facing violence and harassment on public transport – this is unacceptable.

"Everyone should have the right to travel in confidence and without fear.

"We thank Anne and Laura for their recommendations and will work tirelessly across Whitehall and with our transport partners to drive these important changes."

Among the nearly 200 respondents at eight roundtable workshops were charities, passenger groups, women's transport advocates and victim and survival groups, as well as enforcement officers, transport operators, planners and placemaking experts.

Laura, who also chairs the national [Urban Transport Group](#), and Anne developed the recommendations following a thorough assessment of the true impact of violence against women and girls on our transport network, finding that it is having a direct effect on access to opportunities such as learning and employment.

Laura said: "There have been some horrific incidents of violence against women recently which have generated national headlines and sparked a deep re-examination of attitudes towards women and girls.

"While incidents of violence against females on our transport networks are thankfully low, these recent high-profile incidents in our wider society have understandably led to deep seated anxiety and fear for many women and girls when using public transport, especially for those travelling alone at night.

"This fear of violence can be toxic, not just emotionally but also economically and socially because women and girls are often more reliant on public transport so anything that deters them from travelling can significantly reduce their life opportunities and ambitions.

"This is completely unacceptable. Women should feel able to take up work, training and education opportunities and connect with friends and family without feeling threatened.

“Anne and I are proud to have been chosen by Government as champions to make transport and public places safer for women. Following extensive engagement, we’ve made 13 practical recommendations aimed at preventing violence against women and girls on our transport networks, challenging the attitudes and inequalities that promote it and making it clear that such behaviours will never be tolerated.”

The report highlighted West Midlands Safer Travel Partnership and Merseytravel’s Travel Safe Partnership as examples of how local police forces, the British Transport Police and transport operators are working together to reduce crime across all transport networks including rail, bus, tram and active travel modes.

Anne said: “Having worked in transport for over 30 years, I can see the progress made with more women working within this industry but there is still much more work to be done.

“By encouraging more women into the industry, we can make sure their unique perspective is embedded into the design and operation of our transport networks, creating more hostile environments for would-be perpetrators. By having stringent and relevant checks for all frontline staff and others who provide our travel needs will can also help give confidence to women and girls using the transport system.

“The contributions of women and girls who have experienced violence first hand have also been crucial to our recommendations, and we must all continue to listen to their voices so that everyone feels safe using public transport.”

Those attending the event included Tracey Secker, enterprise manager of The Haven Wolverhampton, which supports women and children who have been subjected to domestic abuse.

She said: “We were delighted to be invited to be part of these roundtable workshops, and to be able to offer support and insights around violence against women and girls on our transport networks.

“Our vision is for all women to live in a society free from oppression and to promote and uphold human rights, and being able to travel to work, to education facilities and to see family and friends without feeling unsafe or threatened is part of that.

“When younger, I experienced harassment on public transport which made me feel vulnerable and unsafe. Unfortunately, there was also no intervention from bystanders, so we need to look at how we empower everyone to feel they can report what they see.

“We fully support the recommendations and hope we can continue to be part of this vital work that Laura, Anne and the Champion team are doing.”

Other examples of ways the network is being made safer include the West Midlands Regional Traffic Coordination Centre – a cutting edge control facility which monitors the region’s road, rail, tram and bus networks round the clock.