



# Railway Mission

## Post-Incident Support Report 2023

Post-Incident Support refers to the wellbeing and care chaplains offer and supply after a potentially traumatic incident on the railways.

Covering January 1 to December 31 2023

### Support on life's journey

# Post-Incident Support Report 2023

## Why we do this

**We see the wellbeing of rail staff as paramount to the effective viability and continuation of the railways.**

Care for staff is the highest incentive for a successful industry.

An intelligent corporate view understands the vitality that comes from the wellbeing of those who are engaged in its productivity.

The care arm of the railways helps give the workforce the knowledge that they are valued as people as well as in terms of their availability, skillset and energy.

## What is Post-Incident support?

**Railway Mission has determined to offer and provide support to as many rail staff as possible following incidents on the railways.**

Incidents could include suicides, attempted suicides, sudden deaths, accidental deaths or non-fatal accidents, trespass fatalities or non-fatalities, homicides or attempted homicides.

Post-Incident Support refers to the wellbeing and care chaplains offer and supply after potentially

traumatic incidents on the railways, when staff members have had a period of time to assess and reflect on the situation they have faced.

It's in these moments that care agencies such as Railway Mission spend time with staff members giving them the valuable option of speaking to a trained professional.

We aim to help provide an outlet for any trauma they may have experienced and if necessary signpost to other agencies for ongoing support.

## Who we support

**Our main provision of support following rail incidents has specifically been for rail staff.**

This includes British Transport Police (BTP), Network Rail, Transport for London (TfL), Transport for Wales (TfW), Scotrail, Train Operating Company (TOC) or Freight Operating Company (FOC) and agency staff; in fact, anyone who works on the railway who may have been directly or indirectly engaged in the situation.

We also occasionally receive referrals, usually from BTP or the Coroner's Office, to members of the public who may have been



affected in some way by an incident, either as a friend or relative of the person involved, or as a witness of the incident.

## Reliable support

**During 2023 Railway Mission chaplains gave or offered support to staff to the majority of railway incidents recorded in England, Scotland and Wales.**

Our goal has consistently been to be available to staff following rail incidents as an avenue of relief from the potential trauma that can come from witnessing or even hearing of a serious incident on the railways.

Our availability to staff is well known and highly considered by most rail-associated agencies, and we work alongside care provision teams from train companies and police to provide an added layer of support that is seen as a valuable and unique part of the wellbeing industry.

## When staff need care

**When incidents take place many staff members are unprepared for the potential trauma that can come from being placed at or near the scene of an incident.**

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# 2023

## 439

Rail incidents

## 278

Assumed suicides

## 57

Attempted suicides

## 13

Fatal accidents

## 38

Non-fatal accidents

## 52

Sudden deaths

## 1

Attempted homicide

Where there are staff members who are trained to attend to incidents, such as BTP First Responders or MOMs, even though there is an expectation of confronting scenarios, there is still the possibility of a traumatic response to those situations.

Whilst some workers expect to be dealing with difficult scenarios and move from one to the next, it only takes one incident to trigger a potential traumatic reaction.

It can take place when there is an identification of some kind to a person affected during the event. This can bring on a reverse domino effect of remembering past incidents that were psychologically compartmentalised.

We often speak to responders following an incident who actually talk to us about previous incidents in which they've been involved, which indicates that they are still coming to terms with the effects of the latent emotional discomfort of a previous incident that has been sitting at the back of their mind.

### A shared weight

**Accordingly, we provide a potential outlet from perceived or actual trauma.**



This comes in the form of a listening ear and caring presence that give staff and officers the opportunity to talk through their natural responses, emotions, feelings, and general mental wellbeing in a setting that is independent, impartial and confidential.

Our response to their situational review is to bring the opportunity to share their experiences as we offer to help lift the emotional or psychological burden of a distressing experience.

We do this so that the staff member is better able to come to terms with the situation and continue in the workplace knowing there is help available to them when they need to share their emotions.

