

Written evidence submitted by British Transport Police

About BTP

BTP are the specialist police force for Britain's railways, providing a service to rail operators, their staff and passengers across the UK. BTP also police the London Underground, Docklands Light Railway, the Midland Metro tram system, Croydon Tramlink, Tyne and Wear Metro, Glasgow Subway and Emirates AirLine. BTP employs 3,062 Police Officers, 300 Special Constables, 362 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 1,689 Police Staff. Our officers respond to and investigate all crimes that are committed on or related to the railway network, which include the most serious.

BTP Response

1. Overview

BTP officers have been fully integrated into the Covid - 19 national policing strategy, focused on reassuring members of the public and achieving public compliance with the new emergency measures by using an encouraging and engaging policing style. BTP is integrated into the NPCC and other national structures including the London Strategic Coordinating Group and other Local Resilience Forums.

This response sets out how BTP is responding to the pandemic, the changes in crime types and how we are implementing the new health regulations on the rail network. The response also sets out potential challenges as rail services start to resume and our role in addressing this.

2. Abstractions

Our service offering is not reduced at any location across England, Scotland and Wales; the Force is still responsive and flexible to industry needs. At its peak our abstraction rate was 12% but is now 2.4%.

3. Implementation of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations 2020

BTP has been working hard to establish and implement the new police powers related to policing the new Government measures on essential travel. The legislation has since been updated and we have taken into consideration the changes, as well as the difference in legislation across England, Scotland and Wales.

Like other forces we have adopted a four-stage escalation process – engage, explain, encourage and enforce. Our priority is to **engage** with the public to **explain** the new rules around social distancing and **encourage** them to comply with the new guidance.

Our officers have a very difficult and unique responsibility in undertaking these new responsibilities. If the first three steps of engage, explain, and encourage do not work we will use our enforcement powers. Unfortunately, there is a small minority of people who, despite our best efforts, have refused to follow the instructions and officers have needed to use their enforcement powers. To date we have issued over 300 enforcement notices in England, Scotland and Wales.

We are disappointed to report that we have had instances of officers being attacked when engaging people about reasons for travel. One of our officers was knocked unconscious, another spat at by a person claiming to have the virus. This is just two examples which show the risks that our officers are taking to ensure the safety of the railway.

4. Our policing approach

Our policing approach is focused on protecting rail staff and passengers and involves:

- **High-visibility** deployments to locations where we know that crowding and/or non-compliance is most prominent.
- **Deploying** to key locations such as booking halls / gate lines / platforms.
- **Engaging** with travelers, asking questions to establish circumstances, and explain the regulations.
- **Encouraging** and instructing travelers to go home that do not have a 'reasonable excuse' for not staying in their homes.
- **Communication** is key, and we are using our marketing and social media channels to support the message that you should only travel if necessary, as set out in Government guidance.
- **Working with rail staff** to offer reassurance and manage any public disorder or ASB incidents.
- **Policing the regulations not government guidance.** BTP have no legal role in enforcing social distancing or managing crowds or queues.

5. Crime

Calls for service

We have seen, approximately, a 50% reduction in calls for service.

Crime 2020-21 Comparative

- Since 1st April 2020 to date against the same period last year, there has been a **68% reduction in notifiable crime** down by 6,185 crimes.
- Crime groups that have seen big reductions; **TPP** at an 89% decrease (-2,227 crimes) followed by **Public Order** at 66% (-921 crimes) & **Pedal Cycle** down 78% (-660%).
- **Violent crime** has seen a reduction of 1,186 offences (-73%) across both violence with (-78%) and without injury (-72%). **Robbery** has recorded a decrease of 52 crimes (-52%) & **Hate crime** is also down 78% (-403 crimes).
- Only **one crime group has recorded an increase so far; Drugs** up 81 crimes (23%) against last year.

Covid-19 related crime

A total of **218 COVID related crimes** have been recorded since 18/03/20. Key themes related to these offences include:

- Most of the offences have happened in London.
- The peak time for offending is during rush hour period between 16:00 – 19:00.
- The top station for offending is London Victoria with 5 occurrences.

