



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Women's Safety on Public Transport Workshop: Next steps to ensure a safer public transport system for women and girls in Scotland

**Summary report of meeting held in Glasgow, 6th
December 2023**

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Outline

This summary report sets out a set of reference principles to support collaboration between the range of organisations with a role in ensuring women's and girl's safety on public transport. This is followed by the background and outline of how these principles were shaped during a meeting attended by more than 40 stakeholders representing over 30 organisations and hosted by Transport Scotland with the Minister for Transport on the 6th of December 2023, in Glasgow. The aim of the meeting, was to identify next steps in engaging with the recommendations arising from the research report '[Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport](#)'.

Draft Principles

Early engagement and consultation

Measures should be put in place to ensure women and girls, including female staff working in the transport sector, are specifically consulted and engaged with on relevant transport issues, to ensure that any developments reflect their needs.

Standardised reporting

Organisations should move to promoting and adopting simple and consistent guidance and sign posting to women and girls to enable a standardised approach to reporting sexual harassment and unwanted behaviour across public transport and transport hubs.

Increase confidence in reporting

Identify and promote mechanisms, which ensure women and girl can feel confident in reporting any instance of behaviour, which make them feel unsafe.

Increase visibility and understanding of support and follow up

Organisations should put measures in place individually and in collaboration with relevant organisations to increase understanding of help and support are available when incidents are reported.

Sector-wide, ongoing training

Creating a sector-wide, ongoing training programme that builds the confidence and resilience in staff to manage and report incidents.

Commit to sharing best practice

Make a commitment to share best practice to create sector and Scotland-wide solutions, therefore identifying further opportunities for collaboration.

Background

In early 2022, the Minister for Transport announced a consultation on the safety of women and girls on public transport, including both public transport users and those working within the public transport system in Scotland. The Scottish Government subsequently undertook a programme of research exploring personal safety issues on the Scottish public transport system, including an in-depth qualitative study with female transport workers, and women and girls using public transport. The report on this work, ['Women's and girls' views and experiences of personal safety when using public transport'](#) was published on 7 March 2023.

A Parliamentary Debate was held on 8 March 2023 to coincide with the report. The motion from this, which was agreed by a majority in the chamber that day, was that operators, police authorities and other stakeholders adopt the recommendations contained in the report and committed the Scottish Government to work with stakeholders to make Scotland's public transport safer for women and girls.

Research Findings

The evidence review undertaken by Transport Scotland officials supported the view that a perceptions and experiences of a lack of safety constituted a major constraint on women's use of public transport. Headline analysis from the survey research showed that women continue to feel less safe than men on public transport, and this influences their mobility. The provided scope to explore these issues in more detail. This report, based on the qualitative research, highlighted that public transport was seen as an essential and affordable way for many to achieve independent social mobility. The research indicated that women and girls are already shouldering significant responsibility for adapting their behaviours to try to 'be' and to 'feel' safe when travelling on public transport.

Research Recommendations

The recommendations from the research report, which served as a focus for discussion in the meeting are as follows:

To raise awareness of the technology that is currently available to assist women and girls and explore means of making this more accessible to all, including raising awareness of the immediate and intermediate support that is available to those who feel vulnerable at any point before, during or after public transport journeys.

To gather and share best practice in relation to options for ensuring the safe return home of those working in the transport industry at night, with a review of measures and resources in place to support and promote safe travel home options for transport workers.

To strengthen existing rules around non-consumption of alcohol on public transport and at points of interchange. Increased penalties for non-compliance and better enforcement of legislation in this regard may also be required.

To develop more credible and accessible information and guidance for women and girls regarding what to do and who to contact if they feel threatened or unsafe or if they are victim to incidents when using public transport. Any information and guidance must be developed in collaboration with women and girls directly (including those from ethnic minority communities) to ensure solutions can address existing low levels of trust in authorities that appear to exist.