## The annual tragedy of self-harm ideation

**It is a sad fact that there are more than 400 person-centric incidents on the railways most years.**

Not all are deliberate acts. In 2023, of 439 incidents, 104 were designated as accidental incidents, sudden deaths, and one attempted homicide.

This means that 335 incidents were determined by investigative

teams to be supposed suicides or attempted suicides. Of these, 57 did not result in loss of life, so around 17% of attempts potentially resulted in life-changing physical injuries.

Whilst there was a drop of 19 in the number of suspected suicidal incidents for 2023 from the previous year, it still reflects a need to encourage suicidal persons to seek help. 'Help for suicidal thoughts' is a NHS online source of help.

## Accidents on the railways

**There was a slight increase in accidents on the railways during 2023, with 13 fatal accidents and 38 non-fatal accidents.**

Only the more serious accidents are recorded via the BTP proforma where responders have needed to be in attendance.

These figures may reflect more people travelling or using the railways post-pandemic.

## Sudden deaths

**Instances of sudden deaths were also slightly higher in 2023. 52 people died from mostly natural**



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causes on the railways, usually onboard trains or in stations.

These situations can potentially be traumatising for staff members, so it is vital to the industry to maintain professional support services that help them come to terms with the situation they have faced in the course of their duties.

## Someone is there

**It's important to note that the figures presented here represent individuals, people affected in some way by a rail incident.**

By association, this can also include family members, friends, colleagues, or, less directly, the unrelated travelling public whose journeys are curtailed by an incident.

They also represent groups of people, teams and individuals, who are railway staff and officers who are called upon to give some level of response, either on site, or by remote interaction with teams.

Our role as railway chaplains is to support those in the railways who are in some way engaged or affected following an incident.



## Who receives support?

**Railway Mission offers support to all and any staff following any rail incident.**

The train crew, which could include drivers and guards, or an onboard team. This is usually done through their driver manager or team manager.

Station staff where there has been an incident at the station. Again, we will go through their line manager or supervisor, but it will usually include a visit to any staff on site when the incident took place, or who arrived afterwards but were subsequently affected in some way.

Even viewing CCTV could be an avenue of distress or trauma.

Network Rail staff are also followed up, including MOMs, LOMs,



Signallers. If the incident takes place on a TfL site we will engage with their staff, including Train Operation Managers (TOMs), Train Managers and other participants by referral.

BTP Responders, via their Scene Commander and duty officers, including any other officers, including SOCO Fatality Investigation Teams, Medics and the like are contacted and visited.

## The data

**The information we gather is in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), so no names are disclosed in this report, nor direct association or specific details of incidents.**

Our support work is confidential, impartial and independent, so whilst these are figures only, they do give an indication of the levels of support we undertake each year following rail incidents to provide support for any staff member who has engaged in some way in the incident.

Many of the figures reflect support for more than one person. For instance, we'll visit a BTP station and may speak to several officers, some of whom will have been present at the scene, or others who

are in the station but may reflect on other incidents they have attended.

For this report, this will be shown as one visit or contact, even though it involves multiple persons. We will also have been in contact with BTP First Contact, and perhaps a number of officers before we are in touch with the team that had been on site.



Or we will visit a station and there will be more than one staff member who has been part of the response team at that station, but this is recorded as one visit or point of contact.

## Making contact

**During 2023 Railway Mission chaplains made contact with 2951 teams or individuals specifically following rail incidents.**

We reached out to 347 driver managers and supervisors, in both passenger and freight rail, to offer

# 2951

Teams supported



347 Driver Managers and their crews

270 Station Managers and their teams

384 Local & Mobile Operation Managers

324 Signal teams

433 BTP Scene Commanders

433 BTP Response Unit Teams





support to 344 drivers and 154 train crew, which could involve between one and four or more crew members.

Not all rail incidents take place at stations. Regionally they may occur lineside, but for those that did occur at or near stations we were in contact to offer support and visits to 270 station management teams and 263 staff teams, involving more than one staff member in most situations.

