

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

March 2026

## Transport Committee

In January 2026, the Transport Committee wrote to GMB, RMT, TSSA and Unite, asking for written evidence to inform the Committee's meeting on assaults on transport workers in London.

The questions asked by the Committee were:

- Why are incidents of violence against transport workers increasing?
- How effective have TfL's strategies been in tackling work-related violence and aggression?
- What strategies are needed to tackle work-related violence and aggression across different modes of transport such as taxi, private hire, bus and tube?
- What can TfL do to encourage all transport workers to report when they have been victims of violence and aggression at work?

The Transport Committee received 4 pieces of written evidence between February – March 2026, which are collated in this document.

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March 2026

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13<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## **Subject: Key Issues Regarding Assaults on Transport Workers**

Assaults and abuse directed at transport workers - particularly those in the taxi and private hire sectors—remain a significant and growing problem. Many drivers continue to face both verbal and physical attacks with limited protection, follow-up, or support from authorities and operators.

Many drivers fear reporting assaults and abuse for fear of suspension from platforms, meaning no income for unknown days/weeks whilst it investigates. Violence and abuse against drivers is widespread, many drivers report that verbal abuse and physical threats are routine parts of their day. Under reporting of offences remains a major issue due to, lack of confidence in police response, fear of punitive action by operators.

There is common concern that Transport for London (TfL) has not taken sufficient or consistent action to safeguard workers across all modes. While some initiatives exist for directly employed staff, support for self-employed or contract-based drivers is minimal.

As a result, taxi and private hire drivers often feel unsupported and unprotected when incidents occur. Indeed, TfL already operates enforcement and investigative units, but drivers are excluded from these protections:

- The Workplace Violence Unit (staffed by MPS officers) supports transport staff but not taxi or private hire drivers.
- TfL's Investigation and Prosecution Service can pursue offenders for other transport related crimes, yet drivers are again excluded.-related crimes, yet drivers are again excluded.
- The infrastructure exists; drivers simply do not have access to it.

**Regional Secretary: Warren Kenny**

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A major issue is the lack of meaningful operator involvement. Many private hire operators fail to show practical support following assaults, offering little more than procedural reporting. Drivers frequently must bear both the financial and emotional costs of attacks without compensation or assistance. This creates a perception that driver safety is a low operational priority.

The response from law enforcement is also inadequate. Police attendance is often delayed or does not occur at all. Many drivers have expressed that reporting assaults feels futile due to the lack of visible consequences. This has led to severe underreporting, masking the true scale of the problem, and weakening efforts to drive policy change.

To address passenger accountability, there is a strong case for a “No Drive” or “Zero Tolerance” policy—one that applies even when the individual responsible for the assault is not the person who made the booking. This would send a clear deterrent signal and reinforce the principle that driver safety takes precedence over customer convenience.

Ultimately, assaults leave long-term scars - financial, psychological, and emotional. The absence of prosecutions and follow-up fosters anger, insecurity, and distrust across the driver community. Urgent and concrete action is required from TfL, the police, and operators to ensure that every transport worker can carry out their job without fear of assault or neglect.

### **From a bus driver’s perspective**

As a London bus driver with 25 years of service, I have unfortunately experienced several serious incidents during my career. I want to share a few examples to highlight ongoing concerns and to encourage constructive discussion around improving safety for all drivers.

On one occasion, I was assaulted in the cab—this was some time ago when the assault screen was positioned high to allow for cash handling. Despite this barrier, a passenger managed to attack me under the screen. I felt there was limited support from management regarding safeguarding, and the police response did not seem as thorough as I had hoped.

In another instance, I encountered a passenger using a fraudulent ticket. As I approached the stand, they contacted a friend who boarded the bus and confronted me, demanding the return of the ticket. My colleagues were present and assisted, and fortunately, the assailant fled before anyone was seriously harmed. I appreciate my colleagues’ support during that difficult situation.

However, I was advised by the company not to defend myself, which left me feeling unsupported.

A third example involves the persistent issue of irate passengers. Bus drivers are frequently subjected to spitting, and while I appreciate the introduction of the TFL spit kits—which are a positive step—the kits can be difficult to locate and use. Additionally, many of the swab kits available are out-of-date stock.

Reflecting on these experiences, it often feels as though our concerns about assaults are not fully addressed by employers, and sometimes responsibility is placed unfairly on drivers. Police attendance following incidents is frequently inadequate, with many drivers reluctant to use the code red emergency system because of long wait times. When police do respond, the process can be frustrating, with communication challenges due to poor radio quality and, at times, insensitive questioning during emergencies.

While I appreciate any efforts made to improve safety, I believe there is still much that can be done. I would welcome any thoughts on how we can further protect bus drivers and ensure a safer working environment for everyone. Thank you for considering these concerns, and I look forward to constructive ideas and continued support from management, colleagues, and relevant authorities.

### **A Drivers Perspective**

Private hire drivers are in a fear of their life choosing between reporting an assault and be banned from working or accepting the assault as part of life and move on to keep their jobs.