To introduce systems for the regular monitoring, reporting and upgrading of lighting and communications systems for all transport services (including on board and at stops/stations) with strategies in place for the immediate repair and redress of any reported failings or absence of communications and surveillance equipment at interchanges and on-board services.

To explore the feasibility of increasing staff presence at both points of boarding, alighting and interchange, as well as the possibility of increasing on board staff presence at the times that women and girls feel most vulnerable (including evenings and weekends, in particular).

Joint working between stakeholders to map and improve existing reporting protocols and develop more consistent and transparent systems for reporting and recording incidents that affect women on public transport. Improved evidence gathering will help to crystallise the nature and scale of negative personal safety experiences that passengers endure, and help to target resources and refine responses.

For stakeholders to implement more robust procedures and standard practice for following up with transport staff and public transport users who do report negative incidents to the authorities. Women and girls need to know that their complaints are taken seriously, and that they are being heard, to give them, and others, the confidence to share their experiences in the future.

To carry out a comprehensive review of the training that is currently offered to those working in the transport industry on the topic of personal safety (both their own safety and the safety of others) to identify any gaps in content, frequency of provision and reach as well as to explore how these can best be filled.

Further targeted research, consultation and training specifically with drivers of public transport, to explore their own fears in relation to protecting those on-board services and to better understand what could be done to assist them in communicating more effectively with passengers and responding to incidents, while not jeopardising their own or others safety.

Outline of the meeting

The event was opened by Alison Irvine, CEO of Transport Scotland, who welcomed participants and provided some background on the work, which had produced the 10 recommendations.

This was followed by the Minister for Transport who addressed stakeholders outlining that her hope that the meeting would serve as an opportunity to identify practical actions to improve the safety of women and girls, who both use and work on our public transport network.

The Minister reflected that the event was taking place during the global 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, adding that the research, undertaken by KSO on behalf of Transport Scotland, built upon an established evidence base that highlights a significant international problem of unwanted sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, and sexual assault on public transport. There is clear evidence that personal safety disproportionately affects women's decisions about using public transport and constitutes a barrier to fair and equitable access to the employment market, goods and services.

The Minister highlighted that the Scottish Government had taken steps to address this issue, exploring potential routes including the use of measures available under current antisocial behaviour legislation, and possible additional powers. The police, local authorities and other local agencies, empowered by the Scottish Government, are responsible for tackling anti-social behaviour at the local level. The research had highlighted the role of alcohol and drugs as exacerbating many of the incidents and causing feelings of unease. Passenger safety, which clearly includes that of women and girls on public transport is paramount. All views on the alcohol ban on ScotRail trains would be given due consideration and all impacts assessed fully. The Minister noted that the work on women and girls' safety feeds in to the National Transport Strategy, the goal of which is a transport system that is accessible to all.

Presentations

Kate Skellington-Orr, from KSO Research who were responsible for carrying out the in-depth research on understanding women and girls' experiences on public transport in Scotland, provided an overview of the research and its recommendations.

- A total of 35 women and girls from a diverse range of backgrounds took part in the research, ranging in age from 14 to 86 years old.

- Most participants described feeling the need to maintain a constant state of 'vigilance'.
- Numerous self-protection strategies were reported by women to help them feel safer (e.g. not travelling alone, or at night, avoiding particular routes and using taxis or private transport, especially late at night.)
- Previous personal experience, the experiences of others, word of mouth, stories in the media (including social media) and warnings from other people about the dangers of travelling alone/at night all influenced perceptions of safety and associated behaviours.
- Female transport workers were those most likely to report previous incidents of unwanted physical contact or assault from men.
- Wider systemic change to ensure women and girls have the freedom to maximise opportunities afforded by public transport travel.

Stakeholder presentations on the theme of 'What's working well'?

