

Transport for London launches bystander campaign

March 13, 2023



Transport for London (TfL) continues to take a stand against hate crime this National Bystander Awareness Day (13 March) with a recently launched campaign that aims to encourage a culture of active bystanders on public transport by highlighting how customers can safely intervene if they witness incidents of hate crime on public transport. The campaign, in partnership with British Transport Police (BTP) and Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), aims to inspire Londoners to look out for others by learning to recognise the signs of hate crime and providing information on how they can help, ignoring the offender and focusing on the person being targeted.

Everyone has the right to use public transport without fear of abuse because of their disability, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, religion or any other reason. TfL takes a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse on its network and is working hard to ensure its customers and staff are safe, feel safe and have the confidence to report any incident knowing that it will be taken seriously and investigated.

Research from London Travelwatch Personal Security's report, 2021, found that 63 per cent of passengers would feel more confident in intervening in an incident if they had more information on how to help. Research from Communities Inc has also shown that most people want to help, but don't know how,

or aren't sure if the situation is serious enough. Communities Inc aims to empower everyone to challenge and report hate whenever they see it.

TfL's campaign includes eye-catching posters that can be seen across the network that sets out clear guidance for customers on how they can safely intervene if they witness hate crime. The following actions are highlighted by the campaign as ways customers can help, but only if they feel safe to do so:

- Distract with a question – ignoring the offender and asking the victim an unrelated question such as 'what's the time?', 'what's the next stop?' or 'where does this terminate?'
- Make a note of what's happening and report it – including the location, bus route or Tube line, time etc
- After the incident, check in with the victim and ask if they are ok and that what happened to them wasn't ok

The campaign posters that appear on buses and trains and at stops and stations across London's public transport network, encourages customers to report incidents wherever possible on the bus network at [met.police.uk](https://www.met.police.uk) or calling 101 or, for all other TfL services, text British Transport Police on 61016 or via the free BTP Railway Guardian app. Always call 999 in an emergency.

The campaign will also include editorial partnerships and other communications, including sponsored podcasts, as well as public engagement activity at King's Cross and Walthamstow stations. The campaign has been informed by research, including focus groups, the expertise of hate crime campaign groups and the police. TfL took a similar approach to its violence against women and girls (VAWG) campaign when it launched a bystander campaign earlier this year, advising how customers can safely intervene if they witness incidents of sexual harassment.

TfL continues to work closely with the police to support the investigation of hate crimes on its public transport network to bring offenders to justice. TfL is not asking customers to police the network. More than 2,500 police and police community support officers and 500 TfL enforcement officers patrol the network to improve the safety of customers and staff and reassure those who may feel vulnerable. TfL's staff are trained in how to support our customers and deal with reports seriously and with compassion.

London's Deputy Mayor for Transport, Seb Dance, said: "The Mayor and I want everyone to be safe at all times when travelling around London. Everyone has the right to use public transport without fear of abuse and TfL takes a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime. Today, I want to ask Londoners to join us in sending the message that hate has no place in our city.

"Londoners have told us that they want to support each other if they witness a hate crime, and they would feel more confident doing so if they had information on the best and safest ways to help. That is why TfL's campaign is so vital – it provides helpful advice to anyone witnessing a hate crime and enables all of us to intervene, safely. Together we can build a better, safer London for everyone."

Siwan Hayward, Director of Security, Policing and Enforcement, said: "Hate crime has no place anywhere in our city. Tackling abuse and hate crime on London's public transport network is a priority for us. We operate a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of hate crime and are absolutely committed to ensuring everyone is, and feels, safe on our network. We're not asking customers to police the network, that's the

job of our police partners with our support, but we do know that customers also want to support one another if something doesn't feel right. If it is safe to do so, there are a number of small actions customers can take that can make a huge difference. Through some safe and practical actions, bystanders can prevent or discourage an incident from escalating. Reporting incidents will help us to take action against offenders and prevent it from happening again."

Shamsher Chohan, Communities Inc Creative Director, said: "Communities Inc set up National Bystander Awareness Day to unite people in tackling hate and hostility. We are pleased to be working with TfL on raising awareness amongst staff and passengers about simple things that can be done to address the early expressions of harmful behaviour. This could include people being rude, dismissive, and disrespectful to people due to their membership of specific groups or having specific characteristics."

Iman Atta OBE, Tell Mama's Director, said: "It is important for people to know that they can do things to help others targeted on public transport by hate, intolerance and prejudice. People don't have to be Bystanders and they can be Upstanders by supporting victims, offering empathy and basic care whilst ensuring their own personal safety. We all have to take responsibility for each other."

Louise Holden, Inclusion London, said: "Inclusion London campaign for Disabled Londoners right to feel safe in their communities. Hate crime is any crime that involves someone being targeted because of who they are. It can be a lonely and devastating experience for many Disabled people when it happens to them. Seemingly small acts of kindness from other passengers can make all the difference. Having bystander training means more people will feel confident to engage if they see someone being targeted. Just knowing others can see what is going on and are reaching out to help can really make a difference."

Superintendent Stuart Middlemas, British Transport Police, said: "Preventing and tackling hate crime is a BTP priority – no one should be subjected to violence or harassment because of who they are. We conduct highly visible patrols and dedicated operations across London's rail network to ensure the safety and security of passengers and staff, and with access to thousands of CCTV cameras we can quickly identify offenders and make arrests."

"Passengers continue to be our eyes and ears on the rail network, and they can play a vital role in ensuring it is a safe environment for everyone on it by reporting incidents of hate. If you witness a hate crime on the railway, I urge you to report it to us by texting 61016 or via our Railway Guardian app."

Detective Inspector Tony Forsyth, Metropolitan Police Service, said: "The Met supports this new campaign and works closely with TfL to tackle hate crime on the bus network. We take reports of hate crime seriously and record all instances reported to us. We want victims to feel confident to report any instances of hate crime, via a multitude of avenues available, including the www.report-it.org.uk website. We continue to work in partnership with charities to increase the support for victims. We have seen an increase in our victim referral to CATCH (Community Alliance to Combat Hate), an alliance of charities who give specialist help and advice to victims and witnesses of hate crime, whilst we investigate their case."

Photo credit: Transport for London