As the branch secretary of professional drivers at GMB and recalling personal experience as a private hire driver of almost 7 years, the environment under which private hire drivers work needs to change.

A driver once reported a rider who went berserk, assaulted him, broke the wing mirror and ripping off even the cabs livery and yet he was not brought to book; neither did he receive any compensation. The operator only said that he should report the damage to his insurance and the behavior to Police.

There was another experience of a member who was racially abused being an Eastern European person and all captured on the audio recording of his CCTV, Police were informed and took no action claiming he was a first offender.

There was another incident where a driver picked 5 passengers who became unruly while on board and drivers exercised his right to discontinue the trip for his safety, they poured milk shake down the air vent of his car, soaked his car

seats and his clothing drenched with same. He took his car for deep cleaning. He called Police who arrived very late when assailants have left and case went nowhere. Operators provided no real help beyond refund of car wash and usual promise of ensuring that drivers will not be matched with the offender.

Even though we are talking about assault, but where false accusations are made against drivers constitute another dimension that TfL should assist drivers with. I was once accused of attempted rape by a rider who was in my car for not longer than 2 mins at 8am on a main road, all because I refused to fulfil the trip as a result of verbal altercations. Police concluded it was a malicious allegation but I was out of work for weeks and no compensation received from anyone and when I asked Police what action they took against the lady, I was told that they did nothing and that I could pursue private prosecution, this is one of the reasons that drivers do not report assault.

Assault also comes from members of the public. A pedestrian felt that I should stop for him to cross the road on a fast-moving traffic section who I had to avoid spitting at me missing my face, however his spittle splattered on my window, I just moved on.

TfL can do more by changing parts of its charter that seem to focus more or emphasise more on protecting members of the public only without any direct reference on how to support drivers.

We pay a lot to TfL to obtain our licenses we deserve more, and the starting point will always be what GMB has been asking for and that's to be given access to report assault incidents to TfL sponsored dedicated Police Team.

I hope these comments assist in the committee's considerations.

Yours sincerely,



**Steve Garelick**  
**GMB Regional Officer**



London Assembly Transport  
Committee Inquiry:  
Assaults on Transport Workers in  
London

Response from the National Union of Rail,  
Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)

February 2026

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) is the UK's largest specialist transport union. Of our 80,000 members, many thousands work across TfL including at London Underground, London Overground, Elizabeth Line, DLR, taxis and at the many outsourced and sub-contractors working across London's transport network.

We welcome the GLA Transport Committee's focus on assaults against transport workers in London. Reducing the prevalence of violence and assaults perpetrated against public transport workers is a priority for RMT and is the focus of our Action Against Assaults campaign.

## The extent of the problem

Last summer, RMT surveyed our members working across the UK's public transport networks about their experiences of violence and abuse at work. The findings for our members working in London reveal the extent of the problem on the Capital's public transport network.

Of our members working at London Underground (including outsourced workers such as cleaners on London Underground):

- **62% had experienced workplace violence in the past year. This figure rises to 85% of station and revenue protection staff.**
- **Of those who had experienced workplace violence, it was a multiple occurrence for the majority (86%).**
- **The most common form of violence is verbal abuse (92%), followed by threats of violence or assault (60%). A third of members reported experiencing racial harassment and over a quarter had experienced a physical assault.**
- **Nearly half of those who experienced violence were lone working at the time.**
- **By far the most common 'trigger' for violence was fare evasion/invalid ticketing, cited by nearly 70%.**
- **Nearly all said they were worried this would happen again.**
- **Nearly a quarter said they did not report the incident to their employer, with the most common reason cited for not doing so being that 'such incidents are just 'part of the job'' followed by not thinking that the complaint would be taken seriously.**

- Whilst the majority of staff did not take time off work following the incident, 20% did. Concerningly, of those who did take time off work, nearly half reported feeling pressured into returning to work before they were ready to do so.
- Two-thirds of members said they were not satisfied with their employer's response to the incident.
- Three-quarters thought workplace violence had increased in the past year.
- The most commonly cited reason for the prevalence of workplace violence was lack of BTP presence, followed by lack of action taken against perpetrators and an increase in anti-social behaviour in society.
- Nearly 90% thought that an increase in staff on the network would help reduce the prevalence of violence.
- 80% said there had been a reduction in BTP presence on the network in the past year.

RMT members working on other parts of TfL also report equally high levels of workplace violence. In our survey 80% of members working at London Overground and Elizabeth Line and nearly 60% of members at the DLR has experienced violence at work in the past year.

