

Shaping Rail's Future: Customer Community 2024-25

Face to face workshop November 2025

Expectations for delivering Customer
Promises in practice



The Customer Community: 2025-26

Following the successful community insight programme which ran from February 2023 to April 2024, and again from July 2024 to June 2025, this is the third community of rail users brought together by Transport Focus and the Customer & Revenue Growth Team to help inform the future of rail travel in Britain



A unique vehicle for engagement

- ✓ Hear users' experiences and opinions of rail travel in Britain
- ✓ Identify strengths, weaknesses, and improvements
- ✓ Involve customers in potential solutions and new ideas to help shape the future of rail



40 rail users

representing
diverse needs &
experiences



Sep 2025 to
March 2026

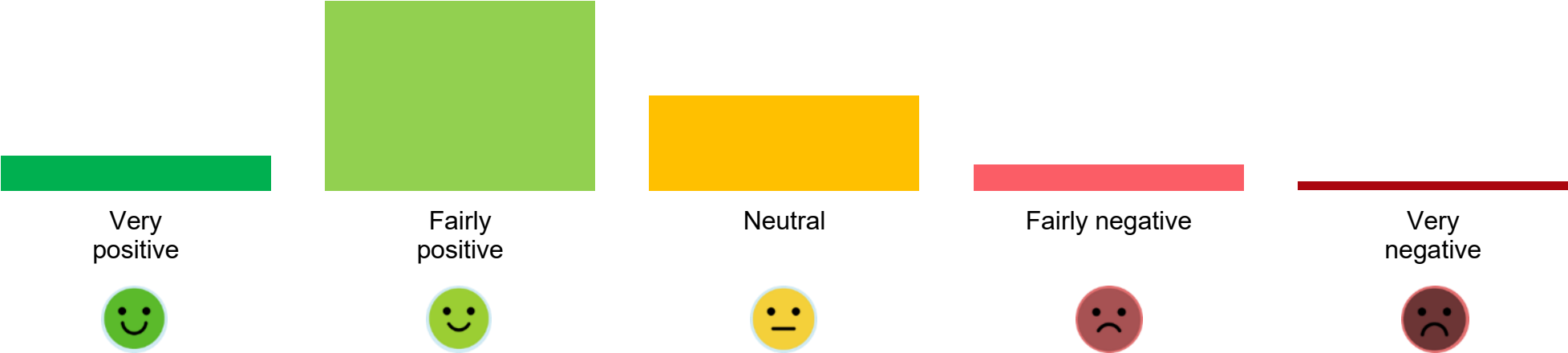


Using flexible, engaging research methods

- ✓ Online research platform for continuous interaction
 - Feedback on a given topic each month
 - Via activities using video, text, images, polls
 - Participants work individually, interacting with a moderator, and each other
- ✓ Face to face workshops to discuss topics further, generate ideas, and explore proposed concepts

Some context: most in the community were feeling fairly positive about the railway in general at this point

How you feel about travelling by train at the moment: A snapshot
(Sep/Oct 2025)



Base: all community participants, Sep/Oct 2025 (41)

November 2025: the first of this cohort's in-person workshops



Saturday 8th
November 2025



Central
Birmingham



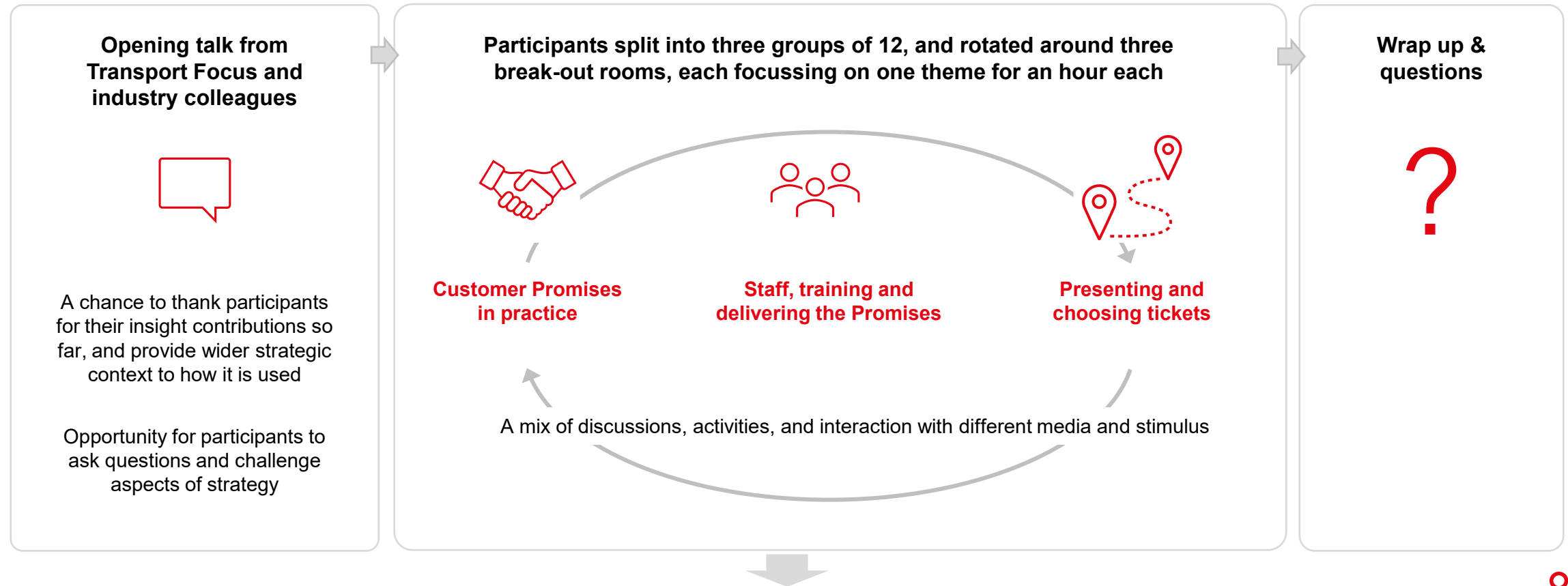
Detailed
discussion on:

- **Customer Promises**
(in practice)
- **Staff & delivering the Promises**
- **Presenting and choosing tickets**



The workshop: a chance to engage face to face with the community, and hear richer discussion around customer needs to complement their online feedback

Outline of the day:



This report summarises discussions around **Expectations for the Customer Promises in practice**

About this report

Inputs

Takeouts provided here draw upon the discussions in the workshop in November 2025, as well as previous workshop feedback and the community's thoughts and views given via their separate, online activities.

Every person's expectations and interpretations of the stated Promises is likely to be a little bit different – this was demonstrated by the very numerous and diverse range of responses to the Promises in this workshop, as well as in previous feedback exercises. This report brings out the most common and salient ideas, and puts them into themes where possible to make it easier to digest and use the findings.

It also highlights some tangible examples of how participants in this workshop would expect to see the Promises delivered in practice. These are just the examples given by a small group of individuals, rather than being comprehensive of all the ways the Promises can be brought about in practice. They are intended to illustrate the kinds of attitudes, approaches and considerations that staff – and the railway in its broadest sense – should internalise and display, in order to deliver against the Promises effectively.

Structure

1. Recap on previous feedback about the Customer Promises
2. Further development of customer expectations for Promises delivery in practice
3. What this means in terms of expectations for staff:
 - Recap on previous feedback about staff
 - Existing impressions of staff, as context for customer expectations
 - The detail on what customers expect from staff, for each of the Promises
4. Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, and resulting expectations for the new Promises
5. The public face of the Promises: Communication and accountability
6. Key takeouts
7. Appendices
 - The Customer Promises as presented in the workshop
 - Information needs summary (from recent Whoosh! feedback)



Recap on previous feedback about the Customer Promises

Insight gathered from the workshop in November 2025 follows a series of previous feedback occasions about the Customer Promises

In a **March 2025 workshop**, participants largely supported the principle of setting clear commitments for how rail will deliver for customers

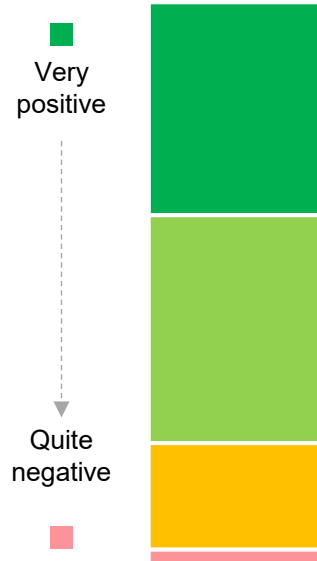


In **June 2025**, a revised set of Promises was shared with the same cohort

This set included fewer individual areas of commitment, and included some phrasing revisions following the earlier feedback

Response to this revision was gathered via the online research platform

How do you feel about the railway having these kinds of commitments?



Base: community participants, Feb-Mar 2025 (37)

The feedback highlighted that, to customers....