From the incidents 36 have been classified as Common Assault offences, with some concerning suspects coughing and spitting at the victim, of which 5 offences involving rail staff being victims of common assault. There were 10 Officer assault offences recorded with most of the incidents (8) involving suspects spitting/coughing at officers whilst being detained. Most of these offences have taken place on TFL services but also include Southern and South Western train operating companies.

The other crime areas that are higher risk in the current environment include:

- i) Railway trespass

Data shows that most trespass incidents occur at stations. During the current Covid-19 pandemic trespass, and its impact on disruption to rail services, has seen the biggest volume decrease at 77,408 minutes (-75%). Forcewide disruption incidents are also down 55% (-2,042) with trespass and drunks/disorder/trespass recording the greatest reductions.

Whilst this reduction is good news, both the Force and industry have been aware that with the closure of schools and the knowledge that fewer passenger trains were running, there has been a risk of an increase in the number of trespass incidents on the network. We have been proactively patrolling the thousands of miles of rail network we police and are working in partnership with the industry to deliver tailored plans to target known hot spots – highlighting any concerns to allow partners to put mitigations in place to stop repeat offending at these locations. In partnership with Network Rail, we continue to highlight the devastating consequences of trespassing on the railway with our safety campaign – You Vs Train – and are sharing educational resources for parents and children.

ii) Anti-social behaviour and staff assaults

Sadly, we have had a small number of instances of officers and rail staff being assaulted and threatened with being exposed to coronavirus. Protecting rail staff is one of our top priorities and we continue to provide reassurance with a high visibility presence. In total, violent crime has seen a reduction of 1,186 offences (-73%) across both violence with (-78%) and without injury (-72%).

iii) Supporting NHS workers

Following feedback from the NHS, Home Office Partners and stakeholders we are policing additional areas and identified hospital service routes at key times based on concerns over ASB affecting NHS workers. This is particularly the case in London, where we have increased our policing presence at Custom house, Northwick Park, Whitechapel, Warren Street, Archway, Fulham Broadway / Earls Court, Thornton Heath and Woolwich Arsenal.

In addition, we have specific teams patrolling on services on the following routes; Victoria to Clapham Junction, Waterloo to Clapham Junction, Charing Cross to Lewisham, Victoria to Seven Sisters and Camden Town to Kennington.

The impact of Covid-19 on suicidal incidents

The nature of BTP's work means that our officers regularly deal with the most traumatic of incidents. Tragically, around 300 people take their own lives on the railway each year and BTP officers attend and manage all of these scenes. Approximately 40% of BTP staff are impacted by one of these incidents every year and over 1,000 staff are impacted by two or more.

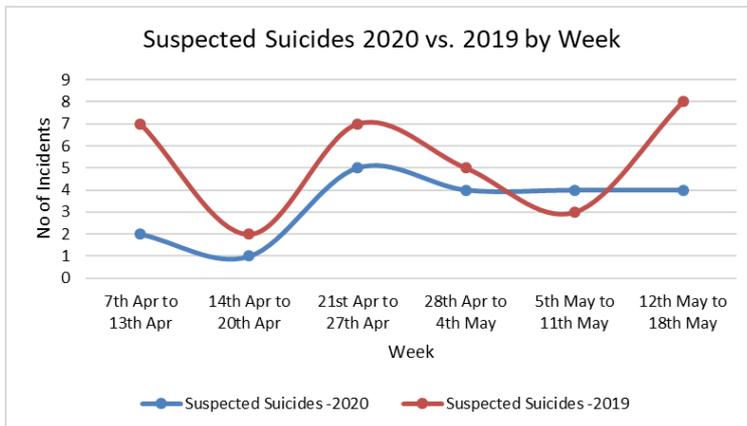
BTP is measured on how quickly it responds to fatality incidents and hands back the railway line to continue services. The overall handback time (non-sus and unexplained) was 105 minutes. For non-suspicious fatalities it was 91 minutes.

