

Railway Guardian safe rail travel app

Combines tools to support safer travel across Transport for London (TfL) and the rail network in England, Scotland and Wales.

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5 October 2023

Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Violence (other) Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	British Transport Police
Smarter practice	Railway Guardian – British Transport Police
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Partners	Police Business and commerce Government department Voluntary/not for profit organisation

Key details

Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2022
Scale of initiative	National
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Victims Workforce

Aim

Railway Guardian aims to:

- encourage the reporting of crime
- provide immediate support and guidance to service users
- increase public trust and confidence in policing

Intended outcome

- Increased feelings of public safety on the rail network.
- Increased reporting, particularly in terms of sexual offences and harassment.
- Increased trust and confidence in policing.
- Increased public knowledge of services and support available.

Description

A consultation took place with stakeholders from the rail industry, policing organisations, charities, app designers and academics. Following this, British Transport Police (BTP) worked with an app developer and the internal communications and IT teams to create Railway Guardian.

The app has the following main functions.

- Reporting – users are able to report incidents to BTP through text and an online form. The app also allows users to report station issues to a train operator and feelings of unsafety in public areas on the Home Office StreetSafe tool.
- Geolocation – allows users to share their location with pre-allocated contacts, who can be notified when the user arrives at their location.
- Guides – users can access information on a range of subjects. For example, ‘What is sexual harassment?’ and ‘What can I report on the Railway Guardian app?’.
- Support – provides links to national charities, for example, Women’s Aid, Shelter and ChildLine.
- Messaging – currently only a one-way messaging service, whereby BTP updates users about new features, upcoming public events and relevant news stories.
- Surveys – allows BTP to collect feedback from users. Surveys include questions on perceptions of safety and feedback on the app.
- Other information – including links to resources such as TfL and the National Rail journey planner.

Overall impact

- As of March 2023, there have been 24,512 downloads of the app. Of these, 14,574 have been from the public, 3,938 have been internal BTP downloads, and 6,000 have been downloads from workers in the rail industry.
- The app has been featured in a number of media outlets, including the Metro, Evening Standard, Manchester Evening Standard, Police Oracle and Glamour Magazine.

Learning

Facilitators

The BTP recommend:

- involving all relevant internal teams from the beginning of the project, such as communications and IT, to help with initial scoping and design
- allocating sufficient time for an extensive consultation period with stakeholders
- having a single point of contact (SPOC) in each business area, such as legal and procurement, to help with the commercial side of app development
- recruiting a project manager who can assist with scheduling and finance
- having an internal communications campaign to ensure there is awareness and understanding among the officers and staff who can promote the app to the public

Barriers

- Given the media landscape, the importance of being sensitive around the timings of campaigns and promotions.
- Delays in funding – this meant that the funding to develop the app needed to be spent in a short period of time.
- High costs of app advertisement on the trains due to advertisement space being sold to private companies.

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Tags

Information communication technology (ICT) Public safety Violence against women and girls