Commitments like this can demonstrate the industry has:

- ✓ **Potential for accountability**
- ✓ **Consistency & standardisation**
- ✓ **Cohesiveness within & without** (e.g. among employees)
- ✓ **Customer centricity**

It is essential that commitments like this are

- **Aligned to customer priorities** (service reliability and cost of tickets were felt to be conspicuously missing)
- **Specific** (and there were some areas highlighted where articulation could be improved)
- **Achievable and measurable**, with clear **accountability**
- **Sincere**, and ultimately **delivered on in practice**

There were too many (10) Promises overall at this stage), to feel achievable and meaningful

✓ **A similar response was seen to the principle**

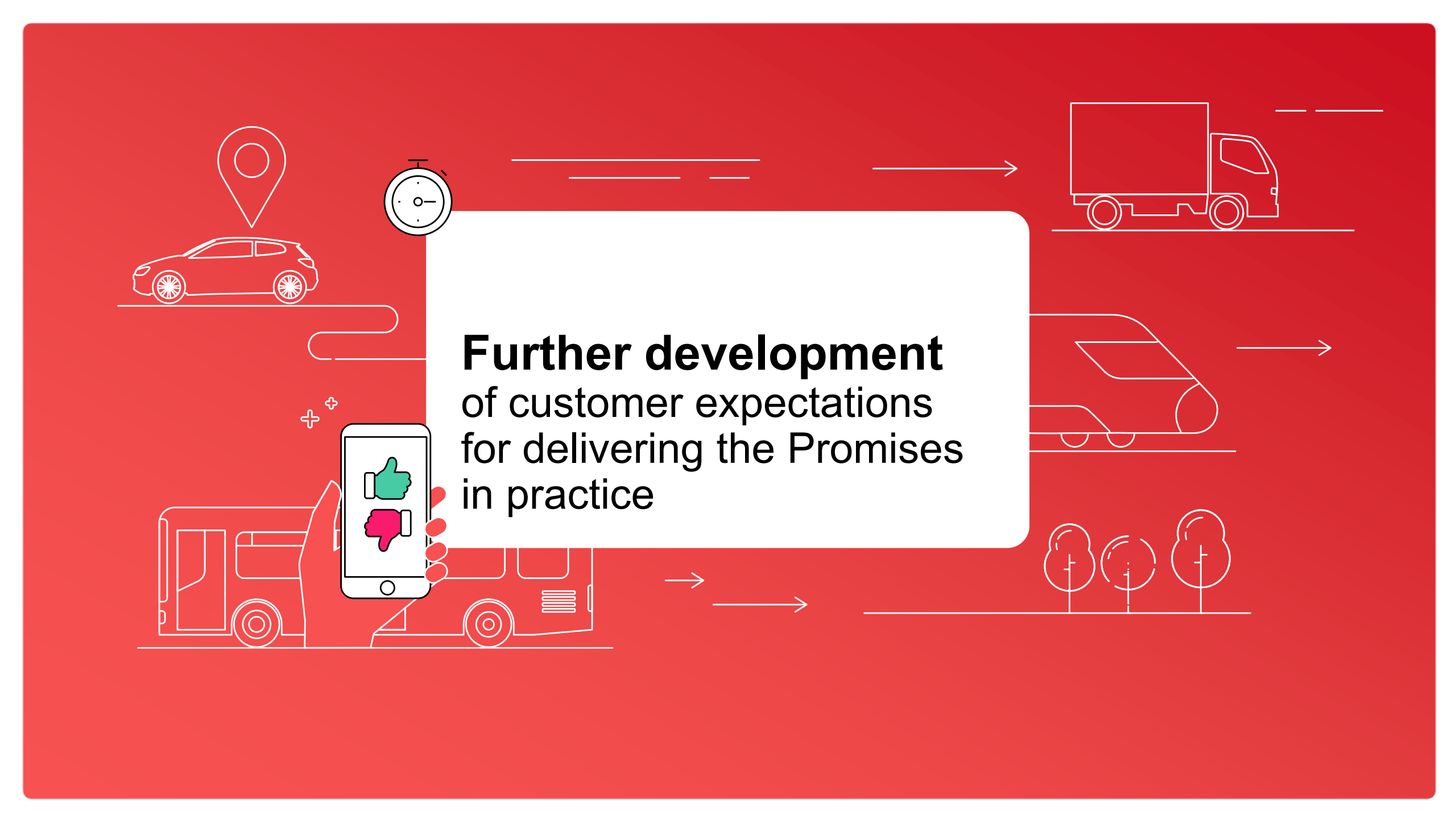
✓ All six individual Promises appreciated, with **access to staff** **slightly more popular and meaningful** than others, overall

- 1 Approachable, knowledgeable & easy to find colleagues
- 2 Clear, honest, up-to-date & accessible information
- 3 Simple ways to buy tickets
- 4 Clean, safe & secure stations and trains
- 5 Inclusive & accessible travel
- 6 Support when things go wrong

Feedback in June '25 highlighted some initial **areas of expectation** for the Promises...

1 Approachable, knowledgeable & easy to find colleagues	Very visible & present staff ✓ Plentiful staff ✓ Uniforms / hi-vis ✓ In designated areas ✓ Visible, not just findable ✓ Where customers are	Easy to access & engage with ✓ Available (not busy with other tasks) ✓ Physically & attitude-inally approachable ✓ Where appropriate, easy to call	Equipped, informed, capable ✓ Practical help & info. on diverse needs ✓ Pro-active, ownership ✓ Empathetic ✓ Efficient
2 Clear, honest, up-to-date & accessible information	Omnipresent ✓ Multiple channels & formats inc. staff ✓ Comms equipment / tech is present and working well	Accurate & up to date ✓ Live / real-time ✓ Unambiguous ✓ Consistent ✓ "Journey-centric", inc. onward travel	Wide ranging topics ✓ Especially relevant during disruption ✓ But also applies to before, during & after "normal" journeys
3 Simple ways to buy tickets	Effort-free book & purchase process ✓ Accessibility and choice: on/offline options, inc. staff, to be "simple" to all ✓ Easy to navigate websites / apps ✓ Variety of straight-forward pay methods	Clarity at point of research / purchase Implications for: ✓ The fare model (more streamlined, fewer conditions / variations) ✓ Info. about tickets: (clear, plentiful, consistent in pricing & presentation)	No-fuss usage in practice Most relevant in disruption: ✓ Clarity re using tickets on alt. services ✓ No penalisation for incorrect usage + everyday relevance – fair ticket inspections
4 Clean, safe & secure stations and trains	Consistency Reliable standard of cleanliness, condition and safety to be upheld, across whole network, all times of day & night	Focus on certain physical aspects ✓ Buildings / assets condition (seats, toilets graffiti, etc.) ✓ Provision of lighting, warmth, facilities (retail, etc.)	Staff role ✓ Visibly demonstrate cleaning takes place ✓ Human presence ✓ Actively address ASB ✓ (+ steps to ensure the public play their part)
5 Inclusive & accessible travel	For disabled people Customers' dominant focus here; emphasis on mobility disability, and: ✓ Equipment, adaption ✓ Reliable staff access ✓ Suitable seat / space	Broader inclusivity Also means inclusivity re: ✓ Digital / non-digital ✓ Background & circumstance ✓ (+ some emphasis on safety of women)	Affordability Less common, but some take issue with a promise of inclusion, when many feel priced out of rail.
6 Support when things go wrong	In-journey, in the moment support ✓ Practical help & support ✓ Information ✓ Empathy ✓ Importance of staff cannot be understated	Specific focus on welfare ✓ Practical support, kindness ✓ Largely provided by on the ground staff	Compensation ✓ Key element of this Promise ✓ Expectations are for a centrally-managed system

....these expectations have been built on further in workshops in November →



Further development
of customer expectations
for delivering the Promises
in practice

Customer expectations for delivering Promises in practice were further developed in the Nov '25 workshop:

Summary of developed expectations

The next page summarises where **particular attention may be needed** to ensure delivery meets expectations. This is also subsequently followed by more detail on **what these expectations entail**.

