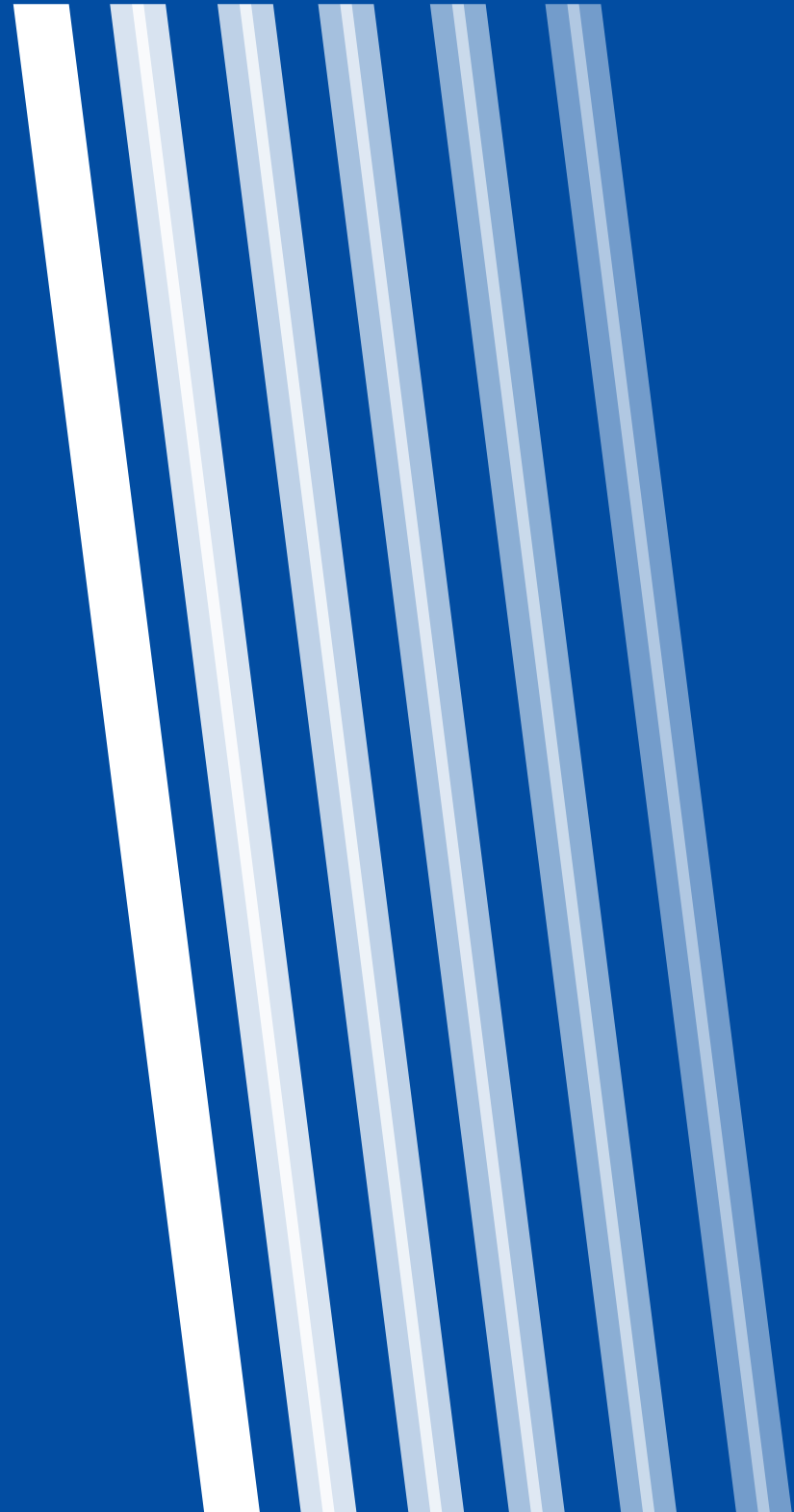


#RELATIONSHIPRESET

OUR RIGHT TO BE SAFE



November 2024

#RelationshipReset

was commissioned by The Education Alliance, The Summit Learning Trust, The Kemnal Academies Trust, Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust, and Fairfax Academies Trust.