Below are a small number of comments from our London Transport members describing their experiences of violence at work:

*"It feels that it has become part of the job as is being normalised, verbal or being cursed is basically a daily thing you go through at work."*

*"I was assaulted and racially abused by a drunk member of public"*

*"I was the only person in the [station name] gateline"*

*"Due to minimal staff, I was alone at the location of incident"*

*"One plus one station where supervisor/manager is in control room and myself on the gateline"*

*"This incident has had a significant impact on my sense of safety at work. I no longer feel secure when required to work alone, particularly given the lack of closure or accountability in this case."*

*"Many staff report it online but we do not get feedback"*

*“Its logged, never had any follow up and doubt it even got any further attention as its far too commonplace”*

*“My manager and colleagues were all great. The BTP response was great. But there has been no changes, we still get pretty violent fare evasion on a daily basis. We rarely get revenue visits.”*

*“Management knew about what happened but did not approach me for any support.”*

*“Station staff are being pushed into lone working more often, particularly with earlier starts and later finishes.”*

Other data sources back up the experiences of RMT members:

- BTP data for the whole UK rail network showed an 8% increase in violence against staff incidents between 2023/24 and 2024/25. RMT analysis of BTP data for London Underground, London Overground, Elizabeth Line and DLR shows a 9% increase in incidents in the year to November 2025 compared to the year previous.
- The latest available TfL data recorded 10,493 incidents of work-related violence and aggression in 2023/24, a 5% increase from the previous year.<sup>1</sup>
- Data published by TfL in response to an FOI request<sup>2</sup> regarding violence against rail staff (LUL, LO, EL, DLR and Trams) shows that the average monthly incidents increased by 103% between 2020 and 2023.<sup>3</sup> We note that whilst this data is held by TfL, it is not routinely published, with this information only being available as a result of an FOI request. We believe that there is clear merit in TfL routinely publishing this data.

## Why are incidents of violence against transport workers increasing?

As our survey demonstrates, RMT believes that there are a number of factors driving the rise in violence against transport workers.

Our members report that violence and abuse has increased significantly since the pandemic, and this is reflected in BTP’s and TfL’s data. It is also the case that trends in violence and abuse are impacted by wider trends in anti-social behaviour in society. However, there are factors inherent in the public transport network that heighten the risks of violence and abuse in these settings and thus requiring targeted actions. These include:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://railuk.com/btp/tfl-launches-new-campaign-to-tackle-violence-against-staff/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/transparency/freedom-of-information/foi-request-detail?referenceId=FOI-0749-2425>

<sup>3</sup> The 2020 data is from April, and this shows an average of 234 incidents per month, compared to an average of 476 in 2023.

## Safe staffing levels and ending lone working

It is evidenced time and time again that properly staffed public transport networks are vital for passengers' feelings around safety and security when travelling. Proper staffing levels, including to enable cover for absences, is also vital for our members' safety. It is unsurprising that in our survey, nearly 90% of respondents said they thought an increase in staffing would reduce the prevalence of violence on London's public transport.

Whilst TfL reports that it does not have lone working at many stations, the reality is that in our survey, nearly half were lone working at the time. Our members report that lone working at stations is becoming more prevalent, and even at stations where more than one member of staff is on duty, the reality is that an individual could be working alone during that shift including in isolated areas. For instance, if their colleague/s is in a different part of the station, such as an office.

As part of our campaign, RMT identified a range of measures that we believe should be implemented by employers as part of their approach to tackling workplace violence. One demand relates to the cessation of lone working. In its response to us, TfL stated that *'we work closely with the Rail Delivery Group, Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) and rail operators to understand the industry wide situation and to benchmark and share learning. We are not aware of any evidence through this partnership working of any increased risk for lone working'*.

Much of this work is coordinated via the rail industry's Violence at Work Group. RMT attends this group, and contrary to what TfL's response suggests, this has identified lone working as a risk factor for violence. In 2025, the Group held what it termed a 'horizon scanning cross industry workshop' attended by a number of rail industry representatives. One focus of this workshop was identifying risks to work related violence, and these included 'DOO [diver only operation] and **lone working and less customer facing staff**'. This is a clear recognition from the rail industry's violence at work group that these staffing policies are a risk factor for workplace violence.

Whilst TfL's policy is to staff stations throughout the 'traffic day', we are aware of reports that there are increasing instances of stations (non-subsurface) being left unstaffed due to existing vacancies and insufficient staff to cover absences (such as sickness and training). Not only does this mean no staff are present to provide assurance to passengers, it also increases the likelihood of people taking advantage of the lack of staff to fare evade – which, as we discuss below, is a key trigger for workplace violence.

Between 2018/2019 and 2024/25 London Underground's staffing complement reduced by more than 2600 (16%)<sup>4</sup>. In 2018/19 London Underground had 18,985 FTE staff, compared to 16,352 in 2024/25. TfL does not publish a breakdown of where in the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-quarterly-performance-report-q1-2025-26.pdf> and <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/tfl-quarterly-performance-report-q1-2018-19.pdf>

business these staffing reductions have taken place, but London Underground imposed a “Stations Modernisation” program during that period, which resulted in a reduction of station staff roles.