1 Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff	High staff presence and visibility Desire & expectation for <u>more</u> staff, more of the time, in more places	Truly effective alternatives to f2f contact ✓ Accessible ✓ Working	Equipped, informed, supported staff ✓ Tools ✓ Knowledge ✓ Employer support	Inclusive attitude, meeting diverse needs Including disabilities and other needs	Personable, empathetic outlook Desire & expectation for stronger emphasis on empathy	4 Safe, secure and clean stations and services	Demonstration of safety & cleaning ✓ Visible staff inc. security / police ✓ CCTV etc. ✓ Cleaning focus on toilets & litter, with explicit demo of being cared for ✓ Trains, stations, station surroundings	Specific details on reporting mechanisms ✓ Accessible and useable themselves, inc. in a scenario of vulnerability	A passenger side to the bargain ✓ Rail industry has some responsibility to encourage & enable good citizenship
2 Clear, honest, and accessible information before and during your journey	Particular attention & effort during disruption ✓ Esp. “so what” ✓ + everyday service, station, onward travel info	Timeliness is paramount ✓ Live ✓ Pro-active	Be truly informative ✓ “So what” not just facts ✓ No blank space	Wide & evolving scope ✓ Multi-channel inc. staff ✓ Includes 3rd parties & AI	5 Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities	Comprehensive, always-on empathy ✓ Allow for diverse scenarios & needs ✓ Emphasis on staff/ in person	Applies to all aspects of rail travel ✓ Journey planning ✓ Communications ✓ Key facilities like w’chair spaces & lifts		
3 Help finding the best ticket for your journey	Individual, relevant help with <u>your</u> journey ✓ Accommodate diverse scenarios & needs ✓ Emphasis on staff/f2f	Fair refund <u>outcomes</u>, as well as advice Implied by and expected from this Promise	Wide & evolving scope ✓ Incl. 3rd parties & AI ✓ End to end journeys	6 Support when things go wrong	Wide definition, e.g. ✓ Delays/cancels & after-effects ✓ Facilities being out of order ✓ Ticket misunderstandings ✓ Crowding ✓ Compensation for all inconvenience	Demonstrate issues are taken seriously ✓ Active listening ✓ Range of issues shown to be addressed	Be truly informative ✓ “So what” not just facts ✓ No blank space	Expectations for staff in particular Expectations as per Promise #1	

In addition, customers want and expect the railway to be genuinely constructive when there are pragmatic limitations to delivering a service. For example, where staff are unavailable, customers expect constructive signposting and contact methods, rather than what they perceive as ambiguous "small print" phrases within the Promise statements (e.g. "where available"). See especially Promise #3, #4 #5.

Meeting these expectations for delivery in practice: In summary

Workshop participants responded to each of the six supporting Promises, based on the headline, sub-line, and “what you can expect” statements*.

This page summarises how well the headlines and “what you can expect” statements fit with customer expectations for what each of the Promises would mean in practice, and where particular attention may be needed to ensure these expectations are met or managed.

This takes into account how participants reacted to the Promises **as they stand**, what they took as **implied**, what might be **missing**, and therefore also which parts of their expectations might have the **potential to be under-delivered**.

Further detail on customer expectations in practice is given on the following pages.

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with what the community needed and interpreted in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where the community’s response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff	Clear, honest, and accessible information before & during journey	Help finding the best ticket for your journey	Safe, secure and clean stations and services	Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities	Support when things go wrong
					
✓ Arguably most significant Promise to customers ✓ Stated commitments match much of customer need ? Stronger commitment and really concerted effort likely worthwhile around staff attitude and visibility	✓ Stated commitments largely match customer needs ○ (Expectations are very high and wide, and likely to evolve rapidly with technology – GBR will need to work hard to deliver now and to keep up)	✓ Stated commitments largely match customer needs ○ (As #2, indications are that expectations will likely evolve rapidly with tech, setting a need for GBR to work purposefully and continuously to stay up to speed)	✓ Stated commitments match customer needs quite well ? Beware over-promising – to potentially appear insincere, or under-delivering ? Public appetite for industry to explicitly talk about passengers’ side of the bargain	✓ Feels well intentioned and covers most customer priorities ? Expectations go wider than currently acknowledged overtly ? Stakes especially high = higher cynicism (even distrust) than for other Promises	✓ Less common but higher impact than other Promises; largely matches customer needs ○ Feedback suggests this is where greatest effort is perceived to be needed ? Note wide definition of “when things go wrong”

-  Good fit with expectations; expectations are high but do not materially differ from or stretch the stated commitments, so should in theory be possible to deliver on in practice
-  Expectations are demanding to deliver on in practice, and close attention may be needed in some aspects of the Promise to ensure expectations are met
-  Expectations are demanding, and it may be difficult to genuinely commit to what customers really want (and customers know this)

*See Appendix for full text and placeholder visuals as shown to the community at this stage; short headline text used here for brevity

Promise #1 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (1/2)

Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff

Trained to support you and provide assistance throughout your journey



How well Promise #1 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Arguably the most significant of all six Promises to customers:
 - expectations for staff also run through all other Promises
 - this Promise also seems likely to bring greatest impact, and / or greatest potential for positive change.
- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statements match much of customer need
- ? Some clearer commitments may be worthwhile around staff attitude and staff visibility – and really concerted effort towards ensuring the railway does not underdeliver on key expectations here



What customers expect from this Promise in practice (1/2: presence of staff & support measures)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



High staff presence and visibility

Rail passengers consistently express a desire (and need) for **more staff available in person**, in more places and more often than at present – both at stations and on board.

The headline for this Promise, and the final bullet point for “what you can expect”, strongly imply that this will be the case, and indeed the community’s feedback indicates that they feel strongly within their rights to expect staff to be **available when and where the customer feels they need them**.

- ? Phrases like “staffed stations” and “during specified hours” raise concerns for many and can jar with this expectation for consistent, visible presence. Nevertheless they are also often recognised as the pragmatic reality in some locations, and can be acceptable.
- ? Less acceptable are phrases like **“where provided” – this feels ambiguous and variable**, and can undermine the sense of a genuine commitment to providing a customer-centric service. The difference here is that “staffed stations” and “specified hours” are quantifiable, and more understood within the context of a commitment.

Workshop participants highlighted a need for **deliberate, empathetic consideration for what constitutes “specified hours”, and an ability to modify this**: while they expect this to be largely constant throughout a normal week, they also expect increases to staffing at certain times, for example to help manage higher passenger footfall during large local events (e.g. football matches), or at times of planned or unplanned disruption.



Truly effective alternatives to in-person staff contact

Where staff are not available in person, customers emphasise that any alternatives, i.e. helplines or Help Points, are:

- ✓ **accessible** (e.g. Help Points at the right height for use by people in wheelchairs as well as standing)
- ✓ **reachable** (e.g. on all platforms, without the need to cross tracks)
- ✓ **working**, e.g. with good quality audio (something which is distrusted, rightly or wrongly, at present).



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or

Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery

Promise #1 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (1/2)

Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff

Trained to support you and provide assistance throughout your journey



How well Promise #1 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Arguably the most significant of all six Promises to customers:
 - expectations for staff also run through all other Promises
 - this Promise also seems likely to bring greatest impact, and / or greatest potential for positive change.
- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statements match much of customer need
- ? Some clearer commitments may be worthwhile around staff attitude and staff visibility – and really concerted effort towards ensuring the railway does not underdeliver on key expectations here



What customers expect from this Promise in practice (2/2: how support is delivered)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Well equipped, informed and supported staff

Customers expect staff to have the **tools and information** to be able to help, **the right attitude and motivation** to help to the best of their ability, and to have a **comprehensive knowledge** and understanding of how to help.

Community participants felt that many of these were true for railway staff today, but that their expectations from this Promise are that **this standard will be consistent and reliable across the whole network** and at all times.

Part of customers’ expectations from staff relies on **organisation culture and the support given by employers**: Participants’ feedback clearly indicated that customers themselves expected staff to be treated well by their employers, and for **this to be an improvement brought about by this Promise**, compared to what they perceive is true in some cases currently.



Inclusive attitude, accommodation of diverse needs

The commitment to having “staff who can provide... information... and support...” is expected to include assistance for **passengers with disabilities** (visible or not), **or other assistance needs such as luggage**.



Explicit commitment to personable, empathetic outlook

Friendly... ready to assist” aligns with passengers’ expectation that staff will be approachable, including for example that they will use **welcoming body language and appear available**.

However, participants also highlighted the importance of staff showing **fairness and empathy** towards customers; this is **not given as an explicit commitment currently** within this Promise’s description, and is felt to be important enough that this feels “missing”



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or
Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery



More on how staff deliver the Promises – and on how they are enabled to do so – is given in the next section.

Promise #2 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice

Clear, honest, and accessible information before and during your journey

Including real-time updates and planned changes – so you can make informed choices

How well Promise #2 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statement largely match customer needs
- (Expectations are very high and wide, and likely to evolve rapidly with technology – GBR will need to work hard to deliver now and to keep up)

Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery

What customers expect from this Promise in practice

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Particular attention & effort during disruption

Participants put particular **emphasis on practical delivery of this Promise when there is any kind of disruption**

In particular, they feel strongly that **passengers should be able to hold high expectations for the information relating to “so what do I do”** – as tailored to specific circumstances as possible (including with access to staff and AI, as noted right)

Nevertheless information is important across various other needs including **current running times, station navigation, onward travel**.

See Appendix 2 for a summary of needs identified by the community in an earlier exercise exploring information in detail.



Timeliness is paramount

“Real-time”, “timely”, “live” references are highly apposite. This means:

- ✓ **Live running information** as described, and for some extends further to, for example, the ability to see **live geo-location** of your train (esp. when there are delays). Note this is an example of how passenger expectations from the Promises will be dynamic and are likely to change as technology develops – not remain static at the point of capture in this workshop.
- ✓ **Pro-active** information – with push notifications, emails/SMS, pro-active communication via staff on the ground



Be truly informative

The “so what”, not just the facts (in disruption)

Being genuinely informative includes being transparent when information is not known, and updating passengers regularly to say whether or not there is still no new information.

