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Community safety practice briefing

Getting there

Reducing crime on public transport

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This briefing paper has been written as guidance for local community safety practitioners who are developing strategies and plans to deal with community safety issues on public transport. It gives an outline of government policy, the current situation and some examples of best practice. It makes recommendations for Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships about ways in which they can work together with local public transport operators to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

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The context

Bus and train usage in England and Wales has declined proportionately since the 1950s, as the popularity and ownership of cars has increased. Over the same period the number and length of journeys has increased by six times. Between 1998 and 2000 the average distance travelled was 6,843 miles per person, up by 45 per cent on the miles travelled in 1975 to 1976.¹ The majority of these journeys (whether by public transport or car) are to and from work. Today more people live further away from their place of work than in the 1950s. People are also travelling further for education, training and leisure activities.

Approximately a third of British households, some 13 million people, do not have a car, while those who live in households with cars do not have access to it for all their journeys. In the most deprived wards fifty percent of households do not have a car (compared to only 11 percent of households in the least deprived areas). Those who cannot afford their own private form of transport are dependent upon safe, accessible and reliable public transport to access key services.²

The Government's *Transport 2010 – the 10 Year Plan*, published in July 2000, highlighted the adverse affects of the increase in traffic volume on quality of life and the environment. It set out measures to reduce congestion and pollution over the next ten years, in part by reducing use of cars and increasing use of public transport.

Social exclusion and public transport

Public transport impacts on social exclusion. It can prove to be a barrier for people seeking work, attending education, accessing health services, keeping medical appointments, shopping for food and participating in social activities.

In one study a quarter of young people looking for work reported that lack of personal transport was a problem.³ Other research suggests that within a year approximately 1.4million people are unable to seek medical advice or assistance due to problems with public transport and many 16 to 18 year old students find the cost of public transport difficult to meet.⁴

In addition to these findings, those from the most deprived wards reported being more reliant on walking and public transport when accessing services such as the chemist and the local hospital than those from the least deprived.⁵ People from the most deprived areas are also nearly five times more likely to have concerns about their safety at bus stops than people from the least deprived areas.⁶

A MORI report on public services in deprived areas found that buses were considered more important than services such as water and electricity but only had a 50% net satisfaction rate.⁷

Crime and safety on public transport has a greater impact on those from deprived areas due to its direct influence over social inclusion. Safe, reliable, cost effective public transport is therefore crucial to the quality of life of a large part of the population and tackling crime on public transport is a key way of tackling social exclusion and if not addressed could have serious implications on issues such as health, education and employment.

Crime on public transport: the statistics

Trains and buses and their staff and passengers are subject to various kinds of crime, such as robbery, harassment, assault and anti-social behaviour. A 1997 passenger survey revealed that:

- 5 per cent have been threatened with violence.
- 4 per cent have been the victim of theft.
- 11 per cent have been stared at in a threatening way.
- 12 per cent have been deliberately pushed.⁸

Table 1 below summarises the reported statistics for incidents of crime and disorder reported on the English railways in 2001 to 2002.

In this period there were:

- 275 adult trespassing fatalities.
- 3 child trespassing fatalities.
- 107 cases of assault against London Underground staff (accounting for 30 per cent of all incidents involving injuries).
- 53 per cent of train incidents were as a result of vandalism.

In Wales during the same period 66 per cent of train incidents were acts of vandalism, with 58 per cent of damages due to missiles. For England, Scotland and Wales as a whole there were 15,075 incidents of vandalism and 16,779 incidents of trespass.⁹ Crimes of this nature are estimated to cost £250 million a year and result in 700,000 delay minutes.¹⁰ However, it is difficult to establish the true extent of crime. Although recorded crime on public transport is

Table 1: Summary of railway crime statistics for 2001 to 2002 (England and Wales)

Type of crime	Volume
Violent crime	4,331
Sexual offences	684
Criminal damage	4,774
Line of route offences	4,056
Theft of passenger property	15,996
Robbery	2,571
Theft of railway property	4,841
Public disorder offences	1,710
Drugs	1,428
All other incidents	15,498
All crime	55,889

Source: British Transport Police¹¹

lower than over all crime, there is strong evidence that a lot of crime is unreported. The majority of railway and bus passengers do not report harassment or crime, either because they do not think the incident is serious enough, or that transport staff will not treat the incident seriously. Many also fear that reporting a crime will lead to a delay in their journey and that the offender will not be caught in any case.

