

Transport Focus/Rail Delivery Group: ‘Do Not Travel’ Messaging

Final Report: November 2022



Rail Delivery Group



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Introduction

Project context

As part of the rail industry 'Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys Programme' (SISJ), Transport Focus are working with the industry to consider the impact of 'do not travel' (DNT) and similar messaging on those making journeys on the National Rail network. There have been recent recommendations and reviews based on customer feedback following the storms over the winter period of 2021/22, and research is now required to address the recommendations and enable the industry to develop appropriate messaging for train users.

Research objectives

Overall, the research was intended to understand the most appropriate way to communicate with National Rail passengers at times of severe disruption, including whether current DNT and related messaging needs development to ensure it meets passenger needs in the future

Customer behaviours and attitudes to travelling during times of severe disruption

- Customer behaviours and attitudes to travelling during time of severe disruption

Feedback on the existing messaging

- Message content
- Tone
- Means of accessing the information
- The impact of receiving such messaging on their travel behaviour

Evaluation of template message

- Extent to which it meets passenger needs and expectations (content, tone, accessibility, potential impact), including
 - Would their assessment change when thinking about different scenarios
 - Extent to which passenger needs for DNT information change depending on what leg they are on in their journey
 - Passenger understanding of key phrases often used in DNT messaging such as ticket easements and assessments

Coronavirus

- The impact on messaging needs, if any, of the coronavirus pandemic on attitudes to making journeys and consequent impact of DNT messaging in this context, including tone and quality

Method and sample approach

24 four-person quad* sessions with rail users and 10 depth interviews with disabled rail users

Quads 90 mins via Zoom and depths 60 mins via Zoom or telephone

Age / SEG	Journey / passenger type			
	Commuter (8 quads)	Occasional Business (8 quads)	Leisure (8 quads)	Disabled passengers (10 depths)
Deferrable	4 x quads	4 x quads	4 x quads	
Non-deferrable	4 x quads	4 x quads	4 x quads	
Total respondents	32	32	32	10
106 respondents				

Nation/Region	Across sample to include minimum quotas
South England	Min 24 passengers + Min 2 disabled passenger depths
North England	Min 24 passengers + Min 2 disabled passenger depths
Scotland	Min 24 passengers + Min 2 disabled passenger depths
Wales	Min 24 passengers + Min 2 disabled passenger depths
Total	106 respondents

Quads 90 mins over Zoom and depths 60 mins over via Zoom or telephone

Fieldwork took place from the 10th October to the 7th November 2022

All participants were pre-tasked to think about their current or prospective experiences of train disruptions. During the session, a variety of stimulus was shown to prompt debate, including: current standard messaging; specific scenario prompts; potential reasons for DNT; personalised messages and route specific customer advice, and variations on industry terms.

6 quads conducted as trios due to no shows and supplemented with 1 additional trio and 3 depths to achieve full sample numbers and intended spread

Further sample detail on following charts

Method and sample

Further sample criteria

Commuters

- Those who use the train to get to or from their place of work or education, and will usually take their return journey on the same day as their outward journey
- To include a spread of time of day of travel
- 4-6 who commute on weekends

Occasional Business

- Those who use the train for a personal or commercial business-related work journey at least once a month (excluding commuting)
- To include a spread of time of day of travel

Leisure

- Those who use the train for leisure-related journeys at least once a month
- To include a spread of time of day of travel
- Mix of those travelling alone vs with others (adults, children)
- To include a spread of those who travel for this purpose on weekdays and those who travel for this purpose on weekends (note: some will do both)
- To include minimum 4 who travel for this purpose at night-time

Passengers with disabilities

- Those who use the train for any purpose and have at least one disability
- To include a spread of age and gender and disability type
- Spread of journey type
- Spread of those with a range of physical and cognitive disabilities, including some wheelchair users, those with auditory and visual impairments and individuals with learning difficulties
- Ensure at least 3 across the disability sample who require staff assistance to complete their onward journey

Across the sample:

- Thorough spread of gender across sample as a whole and by journey type and route
- SEG - thorough mix across the sample
- Age - ensure a thorough mix of ages 18+ by region/nation and across the sample. Depth interviews to all be with those aged 18+, aiming for a spread of ages
- Ethnicity - inclusion of ethnic minority respondents within the sample
- Access to alternative transport - ensure presence in each region/nation and passenger type of those with and without access to alternative transport
- Disruption experience - minimum of 2 respondents in each quad to have been affected by recent events of severe disruption; strikes, storm Eunice, storm Franklin, and the disruption of October 2021 during COP)
- Locations - respondents from at minimum two locations per region/nation, with locations within the region/nation combined in each session

Stimulus overview

Standard message

DO NOT TRAVEL between Purley and Redhill TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to heavy rain flooding the railway.

We expect this incident to be resolved by 10:00.

DO NOT TRAVEL with Avanti West Coast TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to heavy snow.

We expect this incident to be resolved by 19:00.

DO NOT TRAVEL no service TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to high winds.

DNT potential reasons

Heavy rain flooding the railway, flooding, predicted flooding, forecasted heavy snow, heavy snow, severe hot weather, forecasted high winds, thick fog, high winds, forecasted severe weather, severe weather.

Touch points



Specific scenarios to prompt

Scenario 1	Scenario 2
Two years ago you bought tickets to see your favourite band live. On the day of the concert, as you are about to leave home for the train station, you see a 'Do Not Travel' has been issued by the train company you are travelling with.	You are about to leave home to visit a sick family member when you see a banner with 'Do Not Travel' on the website for the train company you are meant to be travelling with. When you click into the banner, you see 'information for customers who need to return home'.
You are at the station waiting for a train to go to visit a friend when you see 'do not travel' on the main station screens.	You are at the station waiting for your train to get to work when there is an announcement on the tannoy and on the digital screens that due to unexpected issues with overhead lines, multiple routes have been impacted and a do not travel message has been issued.
You are on the train when it suddenly stops. On board announcements inform you that a tree has fallen on the track ahead and the train will need to wait for the track to be cleared.	Despite being advised not to travel due to severe storms, you have caught a train, as you have an essential hospital appointment. The storms become worse and the train guard announces that the train will need to terminate at a station along the route.
You reach the station to get the train home after a day out in London when you see 'do not travel' on the station screens.	You are getting ready to leave work and go to the train station when you get a notification advising customers not to travel. Your children need to be picked up from school and you have no alternatives in terms of childcare.

Personalised DNT Messaging

Different scenarios	What the message should include
If you are at home..	DO NOT TRAVEL [between (Station) and (Station)] or [to (Station)] or [from (Station)] or [with (TOC)] or [No service] TODAY (Day/Date/Month) There is major disruption due to [Tyrell code] or [Darwin message] We expect this incident to be resolved by [Time] or We estimate that our train service will be back to normal by [Time].
If you are at the station..	DO NOT TRAVEL [between (Station) and (Station)] or [to (Station)] or [from (Station)] or [with (TOC)] or [No service] TODAY (Day/Date/Month) There is major disruption due to [Tyrell code] or [Darwin message] We expect this incident to be resolved by [Time] or We estimate that our train service will be back to normal by [Time]. Return home if possible.
If you are on the train..	Listen out for onboard announcements to tell you about what is going on, how long disruption is likely to last and when you can next expect an update. Further information on alternative routes, ticket acceptance and delay repay can be found [link to information].
If you are away from home and need to return home or your travel is essential	If you choose to travel, we cannot guarantee that you will be able to complete your journey. Find out your rights under the National Rail Conditions of Travel [link to information].

Ticket Acceptance Best Practice Messaging Template

While disruption is happening, you might see the following...

Whilst this disruption is ongoing, you can use your ticket at no extra cost on [TOC Name and Route Information] from [Time] or until [Time]. If you start your journey at a different station due to this disruption and need to return to the same station later, you will also be able to do this at no extra cost.

This may add up to [Number of (Minutes) or (Hours)] to your journey.

Please try and travel as close to your original train time as possible.

[TOC Name] services between [Station] and [Station] [are] or [will be] extremely busy and we cannot guarantee that you will be able to have a seat on these trains.

Please try to make a seat reservation, if possible, via [Link to TOC Reservation Page].

Please be aware if you decide to travel via [Location], [TOC Name] is also experiencing disruption because of [Reason] which may impact your journey further. For more information, please see [Link to Relevant Disruption Item].

If you no longer wish to travel or abandon your journey due to this disruption, you are entitled to a fee-free refund. Please contact your ticket retailer. If you do travel but are delayed by [X minutes] or more, please claim delay repay [Hyperlink].

Post disruption, when the line is open but there are still delays, you might see the following...

If you are already using or making your way to an alternative route, then you will be able to continue your journey via this route at no extra charge. If you are starting your journey at a different station due to this disruption and need to return to the same station later, you will also be able to do this at no extra cost.

When the disruption is over, you might see the following...

If you are already using an alternative route, then you will be able to continue your journey via this route at no extra charge.

Post – Do Not Travel and Route Specific Customer Advice

Context: Following on from a Do Not Travel message, TOCs may be guided by the following points to advise passengers in need of alternative routes.

Tickets dated today can be used on [Date(s)]

If [Route] is affected, use [Route or TOC]

Trains will be busier and journey times will be longer

Disruptions are likely to continue until [Date/ Time]

Service is not likely to resume until [Date/ Time]

If you no longer wish to travel due to this disruption, you are entitled to a fee-free refund. Please contact your ticket retailer.

For further details on the reason for this disruption, please go to [hyperlink to mainstream media covering incident]

For further information on alternative travel, please see the [hyperlink to disruption maps/ alternative route maps]

Industry Terms, Ticket Easement and Acceptance

- ONLY TRAVEL IF ESSENTIAL
- ONLY TRAVEL IF ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL
- ONLY TRAVEL IF NECESSARY
- ONLY TRAVEL IF ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY
- ONLY TRAVEL IF YOUR JOURNEY IS NON-DEFERRABLE

- DO NOT TRAVEL
- AVOID TRAVEL
- DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TRAVEL
- CHECK BEFORE YOU TRAVEL
- SEEK OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORT
- NO SERVICE
- LIMITED ROUTES AVAILABLE
-
- TICKET ACCEPTANCE
- CROSS-INDUSTRY TICKET ACCEPTANCE
- HONOUR PASSENGER TICKETS
- USE OF TICKETS ON ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

- TICKET EASEMENT
- USE OF TICKETS ON A DIFFERENT DAY
- TRAVEL ON THE SAME JOURNEY, AT A DIFFERENT DATE OR TIME

Overview of findings

Overall headlines

Consistency and clear direction within findings

- While there is a spectrum of how likely an individual is to travel if they receive a DNT message (based on the scenario they are in and their own propensity to follow advice) **responses to the standard messaging and what else they would need to hear were aligned across the sample**

Standard messaging contains what most would expect to see

- Thought to cover **key information of what is happening, why it's happening, the implications of this, and when it will be resolved**
- Little need for the current language to be made clearer or more concise (wording is accessible) **but some room for improvement**
- Exception is **ticket 'easements' which was not well understood → clear need to use words that are in everyday use** amongst the travelling public and plain English sought across all messages

However, some confusion around whether trains run in a DNT situation

- **Assumption is that if a DNT has been issued there are no services**
- Tension therefore between there being 'major disruption' and being told 'DNT' – as the former suggests that, even though disrupted, trains are running, and in this case many would still want to travel

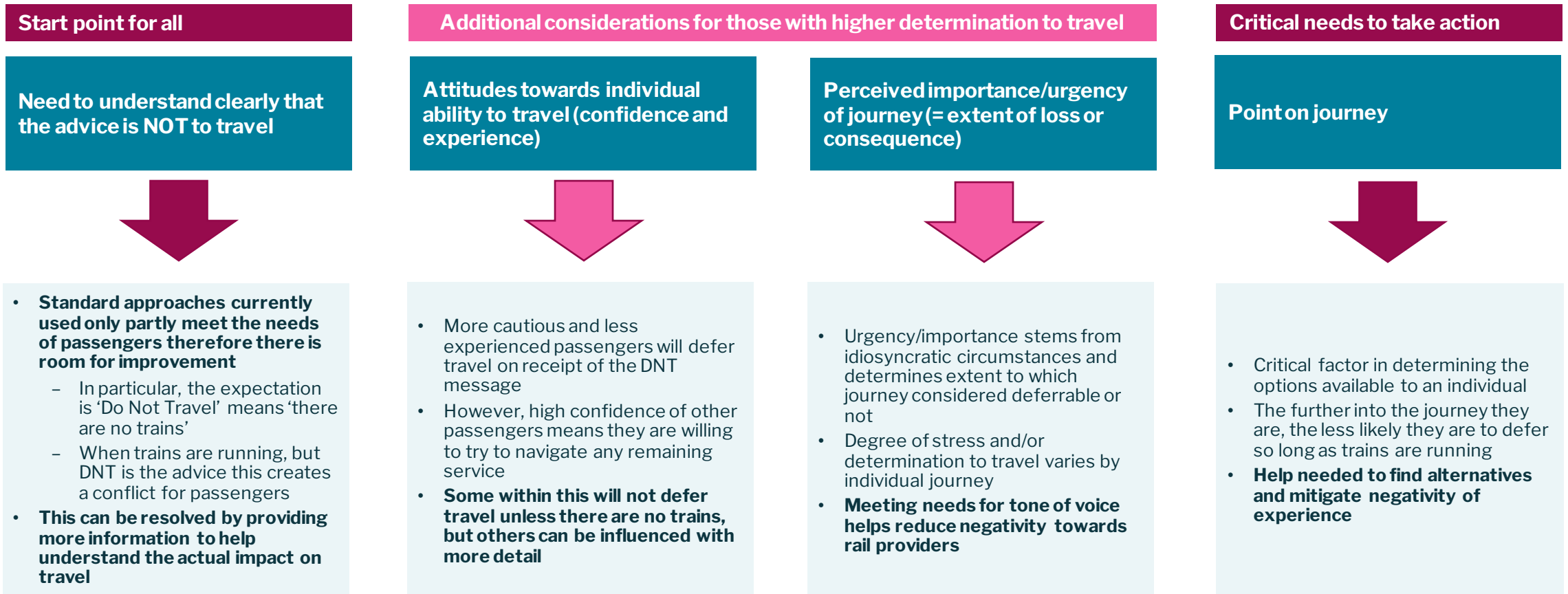
If some trains are running, some people need more reason not to travel than others

- If their journey is less deferrable
- **More experienced rail travellers expect to be able to get through – even though their own journey might be more deferrable**
- **To encourage latter to defer, need links to more detail and to emphasise likely travelling conditions**

Overall information needs vary by a range of factors

- What leg of the journey they are on is also key to what messages and information they need to help them resolve their travel dilemma – overall passengers are more likely to defer the earlier they are in the journey
- **Appropriate messages, signposting and information (all in right tone) can make a significant difference to: decisions to travel; overall passenger experience in the event of severe disruption; and brand/rail perceptions**

Overview of multiple factors affecting passenger messaging needs



Background landscape

No one likes to receive a DNT notice but access to travel alternatives is also a key factor in how DNT notices are received initially

Negative feelings for all when receiving current DNT messages

- Emotions reported include **anger, frustration, panic and annoyance**
- Definite sense that some disruption is worse than others

I'd be angry, annoyed, frustrated, fed up!
[Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

What leg they are on in their journey makes a difference

- **Most frustrating if they haven't left home, but also easiest to deal with – cancel or replan**
- If their journey is deferrable, it can be easier to cancel rather than face disruption
- More emotional if already on the network somewhere – can feel trapped and fewer options

If I was journey planning and I knew what the situation was, I wouldn't go to a station, I would save some my money or wait for the next day. But if I've already gone, and I'm on the train or trapped somewhere then it would make me angry, but I suppose you just have to go along with it. [Leisure Trio, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Access to travel alternatives are also a key factor in how DNT notices are received

- **Those without access to their own car, or other public transport are the most impacted**
- **Those with alternatives are possibly influenceable by messaging** if the audience can be directed to other options to make/complete their journey
- **For some, cost of alternatives and potential for refunding/reusing original ticket also comes into consideration**

Because I don't drive things can get complicated with delays. I'd have to google it, plan ahead, call a taxi. It depends where you are but the bus would take too long. It's not a guarantee that you'll get there. [Leisure Trio, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Receipt of a DNT notice is always negative, but exact response depends on what other alternatives a customer may have to either make their journey or defer it and the stress and additional difficulty that can arise from being far from home or their destination. These factors generate different needs from information in terms of overall detail and a sensitivity to tone.