Don’t leave blank space (with the potential for misassumptions, misinformation or a feeling of being ignored).



Wide & evolving scope

Accessible information is that given in a range of formats as described under “what you can expect”, as well as through multiple channels to ensure everyone has opportunity to receive it. These include:

- ✓ strong expectation for **in-person access to staff** for information (esp. but not only during disruption)
- ✓ that the **rail industry has a responsibility to ensure that other 3rd party services have the best, most up to date information** – Google Maps a noted example, used by many for end-to-end journey planning, within which live running times and any timing and planning implications from disruption are essential, and expected
- ✓ For some (and with little resistance from others), the **use of AI** to help passengers interact with, find and use the best information relevant to them personally. (See also #3)

Promise #3 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice

Help finding the best ticket for your journey

With clear, impartial advice on options, discounts, refunds and compensation



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Individual, relevant help with your journey

Headline reference to “your” generates and/or confirms expectation that any ticketing assistance – or presentation of ticket options in online retail platforms – will work for individual needs.

This means, for example, having easily available, knowledgeable **staff who are motivated to fully think around an individual’s circumstances, and filter to specific choice requirements, and accommodate diverse needs.**

The variations in individual requirements can include Railcards and concessions as stated already, and other features such as:

- Free / discounted travel within a **certain zone** (e.g. London, Scotland) but having to pay for journeys that extend beyond
- The need to break a journey, or to use a **certain route** (e.g. connecting via a step free station despite this taking longer)
- Travelling with a **companion**
- Needing to book **Passenger Assistance** - at the same time and same channel as the ticket



Fair refund outcomes, as well as advice

Alongside promised information on compensation & exchange, **customers also expect (and interpret from this statement) fair policies.**

For many people this would feel like a change from their current experience, where they feel compensation is not always adequate for the inconvenience / cost they have been exposed to.



Wide & evolving scope, keeping up with tech innovation

Some have expectations around the **use of AI in helping to find the best ticket** – i.e. reducing effort further by interacting via LLM with a retail platform, rather than needing to input their journey requirements using the platform’s own more rigid filters and information fields.

Some already do similar using ChatGPT etc. as a start point to their journey planning, and see integration of this as a natural progression for retail websites and apps. It seems likely that more people will take on this kind of expectation over time.

Similarly, many people already want to see **information about, and ability to buy tickets for, their full end to end journey** – and are using apps like Google Maps to do this in part. Discussions indicated that this is likely to become a growing expectation, and can be implied in the statement under this Promise that customers can expect “online and app tools... to help you choose the most appropriate ticket...”



Constructive pragmatism

The reference in the statement to “clear signposting... if ticket sales are not available at that location” rarely raised concern in response to this Promise. This is unlike the caveats such as “where available” or “where possible” in Promise #4 and #5.

This indicates that rail users may be more accepting that some services may not be limited in places, when presented and phrased with this type of more constructive acknowledgement.



How well Promise #3 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statement largely match customer needs
- (As #2, indications are that **expectations will likely evolve rapidly** with tech, setting a need for GBR to purposefully and continuously work to stay up to speed)



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or
Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery

Promise #4 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (1/2)

Safe, secure and clean stations and services

With well-maintained facilities and security measures to keep everyone protected and confident when travelling



How well Promise #4 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statement match customer needs quite well
- ? Beware over-promising, and potentially appearing insincere or under-delivering
- ? Public appetite for industry to explicitly talk about passengers’ side of the bargain



What customers expect from this Promise in practice (1/2: tangible ways in which Promise #4 should be delivered)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Demonstration of personal safety as priority

Safety and security was the most prominent topic within this Promise.

This may have been linked to heightened awareness of safety following a major security incident on a train on the ECML one week ahead of this workshop, but the **emphasis on security both in the headline and “what you can expect” statements felt appropriate.**

Passengers particularly welcomed the commitments here to having **staff available for security support.**

No concerns raised by this community about **CCTV or body-worn cameras** feeling intrusive.



Specific details on reporting mechanisms

“Simple ways to report...” means **reporting mechanisms being accessible and easily usable in a variety of scenarios.** For example this includes having reporting channels / Help Points:

- ✓ **in easily accessible areas** (e.g. not just on “one side of the tracks”)
- ✓ **which allow a passenger to be and feel safe as they use it** (including perhaps being enclosed for privacy like a phone box for example, rather than open for others to see/hear).



Demonstration of cleanliness

Cleanliness was a less salient topic here but we know from previous feedback that this is no less important to passengers.

Particular areas of focus for rail users (echoing feedback in March and June) are **toilets and litter.**

Explicit / visible demonstration that these are being looked after is a key part of customers’ expectation

- People want to have litter bins available, to see staff doing litter collection rounds, and to see “last checked” schedules inside toilet areas for example – both on board and at stations.
- There is no clear consensus on whether or not passengers should see cleaning staff and cleaning itself in action on board trains, but these types of visible demonstrations that cleaning is being done, or has been done, feel like a good balance between very overt and potentially intrusive cleaning activity, and cleaning being kept entirely behind the scenes.

Promise #4 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (2/2)

Safe, secure and clean stations and services

With well-maintained facilities and security measures to keep everyone protected and confident when travelling



How well Promise #4 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Headline and “what you can expect” statement match customer needs quite well
- ? Beware over-promising, and potentially appearing insincere or under-delivering
- ? Appetite for industry to explicitly talk about passenger side of the bargain



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or
Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery



What customers expect in practice (2/2: areas where GBR may need to work harder to meet expectations)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Particularly strong need to eliminate ambiguity in Promise statement

Safety and security is a non-negotiable priority to rail users at all times in all locations. This has implications for their expectations of its delivery in practice – especially given the term “Promise”:

Phrases like ‘at key stations’ and ‘where possible’ can feel at odds with the purpose, and with the Promise headline. While recognised as pragmatic by some, these phrases introduce ambiguity and signal a lack of firm accountability; this can undermine confidence in the industry’s intent to deliver on this Promise in way that truly puts customers first.

If this pragmatism is necessary, it would be preferable to have **clarity around when/where there will and won’t be such measures in place, and to present this constructively** (see #3) rather than in a way that can feel like “the small print”.



(Perceived) genuine conviction around provision and demonstration of security

There is clear expectation for **security measures to be in place across stations and on board**, and for many this extends to the **immediate surroundings, esp. walk/wheelways to/from stations**.

Very strong desire for **more staff across the network as a whole than currently**. Rail users feel that a stronger staff presence should be a fundamental way in which this Promise makes a difference to the future railway. This is for safety as well as for general customer service.

Alongside this, many feel that staff may not always be able to intervene in antisocial or criminal behaviour (for example because staff themselves may be older or smaller, because they can’t chase a fare evader without abandoning other duties, or because it would put them at risk themselves). **Specific security / police resource in some places therefore especially welcomed.**



Passenger responsibility

Several participants felt that **passengers must also keep their side of the “contract”** – this was unprompted and mentioned regularly, with broad agreement from others in each group

Whether or not this is overtly baked into the Promise and its supporting commitments, participants felt that, as part of its responsibility for the overall environment on the railways, **the industry should give explicit reminders and behavioural nudges to passengers to make sure they play their part**. These include signage and other communications on, for example:

- Removing / disposing of litter
- Keeping feet off seats
- Keeping music and other sound low or under headphones
- Respecting others’ needs, e.g. giving up seats, not blocking wheelchair spaces, honouring reserved seats, etc.

Promise #5 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (1/2)

Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities

With assistance when you need it, and alternative transport if these are unavailable



How well Promise #5 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Feels well intentioned and covers most areas that people with access needs prioritise
- ? Expectations go wider than currently acknowledged overtly, esp. for:
 - journey planning
 - registering the range of needs that might be encompassed in a fully inclusive railway – particularly but not limited to front line staff
- ? Stakes especially high = higher cynicism (even distrust) than for other Promises



What customers expect from this Promise in practice (1/2: tangible ways in which Promise #5 should be delivered)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Comprehensive, and always-on empathy & open-mindedness

This Promise as a whole implies and causes expectation that **all people and their individual needs will be considered in all aspects of rail travel**. This includes, for example:

- ✓ **Receiving information in fully inclusive ways** – not covered explicitly in this Promise, but implied, and covered under Promise #2
- ✓ **Genuine equality in how different needs are treated**. For instance an issue raised by members of this community is that, at present, mobility scooter users are not consistently given the same rights as wheelchair users. While it may not be possible to plan and policy-set for every eventuality and all individual circumstances, in the face of issues like this passengers will rightly expect an empathetic and non-discriminatory attitude from staff on the ground needing to help and address specific situations.
- ✓ Even if staff are not required to give physical, in-person assistance, people with any reduced mobility (for whatever reason), or with potential for feeling overwhelmed – as well as other considerations – need and expect **more empathy in how they are expected to move around and interact with services**. One example is the desire to be given **sufficient time to get to the platform** when it is announced without worrying about a “stampede”, and being given **empathy and help when needing to change platforms at short notice**, sometimes involving climbing steps to cross tracks



Expectations involve staff in particular

Stating that passengers can expect “staff trained in disability awareness and inclusive service...” sets welcome expectations that:

- ✓ There will be **more staff than are present and available currently, in more places**
- ✓ Staff will be able to help **those with visible and less visible needs, without judgement**. This includes people who may not have a registered disability but may be less mobile for any reason, people who feel anxious or nervous about travel for any reason, or those who have other factors which might affect how easy it is to travel, such as prams, luggage, small children, etc.



