# Campaign urges free public transport for UK veterans after distressing train incident



Anemarie Miles, a concerned citizen, has sparked a grassroots campaign calling for free public transport for UK veterans after witnessing a distressing incident on a Transpennine Express train. According to Miles, a veteran was ejected from the train while attempting to buy a ticket, a scenario she described as "upsetting, distressing and disgusting." She expressed her concern on social media, recounting her encounter with the gentleman, who was travelling with a shopping trolley and his small dog. When she offered to purchase a ticket for him, she learned that ticket sales were not permitted onboard. The veteran subsequently explained his predicament, emphasising he had cash but no smartphone to buy a ticket, and expressed his distress about being removed from the train. Tragically, Miles recalled seeing him sitting alone on a bench, visibly upset.

This incident highlights urgent gaps in the support available to veterans, particularly those grappling with mental health issues. Miles argues that such incidents illuminate a "glaring oversight" in ensuring that veterans, who have served the country, receive adequate support upon their return to civilian life. The campaign has already garnered nearly 100 signatures, illustrating a growing public sentiment towards addressing the mobility challenges faced by veterans.

This is not an isolated initiative. Previous petitions have sought similar benefits for veterans. For instance, a campaign initiated by Catrina Blair in 2021 aimed to extend free bus passes across the UK to veterans who are entitled to an Armed Forces War pension. That petition underscored the importance of facilitating transport for veterans, especially those dealing with PTSD or other mental health conditions. It was designed not just to enable travel but to enhance their quality of life, fostering social interactions that veterans often miss after their service.

Additionally, another similar petition, launched earlier this year by Ian A Hay, aims for nationwide free travel for all veterans on public transport. Drawing attention to the financial hurdles many veterans encounter when trying to access healthcare or visit family, it cites studies indicating that transportation can be a significant barrier to employment and well-being for homeless veterans. The petition also reinforces the need for systemic change, advocating for accessible transport options to improve the lives of veterans, allowing them to reconnect with communities and resources post-service.

Despite ongoing efforts, previous pursuits for free transport for veterans have encountered setbacks. One such petition, which closed in 2022, only gathered 20 signatures and highlighted the limited support available to veterans, many of whom struggle with homelessness and mental health issues. This sentiment resonates with earlier initiatives, some dating back several years, that sought to align the treatment of service members with the benefits provided to other vulnerable groups, such as the elderly or unemployed. In stark contrast to countries like the US and Canada, where veterans benefit from free travel measures, the UK has been slow to respond to these pressing needs.

Moreover, a government decision last year to scrap free train travel for military personnel attending remembrance services faced significant backlash. This move, justified by budgetary constraints, triggered renewed calls for better support systems that recognise the sacrifices made by service members. While the government later vowed to restore free travel for remembrance services, the episodic nature of such benefits raises broader questions about the comprehensive support for veterans in the UK.

In this context, Miles’ campaign not only sheds light on an individual’s plight but underscores a larger movement advocating for a reevaluation of how veterans are treated in society, especially in terms of accessibility. The response from the public continues to flow in, and it remains to be seen how the government will react to this growing chorus of concern regarding veterans’ rights to free public transport.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061684/campaign-launched-veterans-free-public-transport-train)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061684/campaign-launched-veterans-free-public-transport-train), [[2]](https://www.change.org/p/government-veterans-bus-pass-in-the-uk)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.change.org/p/grant-free-nationwide-train-and-bus-travel-for-veterans), [[4]](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/612325)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/147242), [[6]](https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/209859)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/07/free-train-travel-for-military-to-attend-remembrance-services-scrapped)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061684/campaign-launched-veterans-free-public-transport-train> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.change.org/p/government-veterans-bus-pass-in-the-uk> - A petition initiated by Catrina Blair on 4 April 2021, advocating for the extension of bus passes for veterans across the UK, not just in Scotland and Wales. The petition argues that individuals claiming an Armed Forces War pension and entitled to compensation under the pension acts should have free travel on buses and an entitlement to a rail card. The aim is to improve the quality of life for veterans, especially those with PTSD and other mental health issues, by facilitating their mobility and social interactions.
3. <https://www.change.org/p/grant-free-nationwide-train-and-bus-travel-for-veterans> - Started on 3 May 2024 by Ian A Hay, this petition calls for free nationwide train and bus travel for all veterans. It highlights the financial struggles veterans face when trying to visit family, attend medical appointments, or access accommodations tailored to their needs. The petition references a study by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, which identifies transportation as a significant barrier for many homeless veterans seeking employment or healthcare services. The goal is to alleviate these challenges by providing free public transport services to veterans.
4. <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/612325> - A closed petition on the UK Government and Parliament Petitions website, titled 'Fund free public transport for all military veterans'. The petition, which closed on 14 October 2022 with 20 signatures, urged the government to fund free public transport for all veterans within the UK, covering trains, buses, and trams. It emphasized the limited support offered to veterans post-military service and the difficulties they face in securing employment, with some experiencing homelessness and suffering from PTSD. The petition aimed to provide veterans with accessible transportation to improve their quality of life.
5. <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/147242> - An archived petition from the 2015-2017 UK Parliament, titled 'Allow serving members in armed forces & veterans free travel on public transport'. The petition highlighted that, unlike disabled, unemployed, and elderly individuals who can travel for free or at discounted rates, armed forces personnel have to pay for a rail card. It pointed out that in countries like the US, Canada, and parts of the EU, veterans and serving soldiers can travel for free. The petition aimed to extend free travel to all train and bus companies in the UK for veterans and serving members.
6. <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/209859> - An archived petition from the 2017-2019 UK Parliament, titled 'I would like all military veterans to receive free train travel in the UK'. The petition sought to support current and homeless veterans with free train travel within the UK to aid their social and mental well-being. It emphasized the importance of reducing stress and anxiety and providing opportunities for veterans to connect with like-minded individuals who may also be facing challenges after leaving the services.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/07/free-train-travel-for-military-to-attend-remembrance-services-scrapped> - An article from The Guardian dated 7 October 2022, reporting on the government's decision to scrap free train travel for military personnel attending remembrance services. The decision was met with criticism from former veterans minister Johnny Mercer and others, who condemned the move. The article details the internal briefing by the Rail Delivery Group, which cited the potential cost to taxpayers as a reason for the decision. However, following the outcry, the government vowed to guarantee free rail travel for military personnel to attend remembrance services that year.