Attitudes to being told not to travel in the most extreme circumstances are also influenced by the more day-to-day experiences of customers on the rail network

Recent strikes

- **Can be planned for so easier to predict travel needs and challenges**
- Some sympathy for rail workers, but still an inconvenience
- Have been happening for a while now so difficult to rely on services

The thing about strikes is you know the days which is fine, but you don't fully know what the effects are or what's going to happen. There's not always great detail on what services will run. You only really find that out when it's the day and you go to the station... [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Staff shortages

- **Users of some TOCs have become used to reduced service levels, which means that their expectations are already lowered**
- DNT notices here are coming against a background of already weakened bonds between travellers and TOCs

Reasons not to cancel is that they haven't got anybody to run their trains, or a staff shortage. They should run their business better. [Occasional Business, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

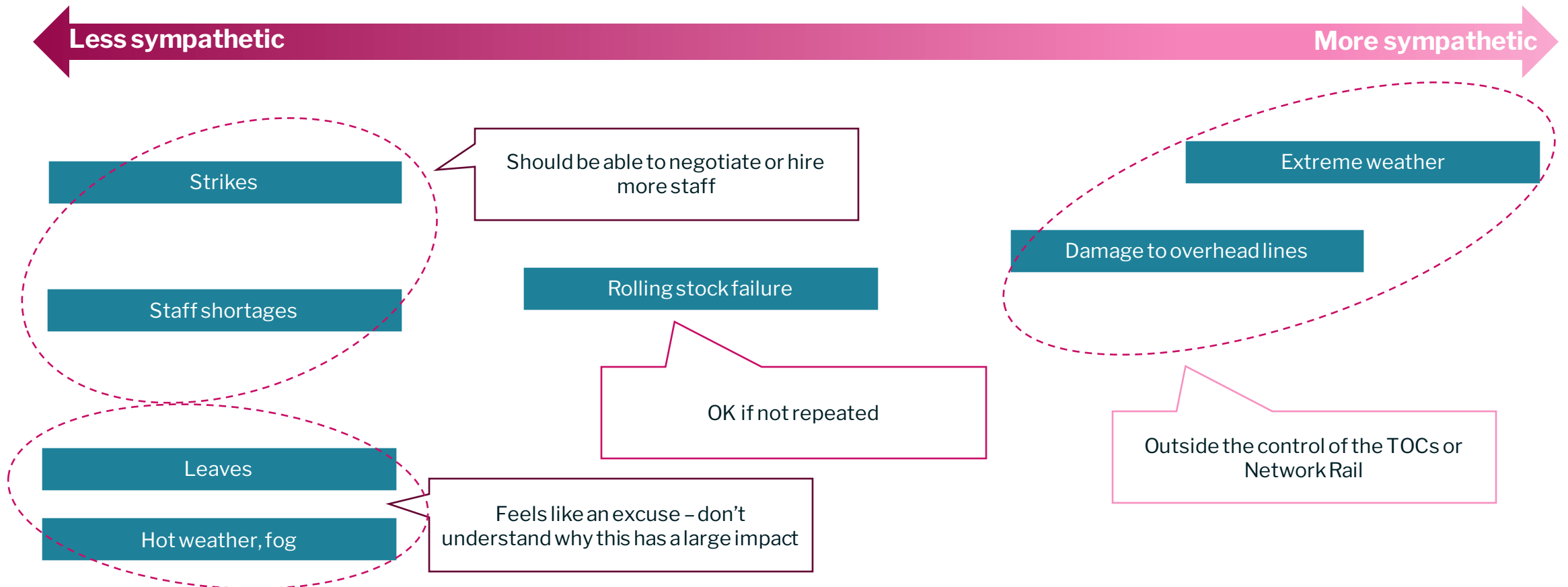
Geographic differences in reliability of service

- Some of those in the North of England (around Liverpool, Lancashire and the Lake District) claimed to have been experiencing regular disruption in recent months (in addition to strikes)

During this year I've had loads of disruptions, from half hour delays to all day. We've had loads of rail strikes so we've had no trains at all for like a day, and that'll impact the next day, so the trains will be all over the place. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Northern England]

The effect of these issues on trust means that some of the most regular travellers need more information about why they're being told not to travel before they will comply with the request – when it is explained/makes sense it is more powerful for them.

Train passengers are naturally more sympathetic to some reasons for disruption than others



Infrequent Leisure and Occasional Business passengers are slightly more sympathetic overall. Most frequent passengers who experience more reasons over time are less likely to differentiate – it's all just another inconvenience that cumulatively affects how they feel about train travel.

Notable number of respondents do not think that train companies should be telling people not to travel unless there are no trains running

Don't think TOCs have the 'right'

Various reasons driving this belief:

- Not part of government
- No enforcement powers
- Can advise not to travel, but not 'tell' how to act (if trains are running)

Occasions they can say 'no service'

- When no trains are running
- When there is a risk to safety

It only makes sense if it's legislated. You're saying, you can't go into work or whatever it is you're going to. ...It's not their job to do that, so to categorically say 'do not travel', it's got to be a safety issue or a government issue, where they say not to travel, like in lockdown. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

If it's a threat to life, yeah, they should tell people there is no service. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

The only time you should be fully informed not to travel is if there is a risk to health and safety. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Respondents generally thought that they wanted to be given information to allow them to make their own mind up on whether to travel. What makes a compelling message therefore varies by scenario.

This attitude contributes to expectations of what a DNT message is about

Strong assumption DNT = 'no trains are running'

- Consequently, phrase **DNT is in conflict with 'severe disruption' as latter suggests that some services are operating**
- Can prompt cynicism amongst some with less positive attitudes towards TOCs (assumed to be untransparent / deceptive)

If I see 'do not travel' I'm expecting there are no trains running. That's saying to me: there are no trains running, no services available, do not do this. That's how I'm taking that message. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

DNT can also be interpreted as 'trains are running but it's not safe to use them'

- **Leads to questions about whether TOCs are acting responsibly** because if it's dangerous then trains should not be running

Is it safe or unsafe to run the train? Either the trains are running or they aren't, but I can't fathom a reason to say 'Do Travel' if the trains are running. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Both responses came from both those who have and have not ever received a DNT message

- **Assumption regarding meaning was the same across passenger journey types, and their previous experience of disruption messaging**

To me if I'm advised not to travel due to severe storms there should be no trains running. It's unsafe right? [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Care needs to be taken to make clear exactly what the situation is as this has a significant impact on whether or not an individual customer will attempt to travel. The interpretations that passengers currently put on DNT phrases lead to confusion when combined with a message that disruption is not total. Those who have never experienced a DNT message before have the same broad expectations from the message as those who have.

Traveller type does map to an extent against needs from DNT messaging, but is not as important as the individual's attitudes to their own travel circumstances, and how necessary they consider their journey to be

Commuters	Leisure	Occasional Business	Disabled passengers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most likely to want to travel regardless • However, those that can work from home will • Others need to travel, and may not have autonomy to make a decision not to travel • Might need permission from work to stay at home, or perform a role which needs to be done in person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be guided by the exact reason for travelling Open to deferring meetings with friends as can be rearranged • May see travel to watch a sports team or favourite band as essential – and travel if no other options • Decision dependent on financial loss, status, unique experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave as commuter or leisure according to the nature of their travel • Quite likely to want to make work-related journeys as these (being infrequent) are likely to be highly important • Hospital visits for booked appointments, especially with long waiting lists, are seen as essential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall want to behave as per whichever travel category they fit into • However, nature of disability (e.g. need for staff assistance) can mean making a quicker decision to defer or not to travel at all • Highly compliant with DNT messaging
<p><i>If I saw a DNT, my priority is to see when the next train actually will be then deciding your plans around that. I'd talk to work, see if they'd let me work from home... it's more flexible now for me. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]</i></p>	<p><i>If I was anywhere near home then I'd go home and change plans. It depends what I was doing and how long I'd been planning it for. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Scotland]</i></p>	<p><i>I think if I was meeting for work, I think I'd ask to meet later in the day if possible, or meet somewhere else. I don't think it'd stop me from using the rail network all day. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]</i></p>	<p><i>You had to give a lot more notice for someone like me. Somebody's got to get you on the train at one end and off at the other. And then you need to find the disabled space (if it's free). [Female Depth, 53, Occasional Business, Disabled (wheelchair user), B, North England]</i></p>

While the type of journey is important, the individual circumstances of the customer and their driver for travel have more impact on what decision they take about whether to travel.

Disabled passengers are particularly motivated to defer their travel if there is any chance of disruption

Those who need staff assistance have a particular need to plan ahead

- Won't travel if they can't have the assistance that they need
- **If they have booked assistance, then this is a benefit if a DNT message is issued while they are on the train – reassures them that they will be taken care of**

I do know that if I get stuck anywhere on the line, they have to get to a platform so they can get me off. I have assistance, but then they would have to get me a taxi to greet the rest of the journey because the coaches are not wheelchair friendly. [Male depth, 65, Leisure, Non-deferrable, Disabled (wheelchair user), B, Wales]

Overriding desire to avoid consequences of disruption

- **Travelling can be difficult in normal times, so want to avoid:** non-disability-friendly replacement transport (esp. if in wheelchair); difficulties with guide dog travel (not carrying food for a long journey); sensory issues; crowding and last-minute platform changes

I try not to travel with complications, it's too much for me. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

Ideally, want to find out as early as possible

- **Allows time to rethink/rearrange** their plans
- **Want to check for updates** before they travel so they don't get caught out

Ideally on the app at home before I head out, absolutely, to save time and save a wasted journey too, because I can't go to my local station. I can make an informed decision from my own property. [Female depth, 42, Occasional Business, Non-deferrable, Disabled (Wheelchair User), C1, Scotland]

While their information needs to travel are the same as other travellers on the network, those with additional needs in this sample tended to be more apprehensive about experiencing severe disruption.

Broad consistency in where customers currently go looking for information in a DNT situation → three key sources

Website

App

Station / trains
(individual staff or
display screens)

- **All three sources mentioned spontaneously**
- **Key needs** are to know:
 - **What is happening**
 - **How long it will go on for**
 - **What their other options might be**
 - **How they can travel if they need to – childcare or work consequences from not attending**
- **Compensation not spontaneously mentioned by many**
 - Not top of mind in the moment because the priority is more whether they can travel or not
 - **Some commuters and those making work related Occasional Business trips less concerned with refunds** as not paying personally for their travel
 - **For some, if they have already spent their own money then that makes them more likely to attempt to travel – unless it is made clear that a refund is available and easy to claim**
- Some of those on trains will look online, but **can't always depend on having a signal – so are much more dependent on what they're told by staff over the tannoy and on in-carriage displays**

I was checking on the website...Avanti had the kind of flag the banner up saying advising not to travel, but your ticket will be valid up until whatever date it was.. I was looking to see what on earth was going on. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

I ended up using my Trainline app to try and work out what trains were actually coming, [Leisure Quad, Leisure, Non-deferrable, Wales]

I always expect to hear the information over a tannoy or something, at a station or on a train, on the boards. [Occasional Business Depth, Deferrable, South England]

Most were not checking the status of their train before leaving home – and the further into their journey they are when the DNT message is received, the more invested they tend to be in continuing their journey. These sources are also where those who have never experienced disruption think they would look.

Covid has had some indirect impact on likelihood of non-deferrable travelling

- Varied views on the extent to which respondents believe Covid has impacted on their travel habits, or response to a DNT message
 - Initially the pandemic caused widespread disruption to travel needs
 - Some actually preferred to travel during the pandemic – less busy trains – and now regret that usage is returning to ‘normal’
- Has definitely shown some commuters that they can work from home, and made them (and their employers) readier to defer travel
 - Others (e.g., nurses) need to do their work at a given location and cannot defer travel without causing disruption in their workplace
- There is **a definite existence of people who wouldn't travel if their employers gave them permission not to** – role therefore for messaging to influence employers, potentially in a separate message asking them to consider if their employees need to travel?