Expectations for key facilities

Participants gave more specific details than are stated in the Promise, around expectations key facilities. For example, **accessible toilets and wheelchair spaces are expected:**

- ✓ **on all trains**
- ✓ to be **working and reachable in practice** (e.g. rather than blocked by luggage, other people, or with narrow corridors / gangways such that a wheelchair can’t get to the facility).

Promise #5 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice (2/2)

Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities

With assistance when you need it, and alternative transport if these are unavailable



How well Promise #5 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Feels well intentioned and covers most areas that people with access. needs prioritise
- ? Expectations go wider than currently acknowledged overtly, esp. for:
 - journey planning
 - registering the range of needs that might be encompassed in a fully inclusive railway – particularly but not limited to front line staff
- ? Stakes especially high = higher cynicism (even distrust) than for other Promises



What customers expect in practice (2/2: areas where GBR may need to work harder to meet expectations)

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Higher expectations for journey planning

One area in which customer **expectations for genuine inclusivity are somewhat more demanding than is currently stated or assumed is in journey planning.**

In addition to provision of accurate information about accessibility, people expect:

- Journey planning tools with **ability to plan journeys with accessibility needs as an objective.** For example this might mean wanting a journey planner to...
 - only offer route options with step-free access, shortest interconnections, etc.
 - include accessibility requirements for getting to and from the start and end stations, as well as for the stations and trains themselves
- Greater **accessibility and lower user effort for the journey planning tools and resources themselves**, including...
 - The ability to book Passenger Assist at the same time as the journey – this is a change from today, where people requiring PA must book using a separate app/service, and are left with a “chicken and egg” dilemma where they must book a journey before being able to guarantee that PA is bookable at that time, but can’t book PA before booking the journey
 - Continual reviews and improvements to the accessibility of websites and apps, using the latest technology for screen readers for example
 - The ability to talk to a member of staff to assist with journey planning and ticket purchase for those who prefer or need this



More conviction, less caveat

Currently (as for #4) this Promise can be perceived as lacking sufficient commitment and accountability overall.

Apparent caveats like “live lift status (where available)” bring uncertainty – and passengers feel that if this is a genuine commitment or “promise”, any uncertainty undermines the objective



(and linked to this), concerted effort needed to ensure customers can rely on services

For example, #5 promises “alternative transport”. Interpretation and expectation here is for alternative transport when things go wrong (i.e. usually in context of delays or cancellations).

Expectations are not necessarily high, but are more demanding than what most people feel is delivered currently. **Rail users with accessibility needs want to be able to truly rely on the provision of alternatives.**

But contrast with current experience means this is one example of why there is scepticism around whether the rail industry can live up to Promise #5.



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery

Promise #6 and meeting expectations for delivery in practice

Support when things go wrong

Keeping you informed, listening to your feedback, and providing Delay Repay compensation



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

Note that where the stated Promise and its supporting “what you can expect” text aligns well with customer needs and interpretation in practice, this has not been highlighted unless to make a related point. Only areas where customers’ response differed or expanded on the stated Promise, has this further detail been called out.



Wide definition

There is a **wide range of interpretations for what constitutes “when things go wrong”**.

It can mean delays and cancellations, the knock-on effects of this (which are diverse and subjective), as well as problems like lifts or toilets being out of order, ticket misunderstandings, or crowding which can affect people’s ability to travel in comfort or at all.

Staff and others need to be open to dealing with passengers needing help and giving feedback in all these scenarios.



Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

Operators and others **must demonstrate that they are listening** and taking feedback seriously, e.g. by:

- ✓ **Active listening** for feedback given in person or by phone
- ✓ Play back feedback and how it has been used, e.g. “you said, we did”
- ✓ Be comprehensive, not selective, in which feedback is responded to – ensure it’s the points that come up often or which have high impact on individuals. Apparently selective response can confirm existing cynicism.



Be truly informative

Receiving clear & timely updates means **hearing what TOCs don’t know as well as what they do know**, and receiving regular, continuous updates.

As also highlighted against Promise #2, rail users don’t want “blank space”.



Expectations for staff in particular

“Practical support from trained staff...” is especially welcome, and comes with specific expectations from customers, especially:

- ✓ (As for #5) that there will be **much greater front line staff presence and availability than there is at present**
- ✓ That “practical support” means **tailored** help, with genuine attention paid to individuals and what any disruption means for them
- ✓ ...and **pro-active** help

Staff are expected to be **motivated** to help, **knowledgeable** for how to help, easily **available**, and **helpful** / amenable



Wide expectations for compensation scope

“Full refunds” and “...against your whole journey” sound right to customers, but **interpretations vary for what “full / whole” means**.

Rail users **still need more clarity on their rights here**, as expectations can include, for example, out of pocket expenses for further travel or accommodation resulting from disrupted journeys, refunds for return journeys or connecting services which were not used, and other things.

This might be too complex to cover within the Promise, but **current statements on “what you can expect” do imply to passengers that they can (arguably rightly) expect compensation for the widest possible scope of their inconvenience**.

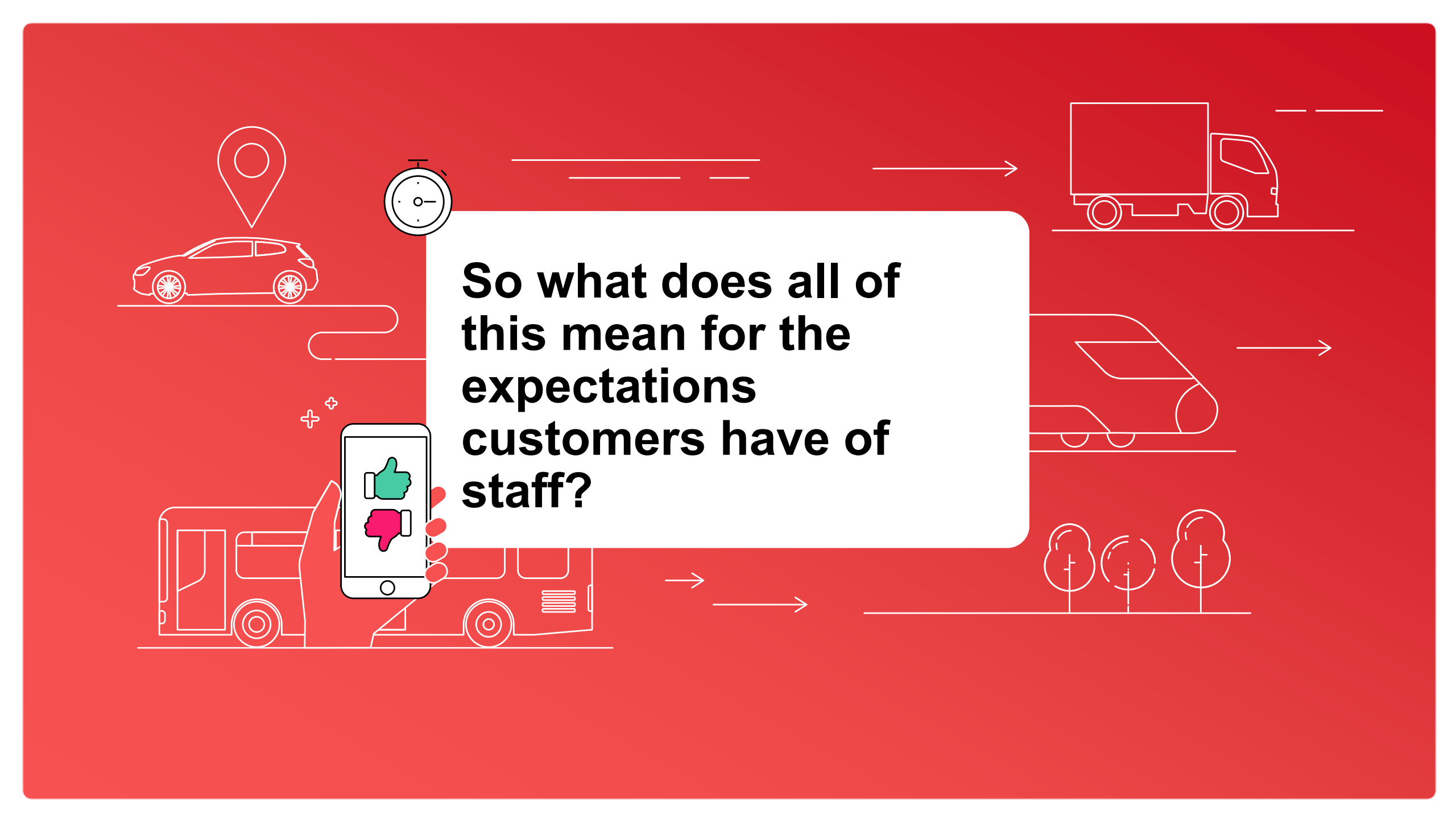


How well Promise #6 can stand up to expectations

- ✓ Less commonly manifested than other Promises, but can have higher impact whether delivered well or poorly
- Feedback suggests this is where **greatest effort** is needed to (be perceived as) delivering effectively
- ✓ Nevertheless #6 largely matches customer needs
- ? Note wide definition of what constitutes “when things go wrong” and as such, high expectations for staff, and wide scope for compensation expectations



Customer expectation that is missing or not explicit in the current Promise statement, and/or
Attention required where expectation is such that there could be a risk of under-delivery



**So what does all of
this mean for the
expectations
customers have of
staff?**

**Recap on previous
feedback about staff**

In March 2023, the first customer community gave examples of their most recent experience of customer service. In summary...

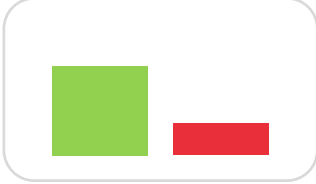
The quality and effectiveness of customer service varied by some key factors:

Where the type of problem or query was in relation to...

 Customer service during disruption

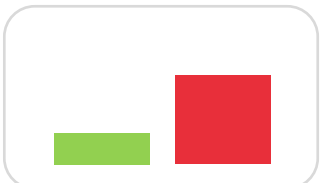


 "Everyday" info / assistance needs

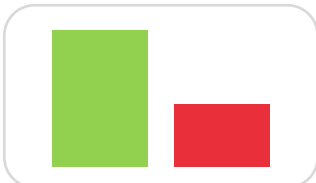


Where the customer's journey was, for them...

 Regular / familiar



 Occasional / less familiar



■ Good customer service examples
■ Poor customer service examples

"Traffic light" colours used give an indication of how often the community talked about poorer (red) and better (green) ways in which problems and assistance needs were handled.

Where this was delivered...

At stations



Very mixed:
some great, some
satisfactory, some poor

On board



Staff usually helpful
when available, but too
often unseen

Remotely



Effortful, too often
lacking in resolution

Rail users' feedback highlighted three central pillars, and key principles, for good customer service



Structural / systematic

- ✓ **Consistency** across channels, across operators
- ✓ **Staff given space and agency** to be empathetic and
- ✓ **Ensuring customers know what services and information exist** – to avoid being passed around or left in the dark



Practical considerations for staff roles & responsibilities

- ✓ **More visible, easy to find and access, face to face staff**
- ✓ **Widened responsibility of any customer-facing staff** to more often meet more customer needs
- ✓ **Ensuring staff have knowledge to be able to help**
- ✓ **Clear, customer-relevant, pro-active information**



Attitudinal

- ✓ Open, approachable, pleasant, empathetic
- ✓ Pro-active, straightforward & pragmatic
- ✓ Honest

If the industry wishes to take a customer-first approach to rail delivery overall, then **there may be a strategic culture change needed in some places**, to move the planning and management of staffing away from that of a mainly operational, safety model, towards one with a greater emphasis on customer service (as well).

In June & Nov 2023, the community workshopped specific responsibilities that they expected staff to undertake at stations and on board trains

Customers' expectations for key tasks and responsibilities

At stations

Welcome / acknowledgement
Directions / wayfinding
Ticket purchase / queries
Assistance: train services
Assistance: in / onward transport
Mobility / luggage / special assistance
Security / safety

+ general **expectation that staff are able to provide a range of different customer service needs, regardless of job title.**

- **At larger stations**, customers expect that individual or teams of staff will cover each of the areas customer service areas above, at all times when services are running
- **At smaller stations**, customers appreciate that it is acceptable for a small number of staff to move around and to cover all of these areas, and/or to be contactable

On board

At this workshop, participants also shared views on the relative level of importance of these key responsibilities

Essential		
Safety / security	Ticketing	Everyday service info.
Important, on certain services, or at certain times		
“Hosting” / cust. service	Support during disruption	Special assistance
Important, but not a deal-breaker		
Basic cleaning / tidying	Basic first aid	
Important on many but not all services		
Catering		

Further important themes in expectations for staff management & deployment

Accessible to customers

Visible, easily reachable, approachable

At stations:

- More roaming staff
- Staff present throughout hours of service
- Where staffing is not practical at small stations, truly effective, innovative mitigations for this

On board:

- Knowing staff are there, and how to contact
- Seeing at least one staff member, + driver
 - more on multi-carriage services
 - *acceptable to engage with customers via audio / other channels in limited scenarios*

Broad responsibility & knowledge

A holistic approach to delivering customer journeys. **In addition to specific technical tasks, staff on board / at stations should:**

- **Be able to help customers (regardless of specific function or employer)**, or at least set them on the right path
- **Work as a team, with a collective purpose to deliver customer journeys**, rather than in silos, with individual, more functional / operational tasks

Participants also felt that this is important for staff morale and so, in turn, performance

Connected

Staff being connected to...

- Customers on site / on board – preferably visible, but otherwise reachable
- The wider rail network / local area
- Other external expert support, e.g. police, medical

Customer focussed

In terms of both:

- The **functions** they perform – nine areas of responsibility identified as important to customers
- The **way they perform them**, prioritising soft skills – for all staff including drivers



**Existing impressions
of staff, as context for
customer expectations**

Overall, customers have a positive and sympathetic view of railway staff, who they see as fundamentally coming from a good place



Community participants **default assumption about customer-facing staff** on the railway is that part of the reason they have chosen and/or been given a particular role is because they are “**people people**”



They often sympathise with staff:

Recognising that managing rail services and enabling people to use them can be difficult and unpredictable (and that passengers themselves sometimes make it harder)

Perceiving that **when staff under-deliver, it is often because they are not sufficiently supported and empowered** by employers and background systems – appearing to...

- lack information, tools & equipment, or the authority to take action
- and/or to be overstretched with other tasks, or not available at all

...**Exacerbated by perceived inconsistency and apparent lack of communication between organisations.**

Customer perception of front-line railway staff

Customer perception of front-line railway staff		Perception is that....
☆☆☆ Overall attitude & willingness		Most staff have the right intentions: staff are human!
☆☆☆ Pro-activity & initiative Soft skills		Staff may need training and support with confidence to deliver on this more effectively
? More specialist (customer service) skills e.g. first aid, security management		Staff likely to need training <u>And</u> specialist resource (security / police) often required
? Access to / conversant with information		Information is not always provided; staff struggle with inconsistent information content or format Staff may need training to translate info. usefully to customers
? Availability & capacity		Inconsistent and unreliable deployment of staff Staff may “hide away” when most needed, due to lack of confidence or information – and resulting embarrassment

Commonest reported exceptions to the overall positive perception are interactions around using tickets – inspection/gateline staff, who sometimes come across as gruff, intolerant of passengers’ lower knowledge, etc.



A key objective in this workshop has been to inform how staff should embody and deliver on the Promises.

While this is crucially important to the success of the Promises, the feedback has also confirmed that the structures and processes behind staff are equally critical, and that **commitments around behaviours and actions must be systemic within organisations, if staff are to be enabled to play their part.**

Customers feel that rail staff work in challenging circumstances, and more could be done to support them to facilitate effective delivery on industry commitments

Customer perception of how front-line railway staff feel when they are at work



...but usually coming across in a positive way to customers despite this perceived, challenging backdrop

The community's discussions suggest that staff need clear **recognition of what they achieve already in sometimes challenging circumstances, as part of any communications around the newly agreed commitments** that they will be asked to deliver on.

This includes deliberately feeding back to staff that passengers themselves highly appreciate them.

When staff do not deliver well, customers often perceive this is because they don't have the information, tools or equipment to be able to, or that they don't have the authority to make decisions or take action.