The safety of our officers is paramount when dealing with any fatalities on the railway. Given the current environment and context of Covid-19 it is mandated that PPE should now be worn, whether there is a known risk of COVID-19 infection or not. All officers are required to wear PPE when undertaking the body recovery role within fatality management. This requires the wearing of FFP2/3 masks.

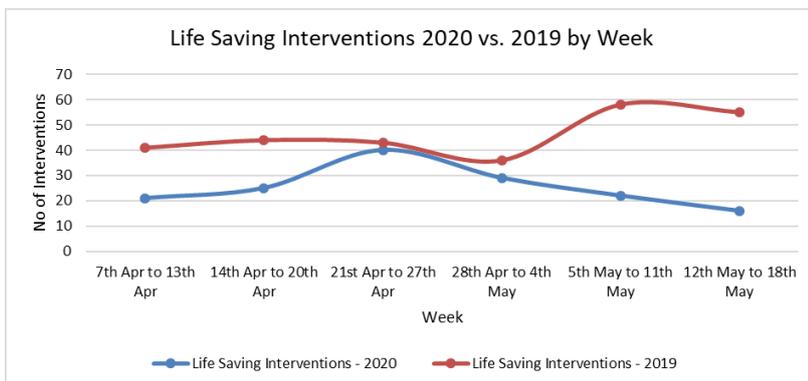
We continue to pay close attention to the safeguarding of vulnerable people - many of whom may be suffering during this unsettling time of increased social isolation. We are working closely with staff across

the industry and local authorities to ensure protections and support are in place. We are pleased to report that at this stage there is no evidence of any uplift in suicides on the network, but we recognise it is a risk.

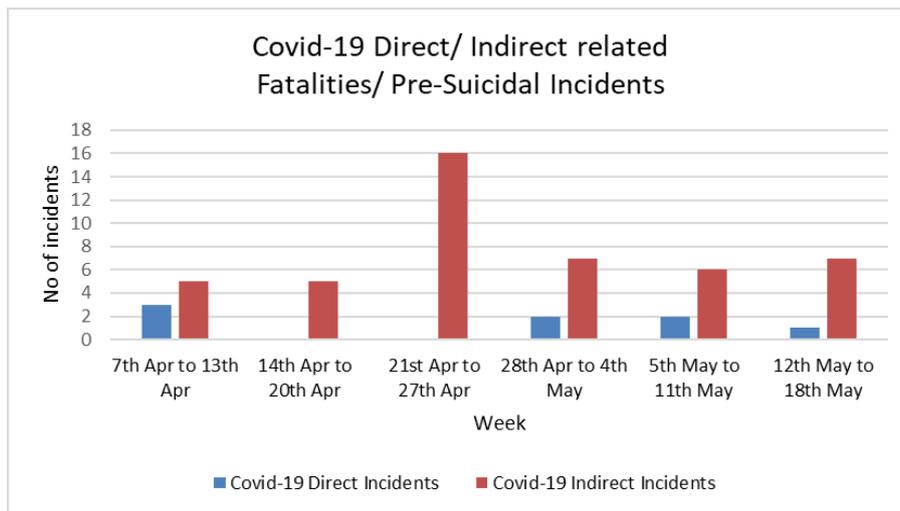
From 23rd March (lockdown) to date we have recorded 32 suspected suicides in comparison to 48 during the same period last year (-16). We anticipate there will be an increase as lockdown restrictions are eased and we will continue to monitor this closely. The below graph shows the difference in levels of suspected suicides compared with last year:



Life-saving interventions have been on a downward trend over the last four weeks, however we may start to see a rise as police and industry staff presence increase at stations.



BTP is recording fatalities and pre-suicidal incidents that have been flagged as Covid-19 incidents – both directly and indirectly. Direct incidents involve people who were directly impacted by the virus i.e it was confirmed that the individual had the virus. Indirect cases involve those where they were indirectly impacted i.e it was causing him/her concern due to other health conditions, a family member had the virus, impact of isolation, mental health etc. These are the cases where the information is known, there may be more which BTP are unaware of and therefore have not been captured in the below figures:



Although small in numbers, where known the majority of Covid-19 related cases are in relation to pre-suicidal incidents where individuals have been distressed or concerned about the virus and/or changes to daily life due to the lockdown. The profile of individuals remains the same as before the pandemic, where the majority are males with an average age between 30-40.

