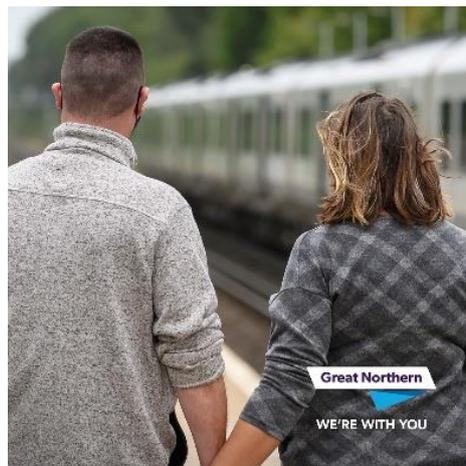


World Suicide Prevention Day Case Study – Agy and Paul O’Brien



Click on the pictures above to download

Having worked on the railway for 13 years, Paul O’Brien has had his fair share of challenging days, but on this occasion, it was his wife Agy that had to raise the alarm. They are sharing their story to support #WorldSuicidePreventionDay

“I remember the day very clearly because it was our daughter’s first day at nursery and I really wanted to be there to collect her at home time”, explains Project Manager Agy O’Brien, who also works on the railway.

“I was off sick at the time with a broken leg and I had agreed with Paul that I’d set off early and meet him at the nursery. I was approaching the station when I saw a man standing in the middle of the track and I knew instantly something was wrong. To avoid startling him or causing any panic, I simply started speaking to him and asked what had happened, as I could see he had blood all over his hands.”

The man told Agy that he’d been dumped by his girlfriend and wanted to die. Thinking on her feet, Agy called husband Paul to handle things from an operational perspective. “I phoned Paul so that he could immediately contact the control centre and put a cautionary speed limit on approaching trains. I then went back to the man and calmly kept speaking to him – I used my broken leg as an excuse to ask for help to the other side of the track and luckily this worked to get us both away from immediate danger.”

Whilst Agy dealt directly with the suicidal man, Multi-Skilled Team Leader Paul, alerted Sussex Police, whose presence spooked the man into running away.

“I managed to catch up with him two streets later” says Paul, who didn’t want him to walk away from this situation. “I knew if I let him go he’d just find another track, or another bridge; and I was determined not to let that happen. I wanted to reassure him that he wasn’t alone and we were getting him help.”

Paul and Agy managed to get the man to safety and left him in the capable hands of Sussex Police and the British Transport Police. The couple’s lifesaving intervention has been recognised formally with a prestigious RosPA Pride Award. They warn others not to judge a book by its cover.

“We are all vulnerable in one way or another and anyone can feel suicidal”, says Paul. “Don’t focus on what someone looks like, watch their body language to look out for potential signs that something is amiss and together we can all make safe interventions that will save lives.”

- ENDS -