

Statistics Governance Group

Date: Thursday 13 June 2013
Location: Fleetbank House
Salisbury Square
London EC4
Time: 1400-1530

Present

Colin Foxall CBE
Nigel Walmsley
Philip Mendelsohn
Stephen Locke
Bob Linnard

CF Chairman
NW Board Member
PM Board Member
SL Board Member
RL Board Member

Anthony Smith
Ian Wright
Jon Carter
Jon Clay
David Greeno
Murray Leader

AS Chief Executive
IW Head of Research
JC Head of Business Services
JCI PTE Team Leader
DG Senior Passenger Researcher
ML Senior Research Advisor

Apologies

David Sidebottom

DS Passenger Team Director

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chairman welcomed Bob Linnard and Stephen Locke to their first meeting and thanked Nigel Walmsley, whose last meeting it was, for many years of invaluable expertise and advice.

2. Minutes

The Group approved the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2013 (subject to a correction to paragraph five on page two) and authorised the Chairman to sign them on that basis.

3. Action matrix

The action matrix was noted. All items were either covered on the agenda, not due until the next meeting, or complete, delete.

National Rail Passenger Survey

4. Expenses data on fieldwork checks

CF noted this was an important proposal. Although it was unusual in his experience to conduct fieldwork checks he considered it was currently essential. The cost was broadly in line with expectations but time would tell whether the provision would be sufficient. IW confirmed that current checking levels were somewhat below the target of 50 for each NPS wave and the approach needed to be more systematic – physical presence and levels of engagement both required checking – and this could only be achieved with a change in expenses policy. The Group **approved** the proposal for the next two waves for both NPS and BPS - after which it should be reviewed - and asked AS to keep an eye on costs in the meantime.

5. Fieldwork report – Spring 2013 wave

IW reported on the fieldwork for the spring 2013 wave and the checks that had been carried out. There were 161 different fieldworkers used by BDRC-Continental for the NPS (including boosts) in spring 2013 (a slight decrease compared to the previous wave as there was a fall in the number of shifts undertaken). By the end of the fieldwork 36 spot checks had been attempted (compared to 28 in autumn 12 and 20 in spring 2012). 20 different fieldworkers were covered on these checks (22 and 17 respectively in the previous two waves).

Of the feedback received from spot checks, a concern was identified with hostile crowds, and the wisdom of attempting to distribute questionnaires in such circumstances. A fieldworker had faced this situation during a Spring wave shift at London Bridge checked by NW. Having noticed that they were charity collectors on the Southern Main Concourse (for Platforms 8 to 16), and noticing the adverse effect it had on her approaching respondents, the fieldworker moved towards the Southeastern Concourse (platform 1 to 6) where she was faced with a big and slightly hostile crowd due to delays caused by a broken down train at Cannon Street and the cancellation of the 17:00 train to Beckenham Junction which was faulty. As a result she established herself on the footbridge linking the Southern and Southeastern platforms, which was less crowded and offered a better environment to approach passengers that were guaranteed to board trains.

SL was concerned that such an approach might skew the results; identifying discontent was an important part of establishing overall satisfaction. IW thought this unlikely on such a large scale survey but undertook to keep the matter under review.

6. Spring wave additional publications

These had been previously circulated to the board for comment, and were regarded as an excellent development. PM asked for a 'complete' copy of the Scotland version as soon as possible as he had a meeting lined up at which it would be useful.

7. Spring Wave response rates

IW introduced the paper on Spring Wave response rates, which had shown a dip. Previously the response rate had been consistently over 30%, which is acknowledged to be one of its positives. While this remains the case, the response rate for wave 28 (Spring 2013) was a little lower than has been seen in recent waves – at around 31% it was lower than any wave (for main and all shifts) since the Autumn 2010 wave. Despite this, the desired minimum sample sizes for each TOC and building block were met as usual, and the absolute number of returns per fieldworker shift is actually higher than for previous three Spring waves.

An analysis of factors that could have contributed to lower response rates included the balance between outward and return journeys; the level of engagement between fieldworkers and passengers in circumstances where targets for distribution have increased; use of the predictor model in building block top-ups; severe cold weather; and an earlier than usual start to the fieldwork. Other findings also suggested areas for further discussion and included the pattern of afternoon and evening shifts; the rather long-winded specified introduction fieldworkers use; certain stations which invariably produce lower response rates; and the absence of an incentive / prize draw for completed and returned questionnaires.