## Network Rail

**Network Rail staff include LOMs, MOMs, Mobile Incident Managers (MIOs), Signallers and others.**

Chaplains reached out to 384 MOMs and 324 Signal Centre teams, including their Senior Management teams at Control Centres.

MOMs are generally amongst the first to be on site at an incident and are always appreciative of the call from a chaplain even though they may have been present at multiple incidents during their career.

## BTP

**Railway Mission chaplains supported 433 BTP Scene Commanders and their Response Units during 2023.**

On occasion an incident will require the services of Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO) or Fatality Investigation Teams (FIT), who also have access to our support service.

Generally, we will visit SOCO and FIT officers at arranged times rather than following every incident as they are very small but mobile units covering vast areas.

## Known in the community

**Railway Mission chaplains are full or part time professionals, so we are in a good position to engage with staff and make ourselves known to the rail fraternity during times when everything is running as normal.**

This means that when there is an incident chaplains are not complete strangers to those who have been engaged in it.

Our longevity in the railways, since 1881, has built consistent goodwill across the industry, especially with those who provide assistance during and after a rail incident. Making contact to offer support is, in almost all instances, appreciated and well received.

This gives us a unique standing amongst the rail fraternity and



enables us to maintain good connections with those who are at the front line of arriving on the scene to carry out the difficult task of dealing with an incident, which is a potentially traumatic event in the life of even the most seasoned responder.

## Chain of care

**Partnering with chain of care agencies as part of the railway fraternity has been a great privilege for Railway Mission over the years.**

Our chaplains very much feel engaged with the wellbeing provision teams that are so important to the continued effectiveness of the railway family.

Railway Mission chaplains are also official BTP chaplains dedicated to BTP forces in England, Scotland and Wales, and work under a high level of vetting.

We are partly funded through a service agreement with Network Rail, by contributions from TOCs and rail agencies, and by donations from supporters and partners, as well as being given access to rail by Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and BTP through passes and ID.

In a recent independent survey and presentation at Westminster, the RSSB calculated and stated that the value provided by Railway Mission to the rail industry was the equivalent of around £1.85m, more than three times our current annual income. This level of funding could enable us to provide an even more effective wellbeing arm to the railways.

## High regard

**These partnerships demonstrate some of the regard with which Railway Mission is held, and has been built over a number of years through the faithful work of dedicated chaplains past and present and their support teams.**

In our annual report to Network Rail on overall support given to their staff during 2023, Executive Director Liam Johnston wrote, 'In the complex and demanding environment of the railway industry, where employees often face high-stress situations, safety risks, and challenging workloads, the provision of comprehensive support mechanisms is crucial.'

There are many other instances of support that chaplains provide to staff members outside of following up on rail incidents, which are outlined in that report, but the



concept holds the same, that staff members, particularly during and following rail incidents, need instant and ongoing support in a caring environment.

## The care factor

**The rail industry has in recent years recognised this and has championed health and wellbeing initiatives that provide care for its staff.**

The challenge going forward, into what is a changing environment regarding how the railways are run and who oversees the process, will be to continue to raise the standards of care and support for rail staff and not let go of recent awareness of the importance of wellbeing support for all staff members.

## We need to talk

**The nature of post-incident support and the sensitivity around rail suicide means, for obvious reasons, that it is not highly publicised.**

Those who have received support know the value, but it is no easy matter to produce the kinds of statistics displayed in this report in the public domain.

Talking about trauma and its effects on staff following the

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suicide or attempted suicide of an individual can be distressing, but it needs to be communicated that support is available for those who may be struggling with the effects of witnessing or dealing with such an event.

Awareness of the support provided by agencies such as Railway Mission is an imperative within the rail industry, and this needs to be accompanied by the necessary resourcing of those agencies.

Crucially, it is placing value on life.

# When you need somebody to talk to...



Railway Mission

Support on  
life's journey

**02038877000**

[www.railwaymission.org](http://www.railwaymission.org)