We will continue to monitor this issue and any impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable people and suicidal incidents and assess any necessary interventions with the rail industry.

6. Disruption

Disruption on the network affects the industry and passengers, operationally and financially. It has cost the industry £630 million in the past 5 years, and it is expected to cost £750 million more over the next 5 years.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recently published its report on how BTP manages disruption following an inspection that took place in June 2019. The inspection considered the extent to which our priorities compliment those of the rail industry whilst maintaining operational independence and how effectively we minimised disruption to the network caused by trespass, fatalities, cable theft and other police-related incidents.

HMICFRS found that overall, we managed disruption very well given the challenging environment we operate in. They noted that the Force is good at prioritising and minimising police-related disruption, that we prioritise our response to trespass and fatalities and, importantly, that we maintain our operational independence. The inspection has not been graded as it was a specialist inspection.

Prevention

BTP has prevention plans and initiatives to reduce disruption. However, these are not always supported by the rail industry. For example, the industry doesn't agree with, or put in place, many of BTP's recommendations to reduce disruption. This means that the force can't prevent some police-related disruption, such as trespass.

BTP has a Designing Out Crime Unit (DOCU) that gathers information about people involved in disruption, suggests solutions and recommends improvements to keep people safe. The safeguarding teams consider the policing response. In the past 12 months, the team has made 1,200 recommendations, however, only 60 (5%) of these recommendations having been implemented by industry.

Technology

BTP uses technology in many ways, and in different areas, to tackle disruption and identify vulnerabilities – such as Operation Compass. This multi-agency response identified and safeguarded the most vulnerable people using the network. This pilot scheme is gathering and analysing data from different sources. These include telecommunications and surveillance monitoring tools. This helps everyone better understand the links between vulnerability, criminality and disruption incidents.

Counter Terrorism

In the period between December 2015 and end of December 2018 there were six terror related attacks directly impacting on parts of the railway infrastructure or stations. They lead to 20 deaths and more than 90 serious injuries. Historically, Britain's railways have been a sustained target for terrorists with many attacks over the last two centuries.

The rail network and stations continue to be a terrorism target. However, BTP receive no direct Government funding for this important activity, despite £15bn in cross Government funding and £850m Counter Terrorism (CT) grant to policing. The Police Counter Terrorism funding is managed by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT), which has a cross government role.

Requests for access to this funding have been unsuccessful. Although sympathetic to the requirements BTP have, Home Office officials and Police colleagues believe that the CT budgets they have access to have been secured through bids as part of the Home Office police grant. Furthermore, their view is that anything made available to BTP would be to the detriment of the geographic police forces.

The absence of central funding for this activity creates tension in the relationship with some rail operators who feel that it is a national security activity and therefore not something they should fund. Some in the industry have described a greater focus on CT by BTP as 'a distraction' to roles they believe BTP should be delivering.

In 2018, BTP carried out a capability gap analysis of our CT approach for the railway. This was set against the 24 attack methodologies we seek to mitigate. BTP utilised a methodology like that employed by the Federal transit security agencies in the USA. Our analysis identified gaps in capability that means our preventative posture is sub optimal. There are preventive measures we would like to develop to address some of the issues arising from recent terror attacks on the railways.

Many of the gaps are capable of at least partial mitigation using technology, much of which is in use or trial in the US. To develop that for our railways requires funding and resource for research and development into deployment. Funding and support have not been available through the budget allocated by the Police Authority or elsewhere. A bid to Government for specific funding to help close the capability gaps was submitted in 2019. We remain hopeful that this might at some time be progressed.

On the more general issue of Police funding, Home Office funding for geographic forces increased by 7.5% this year and is projected to be at similar levels in the next two years. However, funding for BTP has been reduced and set at below inflation rates over the next five years.

Importance as part of the Covid-19 response

Disruption incidents are down 55% (-2,042) to date. However, with rail services increasing and more people using the network in the coming weeks it is probable that they will increase.