Overall, a sense that things are returning or have returned to normal on the railways – Covid is not something that they want to think about too much, and feels like it is in the past



There are two key attitudinal impacts from Covid which potentially impact on DNT messaging in the future

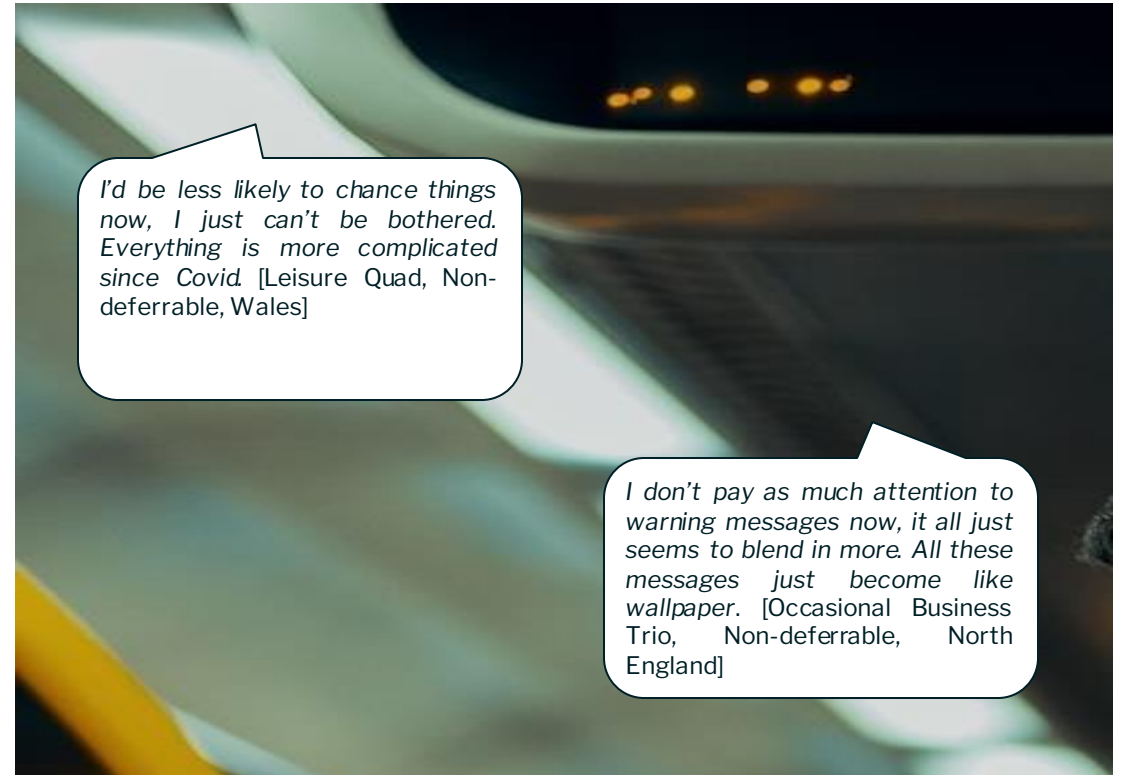
More likely to do as they're told

- Subset of travellers who have become used over the Covid period to being told what they can/can't/shouldn't do
- Will see an instruction and are likely to follow it

VS

Less likely to do as they're told

- Tired of being told what they can and can't do
- Claim to be more questioning of instructions now than they would have been before Covid, unless they're clear, unambiguous and are supplemented by additional information on the rationale



These attitudes are likely to be long lasting. For some, DNT messaging is now more likely to be followed than before the pandemic, however for a second group of customers more is now needed to persuade them to defer their travel.

Current behaviours and responses to existing DNT messaging approach

Recall of current DNT messaging from those who had experienced it was vague with a sense that it is insufficient for needs

Struggle to recall specific examples

- Typically have **very little recall beyond being told not to travel**, and then having to plan what to do instead – tone recalled as ‘formal’

Yeah, I think it's fine, the tone is formal yes, but it tells us how it is.. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

Belief there are gaps in the existing messaging

- **Claimed lack of clarity on implications**
 - Lack of clarity for some on when it will be resolved
 - Unclear about what they should do next
 - Some sense that it is ‘copy and paste’

When it happened before I think they just needed to be as clear as possible. Be specific. Don't just give out these generic messages, or things that at may apply to some people and not to others. [Commuter Trio, Non-Deferrable, North England]

Frustration that information doesn't join up across platforms

- Common belief that **where an instruction not to travel is issued, there can be different and conflicting advice from apps, notice boards, social media, and station staff**
- Role of staff is crucial, but it is recognised that they can only give out information they have been given themselves
- Ideally, **desire to ensure that information content and flow is synched across as many platforms quickly to avoid confusion**

I tried to ask what was kind of happening, because I wasn't really aware of what's going on. There wasn't really any updates on my phone, on the website. It said different things. In the end, I think I was just asking around people at the station, everyone was kind of just waiting for like the next update, [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, South England]

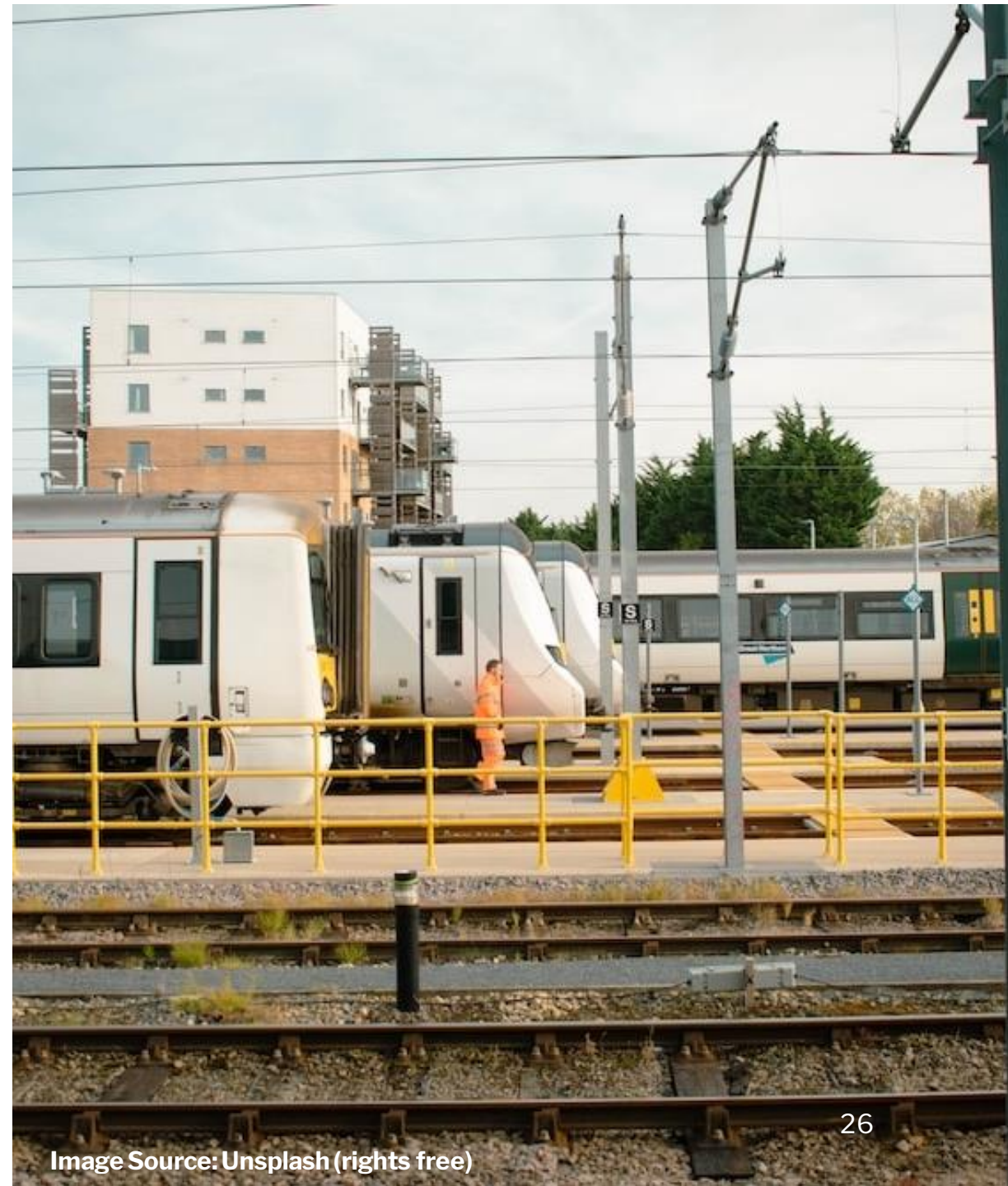
Most felt that when they have been told not to travel in the past, it has been a complicated process to work out what to do next.

As a result, people do their own research to problem solve

- Seeking information about what has happened and what the impact is
- Googling general news channels and Network Rail
- Talking to other passengers – key source of information
 - If phones are out of battery / signal on long journeys, will rely on person next to them if can't contact staff

Information is quite scant insofar as at the length of delays what the potential disruptions are.. I check Twitter on the Network Rail pages and also the Avanti page as well for any potential updates [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Overall sense that it is harder to find out information than it should be – especially when away from home



The more experienced travellers specifically ‘play down’ the risks

- Respondents who travelled regularly (across all passenger groups) were more likely to assume it would be fine to make a journey – even where there have been news bulletins about e.g. storms
 - High confidence in their ability to navigate the problems
 - Tendency to feel that it won’t be as bad as reported
 - Could cite previous cases where they had been advised not to travel, but did and found it was ok
- For this group of travellers there often isn’t a sense of obligation to do as they’re advised by TOCs
 - Some evidence of **cynicism that they’re being told ‘whatever makes the rail industry’s jobs easier’ rather than what’s in their own interests**
- For some, **a risk really has to be spelt out in terms of potentially not reaching their destination, or danger of life, before they’ll assume that there might be a problem with their travel**

I think if the journey's not going to be possible, I really want to know the facts. I don't want them saying 'possibly' or 'unlikely' because that makes me think, 'I'll try it'. If it's severe then tell me that plain and simply: do not travel. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Most felt that if they were told not to travel, then they would consider following that advice, but it would be balanced by whether trains were running or not, and how deferrable they felt their journey to be. Some would travel if there were trains, regardless of advice, others can be influenced



Image Source: Unsplash (rights free)

Do Not Travel pre-task message – there are elements that work effectively across the prompted journey touchpoints

The Met Office have issued amber and red weather warnings for gale force winds today because of Storm Eunice.

We are advising passengers NOT TO Travel today and to travel instead on Saturday 19 February.

Why might my train be affected by high winds?

High winds present the risk of debris being blown onto the tracks. Debris, such as trees, can block lines until they can be safely removed and in some cases, debris can cause damage to overhead wires and lineside equipment.

Check before you travel:

You can check your journey using the National Rail Enquiries real-time Journey Planner. Journeys affected by real-time disruptions will carry a yellow warning triangle where you can click to find more information.

Twitter:

If you would like to follow this incident on Twitter, please use #StormEunice

Compensation:

You may be entitled to compensation if you experience a delay in completing your journey today. Please keep your train ticket and make a note of your journey, as both will be required to support any claim.

- ✓ Language and layout considered clear
- ✓ Covers most of the key information they would expect to see
- ✓ Helpful if received at home
- ✓ Would be influential if received at their departure station
- ? If received when on the train then potentially too late to be useful
- ? If received when about to make the return leg of a journey then helpful, but would want to know more about any alternative transport to get home
- ? Commuters particularly liked the mention of Twitter, but other users cautioned against reliance on one social network, and would like to be pointed in the direction of mainstream media outlets
- Additional information called out as helpful to add in when prompted:
 - Direction to alternative routes and route planners
 - How to make compensation claims
 - Clarity on whether trains are actually running or not
 - Overall level of service being offered

Overall seen as clear and helpful – though still potential for improvement

Do Not Travel standard template message – when shown, this was working to deter those with the most easily deferred journeys, or a likelihood to do as asked

DO NOT TRAVEL [between (Station) and (Station)] or [to (Station)] or [from (Station)] or [with (TOC)] or [No service] TODAY (Day/Date/Month)

There is major disruption due to [Tyrell code] or [Darwin message*]

We expect this incident to be resolved by [Time] or We estimate that our train service will be back to normal by [Time].

I think having 'do not travel' standing out and in bold highlights the importance, you've got the date and time on there, and you've got a reason, so I think the language is pretty clear. You don't want something really wordy that will make people flustered and confused, so just keep it really succinct, give the information they need. [Mixed Trio, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, North England/Scotland]

- ✓ Overall, well received
- ✓ Perceived as informative
- ✓ No significant suggestions to reword what is in the message as terms seem clear
- ✓ No elements which could be made more concise
- ✓ Tone clear, authoritative
 - ? Some demand for an apology to be added to acknowledge passenger inconvenience and experience
- ✓ Enough for those with more deferrable journeys/more cautious respondents to simply not travel if they're at home
 - ? However, tension for some between 'Do Not Travel' and 'major disruption'
 - ? Those with less deferrable journeys interpret 'major disruption' as suggesting that some services are running
 - ? Cue to travel anyway
 - ? Some might at least travel to their local station to see if they can still get a train
 - ? Need from this less deferrable audience for definite instructions – e.g. 'there are no trains, do not travel'
- ? Ideally should signpost to where to go for more information on alternative routes, ticket acceptance and refunds

While seen as clear by customers, it was evident that the contradiction between 'Do not travel' and 'major disruption' affects intention to travel

Do Not Travel standard message – worked examples of the standard template

DO NOT TRAVEL between Purley and Redhill TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to heavy rain flooding the railway.

We expect this incident to be resolved by 10:00.

- ✓ Seen as clear and concise on where is affected and when
- ✓ Reason is credible
- ? 'We expect' sounds less certain than 'this will be over by'
- ? Ideally, message writers need to be sure when saying when the disruption will be resolved

DO NOT TRAVEL with Avanti West Coast TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to heavy snow.

We expect this incident to be resolved by 19:00

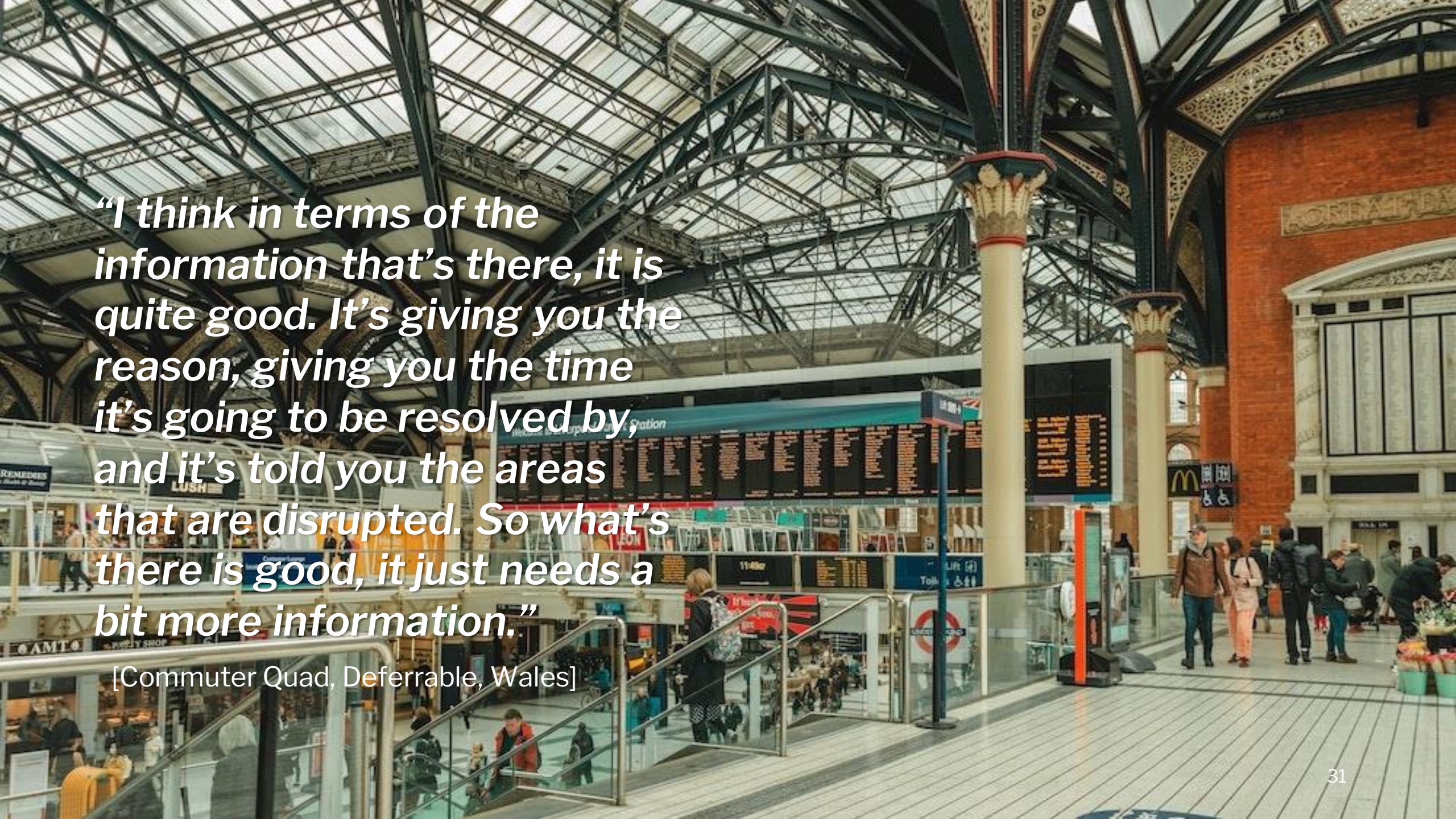
- ✓ Reason for disruption and time of resolution clear
- ? Using the brand name of the service raises questions for some
 - ? Credible that a whole company will be affected?
 - ? Don't know all the routes operated by a TOC so begs questions about alternatives
 - ? Not as clear as specifying a particular route - though most accept that the message needs to be concise – potential to link to disruption maps/ alternative route maps at this point
 - ? If it's affecting the whole network then clearer to say 'no trains'

DO NOT TRAVEL no service TODAY (21/09/2022)

There is major disruption due to high winds.