Crime on public transport: the effects

As well as assault, robbery, and anti-social behaviour, vandalism, trespass on railway property, graffiti and etching on windows also causes damage that is very expensive to repair. In one bus garage in Bexleyheath, for example, the costs of repairs due to vandalism amounts to an average of £7,000 per week, not including the loss of revenue incurred when buses are taken out of commission,¹² and vandalism is costing Stagecoach Manchester around £500,000 per year. The estimated cost of graffiti to London Boroughs and transport operators is around £13 million per year, and London Underground estimates that it would cost them around £10 million to replace etched glass on all its rolling stock.¹³

Offenders and victims

Most of the vandalism, trespass, graffiti and etching is committed by young males. The majority of vandalism on railways and trains is committed by young males between the ages of 10 and 20, peaking at age 15. Most incidents

occur during the school summer holidays and at weekends.¹⁴

On buses young perpetrators of vandalism and anti-social behaviour smash windows, set fire to bus shelters, smoke, push and shove other passengers. They bully other school children (and are usually the same people who bully at school). Other passengers are intimidated by their rowdy behaviour and rudeness.¹⁵ Stagecoach Manchester estimates that 40 per cent of incidents happen on buses that take children to and from school and the remaining 60 per cent are largely missile attacks on vehicles by young people.

However, young people are also the victims of crime and disorder on buses. They are bullied, have property stolen from them, and are frightened or upset by adult passengers.¹⁶

It is also important to note that crime does not just occur whilst passengers are waiting for transport or in transit. Offenders also use public transport to travel to and from the locations where they commit crimes. Part of the remit of London Central Buses is to raise awareness among police that bus-related incidents are also related to other offences such as street robbery, and they provide free travel for police to help counter these incidents.

Fear of crime

Fear of crime can deter people from using public transport and some groups are particularly affected. Black and minority ethnic people's fear of crime is higher than that of white people, some women will not travel after dark, and parents restrict their children's usage. A DETR survey found that fear of crime while waiting for a train or bus after dark is greater for women than for men, with bus stops being considered less frightening than railway platforms. In the survey 44 per cent of women and 19 per cent of men felt unsafe waiting for a bus, and 53 per of women and 23 per of men felt unsafe on a railway platform after dark. However, both men and women feel safer once they have boarded their bus or train, with buses again rating as less frightening than trains.¹⁷

Good practice examples

Get on Board: An Agenda for Improving Personal Security published by the Department of Transport provides guidance and best practice case studies useful to bus operators and crime reduction partnerships.¹⁸ *Prevention of Trespass and Vandalism on the Railways: a Good Practice Guide* was published in 1998 and provides an outline of 35 different initiatives currently in operation.¹⁹ The mobility unit has also published a set of guidelines for operators titled *Personal Security on Public Transport*²⁰ which cover topics such as developing the role of staff, working with young people, and working with other organisations.

Good practice examples: Joint working

Stagecoach Manchester works in partnership with police, schools and local authorities to tackle crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour on their buses. They also help smaller operators (who are less able to offset the cost) by offering training to their bus drivers in conflict resolution and managing young people's behaviour.²¹

Liverpool City set up a Night Transport committee comprising representatives from the police, Travelsafe (the local Transport Executive) and the local bus companies. Citysafe, the Liverpool City interagency partnership, agreed to support the bus services at weekends by funding police officers to patrol bus stops, distribute leaflets setting out a code of conduct for the city centre, and escort night buses. The drivers are also provided with mobile phones with which to communicate any problems to the escort and thus receive rapid assistance.

The Transport Operational Command Unit, a partnership between Transport for London, Metropolitan Police and traffic wardens, aims to increase feelings of safety for staff and passengers using the London bus network. The Unit also enforces the law relating to taxis and minicabs to reduce illegal taxi touting. The partnership has been considered a success making 1,497 arrests and issuing 39,316 tickets in the period between June 2002 and February 2003.²²

Good practice examples: Young people

As well as looking at problems in the environment through which the transport goes, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) can help with crime and disorder issues that occur whilst people are in transit. Young people commit most incidents of trespass and vandalism on and around railways and trains. CDRPs can facilitate transport operators and British Transport Police visits to schools to highlight the dangers of trespassing on railways, the costs of vandalism, and to encourage young people to report incidents.