Prior to attending the workshop participants were asked to share details of work currently underway to improve the safety of women and girls (including transport workers) on public transport. From the participants who submitted work, it was necessary to make a selection in order to allow speakers sufficient time to communicate their work and to fit in a range from across the stakeholders who attended the meeting. Accordingly, attendees presenting their work represented Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) organisations, Transport Unions and Transport Providers. The presentations detailed a range of activity including research, marketing campaigns, innovations in reporting mechanisms and / or technology plans and wider activity. A brief summary of each presentation is given in Annex A:

Overview of working group discussions

For the discussion sessions participants were divided into four mixed groups who each reviewed three of the ten recommendations. Each of the groups had a chair and a note taker to capture the discussion which lasted for one hour, with equal time being accorded to each of the three recommendations under consideration. Each of the groups fed back the main points of their discussion, with key areas raised building upon the recommendations and taking practical steps. These are summarised here:

- Ensuring that women and girls', including female staff working in the transport sector, are engaged and consulted to ensure that developments are centred around their needs.
- Creating a more unified, simplified and standardised approach to reporting sexual harassment across organisations and modes of transport.
- Taking steps to increase women and girls' confidence in reporting any type of incident, no matter how small.
- Collectively building confidence and trust in reporting systems, by increasing understanding of the help and support provided if incidents are reported.
- Creating a sector-wide, ongoing training programme that builds the confidence and resilience in staff to manage and report incidents.
- Making a commitment to sharing best practice to create sector and Scotland-wide solutions, therefore identifying further opportunities for collaboration.

Round up and building consensus

The meeting was closed with remarks from Fiona Brown, director of Transport Strategy and Analysis at Transport Scotland. Fiona thanked attendees for their input across the meeting (see Annex B for the list of organisations attending) and advised that Transport Scotland would produce a report documenting the event and next steps to take this work forward. A show of hands was requested to indicate commitment from workshop attendees to continue to work together on this issue.

Follow up

Women and Girls Safety on Public Transport: Draft Principles

One of the aims of the meeting was to produce a set of high-level principles to take forward the above 10 recommendations from the report. These principles are derived from points of consensus shared at the meeting (summarised in Section 2.3). The principles set out above are designed to provide an agreed reference point for a range of stakeholders and organisations concerned directly and indirectly with ensuring women's safety on public transport.

Keeping Women's and Girls' Safety on the Agenda

There are a range of actions being taken forward by the Scottish Government to maintain focus on the issue of women and girls' safety on public transport. These include:

Transport Scotland officials will continue to work with colleagues across Government to ensure that specific actions in development to tackle antisocial behaviour on bus take into account the safety of women and girls.

ScotRail, Network Rail and British Transport Police work together with stakeholders to deliver a wide range of activity to reduce anti-social behaviours across the rail network. For example, ScotRail established a "Travel Safe Team", made up of 24 officers and 3 supervisors, in 2023. The team work mainly across the central belt and in the southwest and ScotRail are looking into how it can be expanded. The team promote safe behaviours as much as challenge bad behaviour. They engage closely with customers and staff to identify issues; this is then followed by targeted engagements e.g. they will spend time talking with (and maybe travelling with) people to explain the importance of buying tickets and the benefits of considerate behaviour to everyone.

All ScotRail train carriages are fitted with CCTV. All but two ScotRail stations have CCTV. The two stations without CCTV are on private land and legal issues are currently being worked through. Of the ScotRail stations that have CCTV 246 are monitored continuously within control centres. Waverley has its own CCTV system and control room. Glasgow Central has plans to update its CCTV, which is out of date, but it does not have a dedicated and staffed control room for monitoring it.

ScotRail are investing in increasing numbers of body worn cameras and encourage staff to wear them. They are working to persuade Trade Unions in particular of their benefits.

Advertising campaigns and literature on board trains and at stations highlight ways to report incidents to the British Transport Police, for example via the Text 6-101-6 service or by reporting via the Railway Guardian app.

