

MEDIA RELEASE

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Rail passengers urged to 'make a connection' for wellbeing

Hundreds of rail passengers will be asked a simple question as they stream through Leicester Railway Station on Thursday (11 October): 'Are you OK today?'

And trained listeners will be on hand to provide confidential support for those who answer 'No'.

This is the fourth year that RUOK? campaign volunteers from public, private and third sector organisations across the county will be on the station from 7am until 7pm in the week of World Mental Health Day.

Their aim is to have 30-second conversations to get people thinking how small acts, such as a friendly word, question or gesture, can help to lift someone's mood.

Passengers are also invited to take a few seconds to make an RUOK? pledge to take positive action, creating a 'wall' of pledges during the course of the day.

Previous RUOK? days on the station and in Leicester City Centre have seen more than 7,000 people engaged in conversation and handed business cards signposting them to further information and support.

And more than 60 people have been given or offered additional support on the day

The RUOK? campaign is a partnership of health, police, rail, local authority and other public, private and third sector organisations across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.



Event co-ordinator Matthew Wakely, an LPT mental health service lead (pictured at the 2017 event with the Trust's chair, Cathy Ellis), explained the RUOK? concept. He said: "Asking someone 'are you OK?' is such an easy thing to do. It's a simple act that can have a massive impact on someone's mental wellbeing."



"What we try to do is raise awareness of how anyone can make a difference by being aware of how a friend, colleague or loved one is feeling and be there to support each other."

Alan's story

Volunteers like Alan Chapman, left, will be on the station concourse and platforms throughout the day,

talking to passengers and handing out business cards signposting them to the RUOKToday? website for information about the campaign and sources of support.

Alan founded the Festival of Life and Death for suicide awareness, prevention, education and promotion of societal wellness, in the wake of losing his partner of five years, Liane, to suicide in 2015

He explains: "I'd never had deep awareness of mental illness before meeting and losing Liane. I didn't really understand it. Then some other difficult things hit me in the wake of Liane's death. My world became chaotic, and I experienced the scale of the impact losing Liane had on my mental wellbeing, and people around me.

"I was compelled to seek better understanding of what can make people so ill, especially the taboos that cause people to suffer secretly, and also what can help to keep people well - such as talking. Liane and I shared a love of making music, and this with other things such as running, talking openly, and the support of friends, helped save my life after Liane's suicide and my subsequent challenges.

"I became increasingly interested in the things that can help us to improve mental wellbeing, and when I discovered RUOK? I wanted to get involved. I love the concept and I love taking part in the RUOK? days. It's such a simple idea that can be replicated almost anywhere. RUOK? can make a powerful positive difference to many thousands of lives."

You can find out more about RUOK? at <http://ruoktoday.co.uk/>

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The RUOK? Partnership includes Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Leicestershire Police, Network Rail, Railway Mission, Samaritans, LAMP,

Healthwatch, Leicestershire County Council Leicester City Council. You can find out more at www.ruoktoday.co.uk

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