- ✓ Seen as clear and concise
- ✓ Aligns with spontaneous expectation that 'do not travel' means no trains running
- ? Lacks details of when disruption is expected to be over

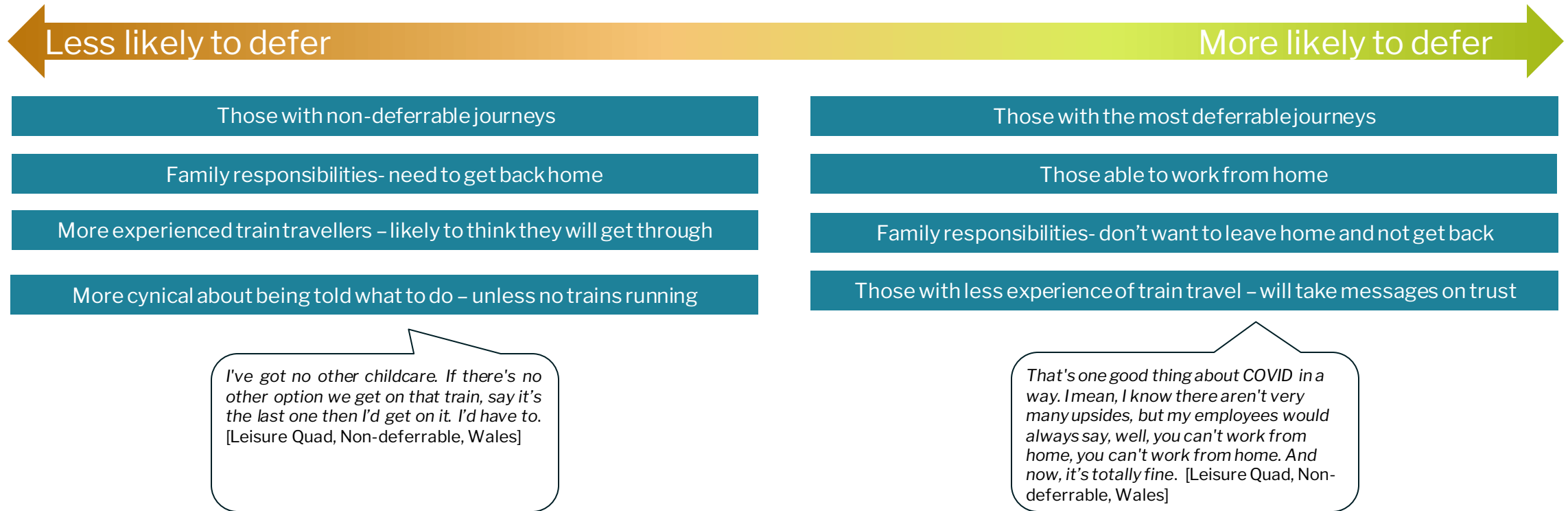
Responses to worked examples further showed that 'major disruption' is not always seen as indicating 'no service' unless this is spelled out. The more detail the better – many recipients will not be experienced travellers who know their routes and the implications of a message.



“I think in terms of the information that’s there, it is quite good. It’s giving you the reason, giving you the time it’s going to be resolved by, and it’s told you the areas that are disrupted. So what’s there is good, it just needs a bit more information.”

[Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

Whether they would defer their journey on receipt of a DNT message is down to personal circumstance



The standard message is enough for some, but there are a variety of factors which mean that others need more information to persuade them to defer.

Most people in the sample would be put off travelling if they believe it is sufficiently *inconvenient* to do so

'Travel only if essential' might be more of a deterrent

- Suggests clearly that services are running
- Drives home **how unpleasant the journey might be before advising people not to travel**

Say essential – if you can postpone to a later day then do. If it's for leisure then don't travel. If you can put it off put it off, but if you can't then ok the travel's there for you. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

'DNT' can work if additional information in message helps justify instruction

- Potential for stranding not spontaneously considered, so when referenced in the scenarios it was a strong motivation to defer
 - **People may be more open to hearing 'DNT' if it is followed with a justification that the TOC cannot guarantee they will be able to complete their journey**
- Where TOCs determine it is necessary to say DNT rather than travel only if necessary
 - Make explicit they are running a severely reduced service *only* to help people performing essential services or with no choice about travelling
 - Bridges the apparent disconnect between a DNT message and the fact that some trains are still running

If you know that you could get stuck halfway through your journey, and you need to be somewhere for a certain time, then that would make my decision not to not to travel by train. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

'Reduced service' puts me off because it could be an hour or two, you might not be able to get home. It would put me off a hell of a lot more. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Northern England]

Because of the expectation that Do Not Travel means that there are no trains, where this message is seen as in conflict with other information (e.g. severe disruption) or experience that it is possible to get a train, this can impede trust in TOC/NR information and potentially reduce compliance in future.

Some respondents need more to persuade them to defer

If no trains, then won't travel, but otherwise expect to be able to

- All respondents expect to be told if trains can't be run, and to an extent have sympathy with the TOCs in those circumstances
 - **Little spontaneous consideration of the reasons some trains may still need to be run – thinking is 'very black and white' in terms of they either can run, or they can't**
 - Some respondents eventually worked out that this may be to help those who need to make genuinely essential journeys
 - Being more explicit about this can help to generate compliance and goodwill

I get it... 'do not travel' but I need more information than what they are offering, I find a bit confusing if they don't tell us why. Are the trains running or not? Is it safe to even get on them if we have to? [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Depending on circumstances and customer knowledge, it might not always be clear why the reason being given for disruption should lead to that disruption (e.g. leaves on the line) – consequently the more a TOC can openly explain what is happening and provide sufficient rationale, the more likely it is to convince those with less deferrable journeys not to travel, and also those with deferrable journeys who are tempted to try their luck.

Developing the messaging approach

Spontaneous needs from a DNT message are around informing them of the situation and the customer's options

Essential basic content

- Clear, concise information on:
 - Location affected
 - Whether trains are running or not
 - Rationale for the disruption (to give context and create buy in)
 - Mention of overcrowding
 - Other travel options (route, replacement buses top of mind)
 - How long this will go on for
 - Where to get further advice/assistance
 - (Minority at this point) how to get a refund particularly important if they're already on the train

Beyond basic but still needs high value

- Live tracking and updates
- Notifications or text direct from TOCs so they don't have to find out from third parties
- Prompt organisation of replacement services
- Any relaxation of ticket restrictions

We need to know the length of the disruption, where and why, also what they will do about it, if there are other arrangements. [Occasional Business, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

I think knowing why and how they will overcome it, how long it would last. The exact locations are important too. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

Can they can do something like Uber Eats, they update you on your food's journey, anything like that would be brilliant. I think we're all after small constant updates. [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Spontaneous needs map well with what is being given in the standard messaging template. However, respondents struggled to articulate their ideal Do Not Travel message unprompted, because their key need at the point of finding out is to know what they can do instead.

There was also interest in a 'traffic light' warning system from some

To indicate the severity of what is happening/expected

- Provide **some indication of what to expect from the journey to help decision on whether to travel**
- Ideally should indicate length of delays and extent of overcrowding

Can they make a traffic light? It might be more impactful something visual that explains how bad the situations are, whether we should all travel or not. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, North England]

Multiple suggested benefits of such a system

- People are used to colour warning systems (e.g. weather)
- Can help TOCs/Network Rail convey more information with fewer words
- Psychological impact in that colours denote different things, such as association of red with danger
- **Appear to be giving information to help people make decisions for themselves rather than an order/instruction** (except in most serious circumstances)

Maybe like, when there's issues with the weather, you get different colours, depending on how actually severe they are, and how much issues might be faced. If there was a similar system in place with a few different colours, with an actual indicator of what the problem is going to be [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

I think that some kind of traffic light system on severity would help. Red means do not travel at all, orange is disrupted and green is all ok. That would make things easy to understand [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

Customers are open to being given information to allow them to make the final decision about what is right for them and their own circumstances

Customers want to feel informed and empowered to take next steps and make their own decision

How they feel when reading the message

- **Overall, informed**
 - However, **emotions are more likely to vary according to the nature of the journey they are/were trying to make than the content of the message itself**
- Split between those who are accepting (and don't see the issue as the TOC's fault), and others who are irritated:
 - Don't feel that the message is meeting their needs in terms of saying how bad the disruption is so that they can make their own decision- would ideally want more supporting information on the rationale for the decision if it's not obvious
 - Can leave them feeling that their position as travellers is not understood by the body issuing the message – though not clear on how to address this beyond an apology

I think its clear. It's telling me exactly what they want to do so that's what I'd do, I wouldn't travel. Obviously its inconvenient so I'd be a bit annoyed seeing it, but I like how clear that message is. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

I think something that isn't clear is if the trains are still running or not? If the trains are still running, then why does it make a difference if 50 people or 5 people are travelling. If the disruption is that bad then surely they would cancel that service? I think it's handy to know if you've got a choice or not. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Northern England]

I think I'd have to speak to friends or family or just go on Twitter or somewhere and get more information. Because that doesn't help me decide what to do. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Overall, the messages arm customers with some of the information they need – and no one wanted to read everything in one message. But they do want it to be easy to know where to go for more information.

Exploration of different scenarios and considerations highlighted that specific language and content can encourage passengers to defer their journey

Spontaneous needs

- Clear, concise information on:
 - Location affected
 - Whether trains are running or not
 - Rationale for the disruption (to give context and create buy in)
 - Mention of overcrowding
 - Other travel options (route, replacement buses top of mind)
 - How long this will go on for
 - Where to get further advice/assistance
 - (Minority at this point) how to get a refund particularly important if they're already on the train

Considerations for execution of content

- Consider:
 - Transparency over what is happening
 - Being told to not travel if they don't need to
 - Mentioning 'crowding' and 'lack of seats' as a deterrent
 - Using adjectives such as 'serious', 'severe', 'major' to build sense of disruption
 - Using the words 'essential travel only'
 - Phrasing as 'we recommend' to give agency to the individual but also makes clear that they can travel if they want/need to
 - Giving clarity on how bad the situation is

Where the communication is clear and straightforward about what is happening, the customers feel better equipped to make a decision.

What they spontaneously want to hear: The possibility of being stranded focuses the minds of most

Prompted scenario

The railway is trying to run trains but, because of the conditions, there is a genuine possibility that trains will get stranded or the service has to be suspended – passengers might not get where they are going and/or home again

What they would want to hear

- Looking for transparency about the circumstances they face – so **need for honesty and as much information as possible**
- ‘Stranded’ very important here – **sense that trains might not complete the journey is a powerful deterrent to travelling**
 - Important both because they might not get to their destination, but equally that they might not get home again even if they do make the outward journey successfully

Honesty, more in depth information. If people see ‘you might get stranded’, people aren’t going to think, ‘let’s give that a go!’ unless they have to. Whereas if you say, ‘might be delayed’, then most people would hedge their bets. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

If my journey is unlikely to happen or there’s a risk, I’d rather know that. I don’t want ‘might be/possibly stranded’, I don’t want stranded. I don’t want to be in that situation, so I’d rather it just said ‘code red’ or ‘code amber’ then ‘don’t travel...stranded at own risk’. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

I’d need the reasons for it, how likely it is as well, and what could happen or would happen if you did get stranded? [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Northern England]

Clear reason to not travel for most, so becomes about reassuring those who must travel that they can.

What they spontaneously want to hear: Unpleasant travelling conditions are a motivator not to travel

Prompted scenario

Trains are running, but you could be severely delayed and/or experience significant crowding. In other words, you're not likely to have a good journey but you will get there eventually

What they would want to hear

- The message required in this scenario is primarily about landing the idea of not travelling if they don't need to
- Mention 'crowding' and 'lack of seats' as a deterrent
- **Adjectives such as 'serious', 'severe', 'major' to build sense of disruption**
- **Use 'recommend' or 'advise' to suggest that people can make their own decisions – making their own choice, or feeling that they have, important to many**
- Potentially includes something about 'travel at your own risk'

Say to people we're experiencing severe disruption to your routes, expect your trains to be overcrowded, we will get you there. But you may be delayed, give us an estimate of the time, because that'll put off about half the people that got into the trains. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

They should say trains are in operation but severely crowded. Standing room only, that sort of thing... You are not guaranteed a seat. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Maybe, to advise you perhaps if you can to postpone your journey. So postponing your journey rather than cancelling, Cancel sounds very final. They need to tell people it's uncomfortable so they then can decide what to do. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

I think the wording is really good to sort of strong words like severely and significant, okay, it's like, letting you know that there is going to be like, it's going to be a lot of drama. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

In this case the demand is for something that explains what the situation is going to be like, but still feels like the decision on whether to travel or not is in the hands of the individual.

What they spontaneously want to hear: Severe overcrowding because of fewer trains

Prompted scenario

There are fewer trains than normal and if the usual number of passengers turn up there will be overcrowding

What they would want to hear

- Talk up the overcrowding
- Use the words 'essential travel only'
- **Phrase as 'we recommend' to give agency to the individual but also makes clear that they can travel if they want/need to**
- Give clarity on how bad the situation is
- **Mention refunds, to nudge those who have already bought tickets to see that they could defer without losing out**

Just say it like it is. There is a high risk of overcrowding due to the reduced number of trains, we recommend you organise alternative transport. It's about informing people. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Southern England]

It's important to state 2 things: it might be overcrowded, and you might miss your train due to capacity issues. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Say how bad it is and say overcrowding and discomfort is expected. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

Say there is less carriages, less trains and be honest. Say how severe it is, people with disabilities or people who need to sit need to be well informed. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

In this option, it is about communicating the potential negatives of travelling and, through talking about refunds, making deferring travel seem easy.