Citizens UK was invited to develop a national strategy which would enable those five Multi-Academy Trusts to directly engage with the issues of sexual harm too many young people face across England.

This report was put together by the #RelationshipReset Steering Group

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The #RelationshipReset Steering Group wishes to acknowledge the incredible support of Cathy Anwar, former CEO at The Summit Learning Trust, throughout most of this process.

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Why us, why now?

Sexual harm is a pervasive issue affecting young people in every corner of our country. It is a challenge that no single school, college, or institution can address in isolation. To combat this deeply entrenched problem, we need a systemic approach—one that is bold, inclusive, and collaborative.

At the heart of this work must be young people themselves. They are not only those most affected but also the agents of the change we so urgently need. Their lived experiences reveal the stark realities too often hidden and their hunger for change fuels a powerful momentum. We must listen to them, amplify their voices, and work alongside them to create solutions that are meaningful and lasting.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of this mission. Schools and colleges must unite, sharing knowledge, resources, and strategies to create safer environments for all. But we cannot stop there. Engaging with public officials, policymakers, and private sector leaders is equally crucial. Everyone has a part to play. From shaping policy to developing initiatives, from raising awareness to championing prevention, our collective responsibility is clear.

In a society where trust in "the system" is often fragile, the work of #RelationshipReset demonstrates that hope remains. This hope is not passive; it is rooted in the tangible actions of students and staff across the country who are working together to foster a culture where everyone can thrive free from harm.

We are inspired by the courage and dedication of the young people leading the way, and by the educators supporting them in this vital endeavour. Together, we are proving that systemic issues require systemic solutions—and that by coming together, we can achieve a society where respect, safety, and flourishing relationships are not aspirations but realities.

We are proud to stand with them.

Carol Dewhurst OBE, CEO, Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

Vince Green, CEO, Summit Learning Trust

Simon Jones, CEO, Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust

Dr Karen Roberts, CEO, The Kemnal Academies Trust

Jonny Uttley, CEO, The Education Alliance

Calling for change through collective action

Sexual harassment in schools and society remains a pervasive issue that undermines the safety, wellbeing, and educational experiences of young people.

Our Right to Be Safe is a community-led report compiled by school leaders and a dedicated group of students from five multi-academy trusts across England, including The Educational Alliance (TEAL), Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT), The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT), the Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, and Summit Learning Trust.

Over the past three years, these trusts, representing **over 55,000 students** across key regions in England (East Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, the West Midlands, Hampshire, Kent, and Greater London), have collaborated to address the troubling realities of sexual harassment, working tirelessly to create safer and more respectful environments for all students. This report focuses on very specific issue alone: **public transport safety**.

This report captures the collective efforts, challenges, and successes of these trusts, highlighting the voices of young people whose testimonies bring to light the urgent need for systemic change. Their stories reflect the lived experiences of students who demand **action from those in power**—calling on elected officials and transport executives to take decisive steps to make things safer for young people. The findings and recommendations presented here aim to inspire continued collaboration, innovative policies, and tangible interventions that tackle sexual harassment on public transport and beyond.

This #RelationshipReset report serves not only as a summary of three years of dedicated work but as a rallying cry for decision-makers to join us in **our mission to reshape societal attitudes and ensure that every young person can grow up free from harassment and harm**. Together, we can reset relationships and build a safer future for the next generation.

Tom Fisher
The Education Alliance

What does it feel like to feel scared to take public transport?

Sexual harassment on public transport is a pervasive issue that continues to impact the daily lives of students, particularly young women and members of marginalized groups. The shared space of public transport, meant to offer mobility and convenience, often becomes a site of discomfort, fear, and vulnerability. For students, many of whom rely on buses, trains, and subways to commute to and from school, the experience of harassment is not an isolated one but a recurring challenge that undermines their sense of safety and well-being.

The testimonies provided by students illustrate the deeply ingrained nature of this issue and the lasting effects it has on their mental and emotional health. Students report incidents ranging from unwanted verbal comments and inappropriate gestures to physical contact, leering, and unwanted staring. These experiences often leave lasting scars, diminishing the ability of students to engage with public spaces freely and with confidence. The objectifying nature of such actions can make students feel vulnerable, powerless, and constantly on guard, disrupting their sense of safety and well-being as they navigate what should be ordinary, everyday spaces.

For many students, the fear of encountering harassment during their daily commute forces them to alter their routines. Some avoid travelling at certain times or routes, while others develop coping mechanisms like earphones or staring at their phones to block out the discomfort. Yet, these strategies are not always effective in safeguarding their dignity or peace of mind. Worse, many students report feeling helpless, unsure of how to respond or what resources are available to them. This sense of powerlessness only deepens the trauma of harassment, as victims often feel as though their concerns are dismissed or not taken seriously.

The prevalence of these experiences is alarming, yet the response from authorities has not been commensurate with the scale of the issue. Public transport systems are often slow to implement meaningful changes that would deter harassment or provide students with tangible support. This lack of action exacerbates the problem and sends the message that the safety of students, particularly those most vulnerable to harassment, is not a priority.

The following student testimonies serve as a poignant reminder of the need for urgent and substantial reforms. These personal accounts highlight the gravity of the problem and underscore the responsibility that policymakers have to take immediate and decisive action to ensure that all students can access public transport without fear of harassment. We must listen to their stories and acknowledge the profound impact that harassment has on their lives as we work toward creating a public transport system that is safer.

"I experienced people cat calling me as I sat on the bus and they went past in a car."

"On the bus, I had someone strange ask questions about my body making me feel very uncomfortable."

"Men stare at me when I get on public transport by myself and it makes me uncomfortable."

"A man was staring at my chest on the bus. He followed me off the bus until I ran off. I felt uncomfortable and scared."

"A man on a train looked up my dress. I was horrified and felt scared."

"One time when i was on a school trip a man locked eyes with me and then a couple minutes later proceeded to come up behind me and ask me how old I was and when I didn't respond then he continued asking my friend how old I was until we responded."

"An old man was winking and licking his lips and spreading his legs and staring at me on the bus before I felt uncomfortable and awkward and scared because I was on my own."

"I was getting harassed by two men on the bus. They followed me home making me feel really afraid."

"A man began to masturbate on the top deck of the bus. We told the driver, shaking, what had happened. Thank God he stopped the bus and asked everyone to get off the bus."

"You sit next to someone and you're always worried that they're going to start rubbing their legs or thighs against yours. This happens so often when I'm sat next to someone on a crowded bus."

It doesn't have to be this way...

Stories shared by our students are shocking. It is appalling to hear that their journeys to and from school/college have left them scared, and in some instances traumatised to the point that they worry each time they catch a bus. These experiences have often become normalised.

Students, particularly girls and young women, accept that they will be sexually harassed on public transport. They do not report the first, second, or even third incident because it is so commonplace and in the words of several students "What's the point?".

We believe enough is enough. The safety of young people on public transport is everyone's responsibility.

As schools and colleges, we have put measures in place to support our students to recognise the signs of sexual harassment. We are also working closely with safeguarding officers to ensure that more joined-up approaches are developed.

As our work developed, we engaged with Sophie Linden who, until recently, was London's Deputy Mayor. Ms Linden's leadership on the issue of sexual harm is one which has had an impact on the capital and, as we have carried out our research and shaped our asks, her support and that of key officers at Transport for London (TfL) have been greatly appreciated.



