# TfL launches touching campaign to prevent anti-gay - or anti-anything - harassment on the Tube



Transport for London (TfL) has launched a new initiative aimed at combatting harassment, hate crimes, and other offences on the capital’s public transport network by encouraging passengers to intervene safely and supportively when they witness such incidents. The campaign, titled Act Like a Friend, invites people not to confront offenders directly, but to offer simple, low-risk gestures of solidarity and distraction to those targeted, effectively empowering bystanders to become active participants in creating a safer travel environment.

Launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week, the campaign is grounded in behavioural insight research revealing that many Londoners want to help when they see harassment but freeze because they are unsure how to act. Recognising that women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ individuals are particularly vulnerable, TfL’s campaign steers clear of confrontation and instead models small, natural actions like initiating a friendly conversation or simply asking 'are you okay?' This approach is designed to make bystander intervention feel accessible and intuitive.

The campaign's centerpiece is a 120-second film directed by Edem Kelman and produced by VCCP, which dramatizes real-life scenarios frequently experienced by users of London’s transport network. The film debuted at the London Transport Museum alongside a panel discussion with bystanders, victims, and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) advocates, before rolling out to cinemas, social media, and digital out-of-home advertising. To tailor the message to diverse communities, TfL has partnered with football clubs such as Crystal Palace, Fulham, and Tottenham Hotspur, using localized messaging to engage broader audiences.

Alongside Act Like a Friend, TfL has launched a parallel Tackling Crime campaign focused on deterring perpetrators by highlighting visible enforcement and the serious consequences offenders face, including fines and imprisonment. Together, these complementary campaigns aim to balance deterrence with empowerment—showing that both robust policing and community vigilance are essential to enhancing public safety.

While London’s transport system remains one of the safest of its scale globally, recent data reveal troubling trends: incidents of hate crime have surged nearly 50% year-on-year, and overall crime rates on the network have also increased, from 12.6 to 13.4 offences per million journeys. British Transport Police recorded over 3,500 violent offences on the Underground in 2024, a 20% rise from the previous year. In the first six months of 2025 alone, TfL reported 1,268 hate crime incidents across its services, underscoring the urgency of these campaigns.

To support the behavioural shift the campaign seeks, TfL has teamed with charities like Protection Approaches to offer free 'active bystander' training. These sessions teach passengers how to safely intervene using distraction techniques or to provide support and guidance for reporting assaults, reinforcing that intervention should only occur when it is safe to do so. Siwan Hayward, TfL’s director of security policing enforcement, emphasises the power of simple acts: 'Our new campaign shows how powerful it can be to strike up a conversation with the targeted person and treat them like a friend, to help them feel less alone and make the first steps towards reporting the incident.'

Creative director Zoë Stock of VCCP highlights the campaign’s human-centric approach, noting that 'most Londoners can relate to wanting to help but not knowing how in the moment.' She points out that by showcasing authentic stories of Londoners who have 'acted like a friend,' the campaign aims to equip everyone with practical, safe actions that feel both possible and natural. The campaign’s ethos suggests that looking out for one another on public transport should become as instinctive as minding the gap or offering a seat—small, everyday acts woven into the city’s culture of care.

The campaign’s rollout includes broad visibility across various media channels: cinema screenings through Pearl & Dean and Digital Cinema Media, digital and physical out-of-home advertising, social media engagement, and community partnerships designed to resonate with local audiences. This multifaceted approach seeks to raise awareness comprehensively, making it clear that bystanders share responsibility with official authorities in maintaining a safe and inclusive transport network. Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.creativereview.co.uk/tfl-act-like-a-friend-anti-harassment-campaign/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/transport/tube-harassment-assault-tfl-londoners-befriend-passengers-b1252342.html> - Transport for London (TfL) has launched a campaign encouraging Londoners to 'befriend' fellow passengers experiencing harassment on public transport. The initiative includes a hard-hitting film depicting real-life examples of harassment on buses, the Tube, and train platforms. TfL aims to empower passengers to become 'active bystanders' by using distraction techniques to help victims or offering support and information about witnessed incidents. The campaign also provides guidance on how to intervene safely and report such incidents to authorities.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-10-13/tube-passengers-urged-to-befriend-people-being-harassed-in-new-tfl-campaign> - Transport for London (TfL) is urging passengers to assist potential victims of hate crime when travelling on the network. In a new campaign launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week, TfL encourages people to 'act like a friend' to those who experience any form of abuse. A film showing real-life examples of Londoners witnessing another passenger being targeted and helping defuse the incident by engaging the targeted person in conversation is being shown in cinemas and on ITVX. Free training sessions are also being provided by TfL to help passengers become 'active bystanders' and use distraction techniques to help victims or offer support and information about what they have witnessed. According to TfL's latest figures, 1,268 hate crime offences have been reported across its services in the first six months of this year.
4. <https://madeby.tfl.gov.uk/2025/10/13/creating-a-safer-transport-network-for-everyone/> - Transport for London (TfL) has launched two new connected campaigns to make passengers feel protected, supported, and confident to speak up. The 'Tackling Crime' campaign calls out the unacceptability of crime on the network and shows that perpetrators will be seen, using real case studies to demonstrate how they have been caught and the consequences of their actions, including fines and prison sentences. The 'Active Bystander' campaign encourages customers to help defuse incidents of hate crime, sexual harassment, and offences by acting like a friend to make shared journeys feel safer. Together, these campaigns highlight that safety is everyone's responsibility.
5. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/c7v857l5q10o> - Transport users in London are being urged to step in if they see fellow passengers falling victim to hate crimes or harassment. Rather than looking away, people should approach the victim, pretend like they are old friends, and engage them in conversation, thus deterring predators from continuing their attacks, Transport for London (TfL) said. As part of its new Act Like a Friend campaign, TfL teamed up with charity Protection Approaches to provide free training classes on how to be an 'active bystander'. Passengers should only intervene if they feel it is safe to do so, TfL added. Siwan Hayward, TfL's director of security policing enforcement, said: 'Our new campaign shows how powerful it can be to strike up a conversation with the targeted person and treat them like a friend, to help them feel less alone and make the first steps towards reporting the incident.'
6. <https://creative.salon/articles/work/tfl-vccp-act-like-a-friend> - Transport for London (TfL) has launched a new campaign, 'Act Like a Friend', developed with creative agency of record VCCP and WPP Media’s Wavemaker team, which developed the strategy and media planning. The campaign aims to empower passengers to safely intervene when they witness hate crime, sexual harassment, or offences on the network, while reinforcing the message that criminal behaviour has serious consequences. This new behaviour change campaign launches during National Hate Crime Awareness Week (11-18 October) and shows Londoners ways to step in safely when they see someone being harassed or abused. Running alongside it is 'Tackling Crime', a complementary strand that reminds perpetrators that enforcement is active, visible, and effective.