

UK eyes 'walk me home' phone-tracker to protect lone women

October 9 2021, by Danica Kirka



In this Tuesday, Oct. 5, 2021 file photo, Britain's Home Secretary Priti Patel speaks at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester, England. The chief executive of Britain's biggest phone company, BT, proposed the "walk me home" service in a letter to Home Secretary Priti Patel, saying it would complement the existing nationwide emergency number. Once a woman activated an app on her phone, the service would track her journey and send an alert to her emergency contacts if she didn't reach her destination on time, Philip Jansen said in the letter. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Super, File

A top British government official is backing a phone company's proposal for a new tracking service to help protect women walking alone, an idea pitched amid ongoing outrage over the slayings of two young women who were targeted near their homes in London.

The chief executive of Britain's biggest [phone company](#), BT, proposed the "walk me home" service in a letter to Home Secretary Priti Patel. Once a woman activated an app on her [phone](#), the service would track her journey and send an alert to her emergency contacts if she didn't reach her destination on time, Philip Jansen said in the letter.

The U.K. Home Office confirmed Patel had received the letter and would respond in "due course." Patel was more supportive in comments to the Daily Mail.

"This new phone line is exactly the kind of innovative scheme which would be good to get going as soon as we can," the newspaper quoted her as saying. "I'm now looking at it with my team and liaising with BT."

The "walk me [home](#)" service could be up and running by Christmas, the Mail reported.

The [service](#) would complement Britain's existing nationwide emergency number, Jansen said. BT has run Britain's 999 emergency number for 84 years and is currently upgrading the system.

In March, Sarah Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive, was abducted, raped and killed by a serving police officer who was convicted of murder and other charges this month and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Primary school teacher Sabina Nessa, 28, was killed six months later as she walked through a park in south London on her way to meet a friend.

"Male violence is causing so many people , especially women, to live in fear," Jansen wrote in the Daily Mail. "And their parents, partners and friends worry too, more now than ever. ...

"I am not a politician, I can't change society, but if I can use innovative technology to improve personal safety, then I am determined to do so." he said.

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