### **Fare evasion and revenue protection**

As the Committee has already established, there is a direct link between fare evasion and violence against transport staff. We understand that TfL’s data suggests around half of all incidents are linked to fare evasion, and our data suggests that link is even higher, with nearly 70% of our London Transport members in our survey citing fare evasion or invalid tickets as the trigger for violence.

RMT shared the concerns of the Committee, highlighted in its inquiry<sup>5</sup> into fare evasion, that ‘unstaffed gatelines are not a priority for TfL’ and that TfL must ‘reconsider its approach to staffing stations and its routine use of lone working’ in the context of fare evasion.

The need for proper staffing levels to deter and prevent fare evasion, and subsequently violence and abuse, is backed up by passenger research as well. A report into fare evasion by the watchdog Transport Focus<sup>6</sup>, concluded that ‘more staff’ was one measure passengers felt would tackle this issue, stating that ‘the presence of staff at stations and on trains is also seen as a deterrent to fare evasion and other types of anti-social behaviour’.

In addition to properly staffing stations across the network, the presence of specific revenue protection staff, who are highly trained and hold enforcement powers, is also critical. There was a strong view from our members that London Underground does not have sufficient specialist revenue protection staff to cover the network. RMT estimates that London Underground historically employed around 300 revenue protection staff, but that a freeze on recruitment in this grade led to a significant reduction as vacancies were not filled. We estimate that the staffing complement is now around 200 (comprising both Revenue Control Inspectors and Revenue Control Officers) but that because of outstanding vacancies the actual number of employed staff is under 200. We estimate that on each shift there are only around 40 revenue protection staff for the whole of London Underground.

We understand that there has been a focus by London Underground in targeting revenue protection patrols in inner zone stations, which is, undoubtedly, important, given the high volume of passenger traffic in these locations, but there was a view expressed by members that if this results in outer stations not seeing regular revenue protection that this can exacerbate behaviours around opportunistic fare evasion.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/london-assembly-transport-committee-letter-tfl>

<sup>6</sup> <https://d3cez36w5wymxj.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/30113956/Fare-Evasion-and-Revenue-Protection-What-do-Passengers-think-January-2025.pdf>

There was a strong view from our members that in addition to more staff in general there should be a targeted increase in revenue protection staff. RMT believes that we need a significant increase in specialist trained revenue protection staff at London Underground to provide a visible presence at both inner and outer stations, to cement passenger expectations that revenue protection is commonplace and to deter these behaviours.

### **BTP presence**

A visible BTP presence is an important element of tackling violence on public transport. It acts as a deterrent, provides reassurance to staff and passengers and crucially, BTP have a full range of powers to deal with perpetrators. It is therefore of concern that insufficient funding of BTP has led to a reduction in officers and thus a reduced presence across the railway.

On the mainline railway, RMT is concerned about a funding shortfall for 2025/26 which led to 500 positions, mainly officers, being removed, and a number of BTP stations closing. Data presented to the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA) show a reduction in BTP officer FTE per million journey from 1.2 in 2009/10 to 0.8 in 2025/26, a reduction of nearly a third.

The recent multiple stabbing incident at Huntingdon, where the perpetrator has also been accused of offences at a DLR station, is a stark reminder of the importance of properly staffed and policed network. In response to the incident, the BTP implemented Operation Step Up to improve visibility across the network in order to provide reassurance to staff and passengers. However, BTP was clear that it was too under-resourced to provide this level of policing for any length of time, stating that *'this surge is only possible through 12-hour shifts, overtime, and a pause on non-urgent paperwork, including prosecution files. This cannot be sustained for long.'*

On London Underground, where BTP is funded through a separate agreement, our members similarly report a reduced BTP presence, with 80% of members in our survey reporting seeing less BTP over the past year and this is one of the key reasons our members believe violence is increasing.

Last year, the Committee's inquiry<sup>7</sup> into fare evasion identified concerns about slow BTP response time to violence against staff incidents and sought information on how BTP cooperates with TfL on crime, specifically fare evasion.

The lack of consequences for perpetrators was one of the most commonly cited reasons for the prevalence of violence against staff in our member survey. Proper staffing and enforcement are an important deterrent for violent behaviour and undoubtedly perpetrators can feel emboldened when they do not face consequences

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/london-assembly-transport-committee-letter-tfl>

for their actions. RMT also believes that stronger legal protections for public transport workers, through the creation of a standalone offence, would also go some way to addressing this issue both by making it more likely that cases will be prosecuted but also by acting as a deterrent and sending a strong message to perpetrators that violence against transport workers is unacceptable and taken seriously.

## What strategies are needed to tackle work-related violence and aggression across different modes of transport such as taxi, private hire, bus and tube?

In 2025, RMT launched its Action Against Assaults campaign, aimed at reducing the level of violence and assaults perpetrated against public transport workers across the industry.

The campaign has a number of key demands relating to measures we believe should be taken by Governments, devolved authorities and employers:

- **Stronger legal protections for public transport workers against violence at work**
- **Safe staffing levels and an end to lone working**
- **Improving employers' approaches to violence at work**
- **Reversing cuts to BTP**

RMT believes that one measure that is needed to tackle the issue of violence against public transport workers, is stronger legal protections, through the creation of a standalone offence of assaulting a public transport worker.

