

Case Study: Tram Accident

Background:

On 9th November 2016, during the early morning rush hour in south London (UK), a tram carrying close to 70 passengers derailed and overturned on a sharp bend approaching a junction. There were seven fatalities with another 58 people injured (16 of which sustained serious injuries). It was the first tram incident in the UK in which passengers were killed since 1959.



Challenges:

In the aftermath of the incident, Kenyon's Client, a government body responsible for the transport system of Greater London, activated their own incident support centre. This included a dedicated phone line that provided practical and emotional help to the bereaved and injured. With this line, callers could find assistance with travel and accommodation coordination and other needs. However, the phone line had only been operational less than one year at the time of the incident; as such, the call handlers responsible for supporting the injured, and the friends and families of those who were lost, had never previously managed an incident on this scale.

As there was an on-going criminal investigation, the Client found it difficult to gain information on the persons directly affected due to the British Transport Police declining to share any information, including information regarding the personal effects of the victims that were found at the scene. This proved challenging for the call handlers to effectively support the bereaved.

Solutions:

Kenyon sent in a Special Assistance Team of Mental Health Support Coordinators with the primary focus of assisting the call handlers at the Client's HQ. They advised the call handlers on how to manage the more difficult calls and how to provide the appropriate level of support, as well as providing Mental Health Support to the call handlers themselves. The Special Assistance Team Members made themselves available 24 hours a day for over two weeks.

As well as providing Mental Health Support, the Team Members were also instrumental in using their prior experience of incidents to establish lines of communication between the Client and the British Transport Police. This allowed for information sharing, particularly with regard to the deceased and the injured, and the implementation of a plan regarding personal effects and reported lost property.