The Group **agreed** that all reasonable / practicable measures should be taken to keep the response rates well above 30% and that it would take a deeper look at underlying issues with the benefit of the data from the forthcoming wave.

8. Autumn wave questions to date

The Group **agreed** that the question from Network Rail could be admitted to the Autumn Wave provided (a) IW was satisfied with the wording of the question (reword if possible through discussion with NR) and (b) there was no conflict with other questions that may be requested. The Group **asked** DG to secure approval to any further questions through the between-meetings procedure.

9. NPS in franchising

IW introduced his 'think piece' synopsis of issues which had been floated between DfT and Passenger Focus as a basis for exploring how NPS can be further embedded within the franchise performance regime (which included, AS added, incentives as well as penalties). The discussions to date had included timings; precision and sensitivity; the relationship between NPS and other data; brand satisfaction; technical issues; stakeholder input and community rail.

The Group agreed all were areas worthy of further discussion (with the possible exception of stakeholder input, if this were to be attempted via panels or boards, the like of which had proved to be completely pointless previously) although there was general concern about the cost of boosting sampling. RL noted the sums could be quite large and he was unclear about the appetite (and ability) of DfT to pay for them; and samples *had* to be boosted to ensure results were robust, otherwise they might be subject to challenge. CF referred to previous advice which the group had sought and received on this matter and asked JC to circulate it to the Group, although he maintained sample size and associated costs was primarily a matter for DfT.

SL observed that the risks as set out in the paper were real and we should return to them when time permitted. RL agreed but noted that Passenger Focus should be in a position to move forward as soon as DfT had made its mind up. The Group **noted** the paper as work in progress.

SGG 62	13/06/13	Previous legal advice	Find and circulate	JC	July 2013	
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Bus Passenger Survey

10. Contract management issues

IW briefed the Group on emerging contract management issues and noted that an out of meeting paper would be sent to the entire Board seeking endorsement to his proposed solution.

11. Autumn questionnaire

ML proposed a number of changes to the Autumn questionnaire, including the removal of questions 6 and 38 and a change to question 17 and 35. The Group **agreed**.

12. Methodological overview

ML reported to the Group on the review of methodology he had undertaken with the agency. Issues included:

- Extend fieldwork from seven weeks to nine, towards the front end
- Bring forward evening shifts likely to be aborted instead of rolling over to next day; this helps maintain the substance of the sampling plan
- Results will not be weighted by time of day
- Weighting by age and gender will not be applied yet, but data will be collected during next wave after which a decision could be reached

13. Online pilot

ML reported that given lower response rates by younger people, a controlled experiment to offer an online option would be continued in July. At 25% take up the online option was just lower than its paper counterpart although in research terms this could be labelled a success. NW cautioned that weighting could correct age bias but not response rates. ML agreed to bring back further thoughts to the next meeting

SGG 63	13/06/13	Online pilot	Full report to next meeting	ML	December 2013	
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Open data

14. project update / 16. Memorandum of understanding with ORR

JCI reported that the last few months had seen a clear focus on accuracy of data and ease of navigation through the interrogation tool in preparation for launch. There were several issues still to resolve but these did not present a major hurdle. Given the complexity and scale of the overall task however the Group **agreed** that a September 'hard' launch for appeal complaints and NPS was more realistic and planning should proceed on that basis.

JCI was meeting ORR again the following week to progress the updated memorandum of understanding in respect of transfer of data for national rail trends (NRT). This was important as NRT is an official statistic. He had also met with LTW to discuss improved ways of collaborative working in this regard. Given recent issues the Group **reiterated** it wanted to see the MOU before it was signed – it concluded this was more important than who in fact signed it, although this should not be below head of team level. JC confirmed that a validated process for data extraction and transfer would be brought back to the Group in September (SGG 60 refers).

The Group also **asked** to see a written procedure for authorising access to complaint handling systems and what such access actually meant in practical terms.

SGG 64	13/06/13	CRM access	Access policy and procedure	JC / JCI	December 2013	
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15. terms of reference

The Group approved the revised terms of reference for submission to the September board subject to minor amends to paragraphs 2.6 and 2.8

Minutes

10. Any other business

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1530 hrs.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman

Date:
