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Rail passengers reminded of zero tolerance approach to staff abuse

West Midlands Railway and British Transport Police are today reminding passengers that there is a zero tolerance approach taken towards the abuse of staff on the rail network.

It comes following an incident at Four Oaks station last week (15 May), which resulted in a Birmingham woman receiving a four month prison sentence for assaulting both railway staff and an off-duty West Midlands Police officer.

Cleona Smith, aged 39 and of Grosvenor Road, Birmingham, appeared at

Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 17 May. She pleaded guilty to assaulting an emergency service worker and two counts of common assault. Smith was handed a four month prison sentence and ordered to pay £150 compensation.

The incident happened at around 1630 on Wednesday 15 May, as West Midlands Railway revenue protection staff were at Four Oaks station, checking the tickets of all passengers coming off trains during the evening peak.

Smith was asked to purchase a ticket costing around £4, before assaulting two revenue managers, as well as an off-duty West Midlands Police officer who stepped in to assist with the incident on platform one.

Steven Fisher, head of on board experience for West Midlands Railway, said: "We will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards any of our staff – whether verbal or physical. We are pleased to see this individual dealt with swiftly by the courts, and we hope this incident serves as a warning to others that we will prosecute anyone who acts this way towards our staff.

"We are committed to making sure that those using our services buy a ticket before boarding, and will be continuing to conduct revenue blocks at stations across the network to catch those trying to fare evade. Our staff who undertake this work, or in fact any roles on the railway, should not be subject any abuse and we will work with British Transport Police to prosecute those who respond in this way to our teams."

Inspector Maninder Gill from British Transport Police, said: "It is shocking that someone was willing to assault two members of rail staff, as well as a police officer, simply because they had not paid for the correct ticket. Put simply, the level of violence and abuse witnessed in this case was outrageous. Those who assault or abuse rail staff, or our own officers, can expect to be relentlessly pursued and brought before the courts."

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For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email press.office@wmtrains.co.uk

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

The franchise is a joint venture between Abellio (70.1% share) and East Japan Railway Company / Mitsui & Co., Ltd (29.9% share in a 50:50 split). Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. In the UK, Abellio operates ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, Merseyrail services in a joint venture with Serco and buses through Abellio London. For more information visit www.abellio.com

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