I want to thank you for the work that you do in promoting the safety of young people but particularly the safety of young women and girls. I know the reason [you do this] is that you want to make sure that things change because it is simply not right. We've got to make sure that we stamp out sexual harassment. Women and girls have an absolute right not to be fearful.

Sophie Linden, former Deputy Mayor of London

Carol Dewhurst

Carol Dewhurst
CEO Bradford Diocesan
Academies Trust (BDAT)



Karen Roberts

Karen Roberts
CEO TKAT



Jonny Uttley

Jonny Uttley
CEO The
Education Alliance



Simon Jones

Simon Jones
CEO Fairfax
Multi-Academy Trust



SUMMIT
LEARNING TRUST

Vince Green

Vince Green
CEO Summit
Learning Trust

#RelationshipReset Project

Student Charter for Action - Autumn 2024

As leaders in education, we are committed to providing safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. Sexual harassment is a serious issue that can have a detrimental impact on the well-being and academic success of children and young people. If we are to fulfil our mandate to promote and enhance social justice, young people must be educated in appropriate relationship behaviour.

This charter outlines our commitment and responsibility to address and prevent sexual harassment within our schools. By fostering a culture of respect, awareness and accountability, we strive to ensure that every student feels safe, valued and empowered to reach their full potential.

Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Establish a zero-tolerance policy:** Develop and implement a comprehensive policy that clearly defines sexual harassment, emphasises zero tolerance and outlines the consequences for those who engage in such behaviour.
- Raise awareness:** Conduct regular awareness campaigns to educate students, staff, governors, Trustees and parents about sexual harassment, its impact, and how to prevent and report incidents. Foster open dialogue and provide resources for support. Education around sexual harassment should be a core part of the curriculum, expanded according to age.
- Promote a respectful culture:** Foster a culture that promotes respect, empathy and understanding among all members of the school community. Encourage positive relationships, healthy boundaries and mutual consent through ongoing discussions and educational programmes.
- Create an online support system:** Students can access this during holidays for support and help, anonymously if required.

Implementing Effective Reporting Procedures

- Provide multiple reporting channels:** Establish a variety of confidential (and anonymous) reporting channels, such as hotlines, online reporting systems, or trusted staff members, to ensure that students can report incidents safely and without fear of retaliation. Ensure that staff are well-trained in terms of preventing sexual harassment.
- Respond promptly and sensitively:** Develop clear guidelines for staff on how to respond to reports of sexual harassment. Ensure that all reports are treated seriously, investigated promptly and resolved in a sensitive and supportive manner. Ongoing feedback should be given to victims who must be treated with care and listened to. European rights of personal privacy must be adhered to.
- Support those subject to Sexual Harassment (SH):** Provide appropriate support and resources to survivors of SH, including access to counselling, medical services and legal assistance. Maintain confidentiality and prioritise the well-being of the survivor throughout the process. Ensure accessibility to trained mental health support workers for students. Ensure that those subject to SH retain control over the process post-reporting.

Staff Training and Development

- Provide comprehensive training:** Conduct regular training sessions for all staff members, including teachers, administrators and support staff, to raise awareness about sexual harassment, recognise warning signs, and understand their roles and responsibilities in prevention, challenge and intervention. Consider an action plan for student safety on the way to and from school.
- Foster a culture of reporting:** Encourage staff members to report any incidents or concerns related to sexual harassment promptly. Assure them that their reports will be taken seriously, and that appropriate action will be taken.
- Promote professional boundaries:** Educate staff about maintaining appropriate boundaries with students, ensuring that interactions are professional, respectful and free from any form of harassment.

