



# Public transport

**Child Exploitation is a serious crime. It takes place when others take advantage of the power imbalance between themselves and children and then force, trick, or coerce them into criminal activity on their behalf.**

Children can be exploited anywhere, but public transport such as trains, buses and taxis can be common places. Anyone using or working within transport networks can help recognise the signs of exploitation. They may notice when things look a little out of the ordinary and be able to pass their concerns on, preventing children from coming to harm.

We know that exploitation affects children from all walks of life, including girls, boys, LGBTQ+ children, disabled children, children from ethnic minority backgrounds and, increasingly, younger children. It is a form of abuse that has a serious impact on children, their families and our communities.

People who exploit children also come from all walks of life and backgrounds. Exploiters can be adults of all genders and can also be an older child. They perpetrate this type of abuse alone, with others, online, offline and through complex organised crime networks.

Children are never responsible for the exploitation which they experience, and in all matters, they should be treated as victims of abuse. They should be given support and protection to stay safe and recover from their experiences. Children who exploit other children may also be victims of exploitation themselves.

Exploitation is a complex form of abuse which can be hard to spot or identify. Children may not show signs of abuse, may not tell anyone and may not, at first, realise that what is happening to them is wrong. Exploitation can involve trafficking of children, forcing them to carry out criminal activities as well as coercing them to take part in sexual activities against their will.



# Public transport

If you're a train or bus driver, ticket inspector, or airport worker, you can help make our transport network a safer space for children.

## Is a child using your transport:

Withdrawn, anxious, frightened, angry, aggressive, or displaying other behaviours that make you concerned about them?

Unfamiliar with their surroundings or appearing unsure about where they are travelling to?

Not in possession of a relevant ticket or fare to travel (fare evasion may be an indicator of exploitation)?

In communication with, or accompanied by, older peers or adults who appear to be overseeing or controlling where they are travelling to?

Spending a long time in a transport hub and appear unsure about leaving?

Making frequent trips or spending long periods of time in the toilet during their journey?

Appearing to actively avoid being seen by transport staff or police in the area?

Travelling at unusual hours (such as during school hours, early in the morning, or late at night) and/or to multiple destinations in one day or night?

Paying by cash for an expensive journey?

Showing signs of neglect and/or indicating they have been staying somewhere unsanitary or unsafe?

Using language that you suspect relates to criminal activity?

Receiving frequent calls and messages that they appear anxious to respond to promptly?

# If something doesn't feel right, don't wait, report it.

**Call the police on 999 in an emergency** if the crime is happening right now, the suspect is still at the scene, or anyone is seriously injured or in immediate danger.

**Call the police on 101 in a non-emergency** to share information, suspicions or details that can wait a day or two. Instead of phoning 101, you can report to the police on their webpages by using an online form. This can be found here: [Report a crime | Thames Valley Police](#)

**Call Crimestoppers** if you would prefer to make an anonymous report and it is a non-emergency. They can be contacted on 0800 555 111 or you can report on their webpages by using an online form. This can be found here: [Giving information anonymously | Crimestoppers \(crimestoppers-uk.org\)](#)

**Call the NSPCC** if you would like to speak to a trained professional who can provide expert advice and support if you are concerned about a child. They can be contacted on 0808 800 5000 or you can e-mail them at [help@NSPCC.org.uk](mailto:help@NSPCC.org.uk).

Free online training for anyone is available on the Children's Society webpages under Programme of Learning: [#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society \(childrenssociety.org.uk\)](#)  
Scroll up 2 pages for the training dates and times.