Equivalent legislation already exists for emergency service workers, and the Government is legislating through the Crime and Policing Bill to create a standalone offence of assaulting a retail worker. We have been pushing to extend this to public transport workers – but the Government has resisted, despite widespread industry support for this measure, including from the Rail Delivery Group (whose members comprise London Underground, London Overground, Elizabeth Line, and DLR), BTP and Network Rail. BTP has also highlighted the disparity that will arise if the Government affords stronger legal protections to retail workers, which will include those working at train stations in retail outlets, but does not extend these to public transport workers working alongside them, calling this disparity 'wrong'.

In comparison, in Scotland where this is a devolved issue, we have made more progress, with the Scottish Government recently accepting in full the recommendations of a joint industry working group on enforcement powers on the railway – this included a recommendation to explore the scope for new primary legislation (via a standalone offence).

As we have set out above, measures to improve frontline staffing levels including ending lone working, increasing specialist revenue protection staffing and reversing cuts to BTP should be priorities for addressing violence against transport staff.

RMT has also identified a range of measures that can be taken by employers to improve their approaches to workplace violence, and we have written to all employers of our public transport members, including TfL, to set this out. The measures include: involving union health and safety reps in measures such as workplace violence risk assessments, design of training and inspections following incidents; addressing the triggers of violence at work incidents and measures to deal with repeat offenders.

## How effective have TfL's strategies been in tackling work-related violence and aggression?

In our survey, two-thirds of our London Transport members said they were not satisfied with their employer's response to their violence at work incident. This is a clear indication that there is room for improvement with TfL's approach to violence at work.

One issue of concern for members is an overreliance on body worn video (BWV) by TfL and other employers. Neither RMT nor our members are opposed to BWV as a tool, but it is not the solution to violence against public transport workers. In our survey, the majority (85%) of members who wear BWV said they had received training on how to use it, but just 40% thought that wearing the camera provides additional protection from violence and abuse, and nearly two-thirds thought that wearing a camera aggravates incidents.

It is clear, therefore, that BWV is not a panacea, and we do not accept employers using BWV rather than more costly measures, for example through increasing staffing or as justification for lone working. BWV alongside other equipment such as personal alarms and stab vests come at the bottom of the hierarchy of control – i.e. to deal with residual risks after prevention and control measures have been implemented, and should never be considered as a solution to violence at work, or as justification for unsafe working practices.

In our survey, members reported that the perpetrator in nearly a quarter of incidents was a repeat offender and therefore measures targeted at repeat offenders should be an important consideration of workplace violence strategies. We are aware through our involvement in the rail industry violence at work group that a number of train operators use Withdrawal of Implied Permission (WIP) notices for repeat offenders of anti-social or abusive behaviour. WIPs are issued under trespass rules and breaches of WIPs can be escalated in a number of ways including BTP legal or enforcement action, building a case for Community Protection Notices or Criminal Behaviour Orders, or prosecution including for trespass. TfL has confirmed to us that it is running a trial of WIPs at stations in Harrow and our representatives have been involved in this locally. WIPs are currently TOC specific, but ultimately we would like to see the rollout of a network wide WIP for

repeat offenders. We believe that a TfL wide WIP should be developed. Of course, with any measures such as WIPs, enforcement is vital to them being effective, which is why measures to increase policing and enforcement on the network must accompany measures targeted at removing perpetrators from the network.

One of the measures RMT has sought from employers is the involvement of union health and safety reps in post-incident investigations. There is clear legal provision for this under the Regulation 5 of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations. Yet, in a separate survey of RMT safety reps, 60% said they were not involved in inspections post-incident. In response to our letter, TfL stated that *“our SHE team do not review or investigate incidents of workplace violence as these are criminal matters. Therefore, we would not ask reps to under inspections following such incidents”*. This is concerning for a number of reasons, not least because TfL will be aware that not all incidents of workplace violence are reported to or investigated by the police, furthermore, even when BTP are progressing a case, this does not preclude TfL, as the employer, conducting its own investigations alongside safety reps to identify where improvements should be made and lessons learned.

A key issue for our members in London Transport is the inconsistent application of policies and procedures amongst management. This leads to uncertainty amongst staff and can cause people to feel that they are lacking support from management. Whilst the majority of our members in London Transport did not take time off work following the incident, of those who did, nearly half felt pressured into returning to work before they were ready to do so.