Collaboration with Students, Parents and the Community

- Involve students in prevention efforts:** Engage student leaders and organisations in initiatives that promote respectful relationships, consent education and bystander intervention. Encourage student-led campaigns and empower them to be active participants in creating a safe school environment. Information around what to do if SH happens and how to respond.
- Partner with parents and carers:** Collaborate with parents and guardians to raise awareness through education and resources and to encourage open communication about sexual harassment prevention and the curriculum that is on offer to students. Seek their input and involvement in policy development and implementation. Work with parents should be culturally-appropriate, but resolute in tackling these sensitive issues.
- Engage the community:** Forge partnerships with local organisations, law enforcement agencies, and community leaders to strengthen prevention efforts, share best practices and ensure a holistic approach to addressing sexual harassment.

Conclusion

By adopting this charter, we, as school and Trust leaders, pledge to take proactive measures to prevent, challenge and address sexual harassment within our schools. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment that promotes the dignity and well-being of all students.

Together, we will foster a culture of respect, empathy and accountability, ensuring that every student feels valued, protected and empowered to succeed.

Our asks

Below is a set of practical recommendations which we know would work and which would make young people safer.

As a starting point, we therefore call on Mayor Tracy Brabin, Mayor Richard Parker, and candidates for the role of East Yorkshire Mayor to work with us and ensure that:

1. Posters which clearly define the different types of sexual harassment and how those behaviours will be punished are visible across bus and train networks in their regions;
2. The reporting of sexual harassment is made easy, convenient, and accessible to everyone. Our students have suggested QR codes and text message numbers on posters and bus passes/cards.

We recognise that the management of transport issues isn't always straightforward. Some regional Mayors have direct control over bus networks, for example, whilst some don't.

We believe that the above recommendations can be implemented regardless of whether direct oversight by regional mayors is in place. In some cases, this may require elected officials to use their political influence and collaborate with transport companies. In other cases, it may involve taking direct action to implement the measures themselves.

The image shows two side-by-side posters. The left poster has a pink background and is titled 'Pressing' in large, bold, dark blue letters. Below the title, it says 'RUBBING AGAINST SOMEONE ON PURPOSE IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND IS NOT TOLERATED' in smaller, dark blue, all-caps letters. Further down, it provides contact information: 'See it or experience it on public transport? Text what, where and when to 61016. In an emergency always dial 999.' and 'Aware of someone who is doing this and want to remain anonymous? Call the sexual harassment line on 0800 783 0137.' At the bottom, it says 'Together, we can stop sexual harassment.' and features logos for CrimeStoppers, British Transport Police, and Transport for London. The right poster has a dark blue background and is titled 'Touching' in large, bold, orange letters. Below the title, it says 'TOUCHING SOMEONE INAPPROPRIATELY IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND IS NOT TOLERATED' in smaller, orange, all-caps letters. Further down, it provides contact information: 'See it or experience it on public transport? Text what, where and when to 61016. In an emergency always dial 999.' and 'Aware of someone who is doing this and want to remain anonymous? Call the sexual harassment line on 0800 783 0137.' At the bottom, it says 'Together, we can stop sexual harassment.' and features logos for CrimeStoppers, British Transport Police, and Transport for London.

Pressing

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CrimeStoppers. BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

MAYOR OF LONDON TRANSPORT FOR LONDON EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

Touching

TOUCHING SOMEONE INAPPROPRIATELY IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND IS NOT TOLERATED

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CrimeStoppers. BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

MAYOR OF LONDON TRANSPORT FOR LONDON EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS



We also call on Jess Phillips MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls to work with us ensure that:

1. Clear and consistent national policies and procedures are in place to better assess the safety of young people on public transport.
2. An annual report is produced to assess the efficacy of measures put in place by transport companies across the country when it comes to sexual harm.
3. Driver training includes yearly safeguarding and sexual harassment refreshers.

Relationship

Finally, we call on Mayor Tracy Brabin, Mayor Richard Parker, and Jess Phillips MP to meet with us at least once a year to review progress on our recommendations.

We also call on them to use their convening power to ensure that we are able to engage with transport company executives directly and other public officials if necessary.