What they spontaneously want to hear: Overcrowding meaning some are left behind

Prompted scenario

The number of trains running is so few that severe overcrowding, with people left behind or not able to get home, is inevitable

What they would want to hear

- Strong demand for a clear message of ‘don’t travel’ in this scenario
- Seems self-evident that in the circumstances, if you can avoid traveling, you should
- Convey the severity as a form of deterrent:
 - ‘Travel at own risk’
 - Use ‘disrupted’, ‘left behind’, ‘limited capacity’, ‘only if essential’

I think again just displaying the urgency of the situation and warning people, this is the reality, you could well be left behind. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Tell them and explain not travel unless you have to. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

Say no service, really disrupted service. Travel at your own risk. [Occasional Business, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Limited capacity, likelihood of being left behind. Travel at your own risk, that sort of thing is important. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

Clear permission in this scenario to be straightforward and honest about the likely conditions.

DNT messages are always likely to raise further questions

Questions raised by the message

- **What else can I do?**
- **Are there any services running at all, or not?**
- **When will it be over?**
- **Can I have a refund?**

Notification and frequency of updates

- **Would ideally want to be notified as soon as possible when there has been an issue**
 - Allows maximum time to change plans
 - Might deter those still at home from setting out
- **Updates are expected as and when there are developments**
 - Any material changes in when message routes are expected to be back to normal
- **Some demand for updates when there have been no changes**
 - Especially relevant when disruption is more serious or longer term
 - Makes clear that work is underway
 - Reassures travellers who might be out on the network that they haven't been forgotten about
 - Much less relevant for those who are either able to defer their travel, or who haven't already left home

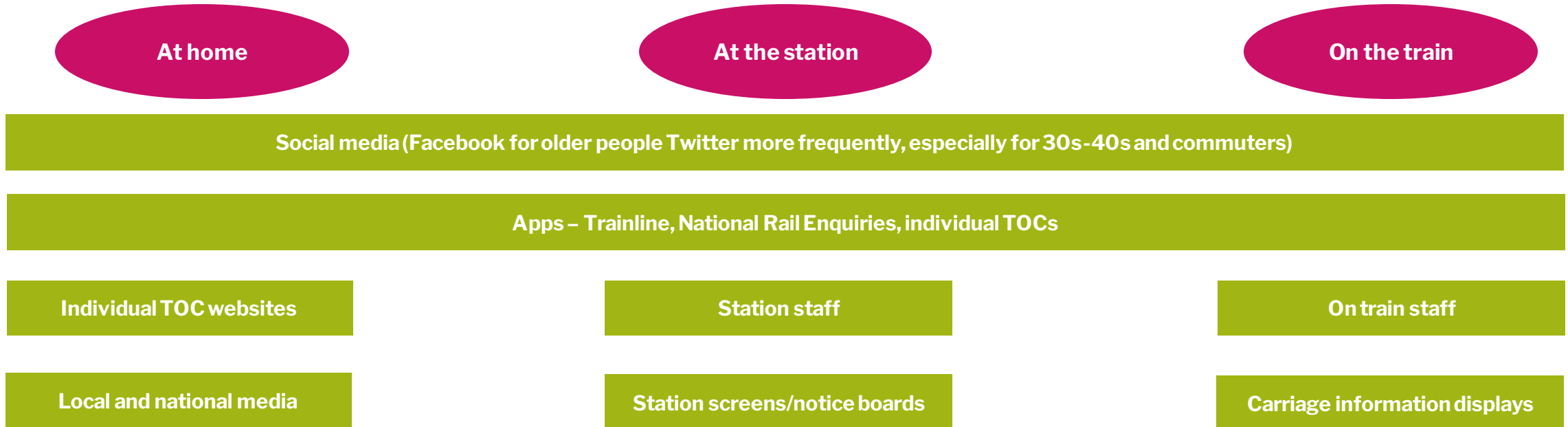
I'd want to know the length of the disruption, where and why, also what they will do about it, if there are other arrangements. Is there any other way I can get there? [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

I'd want to know as soon as possible. The day before I was going to travel, or if it's first thing in the morning before I have to start travelling, at least two hours before. [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

I'd like to be pro-actively notified... I think there should be updates that are done more generically, not just through the app. Basically, you get lots of road information coming through father radio. And I think, that it will be very useful to have it broadcasted properly exactly what's going on area to area. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-Deferrable, South England]

Important not to give a sense that it's one message and then the customer is on their own – need to be clear about frequency of updates, whatever they are – expected to be different for each episode of disruption.

Customers expect to receive DNT notifications through a range of channels



Respondents would choose to use different channels in different locations – and their access both to the channels and to the planning tools/information they might need as a result is also going to vary by location.

Potential to leverage other factors more for this audience?

People respond well to the idea of 'doing the right thing'

- The current message **lacks any sense that if customers choose to travel unnecessarily this could have a negative impact on others**
- Where there is *not* a risk of trains being stranded, **invoking a sense of social responsibility could help justify the DNT advice**

Please think carefully before travelling due to overcrowding, if your journey is not essential maybe consider using an alternative form of travel for your own comfort, something like that, just to make it a bit more customer focused...
[Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Make deferring feel easy

- **Ease of refunds** – also aids good will as TOCs not just taking people's money
- **Changes to ticket restrictions**

I agree and I've always wondered when I've heard about disruption, why there's not an option if I can't travel to just have a refund, rather than claiming compensation after. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

The more that can be done to explain that not travelling is the right thing to do – and to explain why that is the case – the more chance of getting through to those who are otherwise minded to ignore the notice and travel anyway. However, it will be essential to strike the right tone to avoid accusations of using guilt.

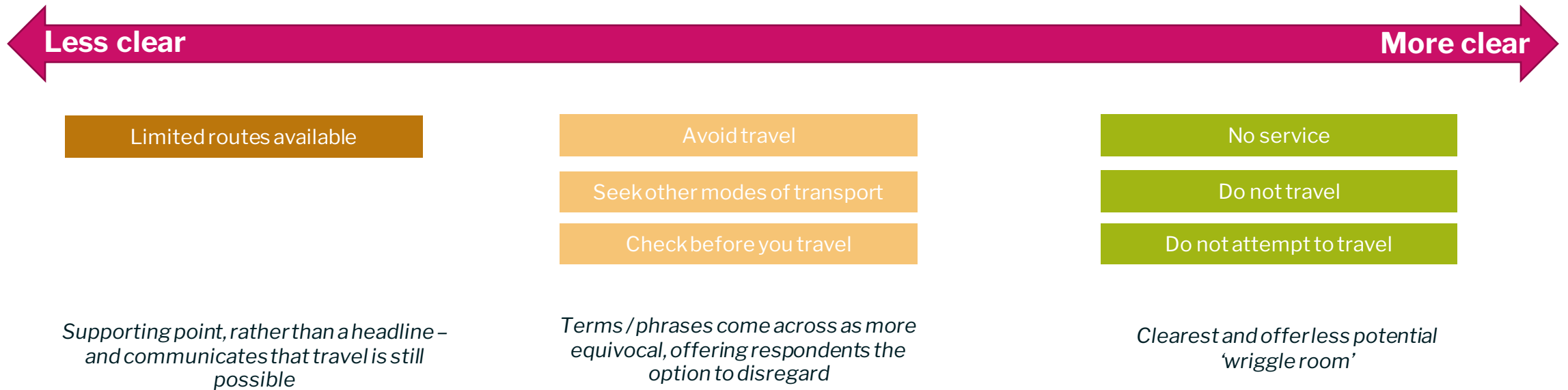
The reason given for disruption has a significant effect on what respondents would do

- Where something has happened that is more powerful than when something is 'predicted' or 'forecast'
- **Common belief that forecasts can be wrong, so less certainty that there is actually going to be the disruption**
- Concern that the TOCs could just be being over-cautious
- Limited understanding from some of why a reason given might mean disruption
- For example, thick fog doesn't close motorways, it just means people drive more slowly – so why should trains be different?
- The reason given will therefore be part of the mix as each individual decides whether to travel or not
- Potential for some people to 'chance it' and make a non-essential trip if they think the disruption isn't likely to happen

Despite being told DNT messages are only issued in the most serious circumstances, there is a need for anything that can reinforce the potential consequences for getting on the train.



Do Not Travel – industry terms vary in perceived clarity regardless of previous experience of DNT messaging or not



In general, the clearest are those that give unambiguous instruction, ideally supplemented by sufficient information to be most effective. Once words like 'avoid' or 'seek' are used there is more permission to disregard the message for those who feel less willing to comply.

Do Not Travel words - working well

No service

- Most likely to get passengers to defer or cancel their travel
- Clearest of all the options = no trains are available at all

No service. It's physically impossible for you to get there. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Do not travel

- Clear and unambiguous instructions
- **Feels 'authoritarian' to some, which does suggest it needs to be taken seriously**
- Those who don't like being told what to do without sufficient rationale would need these statements to be supplemented by additional information on the reason for the advice
- Particular standout for Occasional Business travellers

Do not travel is very authoritarian, in a good way, it works. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Scotland]

Do not attempt to travel

Do not attempt to travel is a good one, there's no way you can... it sounds like it will be chaotic. It would put someone like me off from doing it. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

These three options are the clearest and offer less potential 'wriggle room'.

Do Not Travel – working less well

Avoid travel

- Mixed reception - deterring for the most cautious
- Others see 'avoid' as introducing ambiguity and transferring more of the decision making back onto them
- **For the most literal, conveys that they should not be travelling by any means at all**

Ambiguous. You either want us to travel or you want us not to...tell us what you want us to do, don't leave it down to us to decide. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

Check before you travel

- Less impactful, as something they would expect to do in most circumstances anyway
- Potentially much less useful if they have already left home/their home station

Check before you travel. I don't know how you could check before your travel, well if it's available to you pre but if it's available at the station, it's not going to be much help. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Seek other modes of transport

- Does suggest not to use the trains
- However, **should ideally be followed by clarity on what alternative transport is available, or it can feel frustrating**
- Less effective without offering alternatives

I think seek other modes of transport would help incentivise me to actually look instead of still try and maybe get the train. Maybe if that was followed up with alternative routes that could be taken that would also be helpful [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Terms / phrases come across as more equivocal, offering respondents the option to disregard.

Do Not Travel – working least well

Limited routes available

- Not conveying much on its own
- Seems vague, most likely you still consider travelling without more definite instructions on what they can and can't do
- **If limited trains are running and exact information on this is included then it does have a role, but not as a direct motivator to travel/defer travel**

'Limited routes available', I'd want to know what routes. Because one might be available to get me where I want to go. That's very vague. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

'Limited routes available' is too ambiguous, you don't know. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, South England]

Phrase feels like a supporting point, rather than a headline – and communicates that travel is still possible. Risks the take-out being that if your route is running, then it's fine to travel.

Travel only if necessary – industry terms



Four options relatively clear (preference largely down to the individual).

Travel only if necessary

Only travel if essential/absolutely essential

Only travel if necessary/absolutely necessary

Only travel if your journey is non-deferrable

- **Little to choose between necessary and essential**
- **Slight preference for 'essential' because it feels more serious and less suggestive than 'necessary'**
 - Necessary associated more with having choice and flexibility
- 'Absolutely' prefix preferable for majority
 - Stands out more than options not including it
 - Minority found 'absolutely' patronising

- Many unclear on what 'non-deferrable' means
 - Even those that do found it confusing
- Lacks clarity, introduces uncertainty and doubt

What we define as 'essential' or 'necessary' is up to the individual. You're leaving it up to the individual, to make that decision. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Northern England]

The ones with 'absolutely' for me, I think they'd do a better job of deterring me personally, just because of that word 'absolutely'. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, South England]

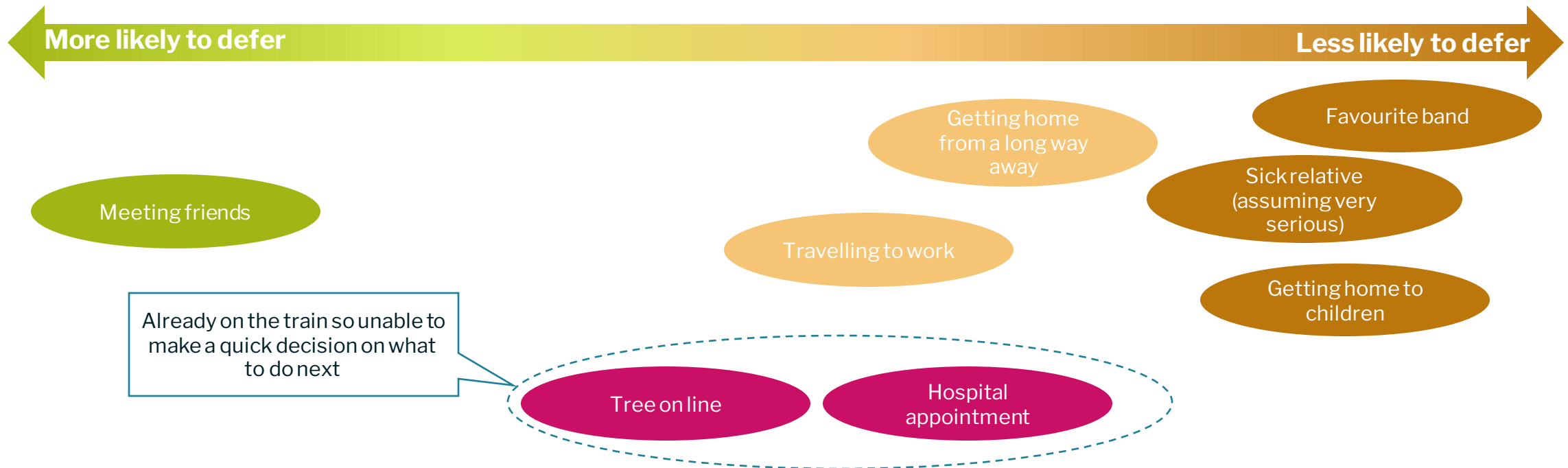
I wouldn't even know what that means. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Mixed Gender, Wales]

Ideally need to land the point that there is a serious issue, and it would be better not to travel unless the customer absolutely has to.

Responses to prompted scenarios

Clear that some scenarios would require more information to deter travel than others

- While there is some consistency in how customers hypothetically consider different scenarios in terms of their likely deferability, discussion simply highlighted that what is deferrable for one person may not be for another



YET for any scenario that an individual considers less deferrable, stronger messaging may work harder to deter travel than the current template.

