

June 2023

Rail pastors – Scotland

Introduction

Scotland route continues to experience a steady increase in suicidal incidents and anti-social behavior on the railway. Based on a similar initiative in England which led to a marked reduction in both suicides and attempted suicides, Scotland route teamed up with Ascension Trust, BTP, Police Scotland and Samaritans to provide training for ‘rail pastors’ to patrol and provide additional public reassurance in unstaffed stations or locations synonymous with reported incidents.

Rail pastors are present for people who are not confident travelling alone, require first aid or who are suffering from more serious problems such as poor mental health. They can identify and support those who require further assistance to get home or to a place of safety. Rail Pastors are provided with key contacts which ensure that railway personnel and BTP officers are alerted to incidents at the earliest possible opportunity. They are also trained to respond to individuals showing signs of suicidal tendencies.

The Rail Pastors initiative is part of the Street Pastors family that came about at the request of the British Transport Police who offered their support if a patrol “like Street Pastors” could be established on a stretch of the network where there had been a high number of suicide attempts and fatalities.

Initiating the Rail Pastors Programme

- A comprehensive training program for Rail Pastors, produced in partnership by the BTP, Scotland’s Railway and delivered by the BTP and Samaritans
- A full risk assessment has been completed and verified by BTP, ScotRail and Network Rail
- Reporting for duty and incident procedures will be defined by the BTP and ScotRail
- Multi-agency involvement is essential right from the start to share experiences and ensure a collaborative project
- Rail Pastors will promote their aims and objectives as ‘providing public confidence and reassurance’ rather than specifically linking this to our suicide prevention strategy
- Internally Network Rail will promote this as a suicide mitigation measure, but we deliberately moved away from this with the public message, so we didn’t generate unwanted interest or highlight the issue
- **Rail Pastors will NOT be asked to police the railway, nor will they be trained to go trackside – they will be deployed as additional support for BTP in a similar way Street Pastors support Police Scotland**

Who to contact for more information –

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