London Central Buses employ a Schools Liaison Officer who organises educational events in schools to develop a sense of ownership among young people and encourage them to report incidents of vandalism.

Stagecoach Manchester runs a three-day event (costing around £13,000) in schools which features 'Big Dave' Gauder, a strongman who pulls a bus load of children and then gives an anti-vandalism talk.

Young people were also identified as both offenders and victims of crime and anti-social behaviour on buses. CDRPs can facilitate the joint working of police, public transport operators and schools to identify the issues and concerns of young people who are bullied by their peers, intimidated or attacked by adults, or have their property stolen.

The large numbers of young people who use public transport on the school runs in the mornings and early evenings can be daunting to adult passengers and transport staff.

If you have town centre wardens, Police Community Support Officers and traffic wardens operating in your area you might consider suggesting to local public transport operators that they allow them free travel during the times young people are travelling to and from school. Their presence will deter rowdiness and bullying and reassure potential victims.

Creative measures to reduce graffiti, such as providing spaces where young people can design and paint on walls, or remove the graffiti themselves, will help. In France one strategy to reduce graffiti on buses was the 'cool bus'. Some school buses were outfitted in designs produced by school children. The buses were reported to be damage free two years later.²³

Integrating work on public transport into Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies

In drawing up their strategies to address crime and disorder in their area CDRPs should ensure that both the British Transport Police and local public transport providers are involved as there are many different ways in which they can contribute.

The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) lists both the British Transport Police and public transport operators as 'Invitees to Attend' the CDRP.

The British Transport Police have also recently received the power to apply for anti-social behaviour orders as a result of changes introduced by the Police Reform Act (2002). Therefore, the British Transport Police now have an opportunity to directly contribute to district wide anti-social behaviour strategies while also providing data useful to Crime and Disorder Audits. Local public transport operators can provide the partnership with specific knowledge and data about local crime and disorder. In return they gain an opportunity to shape the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and learn about broader community safety issues which may impact their operations.

For both, participating in the partnership also provides the opportunity to feed into local policy making decisions, enables a rapid multi-agency response to particular issues and provides a source of support and feedback regarding current initiatives.

The following are steps that may be useful for CDRPs in beginning to work more closely with local public transport providers and the British Transport Police to resolve crime and disorder issues.

Table 1: Contributions to CDRPs and benefits of participation

	Contributions to CDRP	Benefits of participation
British Transport Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Source of data regarding crime occurring in and around public transport. ● Provide links with neighbouring areas through which public transport passes. ● Can apply for anti-social behaviour orders as a result of changes introduced by the Police Reform Act (2002). ● Contribution to district wide anti-social behaviour strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to shape Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and learn about community safety issues. ● Opportunity to feed into local policy making decisions of other agencies, to receive feedback about policing initiatives and to obtain information about specific crime reduction initiatives.
Public transport providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Represent transport providers and provide consultation links. ● Specific knowledge of crime reduction issues on public transport. ● Provision of data regarding incidents of crime and disorder. ● Specific knowledge of local public transport projects that may impact on community safety. Eg routes to and from school for bullying, violence, intimidation and/or hate crime. ● Involvement in town centre violence initiatives eg late night services, service links with other providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to shape Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and learn about community safety issues. ● Opportunity to feed into local policy making decisions and to receive advice about crime reduction initiatives.

1) Assess the relationship

The first step to enhancing the work of the partnership is to establish the level of relationship that already exists. The following questions are a useful guide:

- To what extent are the British Transport Police and local transport providers already engaged with the CDRP?
- Do either the British Transport Police or local transport providers supply the CDRP with any data?
- Are there any projects operating outside the crime reduction field that may have an impact on overall community safety?
- What barriers exist to involving both these groups?

2) Strengthen the relationship

- Develop the existing relationship by establishing regular contact with the British Transport Police and local transport providers.

- Invite them to participate in the partnership if they are not doing so already.
- Discuss with them the contributions they can make but also the benefits that can be gained from participation (see the table 2 above for some ideas).
- Establish and resolve any barriers to their involvement.

