

Rail pastors – Scotland

[Being a caring neighbour] – a social performance case study

The project

Despite a downward trend in England and Wales, Scotland route continued to experience a rise in suicidal incidents on the railway. Based on a similar scheme in Barnet which led to a marked reduction in both suicides and attempted suicides, Scotland route teamed up with Ascension Trust, BTP, Police Scotland and Scottish Business Resilience Centre to provide training for 'rail pastors' to patrol and provide additional public reassurance in unstaffed stations or locations synonymous with reported incidents.



The key benefits delivered

Benefit to society: 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 are able to identify and support those who require further assistance to get home or to a place of safety.

Benefit to the business: 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.

Lessons learned

- Make sure you have a comprehensive training programme for volunteers, as many arriving lacking confidence and appreciate clear, practical guidance.
- Multi-agency involvement is essential right from the start to share experiences and ensure a collaborative project. Police Scotland were involved due to their involvement with the Street Pastor programme and Scottish Business Resilience Centre due to their 'safer towns' partnership programme.
- Rail Pastors were keen to promote their aims and objectives as 'providing public confidence and reassurance' rather than specifically linking this to our suicide prevention strategy. Internally we promoted 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.

Who to contact for more information

Mark Henderson – Senior Communications Manager – Network Rail

Email: Mark.Henderson@networkrail.co.uk | Phone: 07515 620 640