Consideration must also be given to the thousands of workers across TfL are not employed directly and are outsourced/sub-contracted to other employers by TfL. This includes, for instance, cleaners on London Underground, security staff at DLR and some revenue protection staff on London Overground. Whilst TfL does collect data on assaults against contracted staff, its policies and procedures do not cover these workers. Of these workers, TfL’s policy states that *‘We will encourage our contractors to provide their staff with training, personal safety equipment and make it easier for them to report incidents if they do happen’* although it unclear to what extent this is monitored or enforced. Outsourced staff generally have inferior terms and conditions, such as with sick pay, and this is likely to mean that these staff will struggle to afford to take time off following an incident. For instance, staff who are contracted to work in security and enforcement on the DLR are generally lone working, but do not receive sick pay. This significantly impacts their ability to take any time off following an incident.

## What can TfL do to encourage all transport workers to report when they have been victims of violence and aggression at work?

It is recognised that underreporting of incidents remains an issue. In our survey, nearly a quarter of members said they didn’t report the incident to anyone, with the most

common reason for not doing so being that these incidents are now just considered 'part of the job'. This reflects the experiences of many transport workers for whom abuse is now so common that reporting all instances feels futile.

Other causes of underreporting include that when no feedback is received on reports, or there is no demonstrable action taken to address the issue, future reporting may feel pointless. There are also concerns about whether their employer would back them up if they report incidents, or that regular reporting could be questioned negatively by the employer.

Feedback has also suggested that TfL's internal reporting systems can contribute to underreporting. There is what is referred to as an Electronic Incident Reporting Form which is used to report a wide variety of incidents including staff assaults as well as things like fires and other safety incidents. This system is felt to be unduly long and non-user friendly for reporting workplace violence incidents, and this clearly leads to underreporting. A simpler and more user-friendly internal reporting system would support reporting of incidents alongside clear feedback mechanisms for staff who report. It is also essential that staff are given time during their shift (when the incident occurred) to report, and reporting should not infringe on their breaks or personal time.

There is also another system, referred to as WAASB (workplace aggression and anti-social behaviour system) which is used for reporting incidents, but crucially, unlike EIRF it is not a formal report of an incident but rather this system is used for data analysis. Whilst data analysis is important, the fact that issues that are reported only via WAASB are not investigated further likely feeds into staff concerns around lack of feedback.

The measures detailed in our submission are focussed on reducing the extent of violence and assaults on public transport. Implementing measures that have a demonstrable impact on violence will undoubtedly support staff reporting if they can see that action is being taken by their employer to address the issue.

Furthermore, one of the motivations for seeking stronger legal protections for public transport workers relates to reporting. If, as we expect, a standalone offence led to more cases of violence against transport workers being prosecuted, this, in turn, will give staff the confidence that the issue is taken seriously and encourage them to report.

**Contact: Sophie Ward, National Policy Officer**

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13 February 2026

Dear Elly Baker

**RE: TSSA Submission to London Assembly Transport Committee evidence session on assaults on TfL workers**

I am writing to you with the written response of the Transport Salaried Staff's Association (TSSA) to the call for evidence for the above.

**Introduction**

Founded in 1897, TSSA is an independent trade union that organises and represents railway workers across the UK and Ireland. In Britain we have long been known as the 'white collar' rail union, drawing our membership from those people who work as managers, professional, technical and support staff as well as in research, supervisory and customer facing roles.

In London specifically, TSSA is the biggest trade union in Transport for London. We represent staff in TfL offices and stations, bus operations, London Underground, TfL Rail, overground and anywhere the TfL network extends to. We represent everyone from apprentices to senior managers and are the only union with recognition in all parts of the business, including recognition for collective bargaining on pay and key industrial issues, including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I). We are also the only union that is recognised for collective consultation on behalf of senior managers.

We set out our responses to the Transport Committee's questions below.

**Why are incidents of violence against transport workers increasing?**

The reasons for the increase in violence on the transport network and against transport workers are complex and are related to broader social trends and economic realities. It is no accident, for example, that in a wider ongoing cost of living crisis, one of the main flashpoint areas for violence and abuse is the gate line and in stopping incidents of fare evasion.

From our own surveys of our members, and the wider data on violence, abuse and harassment on public transport, it is also clear that not all are affected equally by this

behaviour. Recent DfT research has found that there is a clear association between protected characteristics and feelings of safety on the transport network. That is reflected in what our members tell us, too, with numerous reports in our recent surveys of sexual and racial harassment.

Again, that we are seeing rising levels of racialised and sexualised violence as there are increases in the output and salience of online misogynist influencers alongside an ascendant far-right which regularly mobilises on the streets – not least in London, with very large demonstrations – also speaks to a wider cultural tendency.

This has also been accompanied by a reduced visible presence of British Transport Police, which has faced repeated budget cuts. Whilst this year BTP received a budget increase and a three-year, rather than one-year, settlement, our members in BTP report that this has not been enough to ameliorate the effects of cuts in previous years (TSSA has sole recognition for BTP staff, including PCSOs, but not police officers).