Our specialist response to incidents that stop trains running is key to our relationship with the rail industry. Now more than ever we need to work even closer with our industry colleagues to further improve our joint

response to disruption. **With the importance of social distancing on the rail network, wherever possible, the impact of disruption incidents upon crowd control and queues is clear.** This must be avoided where possible. Through our specialist resources, we continue to put forward measures to industry that we strongly advise they implement to prevent disruption incidents such as trespass.

7. BTP County Lines Taskforce

In December 2019, an operational taskforce dedicated to county lines was established by BTP, funded by the Home Office. The taskforce comprised approximately 30 staff and operated in, and from strategic locations; London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Since it was established the taskforce has made over 320 arrests, made 157 drug seizures, seized over 45 weapons and seized over £116,000.

The taskforce has produced some excellent arrests, which in most cases have led to successful charges and prosecutions. The national rail network has been covered by the taskforce; as far south as Plymouth, north to Scotland, west to North Wales and East to Margate. Rail travel remains prominent within county lines criminal activity.

The taskforce has engaged and worked closely with rail staff, encouraging reporting of suspicious behaviour. As a result, several of the interventions made by the taskforce, not just those leading to arrests, were made because of staff information, either directly targeting the individuals or using the trends in staff information to judge deployment locations.

Unfortunately, the **Covid-19 travel restrictions have not led to a fall in the number of children and vulnerable adults being exploited by gangs as part of County Lines drug trafficking** – as some criminals seek to exploit the quieter network and illegal drug supplies become more restricted generally. This is reflected in our crime statistics (presented earlier in this submission) that show drug offences as the only offence to see an increase in the current environment.

8. Supporting service recovery

BTP have been closely aligned with the rail industry – the Rail Delivery Group, Department for Transport, Network Rail and wider industry across the UK in deliberating the impacts of gradual restoration of transport services.

Having maintained business-as-usual policing during the outbreak, BTP are reviewing resourcing levels across the force to ensure we are prepared for this next stage. We will maintain maximum operational flexibility throughout the recovery period to be able to respond to calls for service, disruption incidents and crime and disorder (recovery-related or not).

The rail industry plays an important role in managing social distancing on the network and we welcome steps already being taken by the industry, such as signage and public announcements, to manage this issue. This is a crucial element in ensuring the wellbeing of passengers and staff. Responsibility for management arrangements for crowd control or queuing sit with the premises and duty holder (operator). BTP have a key role to play in maintaining public order and preventing crime and therefore we are eager to support the rail industry in their planning, and in working together as restrictions ease.

Due to the expected uplift in passenger numbers, as services increase, and restrictions are gradually lifted, we will be deploying additional officers to the rail network at key moments. **We are currently planning a significant officer presence in and around London from June 15th.** The increase in resources is there to provide the best support for our partners, and to ensure the safety of those that need to use public transport. We will provide a high visibility presence where passenger numbers and demands are expected to be highest from travellers commuting to the capital in the morning and returning out of an evening.

An immense logistical challenge faces the rail industry, as we work together to keep people who need to use the network moving.

9. PPE

We are aware that as the network and stations become busier, maintaining social distancing will become more challenging. It is essential that rail staff and the public feel confident that the spread of the virus is not aided by asymptomatic BTP staff. Therefore, following advice published in the Government's Strategy, all BTP staff will be wearing a face covering where social distancing cannot be achieved. Where officers respond to a suspected Covid-19 case they will wear PPE. This will be at their discretion, following a pragmatic and risk-based approach as they undertake their policing responsibilities. We continue to keep this policy under review to ensure we reflect the current public health guidance and regulations.

Face coverings for passengers

The Government recently announced that wearing a face covering on public transport from 15th June would be mandatory. BTP is in discussions with Government and industry about the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

10. Conclusion

The aim of BTP's operations is to provide the best support for our rail industry partners and ensure the safety of those that need to use public transport. We will continue to do this and adapt to the evolving situation as we enter the next phase in the battle against coronavirus and as the UK starts to recover with increased social and economic activity.

June 2020