Press Release

28 November 2023

Avanti West Coast recognised for efforts to protect vulnerable people

- *Avanti West Coast achieves Safeguarding on Rail Scheme accreditation*
- *Work with industry partners and charities designed to protect vulnerable people*
- *Staff praised for passion and knowledge to keep people safe*

Avanti West Coast has achieved Safeguarding on Rail Scheme accreditation for its efforts to protect vulnerable young people and adults at risk on its network.

Developed by the British Transport Police (BTP) and Department for Transport (DfT) in response to increasing numbers of vulnerable people using the rail network, the Safeguarding on Rail Scheme (SRS) is a mark of commitment and dedication to keeping those at risk safe.

The intercity operator was recognised for its work to ensure a coherent programme of training, discussions and collaboration had taken place with industry partners – enabling employees on the west coast to identify people at risk and get them the support they need.

The SRS is based upon the core principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility with the rail industry having a vital role in protecting children and adults.

BTP, who awarded the accreditation, praised Avanti West Coast staff for their passion and knowledge to keep vulnerable people safe. The train operator achieved a score of 92.5% in its SRS assessment, which BTP stated is a testament to colleagues across all levels of the business being aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Over the last 12 months nearly 1,900 employees have been trained in safeguarding – with further training for staff to be rolled out in the next three years. A group has also been established to bring together representatives from across the business, including the Safeguarding Manager, to identify trends and take action.

As part of its efforts to keep people on the network safe, Avanti West Coast works with industry partners, including BTP and Network Rail, as well as the Samaritans and Railway Children charities to ensure they receive the most appropriate help and support.

Within the last 18 months over 1,200 safeguarding incidents were logged that the BTP responded to. This resulted in 58 lifesaving interventions, including a suicidal male spotted

by a member of the public, who staff engaged with and encouraged to walk to the BTP Office, where they provided a detailed account and handed over care of the male.

A dedicated safeguarding form for employees to record and report concerns via an app will launch next month – enabling Avanti West Coast to identify different strands of vulnerability, which will help inform deployment of the BTP and charities to support people, as well as better equip staff to handle incidents.

The train operator has also set out a condition in its contracts with suppliers that it will only work with those that have safeguarding policies in place to govern and support staff.

Barry Milsom, Executive Director for Operations and Safety at Avanti West Coast, said: "We're proud to have achieved SRS accreditation as it highlights our efforts to keep those on our network safe. We hope this provides reassurance to our customers and communities that we're here to look out for everyone and if those who are at risk find themselves on our stations or trains, we'll be able to get them the help and support they need.

"Through our work with industry partners and charities we've seen the positive difference we can all make, and we want to build on this. Everyone has a part to play in protecting vulnerable people on the railway, which is why we're committed to embedding safeguarding into all areas of our business."

Andrew McCullough, Head of Designing Out Crime Unit at British Transport Police, said: "Getting such a high score for the Safeguarding on Rail Scheme is a real testament to the work all staff have put into making sure vulnerable people are safeguarded. I am made aware daily of the incredible interventions Avanti West Coast staff working in frontline roles do to protect the most vulnerable. Avanti West Coast have kept a real sharp focus on safeguarding, have ensured there is extra resources, training, and that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility."

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About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

WEST COAST PARTNERSHIP

AVANTI WEST COAST

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos are returning to the rails, with a £117m investment that's delivering best in class comfort. Rebuilt using sustainable materials wherever possible, including tables made from recycled plastic bottles, our upgraded fleet offers 25,000 brand new seats, free Wi-Fi, onboard recycling and much more.

New Hitachi trains are set to replace our Voyager trains from 2024, leading to a 61% cut in carbon emissions. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, the new 23-strong fleet is the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

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