



Unite brief: Get Me Home Safely #GetMeHomeSafely

Background

Unite's Get Me Home Safely campaign is a joint campaign developed between Unite's Passenger and Hospitality sectors and supported by Unite's Equality department and its various committees. The background to its development was rooted on a concern for the safety of women who work late and unsocial hours, particularly those in low paid jobs who cannot afford taxi travel home and rely on buses and other forms of public transport which are often scarce or simply unavailable after midnight.

The campaign was motivated by an incident that occurred in August 2021 where a Unite activist was sexually assaulted on her way home from work after midnight. She had been asked by her manager to work until 1am and was promised paid transport home because the last bus was at half past midnight. An hour before her shift ended, her manager told her she could finish earlier to catch the last bus home. For whatever reason, the last bus never arrived, left to travel home alone, late at night, she was then sexually assaulted.

All too common

Experiences such as sexual assault, verbal harassment, violence and stalking are sadly all too common in the hospitality sector, a 2021 Unite survey found that over 60% of hospitality workers who responded had either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment in the workplace. Such experiences have a knock on impact in other areas of the workers life, often resulting in stress, anxiety and absenteeism.

Journeys to or from work at night can expose workers to violence, the threat of violence or fears about personal safety and security. Research shows that women feel particularly vulnerable when travelling to and from work. Waiting at a bus stop in the dark, walking home at night, parking your car in an isolated spot. A recent Government survey found that:

- 57% of women say they do not feel safe when using public transport.
- 84% of women said they felt unsafe waiting for a bus after dark
- A survey conducted by Plan International UK in 2018 showed that as many as 38% of young girls aged 14 to 21 have experienced verbal harassment, including sexual comments in public places, at least once a month.

Need for safe transport home from work

We know many workers across the UK find it difficult to access safe transport following a late shift. And we are painfully aware of the possible consequences for women journeying alone at night. Incidents such as the brutal kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard, as well as the experiences we hear from our members who have been stalked and assaulted outside of their workplace, are a stark reminder of why we need this campaign, why this is a workplace safety issue!

The guiding principal of the **Get me home safely campaign** is that every worker must have access to safe transport at all hours of the day and we want employers, local authorities and the Government to engage with our union to develop solutions for ensuring workers who work past 11pm are able to travel to and from work safely. This campaign developed by workers for workers is part of our collective response to address gender based violence in the workplace and in the wider community. Privatisation and corporate greed should never trump worker safety. Employers must have a duty of care to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night. The Government is failing workers and the travelling public by taking the necessary steps to ensure that this happens.

The campaign asks:

- To highlight issues of lack of enforcement of sexual assault including upskirting on public transport;
- Highlight the cost of travel which is often unaffordable to those who work shift patterns and are on low pay and zero hours contracts
- Call for local government and licensing boards to change regulations so employers would need to put provisions in place for workers' working past 11pm.
- Call for municipal ownership of buses to improve bus service provision especially for night time and off-peak services
- Identify workable solutions to facilitate safe travel home, such as getting supplemented taxi travel for late shift workers.

- Ask the UK Government to sign ILO Convention 190 to end violence and harassment in the workplace.
- MPs and local authorities to publicly support the Unite Hospitality Charter and urge employers in their constituencies to implement a safe home policy – example: East Dunbartonshire Council, the Licensing Board has made safe transport home a requirement of any venue wishing to apply for a new or 1am license.
- Compulsory training on sexual harassment/gender based violence for workers in passenger transport – Unite Taxi School deliver this as part of their taxi driver training. This training would better equip transport workers to report and takes steps against sexual harassment where it occurs on our buses, tubes and trains.



GET ME



HOME SAFELY