Most likely to travel anyway

Favourite band

- As with sports teams something that they have been looking forward to, important to be there
- Will look for other transport options **but many would still board a train if no alternative**

It depends how far away it is. If it's somewhere where there's another way that I could get there, and I'm still at home, then I'd probably go for that. But if I had a look, and I would still be able to get a train in time, I'd probably risk it. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Sick relative

- **Most feel compelled to try and get there if serious (no one else to look after them or missing chance to see relative before they die)**
- Ideally would want to look for other transport but overall would rather try and travel (and fail to get there) than defer

Depends how sick the family member was. In that moment I'd focus on getting there, and if there was no other way I'd still try by train. Family come first, I wouldn't care if the journey was uncomfortable. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

Getting home to children

- Assuming there is no one else who can pick them up/look after them, it's important to travel – feels essential

There's no way I'm not going. I'm going to get my children. I've got no other childcare. If there's no other option we get on that train...say it's the last one, then I'd get on it. If there's a chance of complication, then drive or taxi. Probably taxi. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

These scenarios represent essential travel for most, where they would board a train if a train was running and they had no alternatives.

Quite likely to travel anyway

Getting home from a long way away

- Deferring depends on if they've got somewhere else to stay away from their home town, or other transport options
- **Sense that at least starting the journey represents progress for some**

I'd chance it, you're so far from home, a hotel would be loads. Maybe a travel lodge but it would depend how urgent it is for you to come home, what plans you have and stuff. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Scotland]

Getting to work

- Essential travel for some
- Those that can work from home may do so, but there will still be some who try to board trains if they're running
- **Once at the station, some feel committed to journey**

If I'm going in it's because there's something I can't miss, so that meeting or event is going ahead irrespective of whether I'm there or not. I need to be there for me, even if they don't need me to be there necessarily. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

Less consensus on travelling or deferring, but important for some.

Least likely to travel

Meeting friends

- Likely to be able to put this off for another date

It's not urgent travel is it? You're not going to lose any money or you're not going to have to fork out any extra money for anything. So yeah, I'd just go home. [Commuter Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

The scenario which feels most deferrable. However, even here there were respondents who felt that they would want to travel anyway unless trains weren't running at all.

When they're already on the train as in these prompted scenarios, it feels different

Tree on line

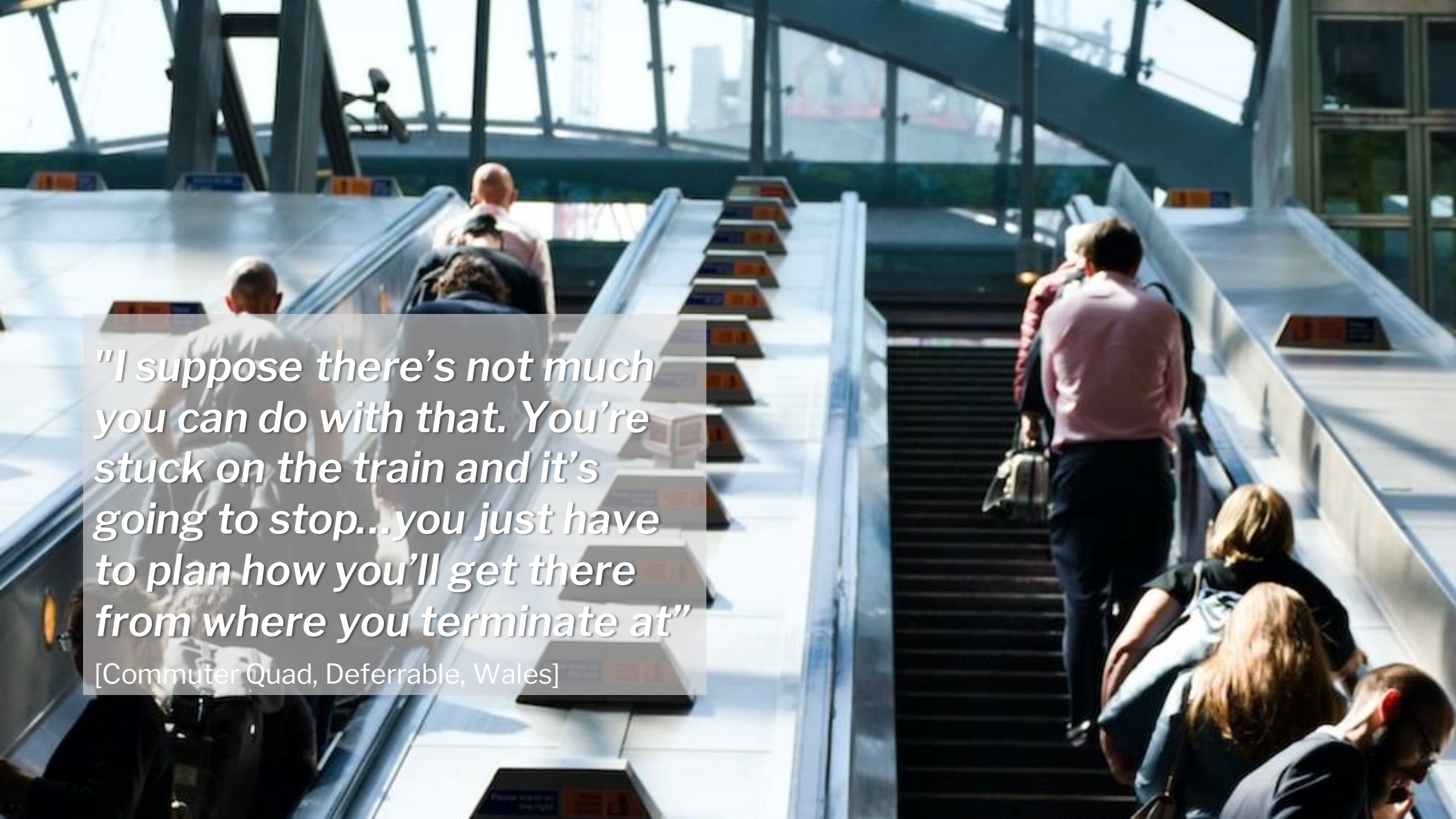
Hospital appointment

- **Because they are already on the train, part of the decision has been made for them**
- Don't have many other options, so important to just be kept informed about what is happening and when they can expect to move again
- In the hospital appointment scenario, strong desire for support and information from staff on trains and at platform to help them access alternative transport

Nothing you can do really, You can't go past. But maybe an estimate of how long? 'We've got workmen on the way, usually takes an hour, so we should be ready in about an hour give or take'. Just a bit of information so you're not sat there wondering. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Northern England]

It's more about what they're going to do, is there somewhere we can shelter until the storm passes, is there an alternative route, is there somewhere we can go to make alternative arrangements? [Female depth, 53, Commuter, Deferrable, Visual Impairment, C1, North England]

In these scenarios, the choice to travel has already been made, so it is more about dealing with the consequences of that decision.



"I suppose there's not much you can do with that. You're stuck on the train and it's going to stop...you just have to plan how you'll get there from where you terminate at"

[Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

Some information needs are common across all scenarios, others layer on according to the situation

Basic information common across scenarios to help decision making

- Cause of disruption
- Timeframe for disruption
- Assurance train is not a reliable option
- Links to any alternative travel

I'd be wanting to know why I'm being advised not to travel and I'd want to know what my options were. I'd want a lot more context around that advice so I could then make arrangements and try and do whatever I needed to do. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Additional information for particular circumstances

- Route/network/line maps for those trying to travel for the most non-deferrable journeys (work and once-in-a-lifetime social)
- How to get a refund (especially when away from home, or to make a quick decision for the most deferrable journeys)
- Ability to speak to staff if at a station

I'd try and speak to someone as soon as possible, then I'd go on trainline or city mapper to try and figure out another route. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

Distinct additional needs if on a train when disruption occurs

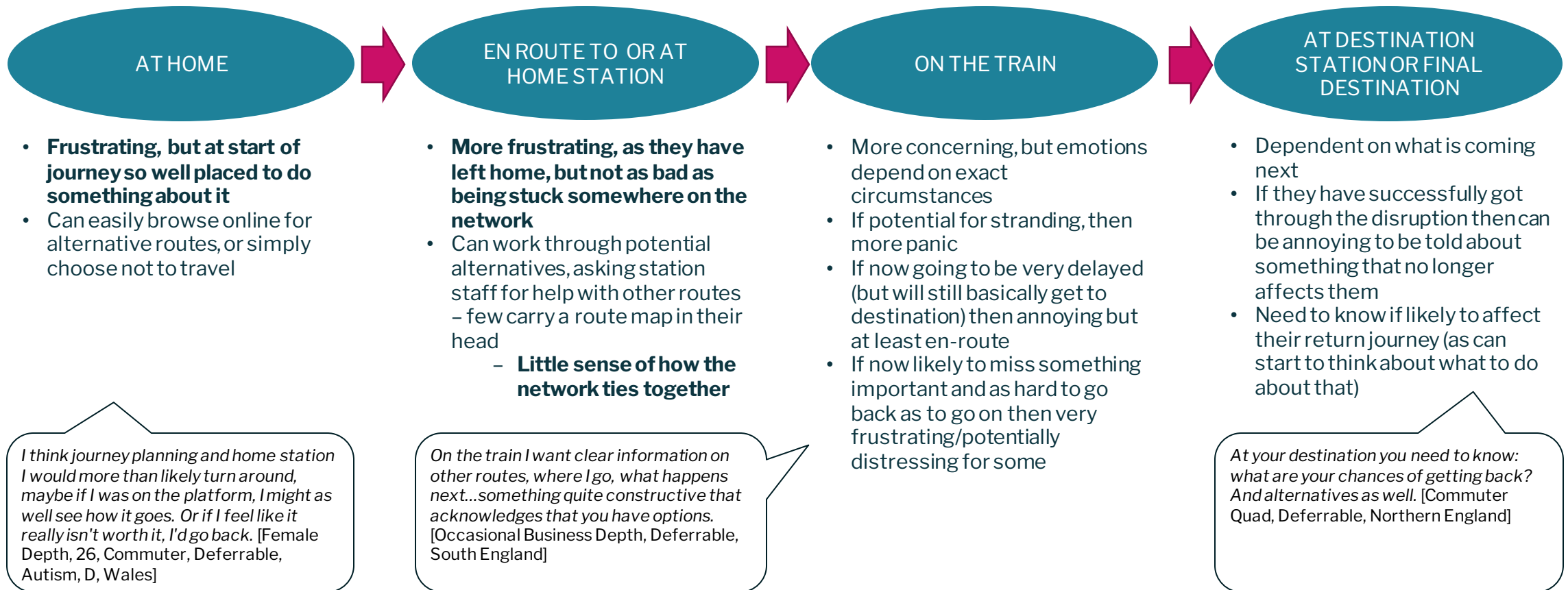
- Options for what to do at the next station
- Any impact on connecting services
- In the event of termination before scheduled destination, any arrangements for onward travel

Personally, I would have to know what station I was getting off at, how far away it was from where I lived, and what the access was like. [Female depth, 42, Occasional Business, Non-deferrable, Disabled (Wheelchair User), C1, Scotland]

There are bedrock information needs that are expected in any Do Not Travel scenario, but other information is also necessary depending on where the customer is on their journey when they receive the message, and the perceived urgency of their journey.

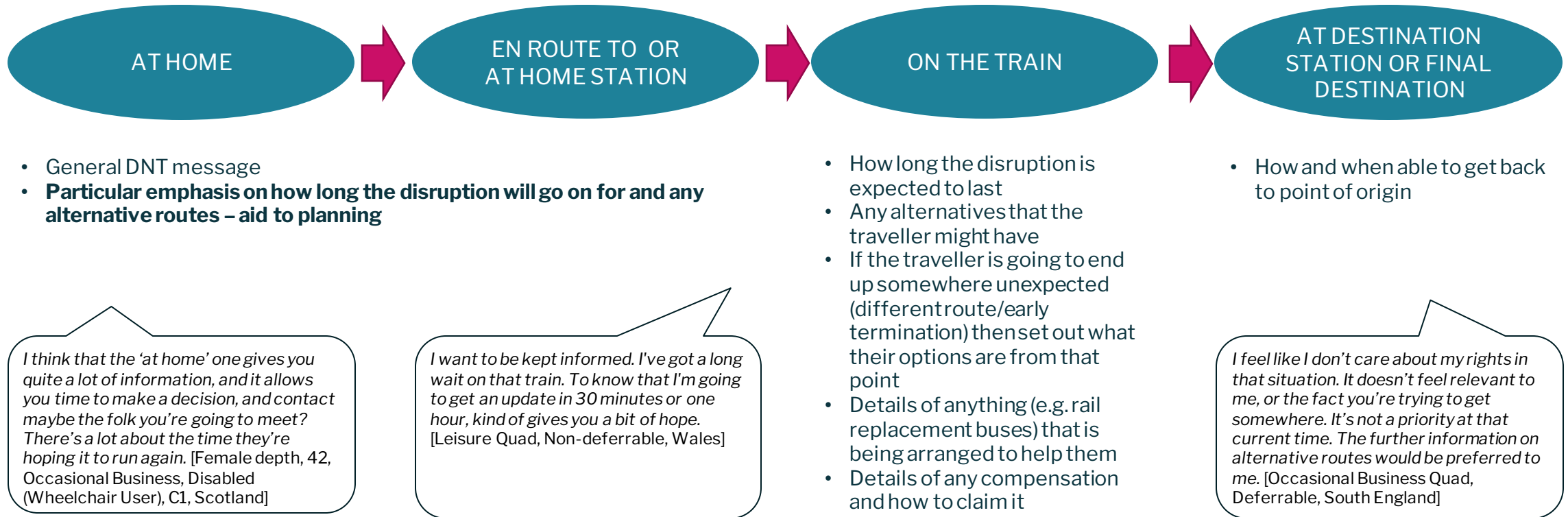
Journey touchpoints and personalised messaging

Reception of DNT messaging is very dependent on what leg of their journey a passenger is on



People have most options to plan alternatives in their own home, then before they start their journey. Once they're en route, the likelihood of abandoning the trip decreases and needs shift towards how to make the best of it.

Information needed from personalised messaging



The key needs are relevant details, and future options.

Personalised messaging therefore has some appeal

Ideal would be truly personalised

- **Interest in having information truly relevant to exactly where they are in their own journey**
- However, understand that the TOCs would struggle to do this in reality

I think they'd be helpful, it's good to know what you should do at different stages. I think it's better to have these than a blanket message with less info. [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, Scotland]

Dedicated website areas

- Without truly personalised messaging, **there is interest in potentially having a web-based drop-down menu where more tailored information can be given for different journey stages**
- Of most use to those still at home with the ability to look online
- Ideally should be able to find the information via apps as well as website
- **Worries about reception and battery life means less interest in looking at personalised information when actually on the train**
 - More likely to use phones for other priorities such as contacting family/friends/employers/clients

Ideally I'd see it on their website, and I use the travel for Wales up so a pop-up on there. I just think the more places they can put it the better it would be. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

I think the mode of communication needs to be tailored to where you are. If you're at the station, or on a train a text is probably not going to be that useful because a lot of the places where the train might be stranded, you're probably not going to get signal via mobile...so it needs to be spoken through the speakers or displayed. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

While most don't think personalised messaging is a genuine option, there is interest from a large group in having information roughly specific to the stage of the journey that they're at available on apps and TOC/Network Rail websites.