Customers want and expect:

- Staff receive up to date, accurate **information** as a priority, and are **trained to find and use it effectively**
- **Tools and equipment** like electronic information devices, luggage trolleys and wheelchair ramps, and static facilities like toilets and lifts, are **provided and well maintained**
- Staff are **trained and empowered to make decisions** on passengers' behalf, **or can quickly and easily contact someone** who can do so
- **Ways of working & communicating are streamlined** across the industry, reducing instances where staff know what to do but can't do it because another organisation is responsible

Especially the case in smaller stations and / or on board trains where limited staff may be present – but isolation is also perceived at large stations, especially when there is disruption for example, and staff appear to be in the dark about what is happening

Perception of staff isolation reinforces passengers' frustrations about inconsistent service delivery and communication, and makes passengers themselves feel isolated from help and information. Impressions of staff isolation (whether correct or not) undermine confidence that Promises can be delivered on

Customers want and expect:

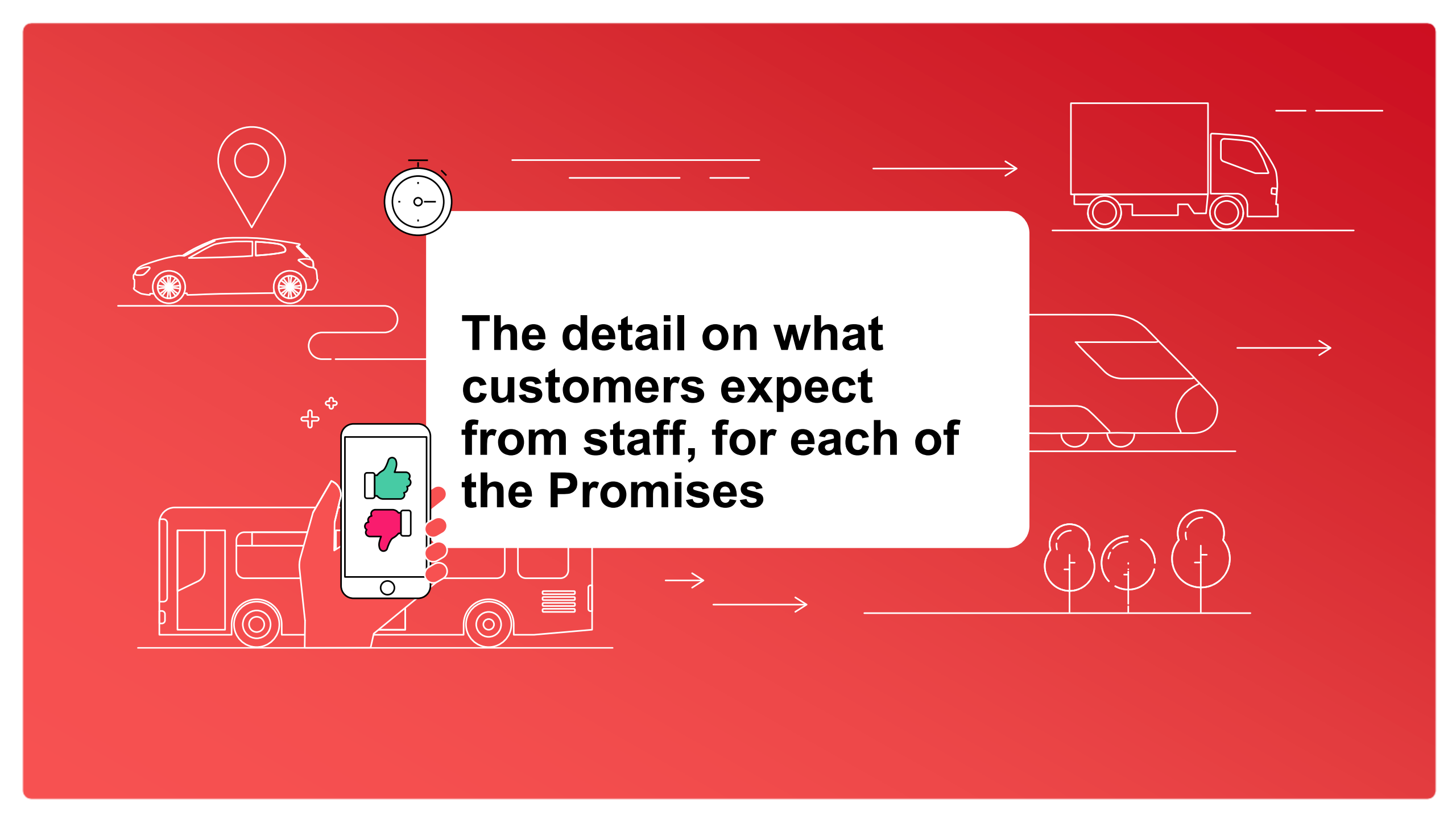
- **Staff working in pairs / groups** in certain scenarios
- **(Demonstrably) clear and active lines of connection** to colleagues in other places – for information, for support in crisis, to phone ahead for Passenger Assistance, etc.
- **Seeing and hearing from staff more often**, where they are present and in higher numbers. This might reduce perception of being isolated – a potential quick win to improve overall impressions of how comprehensively staff are being deployed where this is the case already

Customers recognise that staff's own personal security is not always guaranteed, e.g. when there are crowds, or rowdy or criminal behaviour. Some even suggest that staff deserve danger money / hazard pay.

Customers want and expect:

- **Facilities like lighting and CCTV** – benefitting everyone
- **Staff in pairs (at least)**, or colleagues obviously around to help
 - ✓ For their own safety and comfort
 - ✓ Expectation that staff are more likely to stand up against low-risk ASB or fare evasion if they feel backed up by a colleague, for everyone's benefit
 - ✓ Expectation that members of the public who might cause ASB will think twice if staff are present and look less isolated / helpless
- **Separate, additional staff with a specific security brief** (security personnel, police)

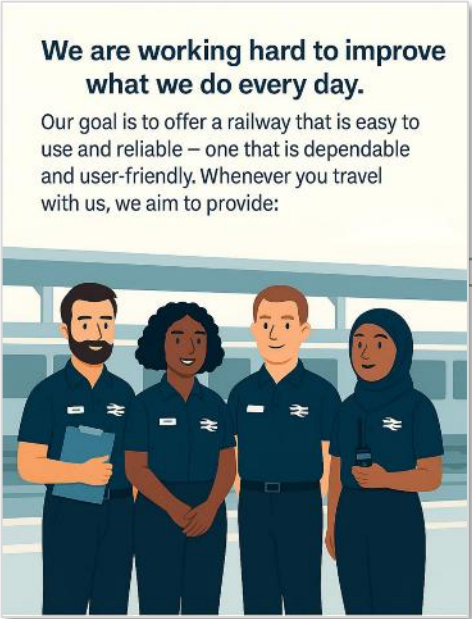
Note: this workshop took place a week after a serious attack on board an ECML train; however, concerns around security which fed into the discussions were not noticeably higher or different to similar workshops and group discussions held previously



**The detail on what
customers expect
from staff, for each of
the Promises**

A summary of the principles that customers expect from staff if they are to deliver on the Promises

The following pages expand on these principles in relation to each of the specific commitments



Responsibilities & characteristics for staff members themselves



Responsibilities for employers / industry



Promise #1, and the expectations that customers have for staff here, encapsulate these principles well

Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff

Trained to support you and provide assistance throughout your journey



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ High staff presence and visibility
- ✓ Effective alternatives to f2f contact
- ✓ Well equipped, informed, supported staff
- ✓ Inclusive attitude, meeting diverse needs
- ✓ Personable, empathetic outlook



And specifically for staff, this means:

This Promise is especially meaningful and impactful to rail passengers

- The behaviours and attitudes that are committed to here underpin all other Promises
- Ultimately it is staff who make all of the Promises happen

Some specific examples are given on the following pages, for how staff are expected to live the spirit of individual Promises

It is especially front line staff who are seen to execute the Promises, but workers behind the scenes are vital even if not seen. This means **it is relevant for all employees to embed the same principles.**

To customers this Promise, and therefore their expectations through all the other Promises, is about staff being available and easy to interact with:

- ✓ **Highly visible**, in places where passengers themselves are, and with recognisable uniforms and/or “here to help” slogans on clothing
- ✓ **Approachable**, with friendly, calm attitude, and open body language, alert to passengers (not busy with other tasks or distracted by a phone for example)
- ✓ **Pro-active, ready and willing** (not having to be searched out, offering information without necessarily needing to be asked)
- ✓ **Adaptable** to different customer needs and circumstances, able to **empathise** and act accordingly

Staff need to be enabled to act in this way...

- ✓ By being deployed in sufficient numbers in the right places
- ✓ By being supported with the best tools, information, and employment culture behind the scenes
- ✓ At all times

Key principles & behaviours expected from staff, to deliver on Promises in practice:

Promise #2

Clear, honest, and accessible information before and during your journey

Including real-time updates and planned changes – so you can make informed choices



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Particular attention & effort during disruption
- ✓ Timeliness is paramount
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Embrace a wide & evolving scope



And specifically for staff, this means:

Be **available, visible** and **easy to reach and talk to**, so passengers can come to you for information

Especially during disruption (but not limited to this): **Be empathetic**, and **think about the situation from individual passengers' perspective...**

...in order to **ensure that information is useful and actionable to real people in practice**. Including for example:

- ✓ Provide practical information on where to go for alternative transport, which platform to head for and how to get there quickly – and practical assistance / directions to get there
- ✓ Provide information and advice on eligibility for compensation, and how to get it
- ✓ Actively look out for those who might need extra help and information

Pro-actively giving information, use **initiative**

- ✓ Don't wait to be asked (because you know more than the passengers)
- ✓ Find out if you don't know

Keep updating passengers (even if the message is still the same or is that there is no news), to reassure them that they have all the information

Enable staff to deliver on the above:

- ✓ Prioritising them to receive the best, most up to date information about what is going on, in everyday situations and when things are going wrong
- ✓ Provide and maintain great information tools and devices, including good wi-fi/connections for example

Key principles & behaviours expected from staff, to deliver on Promises in practice:

Promise #3

Help finding the best ticket for your journey

With clear, impartial advice on options, discounts, refunds and compensation



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Individual, relevant help with your journey
- ✓ Fair refund outcomes, as well as advice
- ✓ Embrace a wide & evolving scope
- ✓ Constructive help to access relevant help, where ticket purchase is not available at certain locations



And specifically for staff, this means:

Be **available, visible** and **easy to reach and talk to**, so passengers have the opportunity to access the ticket help you can give

Take time to fully understand a passenger's requirements for a journey

- ✓ Including preferences and requirements for duration, pricing, accessibility, Railcards, etc.
- ✓ Consider and advise where possible on connections, onward travel beyond the rail network

Be well versed in the options, including any discounts or promos, and special offers for certain groups

Inform and advise on the options and pros/cons; make sure customers have the opportunity to get the best possible price as well as what might appear the most obvious ticket option

Be pro-active, caring, and fair to inform and advise passengers about their rights around compensation.