Transport Scotland is writing to Scottish Rail Holdings to draw attention to this report and the research recommendations, and asking that the recommendations be taken forward. Transport Scotland will also circulate this report and the research report to bus and ferry operators to highlight the recommendations. Transport Scotland will publish a page on the Transport Scotland website which will feature the Principles that have emerged from the stakeholder event and provide links to other relevant information produced by Transport Scotland and partner organisations.

Transport Scotland will report on progress of the research recommendations on an annual basis to coincide with 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and also as part of reporting on the National Transport Strategy.

Transport Scotland will continue to work with Violence Against Women and Girls colleagues across the Scottish Government to support the sharing of good practice in relation to progress on the principles.

Transport Scotland will also publish research which explores literature around the use of personal safety apps for use in public spaces, particularly on public transport.

Annex A

Stakeholder presentations: 'What's working well'?

Engender summarised findings from five research events across Scotland in summer 2023, which were held as part of the Equally Safe strategy. Results included evidence of women and girls avoiding public transport due to issues such as limited space for buggies and safety concerns.

SEStran presented plans for further developing MaaS (Mobility as a service) in 2024, as well as app-based solutions to booking and planning journeys. (GoSEStran) to include push notifications about delayed journeys. Work with East Lothian Council on Demand Responsive Transport is also ongoing.

Rail Delivery Group highlighted a ['Zero tolerance'](#) campaign, launched at Waterloo station in April 2023. This includes posters and a film that encourages reporting and disruption of sexual harassment by sharing different scenarios of women's experiences on trains.

National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) shared results from [a survey of Scotrail female staff undertaken in November 2023](#) which found that 1 in 3 had been sexually harassed in the last year. 80% of those did not report incidents due to feeling that it would not be taken seriously. More than half reported witnessing sexual harassment.

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) outlined activity on this issue, including utilisation of the 10 recommendations as a basis for discussion internally. Actions being taken forward include increased staffing levels, for example on weekend nights, and an accessibility audit across the SPT estate. SPT have also introduced a bus to take staff home safely at night.

Edinburgh City Council talked about the launch of a new campaign [#respectherspace](#) after a consultation with women and girls across Edinburgh. The campaign addresses men's behaviour towards women, deliberately not including any messaging that implies women are responsible for their own safety.

British Transport Police: 130,000 people have downloaded the BTP Railway Guardian App. Other initiatives around alerting staff to concerns for personal safety are in development. This includes use of a code word, which would result in a person being accompanied to another carriage to make them feel safer. BTP officers also receive (VAWG) specific training.

Tactran are exploring additional safety options as part of a MaaS project, including driver checking and identity confirmation, route deviation alerts, an attack alarm feature, and possible police response request.

Nestran are funding a number of improvements to the footways and cycle infrastructure including resurfacing, widening and inclusion of solar powered lighting.

The Poverty Alliance have conducted research with people on lower incomes to understand the barriers they face to using public transport. They have also worked with the [Fair Fares](#) Review team and the Just Transition team at Transport Scotland to help shape the recommendations emerging from these work streams.

Annex B

Organisations represented at the Meeting

- Minister for Transport
- Transport Scotland (Ferries, Rail, Transport Analytical Services)
- Scottish Government (VAWG, Strategy and Insight Team)
- KSO Research
- Audit & Risk Commission
- British Transport Police
- CalMac
- COSLA
- CPT
- Dundee Volunteer & Voluntary Action
- Edinburgh Council
- Engender
- First Bus
- Glasgow City Council
- Lothian Buses
- Mobility & Access Committee Scotland
- Music Venue Trust
- NESTrans
- NHS Highland
- Public Health Scotland
- Poverty Alliance
- Prospect
- Rail Delivery Group
- The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)
- Scotrail
- SEStran
- Strathclyde Partnership For Transport
- Stagecoach, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Scotland's Women's Budget Group
- Tractran
- Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA)
- Violence Against Women & Girls Network
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- Wise Women



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