Post-disruption messaging (ticket acceptance and easement)

Post disruption general and route specific advice messaging was generally working overall

Context: Following on from a Do Not Travel message, TOCs may be guided by the following points to advise passengers in need of alternative routes.

Tickets dated today can be used on [Date(s)]

If [Route] is affected, use [Route or TOC]

Trains will be busier and journey times will be longer

Disruptions are likely to continue until [Date/ Time]

Service is not likely to resume until [Date/ Time]

If you no longer wish to travel due to this disruption, you are entitled to a fee-free refund. Please contact your ticket retailer.

For further details on the reason for this disruption, please go to [hyperlink to mainstream media covering incident]

For further information on alternative travel, please see the [hyperlink to disruption maps/ alternative route maps]

I think it's all really important: dates, times, if you can use it at later dates, if other providers can offer services, and how you go about recouping the money for the services you haven't received. Maybe a hyperlink for FAQ's too. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

They already answer questions that I didn't realise I had, like dates and ticket refunds, I like the warning about busyness so you know that you can travel but also what it's going to be like. [Commuter Quad, Non-deferrable, Southern England]

- ✓ All considered useful information
 - ✓ Particular interest in the links to further information
 - ✓ Important for some to give them additional material to amplify the severity of the situation and persuade them not to travel
 - ? However, minority of the more cynical (across all passenger types) interpret this as an attempt by TOCs to deflect blame/attention from what is happening
 - ✓ Details of refunds useful – and not always top of mind for people
 - ✓ Length of disruption vitally important if deciding whether to defer travel – but ideally need to be specific on expected length
 - ✓ Disruption maps/alternative route maps can play a role in the decision making process
 - ✓ Offer alternative to trying to travel anyway on the disrupted route
 - ✓ Can focus customer minds on how long the diversion might take – potentially encouraging them not to travel at all
 - ? Minority frustrated by hyperlinks / being directed elsewhere

Helpful information which provides the guidance that most would expect during the period of disruption.

While disruption is happening – elements working well

Whilst this disruption is ongoing, you can use your ticket at no extra cost on [TOC Name and Route Information] from [Time] or until [Time]. If you start your journey at a different station due to this disruption and need to return to the same station later, you will also be able to do this at no extra cost.

This may add up to [Number of (Minutes) or (Hours)] to your journey.

Please try and travel as close to your original train time as possible.*

[TOC Name] services between [Station] and [Station] [are] or [will be] extremely busy and we cannot guarantee that you will be able to have a seat on these trains.

Please try to make a seat reservation, if possible, via [Link to TOC Reservation Page].

Please be aware if you decide to travel via [Location], [TOC Name] is also experiencing disruption because of [Reason] which may impact your journey further. For more information, please see [Link to Relevant Disruption Item].

If you no longer wish to travel or abandon your journey due to this disruption, you are entitled to a fee-free refund. Please contact your ticket retailer. If you do travel but are delayed by [X minutes] or more, please claim delay repay [Hyperlink].

*If peak or off-peak time restrictions are being adhered to by the alternative TOC(s) then this should be communicated here in the message.

I like the idea of them saying no extra cost, I'd want to hear it. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

They're giving you options, and even telling you about transferring tickets to other companies, but also prewarning that they might have the same delays. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Northern England]

- ✓ Important and helpful to clarify that there is no additional cost to using alternative routes
- ✓ Information about length of delay useful to see
 - ✓ Expected to help make informed decision about what action to take
- ✓ Useful to be told that services might be busy
 - ✓ May be a deterrent if the journey is deferrable
 - ✓ Particularly important for those with mobility issues or travelling with young children
- ✓ Important to be told if there is likely to be disruption on other routes
 - ✓ Helpful to be able to take this into account when planning
- ✓ Information around refunds and delay repay appreciated
 - ✓ For some, being able to get a refund will help them to rearrange their plans
 - ✓ Suggestion of end-to-end continuity through the process

**All useful information that can help with decision making.
Particularly reassuring to be told about alternative routes, and how to claim back money spent on tickets.**

While disruption is happening - elements working less well

Whilst this disruption is ongoing, you can use your ticket at no extra cost on [TOC Name and Route Information] from [Time] or until [Time]. If you start your journey at a different station due to this disruption and need to return to the same station later, you will also be able to do this at no extra cost.

This may add up to [Number of (Minutes) or (Hours)] to your journey.

Please try and travel as close to your original train time as possible.*

[TOC Name] services between [Station] and [Station] [are] or [will be] extremely busy and we cannot guarantee that you will be able to have a seat on these trains.

Please try to make a seat reservation, if possible, via [Link to TOC Reservation Page].

Please be aware if you decide to travel via [Location], [TOC Name] is also experiencing disruption because of [Reason] which may impact your journey further. For more information, please see [Link to Relevant Disruption Item].

If you no longer wish to travel or abandon your journey due to this disruption, you are entitled to a fee-free refund. Please contact your ticket retailer. If you do travel but are delayed by [X minutes] or more, please claim delay repay [Hyperlink].

*If peak or off-peak time restrictions are being adhered to by the alternative TOC(s) then this should be communicated here in the message.

- ? Most respondents do assume that they can use any route necessary when there is disruption, and any suggestion that there is parameters around this can irritate some
- ? Second sentence can be confusing
 - ? Expected to make more sense if they were actually in the situation
 - ? Potential to be made more concise and align with expectations more
 - ? 'Whilst this disruption is ongoing, you can use any train route necessary to reach your destination at no extra cost'
- ? A few respondents question the logic of being told to travel as close as possible to their original train time
 - ? May not be convenient given the disruption
 - ? Some argue that the TOC should be flexible given it's their problem
- ? If it's possible to reserve a seat then this is useful
 - ? BUT scepticism about whether this actually will be possible based on previous experience – noting people seem to sit where they want when there is disruption
- ? Minority irritated by 'fee free' – can suggest that some TOCs would charge for a refund

I think the 'no extra cost' irritates me. It should be 'no cost' because it's massively inconvenient and trains are already very expensive. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

I think the wording of the first paragraph just lacks clarity, especially the second sentence. Do I need to try and sit down and figure out with whether it will cost me anything. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, North England]

Post disruption – when the line is open but delays remain

If you are already using or making your way to an alternative route, then you will be able to continue your journey via this route at no extra charge. If you are starting your journey at a different station due to this disruption and need to return to the same station later, you will also be able to do this at no extra cost.

- ✓ Useful to be told that they will not have to pay extra to use another route
 - ✓ Even those who assume this will be the case anyway appreciate the reassurance
 - ✓ Important for the less frequent travellers, who can be anxious about this
- ? No major pushback on wording but some sense that it could be clearer/more concise
 - ? Focus of respondents tended to be on key words ('alternative route', 'no extra charge') which gives them the information they need, but little sense that they would read the whole thing

I think it's nice to have the flexibility. It's nice to know that you can do that because you may have you may not use the train you maybe used to car to get to or getting the left to another station. And now you're able to have that flexibility to get back on to what you're originally doing. [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

Yeah, definitely the 'no extra charge'. Train fares are not cheap, can be quite costly, so not having an extra charge would reassure you, and reduce your anxieties. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Northern England]

If it would be more helpful if they could tell you what the alternative route is... If you weren't told that I would probably buy a different ticket. So, I think it's really important to let people know that you can do that. [Female Depth, 26, Commuter, Deferrable, Autism, D, Wales]

Overall useful - good to know that they won't be penalised for trying to work around the disruption. Potentially could be broken down for less chance of confusion – a lot to take in from a block of text.

Post disruption – when the disruption and delays are over

If you are already using an alternative route, then you will be able to continue your journey via this route at no extra charge.

- ✓ Clear in terms of the words being used
- ✓ Reflects their expectations that they will not have to pay extra for measures that they have had to take because of the network's disruption
- ? Some don't understand why they would be on a different route in the abstract, but expect this to make more sense if they were actually in the situation

I think the 'no extra charge' is a bit redundant. You should just be able to continue your route. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

It's good they won't charge extra; this would be something that I would worry about. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Scotland]

Useful - reassuring to know that they won't be caught out on the wrong route and have to pay a penalty.

The meaning of 'ticket acceptance' was ok for most, but could be improved further

Spontaneously seen as something to do with 'validity'

When communicating about ticket acceptance, the need is to be as specific as possible

- Respondents interpreted as 'when your ticket is valid' or 'when your ticket is accepted'
- Also connotations of the ticket being 'collected' or 'inspected' at stations or on trains
- 'Valid' / 'validity' are generally accepted terms

- ✓ **Use of tickets on alternative routes** is clear, direct and descriptive
 - ✓ Potential to strengthen to 'all alternative routes and lines'
 - ✓ Ideally could give further information such as what those alternative routes and lines are, rather than leaving that ambiguous
- ? **Honour passenger tickets** was understood by most to mean that tickets would be accepted, but
 - ? Question in what circumstances/who would be honouring
 - ? Minority don't understand what 'honouring' means
- ? **Cross-industry ticket acceptance** was not well understood
 - ? Assumption from some that this is across the whole transport industry
 - ? Respondents didn't silo public transport into industry verticals
 - ? Suggested to some that they could use their tickets on buses/coaches instead if the trains weren't running

Whether you are accepted on another line or company? [Occasional Business Quad, Deferrable, Wales]

The last one is clear, 'use of tickets on alternative routes'. So if you're going from say Liverpool to Edinburgh and part of the lines closed you can use an alternative route as long as you're going from A to B. Doesn't matter which route you go, it will still be accepted. [Commuter Trio, Non-Deferrable, North England]

When it says honour passenger ticket, it's a bit grey isn't it? Does that mean that they'd honour my bus ticket? Or the metro ticket? It needs more clarification, I would say valid, valid for all routes and operators across the board. [Female Depth, 53, Occasional Business, Disabled (wheelchair user), B, North England]

Where possible, plain unambiguous English is preferred and there are phrases that introduce doubt/questioning for some, such as 'cross-industry acceptance'.

Ticket easement was understood by very few

Not widely understood

- Understood by a very small minority
- Most could not even offer a guess
- Much clearer when communicated as 'when and where you can use your ticket'

I don't think easements a great word, a lot of people might not know what that means. I think there's definitely a better way of wording it [Commuter Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

Most are not spontaneously aware of all the variables

- Number of restrictions that can be relaxed is extensive, and not something respondents had typically given thought to
- When explained, the principle of easement is clear
- ? BUT the words 'ticket easement' can come across as jargon or pretentious
 - ? Most know which TOC runs the line they use most, BUT general sentiment is that trains are trains
 - ? Consequently, many respondents not aware that some tickets can only be used with certain operators
 - ? People tended to think of 'ticket acceptance' as covering all terms/restrictions and would prefer to think of it as:
 - ? Ticket acceptance
 - ? Ticket restrictions/easing of ticket restrictions

Use of tickets on a difference day, is clear but the best one is when they say date or time, it seems more flexible. I'd be more likely to hang on to my ticket. Sometimes you can't take the same journey, it's much more limiting. [Leisure Quad, Deferrable, South England]

I've never heard that word before. Certainly, it would be really confusing. And I didn't know what it means at all. It just sounds like jargon [Occasional Business Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

The concept of ticket easement is easily grasped when explained, but the word 'easement' is not understood.

Conclusions

Conclusions

'Consistency' in findings

- There was consistency across respondent types and areas in terms of what needs to be in a DNT notice
- Key is to explain what is happening, why it is happening, what the impact is, and when it will be over
- Throughout the disruption, there is an expectation that TOCs/NR will keep customers informed of progress towards a return to normal

Overall, most language is clear and concise

- There was little demand to reword sections of the messaging, but there is scope for improvement
- Where possible break down or bullet longer sentences for ease of comprehension
- Need to use plain English and avoid industry terminology such as 'easement'

Tension between 'Do not travel' and 'major disruption'

- Most take a DNT notice to mean that there are no trains
- Confusion when services are still running, and little sense that for anything other than safety reasons why a TOC should have the right to tell people not to travel when trains are operating
- Travel only if essential feels clearer, though more optional in terms of response

Ideally respondents want the information to make their own minds up

- Some respondents will not travel as soon as they see a DNT message, others take more persuading
- Those who are more intent on travel can be influenced to defer by talking about the levels of discomfort they might experience, or explaining to them why not travelling is the right thing to do
- Covid has no ongoing implications for messaging content, but while it has made some more likely to follow instructions, others now don't want to unless it can be shown exactly why they should

Messaging needs are affected by multiple factors – with implications for what is needed to deter people from travelling

Start point for all	Additional considerations for those with higher determination to travel	Critical needs to take action
<p>Need to understand clearly that the advice is NOT to travel</p>	<p>Attitudes towards individual ability to travel (confidence and experience)</p>	<p>Point on journey</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard approaches currently used, only partly meet the needs of passengers. There is room for improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In particular, the expectation is ‘Do Not Travel’ means ‘there are no trains’ – When trains are running, but DNT is the advice this creates a conflict for passengers • This can be resolved by providing more information to help understand the actual impact on travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cautious and less experienced will defer on receipt of the DNT message • However, high confidence of some means they are willing to try to navigate any remaining service • Some will not defer unless no trains, but others can be influenced with more detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical factor in determining the options available to an individual • The further into the journey they are, the less likely they are to defer so long as trains are running • Help needed to find alternatives and mitigate negativity of experience
<p>While initial responses vary, standard messaging approach needs stronger suggestion to not travel which comes from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing perceived contradiction between DNT and severe disruption • Providing more explanation around disruption to help customers understand <i>actual</i> impact 	<p>To reduce desire to travel, need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity that there is NO service • Emotional levers, that very limited service should be for emergency workers / emergencies only • Clarity around conditions of travel, to ensure understanding of relative difficulty/discomfort (helps with creating trade off) 	<p>Where importance/urgency is high, to reduce desire to travel, need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity that there is NO service • Emotional levers that very limited service should be for emergency workers / unavoidable journeys only • Degree of apology/sympathy/empathy in tone • Assistance in finding alternatives <p>At home/before journey starts, information is ideally timely, accurate (in setting expectations around alternatives) and easy to understand</p> <p>On the journey, information needs to specifically assist in solution-finding</p>



Appendix: response to specific scenarios

For 'higher stakes' leisure activities, many likely to travel one way or another and need strong deterrents not to use the train

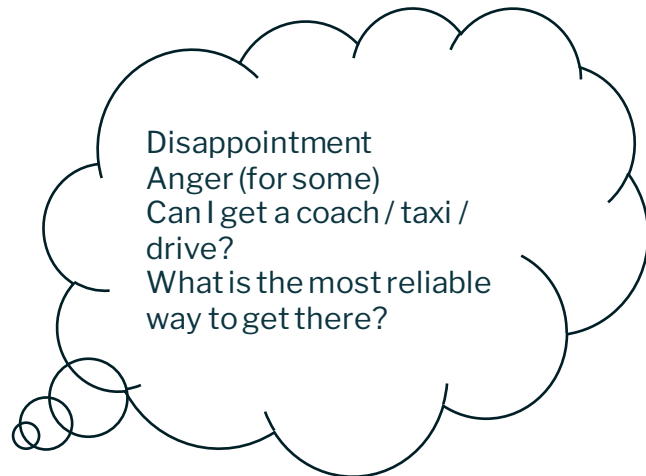
I think I'd be angry and upset, then it's either going or not, so trying to find out if other people are going, maybe there's a car or a coach. It doesn't leave you much time though if you're just leaving home. I'd be very upset if I couldn't get the journey. [Mixed Trio, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, North England/Scotland]

Scenario

Two years ago you bought tickets to see your favourite band live. On the day of the concert, as you are about to leave home for the train station, you see a 'Do Not Travel' has been issued by the train company you are travelling with.