### **How effective have TfL's strategies been in tackling work-related violence and aggression?**

TfL has taken several initiatives to address this issue. Measures joining the now longstanding ban on alcohol on TfL services recently include the recruitment of TSE Officers, staff training on de-escalation techniques, and deployment of Body Worn Video (BWV). While the latter can help with prosecution it does not prevent spontaneous or alcohol-fuelled violence and cannot be seen as a replacement for more staff on the ground, an increased enforcement presence, and other measures to create a safer working environment. Indeed, where there is less of a visible enforcement presence, more pressure is invariably put on staff to police the network in a way that is inappropriate, dangerous, and that falls outside their role description.

A key feature of recent activity has been the use of a poster campaign warning of the consequences of perpetrating violence and abuse of staff. Posters and other forms of messaging are positive insofar as they are aimed at discouraging violence and abuse, but they have tended to shift focus to the individualised behaviour of passengers and not what the employer can do to create a safer and more supportive working environment for staff (see examples set out in the following answer, below).

We would note, too, that many of the posters distributed around the network now refer to examples that are quite old. For instance, one of the main hotspots of violence and sexual harassment is Kings Cross station, and yet the poster on the main thoroughfare refers to an incident of racist abuse that happened in 2022. There is a danger that posters like this end up sending the opposite impression and that actually, no one has faced any serious consequences for abusive behaviour in four years. It would also be good to see TfL branch out their use of comms on this issue, utilising multiple platforms to send a message that not only profiles the consequences for perpetrators, but the effect on staff. This would be more humanising and help to reframe how members of the public view transport workers.

As the Committee notes in its opening question, despite the above measures, we have continued to see the growth of violence and abuse on the transport network. TSSA believes that an effective strategy for dealing with this must not only centre the behaviour of (some) passengers but also extend the support it gives to staff who are the victims, re-examine and revise staffing processes and procedures, especially as they relate to lone working, and think holistically about how TfL can work with external stakeholders and partners to tackle this behaviour.

**What strategies are needed to tackle work-related violence and aggression across different modes of transport such as taxi, private hire, bus and tube?**

It is right to think about this problem as a whole-network, cross-modes issue, especially given that some of the flashpoints for abuse and violence are in the transition points on London's public transport system.

One way of doing that is to work with wider stakeholders and local authorities to coordinate action. For example, working with venues to stagger event finish times to better control flows of passengers, some of whom may be intoxicated. Similarly, TfL could be working with venues and other entertainment providers to ensure that there are not only legal repercussions for those who commit acts of physical or verbal abuse, but – in conjunction with those stakeholders – consequences such as venue bans for those who can be identified.

TfL should also re-evaluate its lone working and staffing policies to ensure that staff are not put in dangerous situations. Lone working demonstrably makes staff less eager to intervene in the case of fare evasions and makes our members feel less safe in their jobs. The routine use of lone working practices without mitigation should be immediately halted and staffing policies related to this issue reviewed, including increasing staffing levels at known flashpoints in the day.

There also needs to be a review of the available post-incident support given to victims of violence and harassment and the training provided to managers to support staff after instances of assault and abuse. As we set out in our opening response, not all are affected in the same way by violence on the transport network. For that reason, support should be tailored to the needs of the member of staff, and training in how to support victims should integrate with the wider equality and diversity piece.

As we outlined in our answer to the first question, the reasons for the rise in violence are complex and linked to wider social, cultural and economic trends in society. To tackle the problem therefore necessarily requires a holistic approach. Rather than see rail workers as agents of a distant company, we would advocate a view of our members – and the London transport system in general – as integral to building community across the city. The approach to service provision should reflect that. There are some examples of good practice – for instance, Arriva Rail London's Community Hubs programme, which has transformed unused spaces on London Overground into community spaces. We are of the view that while not directly tackling passenger behaviours, initiatives such as this help to reframe relationships with the environment and therefore with staff on the

network, giving communities a stake in the places and the people that constitute the London transport system and therefore making violence less likely.

The above also speaks to the broader issue of making stations and interchanges nicer, safer, and more welcoming places for both staff and the public. The obvious points relate to ensuring that there is adequate lighting, that CCTV and HelpPoints are working, that there are widely visible access points (i.e. no dark or narrow alleyways), and that ticket offices are open and stations well-staffed throughout the day – but more widely, giving communities a greater stake in the transport network means investing in graffiti removal (or, conversely, even commissioning art for stations!), new infrastructure and rolling stock, and in programmes to clean the network.

TSSA believes that all the above should be included in a specific action plan for tackling assault and abuse on TfL services. More widely – and beyond the gift of the Mayoralty – we strongly believe that there is a case for a specific offence of an assault of a public facing worker, in a similar manner to provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill as regards retail crime and campaigned for by the trade union, Usdaw. Again, it is beyond the remit of the Mayor, but we also need an adequate funding settlement for BTP that addresses the long term funding issues and reverses the cuts we have seen in recent years.

### **What can TfL do to encourage all transport workers to report when they have been victims of violence and aggression at work?**

While it is not addressed specifically to the situation at TfL, the picture painted by our ‘Keep Transport Workers Safe’ report is of a workforce that suffers the long-term effects of violence and abuse at work, such as physical and psychological injury, low morale and job satisfaction, that then reports these incidences once they have happened, but has little knowledge about how they are addressed or confidence in how they will be mitigated in the future. Clear lines of communication about how a report has been dealt with and the subsequent action taken are therefore crucial for instilling confidence in the system and for ensuring that transport workers report incidences.