3) Develop a strategy

Hotspots already identified in local crime audits may include bus stops or train stations as sites of particular concern, or the movement of people in and out of the town centre on Saturday nights. Asking local transport operators and the British Transport Police to provide information on the number and nature of incidents, as well as temporal trends (whether there is an increase in incidents at particular times of the day or night, on particular days or times of the year) will help to highlight particular issues that can be dealt with by the CDRP.

Once this information has been gathered there are methods that can be applied to aid the initial analysis of the problem. One commonly used method is the problem analysis triangle (PAT) which focusses on the victim, offender and location helps to provide a balanced understanding of a problem, for example, to tackle theft in railway stations the PAT analysis triangle could be used to suggest the following interventions:

- Advertising messages aimed at ensuring that potential victims keep their valuables safe
- Diversionary work with potential offenders
- Maintenance work to make stations less attractive locations for crime

Tools such as these may be useful to CDRPs who are responsible for producing and implementing public transport crime reduction initiatives.²⁴

A number of different strategies can be used to have an effect on crime and fear of crime connected with public transport. Their success will depend on the original analysis of the problem and the way in which they address the local needs. Looking at best practice regarding what works in other parts of England and Wales can provide insights and practical ideas that can be tailored to the local situation.

If crime and disorder on public transport is identified as a major issue in the area, then it may be necessary to form a sub-committee to concentrate on these issues. It should also not be forgotten that transport moves through an area and it might be useful to discuss with and share any agreed practical measures with adjoining CDRPs.

4) Ensure alignment

To ensure mainstreaming of issues in public transport, any Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy should be incorporated into other local strategies dealing with planning, housing, education and general transport matters. For example, measures to design out crime, such as enhancing lighting at bus stops or train station entrances, or relocating bus stops, will need to be incorporated into the action plans of local authority planning and transport departments. Housing and social services departments can provide valuable insights into the needs of people living in peripheral housing estates, where the quality of public transport is crucial to the residents in getting them to and from work, education and leisure activities in comfort and safety.

5) Gather feedback and monitor progress

The experience of the British Transport Police and local transport providers is critical to the creation of a balanced Community Safety Strategy. Involving them in determining Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies will reduce duplication of effort, ensure alignment and encourage support and participation in local crime reduction strategies. Monitoring and evaluating strategies as they are implemented and gathering feedback from those involved will ensure that lessons learned are shared and that the partnership's crime reduction initiatives are continuously improved. For further guidance on monitoring and evaluation see the *Nacro guide to monitoring and evaluation* at www.nacro.org.uk/templates/publications/briefingListing.cfm

Emerging issues

When addressing crime and disorder issues it is also important to be aware of future legislation or policy changes.

The passing of the new licensing bill which removes restrictions on the closing times of licensed venues may have an impact on the levels of crime and disorder associated with public transport across the nation. In London the introduction of congestion charging in February 2003 may have an impact on levels of crime as more people use the existing transport networks.

It is issues such as these that CDRPs can proactively tackle in partnership with groups such as public transport operators, British Transport Police and the local community. Due to the higher reliance on public transport in deprived areas, improvements to levels of crime and disorder will affect social inclusion, health, employment and education, resulting in a better quality of life.

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Footnotes

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Tackling crime on public transport Action planning checklist

- 1) Establish the level of relationship that currently exists between the CDRP, local public transport providers and the British Transport Police
- 2) Develop the relationship by inviting representatives of both groups to attend the CDRP.
- 3) Promote the benefits of involvement such as information sharing, joint working and shared budgets.
- 4) Gather data about crime and disorder issues related to public transport, communicate priorities.
- 5) Develop strategies for dealing with crime and disorder issues related to public transport.
- 6) Agree and implement strategies.
- 7) Evaluate strategies and provide feedback regarding successes or suggested improvements.

Nacro has staff in every English region, as well as in Wales, who provide consultancy and training on community safety. They come from a variety of backgrounds, but are all experienced at working in multi-agency settings and developing problem-solving approaches to support our clients.

Our consultancy work includes support for local agencies seeking to tackle crime on public transport. Examples of our expertise include:

- **consultation with transport users**
- **tackling anti-social behaviour, criminal damage and graffiti**
- **the night-time economy**
- **the transport needs of older people**
- **personal safety**
- **strategy development and implementation**
- **strategy alignment**
- **action planning**
- **monitoring and evaluation**

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