Do not travel? Like, is there trains running or not? Because I would first of all look into that. I would see why they aren't running and make my decision then. Realistically I'd get a refund and find another way, I couldn't be bothered with the faff. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

THOUGHTS / FEELINGS



ACTIONS

- Depending on degree of commitment to event:
- Find alternative travel /
- Risk it and get train
- Try to sell concert tickets

INFORMATION NEEDS

- To make a decision not to travel these customers need:
- Cause of disruption (to drive home importance / diffuse anger)
 - Assurance train is not the best option
 - Links to info on alternative travel

To deter travel, customers need to be convinced that the train service cannot be relied upon and encouraged to seek other options.

Response to family illness depends upon the severity of the illness

It depends how sick they are. If this is like, end of life, then you're gonna get yourself there. So the urgency would dictate what I'd do in this situation. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, Southern England]

Scenario

You are about to leave home to visit a sick family member when you see a banner with 'Do Not Travel' on the website for the train company you are meant to be travelling with.

When you click into the banner, you see 'information for customers who need to return home'.

I just be interested to see what the information is. If the information's like alternative routes for people to get home or information of how long it will be cancelled, it just depends. [Leisure Trio, Deferrable, Scotland]

THOUGHTS / FEELINGS

Depends on how sick the relative is - range of emotions from anger (because unable to get there) through to grief/panic (might not see them again)

ACTIONS

- Seen as essential travel - clearest case where most would still try and travel if not other options

INFORMATION NEEDS

- To make a decision not to travel these customers need:
- Reason for disruption (gives more clarity and mitigates annoyance)
 - Timeframe for disruption
 - Links to alternative methods appreciated

In the worst-case scenario, this feels like an essential journey, and in practice feels like a difficult scenario for a Do Not Travel message short of 'no service' to deter.

One of the more stressful situations

That's another panic situation, you've got to travel no matter what if you can't get alternative arrangements. Either way it's a nightmare to set up. [Commuter Quad, Deferrable, Northern England]

Scenario

You are getting ready to leave work and go to the train station when you get a notification advising customers not to travel. Your children need to be picked up from school and you have no alternatives in terms of childcare

You just need to know that they have got an alternative. You need them to be responsible and say, 'this has happened, but we have an alternative, we'll get you there, don't panic'. [Mixed Trio, Deferrable & Non-deferrable, North England/Scotland]

THOUGHTS / FEELINGS

Panicked (because of needs of children), angry, uncertain what to do next

ACTIONS

- Seen as essential travel for most
- Look into any possible alternatives
- If trains are running, try and travel

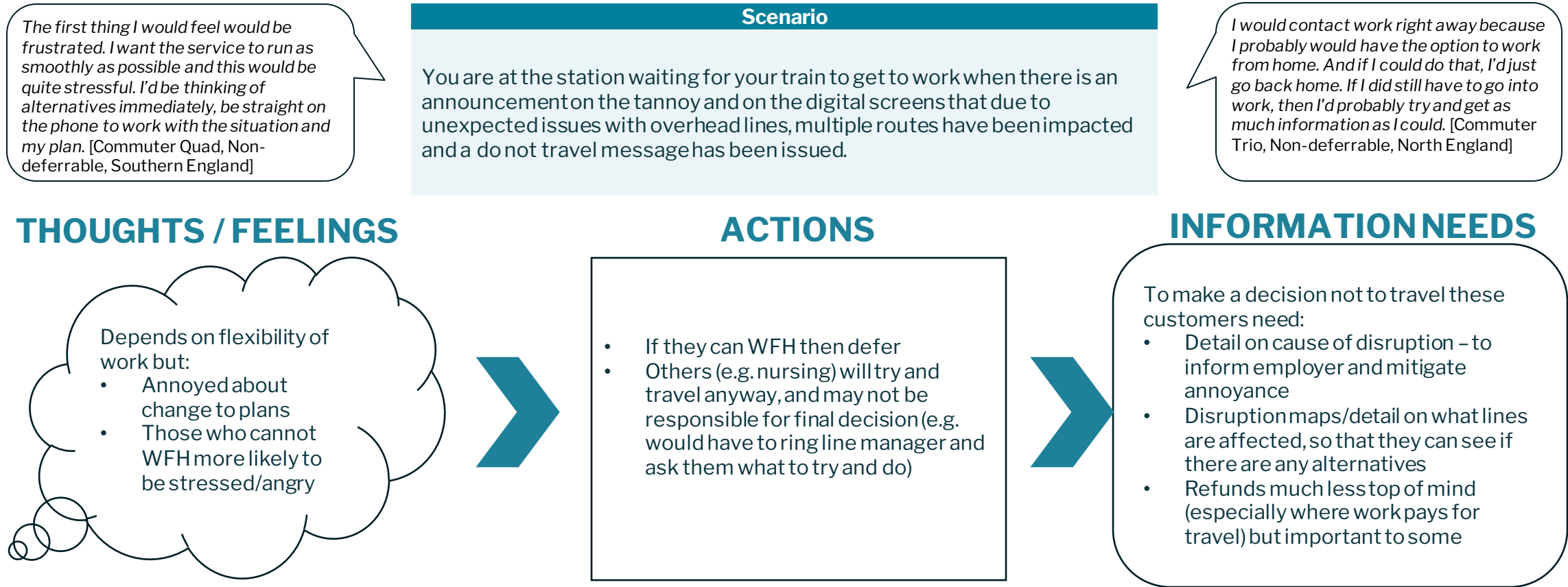
INFORMATION NEEDS

To make a decision not to travel these customers need:

- Nature and length of disruption
- ANY alternative routes or means of transport

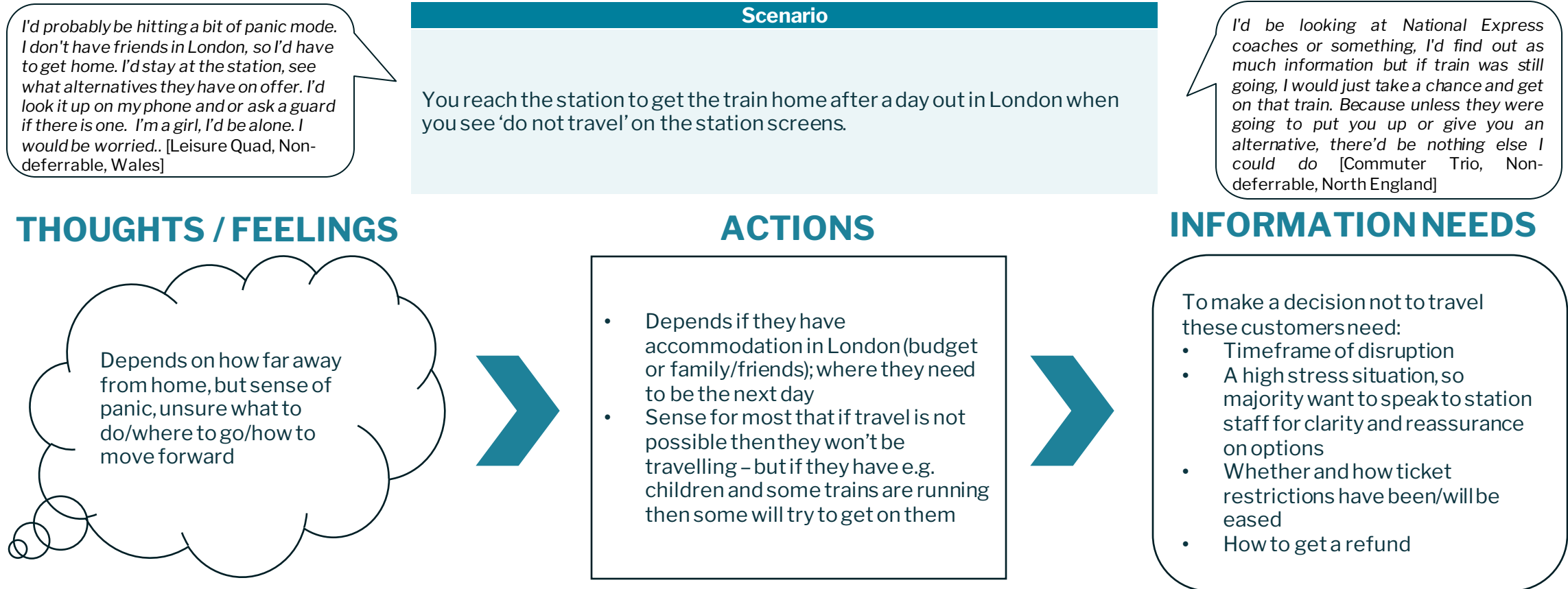
This doesn't feel like a journey that can be deferred for most – even if they can't make it by train

Clear signal to some commuters not to travel, but not all



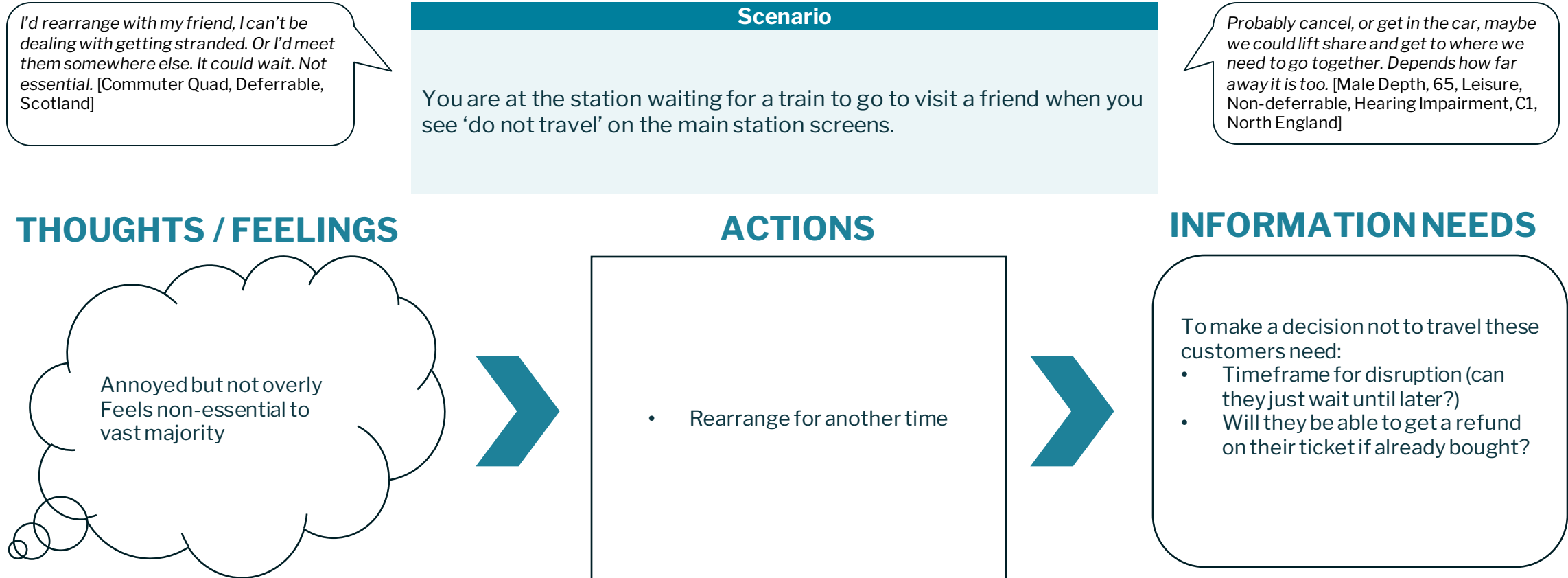
Most recognise that there is little the train company could have done to prevent this, however, more needs to be done to help those who don't feel that they can defer their journey.

Stressful situation, which would deter most from travelling



Most would try and defer their trip – however, if a service is running then those with e.g., children to look after will be trying to travel

Other leisure trips are more deferrable for most



In this scenario, simply being told there's a DNT notice was enough to make many respondents claim they would change their plans – a trip they expect to be able to make easily at any other time

Feeling of helplessness – needs become about ‘what can we do when we’re on the move again’

If you literally are stuck on the train in between stations, you can't really do anything. So it just it is what it is. And if I'm on my way to work, then I just let them know and it probably wouldn't be a hassle because it's not my fault or the train line's fault. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, South England]

Scenario

You are on the train when it suddenly stops. On board announcements inform you that a tree has fallen on the track ahead and the train will need to wait for the track to be cleared.

I'd want updates over the tannoy to say when they expect it to be cleared. You're stuck so you can't do a lot, you can't get off, so you've got to sit with it and make arrangements from the train. There's no alternative there. [Female depth, 53, Commuter, Deferrable, Visual Impairment, C1, North England]

THOUGHTS / FEELINGS



ACTIONS

- Contact work/family/friends that they will be late
- Talk to train staff (crucial because might need to conserve phone battery/data for other purposes)

INFORMATION NEEDS

- To make a decision not to travel these customers need:
- What are their options from the next station
 - Impact on any connecting services (and ticket validity if they miss them)
 - In case of termination at an earlier station, what arrangements are being put in place for onward travel

No one expects the train company to prevent this, so passengers need to be kept updated on progress, and informed of what options they might have from stations further down the line (when they're reached)

Urgent hospital appointment

You made the decision to travel, I have to accept the consequences of my decisions. So, in that respect, yeah, I'm getting off at the next station. It's my own fault. I was warned. And then I'd look at alternatives. I'd get myself out of the situation. [Leisure Quad, Non-deferrable, Wales]

Scenario

Despite being advised not to travel due to severe storms, you have caught a train, as you have an essential hospital appointment. The storms become worse and the train guard announces that the train will need to terminate at a station along the route.

I would really hope that if they're announcing that they're announcing some, some sort of assistance is available at the station beyond that. [Occasional Business Trio, Non-deferrable, North England]

THOUGHTS / FEELINGS

Panic, guilt (because travel is essential but know they were told not to do it), uncertain about what to do next, anxious

ACTIONS

- Contact hospital that they will be late
- Talk to train staff (crucial because might need to conserve phone battery/data for other purposes)

INFORMATION NEEDS

To make a decision not to travel these customers need:

- What are their options from the next station
- Impact on any connecting services (and ticket validity if they miss them)
- In case of termination at an earlier station, what arrangements are being put in place for onward travel

No one expects the train company to prevent this, so passengers need to be kept updated on progress, and informed of what options they might have from stations further down the line (when they're reached) . Key desire here for support for onward travel from the on-board and station staff.

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