Of course, that also requires that reports of violence and abuse *are* followed through – not only in terms of action taken against perpetrators and prosecution, but that there are visible preventative measures, such as an end to lone working practices, a greater number of staff and TSE officers rostered at potential flash points, and that there is wrap-around support for victims after the incident. The key to creating confidence in the system is that transport workers see that there are results when they report a problem.

Yours sincerely,



**Sam Browse**  
TSSA Political Officer

## **Unite – Response to London Assembly Transport Committee: Assaults on transport workers in London**

### **Q1. Why are incidents of violence against transport workers increasing?**

Incidents of violence against transport workers are increasing primarily due to bus tenders being driven by performance measures that can cause issues for the driver and chronic under-resourcing across the transport and policing system. The Metropolitan Police often lack the capacity to respond promptly, and response times are frequently too slow to be effective. In many cases, offenders leave the bus or station before police intervention occurs.

This creates a perception of impunity, where offenders believe they can treat transport staff poorly without consequence. Over time, this undermines authority and normalises abusive behaviour.

For bus drivers, assaults can often happen at 'trigger times' such as when the bus is sent on a diversion that the passengers were not made aware of or wasn't clear, when they are sent on unofficial diversions, when the bus is curtailed as it is running late and will affect the performance pay of the operator, when drivers are told to hold back to regulate the service (this can often be for 8 minutes now, in which time passengers become frustrated about being late etc and react in a verbal or physical way) and when companies change over drivers at stops which again can delay passengers, rather than doing change overs at garages or at the end of routes.

One thing that has changed significantly more recently and put a target on drivers back is the way buses are managed by I-bus controllers. It is now common practice to hold buses at stops for extended periods; alight passengers after terminating a bus hold it there for 10 minutes then push the bus into service again with the driver having to pick up the same passengers. Terminate a bus mid route despite the bus being full. The above often leaves the driver with a bus load of irate passengers while the I-bus controller sits in his office!

### **Q2. How effective have Transport for London's strategies been in tackling work-related violence and aggression?**

Overall, TfL's strategies have been very poor and, in practice, largely non-existent. There is insufficient public awareness messaging, and no sustained or visible campaign to reinforce zero tolerance of abuse.

The Workplace Violence Team lacks authority and influence, rendering it largely ineffective. Transparency is also a major issue; statistics relating to violence and aggression are not routinely published, and quarterly reporting should be mandatory to allow proper scrutiny.

The Transport Security and Enforcement Team is ineffective due to low morale, job insecurity, and high staff turnover. Many officers lack the experience, or confidence required to deal with work-related violence, this is mainly due to TfL not addressing staff pay and terms and conditions. Alarming, these officers themselves are frequently subjected to violence and are not adequately supported by management when incidents occur.

### **Q3. What strategies are needed to tackle work-related violence and aggression across different modes of transport (taxi, private hire, bus, and tube)?**

A consistent, pan-modal approach is required across all transport sectors. Key measures should include:

- Mandatory publication of violence and aggression statistics on a quarterly basis.
- A high-profile, sustained zero-tolerance campaign covering physical and verbal abuse, clearly communicating consequences to the public.
- Stronger physical and operational protections for frontline staff, tailored to each mode of transport.
- A zero-loss pay policy to ensure workers who are abused or assaulted at work do not suffer financial detriment.
- Bus operators should not be able to hold buses for long periods whilst in service
- Diversions should be much better communicated to passengers ahead of time i.e. at the bus stop
- LT bus cabs should be modified so they cannot be opened
- Faster response time

### **Q4. What can TfL do to encourage all transport workers to report violence and aggression at work?**

Reporting must be made simple, quick, and accessible across all roles and modes. Systems should be streamlined and supported by clear guidance, for all workers not just those directly employed by TfL.

TfL must actively remove the stigma associated with reporting abuse and ensure that staff are never made to feel that violence is “part of the job.” Regular conversations between management, unions, and staff should reinforce this message.

Most importantly, workers need confidence that reporting will lead to action, support, and meaningful outcomes. Without visible follow-up, trust in the system will continue to erode and under-reporting will persist.

Proactive support from the employer (bus operators) in giving drivers the time and assistance to report, but importantly there has to be ongoing feedback on what is actually being done after the report has been submitted. Currently, too many reports seem (to the person who has been assaulted) to go silent so the perception is it's not worth bothering unless it's 'serious'. Attitudes amongst the management has to change as they often look to find ways to avoid having to pay assault pay, or dismissing some reports as 'low level' e.g. spitting incidents "it's just part of the job" (drivers have been instructed to carry on after being spat on!).

Counselling/ therapy offered to victims, assault pay across the bus operators.