In his five years on the railway, Alex Weekes-Hanson has sadly made more than one lifesaving intervention. The experiences have helped shape him and he hopes that coming out of the pandemic, we can all look out for each other that little bit more. He’s sharing his story for World Suicide Prevention Day.

“Although it was a few years ago now, I always remember my first experience of dealing with a vulnerable person on the railway. I had only worked in the industry for a year, so I considered myself a newbie.

“I saw a young woman crying and getting increasingly closer to placing herself in danger. I immediately called our control centre and put a block on the line, meaning that trains were stopped from going through the station. I then approached her calmly and started a conversation to find out why she was so upset. She said she’d let her family down because she’d flunked her exams and wouldn’t get the grades she was expected to.

“This took me by surprise because I know exams can seem like a big deal, but they shouldn’t be something to risk losing your life over – but I could tell she was truly distraught. Continuing to speak to her calmly and with open questions, I managed to encourage the young lady to move to a place of safety.

“After a while, we managed to connect the woman to our emergency services colleagues. It was a long process and a total eye-opener as I’d never dealt with anything like that before. The situation made me realise that you can never underestimate what people are going through.”

Alex, 34, was thanked for his kindness two months later when the parents of the young woman came to find him at the station.

“Unfortunately, I wasn’t on shift at the time but I was surprised to find that they had left me a box of chocolates and a card thanking me for what I did to help their daughter. To me, I was just doing my job but it was nice that they recognised what had happened. A few months after that I actually saw the woman again. She came up to me to say thank you for saving her life and I was pleased to hear that she was in a much better place.
“Working on the railway, you do see people from all walks of life and you have to always be prepared for the unexpected to happen. A lot of the time, you have to make snap decisions by yourself and in those moments, I think back to the suicide prevention training we receive, which really helps when dealing with difficult situations. Following the pandemic, I think there will be a lot more vulnerable people around. I’ve made three lifesaving interventions in the past five months, so I want to encourage everyone to be vigilant and look out for one another. We’re all in this together, after all.”