



Transport User Community

Local lockdowns and essential travel

October 2020

Who is in our rail community?

60

people using rail to commute prior to COVID



Across England, Scotland and Wales



Mix of payment methods



Mix of those currently using rail and not using rail



A spread of age, gender and ethnicity



Some have disabilities

What did we ask our community?



Local lockdowns and essential travel

- A task to check in on how respondents are feeling about rail travel in light of recent rises in COVID-19 cases, and how rail companies should respond. In particular, should train companies be warning customers about how local lockdowns may affect their travel plans?

Most feel that train operators should echo government guidance on travel restrictions as closely as possible

The community recognises that train operators can't predict the future

Many argue that government guidance on travel wasn't particularly clear to begin with, and do not expect train operators to provide passengers with insights or guidance that go beyond current legislation.

However, there are several **touch points** where passengers need to be informed about restrictions, and even potential restrictions, on travel, but only within the bounds of what these restrictions could mean for the service itself:

- on the train operator's website
- at the point of purchasing a ticket (whether online or at the station)
- on the platform

The consensus is that while train operators shouldn't be expected to outline what the rules mean for the passenger, they should **reinforce what the rules are** and let the passenger come to an **informed conclusion** about when and if to travel.

The community recognises that train operators cannot and should not provide an interpretation of the guidance

The concept of 'essential travel' has always been a point of confusion for this community

Ultimately, at this stage of the pandemic, essential travel is seen as a matter of individual 'common sense', and most feel that it is beyond the remit, or ability, of train operators to provide an **interpretation** of what this means.

As far as the detail of government guidance is concerned, the public should be trusted to keep a close eye on the rules and what this means for them. And in any case, a common refrain among the community is that **train operators cannot legislate for carelessness**.

Ultimately, among these respondents, the role of the train operator is to flag up major events like local lockdowns and refer passengers to the **official guidance** (.gov websites, Public Health England, local council or NHS sources). Any changes to **timetables** or the overall running of the service should also be indicated at every possible touch point.

“There needs to be a coordinated message on lockdowns, so it is obvious from the train company’s website what the state is. On one particular train operator’s website the home page had no mention of COVID, that is not good enough. If a particular area is in lockdown, the train operator should highlight this and advise people not to travel.”

Male, 57, South East

“In my opinion train companies should advise passengers on their home page if there are local restrictions in place, and what impact this may have on their journey. Information should be clear and updated on a regular basis, local news does not always give concise travel information, this should definitely be made by the train operators.”

Male, 64, South East

“There are a lot of people out there who, even if they had the regulations tattooed on their foreheads wouldn’t know or care. The rail operators are doing the best they can but even they can’t regulate for idiots!”

Male, 65, Yorks and Humber