



Support on life's journey

Railway Mission

Reaching out to rail staff

2024

Report

Post incident support



486
rail incidents

3300
teams contacted

Reaching out to rail staff

Post-incident chaplaincy support 2024

Railway Mission chaplains provide wellbeing support to rail staff in England Scotland and Wales.

A high proportion of this provision is concentrated on post-incident support for rail staff who are or have been engaged in some way with a rail incident.

Post-incident support refers to the care given to rail staff who have participated in the aftermath of a rail incident, whether it is a suicide, attempted suicide, accident, sudden death or related to a homicide or attempted homicide.

Rail staff need aftercare following potentially traumatic incidents, and chaplains are always on hand to help provide wellbeing support alongside other agencies.

A challenging year

2024 saw an increase in rail incidents from the previous year, and a subsequent increase in the levels of support provided.

Railway Mission chaplains directly followed up on 483 of the 486 incidents for the year, engaging with 3300 rail staff teams and individuals.

This figure includes far more than 3300 persons as any incident may include

several staff members who are offered and receive after-incident care and support.

For instance we offered support to 486 British Transport Police (BTP) Response Teams, which could include anything from a few officers to several from a number of stations who attend onsite at an incident. All are offered post-incident support.

There may be more than one Mobile Operations Manager (MOM) on site, so where one instance is recorded, there could be two or three persons who are all offered support, including the Local Operations Manager (LOM) who oversees the MOMs.

Where a train is involved the crew may include more than one driver and more than one onboard crew member. There will also be a line manager who will travel to the site to provide support for the driver and organise a relief driver.

We offer support through line managers and BTP Scene Commanders and Duty Officers rather than directly engaging staff, although, as BTP chaplains, we have access to Response Units and Medics, so we're able to discuss with them any number of incidents they have attended previously, especially those that may have affected them in some way.



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Tragic incidents

Of the recorded incidents where we gave support, 278 were rail suicides, and 57 were attempted suicides, according to BTP investigation teams.

These are highly traumatic events for staff, and chain of care support is important to their wellbeing.

Some rail stations endure multiple incidents of these kinds over the course of a year and staff can be negatively impacted and potentially hyperalert to the potential for further incidents at these locations. Continued aftercare is essential to their wellbeing.

We engage with train driver managers and crew where a train is involved. We speak to station supervisors and staff where an incident takes place at a station.

As well as Network Rail LOMs and MOMs, we get in touch with Signallers, through the Signal Control Manager, who are first to hear the report from a driver when there is a rail incident.

Contacting teams

We call and visit BTP Scene Commanders and Response Units, Scene of Crime Officers (SOCO), Fatality Investigation Teams (FIT), Medics and anyone

connected to the railways who may have had a role to play following an incident.

In 2024 there were 9 fatal accidents and 27 non-fatal accidents on the railways.

There were 74 sudden deaths on trains or in stations to which staff and BTP gave attention, and for which chaplains provided support. One attempted homicide was investigated. Chaplains provide support for all instances.

Following these incidents Railway Mission chaplains offered and gave support to 388 driver managers and their teams across different Train and Freight Operating Companies (TOCs, FOCs), including onboard crew. We reached out to 283 station managers and their teams.

We contacted 419 Mobile Operation Managers including their Local Operation Managers, and offered support to 411 Signallers.

Our chaplains were in touch with 480 BTP Scene Commanders and 486 Response Units.

This included face-to-face visits, phone calls, emails and texts to various managers and staff members as appropriate.

The advantage of Railway Mission chaplains is that our service remains independent, impartial and confidential.

Trauma awareness initiatives

Shielding rail staff and officers from the potential of work related trauma is an essential goal for all workplaces.

When they are required to face those incidents, it is essential that they receive ongoing care and support, even if their job has an expectation of being confronted with challenging circumstances.

It should not be taken for granted that Response Units are expected to arrive on site after a suicide on the railways and not be affected in some way by what they see and handle.

Support needs to be more than a tick-box exercise. It can take days or weeks before an incident fully impacts an individual, and may be many years to come to terms with what is witnessed or heard.

Aftercare is crucial to staff wellbeing and to industry viability.

Rail staff care

Even in a digital age the human side of the rail industry is the most important asset.

Keeping staff well is of paramount importance to rail operations. Where there is potential for trauma related affects on staff, professional care agencies need to be made available to all rail staff, especially following rail incidents.

The advantage of Railway Mission chaplains is that our service remains independent, impartial and confidential.

This means that rail staff and BTP officers can contact a chaplain and know that there is no stigma, peer pressure or loss of promotional opportunities attached on the road to recovery from potentially traumatic instances during their career.

We're simply a caring voice and listening ear in tough times.



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