Listen and be sensitive to expectations, but be calm, fair and firm if they (mistakenly) feel entitled to more.

Responsibility is expected to lie with both the employer to inform and enable their staff to be knowledgeable, **and on staff themselves** to be up to speed.

Key principles & behaviours expected from staff, to deliver on Promises in practice:

Promise #4

Safe, secure and clean stations and services

With well-maintained facilities and security measures to keep everyone protected and confident when travelling



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Demonstration of safety & cleaning
- ✓ Easy, usable reporting mechanisms
- ✓ A passenger side to the bargain
- ✓ Clarity around when/where there will and won't be safety measures in place, and to present this constructively rather than as facts alone



And specifically for staff, this means:

Be present and active:

- ✓ Be **available, visible** and **easy to reach and talk to**, to reassure passengers and help them feel safe
- ✓ **Move around, be mobile and active** to increase sense of presence and capability further
- ✓ **Intervene to stop or prevent low-level anti-social behaviour, where possible and safe.** Passengers do not expect or want staff to be in an unsafe situation themselves, or to make a difficult scenario worse – but for low risk situations, a word from a staff member can diffuse and prevent it from escalating. If it is safe to do so, it is worth reducing these instances.

Enable staff to provide a reassuring presence

- ✓ Ensure sufficient numbers of staff
- ✓ Maximise safety (in practice and in both customers' and staff's perception) by...
 - ensuring that staff are not alone and helpless themselves, so that they can have a visible presence
 - deploying specific security personnel and/or police in some locations.
- ✓ Pay special attention to times and locations, including outside and around stations, when safety might feel lower

Where it does not compromise other responsibilities, **do small tasks that are quick wins for everyone, like picking up a piece of litter** (even if it's not your "job")

Keep on top of cleaning rotas and make sure **cleaning schedules which are visible to customers** are acted on and signed up to date

Key principles & behaviours expected from staff, to deliver on Promises in practice:

Promise #5

Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities

With assistance when you need it, and alternative transport if these are unavailable



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✔ Comprehensive, always-on empathy
- ✔ Applies to all aspects of rail travel
- ✔ Even more so than for most other Promises, customer expectations involve staff in particular: presence, ability and attitude
- ✔ Where execution of Promises is in doubt, be constructive in providing alternatives, not informing of the facts alone



And specifically for staff, this means:

Be **available, visible, easy to reach and talk to**, so those needing extra help avoid extra effort in accessing it in the first place

Really think about what a person might need, and listen to what they ask for without judgement – every experience of disability can be different, and different on different days, so everyone must be treated completely individually

Consider the widest possible scope for where and when people might need assistance, or even just a little extra time.

- This can include people with visible and non-visible disabilities, and other factors which might make them slower or find it harder to move around or make sense of the railway. These include age, familiarity with rail travel, language differences, having a responsibility for dependents, luggage... and so on.
- The help they need might be with physically moving around the station or accessing the train, but it might also be in understanding information correctly, or being able to purchase and use a ticket in the right format and through the right channels.

Pro-actively offer help or information to those who may need it the most... but **be respectful** if help is declined

Have people and equipment ready for passengers who have booked assistance (at the station meet point, outside of their carriage ready to help them off, etc.), rather than passenger needing to wait or search

Make sure that specific facilities for people who need them are available and accessible. E.g. make sure people and luggage are not blocking wheelchair spaces or accessible toilets.

Enable staff to provide assistance

- ✓ Ensure sufficient numbers of staff are available to cover other responsibilities when one team member needs to devote time to a particular passenger
- ✓ Ensure staff have the equipment like ramps and wheelchairs to help
- ✓ Help staff by making sure facilities like lifts and toilets are working, and fixed quickly if not

Key principles & behaviours expected from staff, to deliver on Promises in practice:

Promise #6

Support when things go wrong

Keeping you informed, listening to your feedback, and providing Delay Repay compensation



What customers expect from this Promise in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Embrace wide definitions of “when things go wrong” & compensation
- ✓ Demonstrate issues are taken seriously
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Even more so than for most other Promises, customer expectations involve staff in particular: presence, ability and attitude

And specifically for staff, this means: *And overlaps closely with behaviours which are relevant to Promise #2*

Be **available, visible** and **easy to reach and talk to**, so passengers can come to you for information

Think about the situation from individual passengers’ perspective, and act accordingly in order to **ensure that information is useful and actionable to real people in practice**. This includes for example:

- **Providing information** about...
 - Where to go for alternative transport, which platform to head for and how to get there quickly, and **practical help** / directions to get there
 - Eligibility for compensation and how to get it
- **Being attuned to different people’s needs:**
 - Actively look out for those who might need extra help and information
 - “When things go wrong” doesn’t only mean when trains are delayed or cancelled. To passengers, it might include when they have missed a train or other transport, when they have made an innocent ticket mistake, when toilets or catering is unavailable, and many more situations. Take time to consider the implications of an issue as it affects them, and seek to help on that basis.
- **Being empathetic, patient, kind**
 - Put yourself in the passenger’s shoes
 - Listen actively (give the passenger your full attention, ask relevant questions, clarify what they need to ensure you understand, etc.)
 - Remember passengers may not understand how things work – what their compensation rights are, what ticket restriction mean, jargon, etc.

Pro-actively giving information, use **initiative**

- Don’t wait to be asked (because you know more than the passengers, and because when passengers have to seek out help it can make an already-stressful situation feel more stressful than it might otherwise)
- Find out if you don’t know

Keep updating passengers (even if the message is still the same or if there is no news), to reassure them that they have all the information

Enable staff to deliver on the above:

- ✓ Prioritising them to receive the best, most up to date information about what is going on, in everyday situations and when things are going wrong
- ✓ Provide and maintain great information tools and devices, including good wi-fi/connections for example

In addition to expectations from staff against the six stated commitments, the environment in which they are working and the nature of the customer service activity can influence customer expectations

Discussions highlighted four scenarios in particular:



At small / limited staffed stations

Participants perceived that staff at small stations are likely to have:

- Stronger personal investment in the management of that station, and higher engagement with the customers passing through
- Greater agency and authority to act and make decisions
- Fewer / less complex demands from passengers, on average

→ **High expectation for a friendly face, and more personal and efficient service**

...But that they are also likely to be

- Isolated, less able to help with complex issues when they arise
- Limited in number and less able to cope with multiple customers needing help simultaneously

Delivering effectively on the Promises means **customers expect more staff at these stations** (at least at certain times, if it is not pragmatic to staff them more comprehensively all of the time), **better tech and connectedness to other stations and colleagues on the network**, and improved, faster **contingency plans to enable swift action when the unexpected happens**



At very large stations

Participants perceived that staff at very large stations are likely to feel:

- Like a smaller cog within a larger wheel, with lower sense of individual accountability
- Less invested in the big picture of how well the station is running, and less able to affect change for an individual passenger needing help, especially where multiple organisations are present

Delivering effectively on the Promises means **customers expect more active engagement and ownership from staff at larger stations** than they often feel they get currently, and a **greater sense of teamwork and connectedness within the station as well as beyond**.

Staff and their employers may need to work harder here, both to act more effectively in practice, and to change the customer perception.



On board trains

Participants' most common and critical observation about staff on board trains is that they do not see or hear from them enough – either because there are not any/sufficient staff on board, or because they do not make themselves known.

This matters in a variety of contexts, but is most important to customers in terms of safety, and for providing information / support when things go wrong.

Delivering effectively on the Promises means **customers expect much greater visibility and / or awareness of staff presence** on board trains, and much **easier, quicker ways to contact them**.

This may also involve **ensuring that staff on board trains have more access to information and are more equipped to help** with onward travel options in particular, so that they are empowered to help when needed, and more confident in making themselves available to passengers.



For special Assistance

Passengers needing special assistance typically experience all aspects of train travel, including staff interactions, more sharply. The need is greater, and staff interaction has a greater impact, for good or bad.

For instance, when systemic issues mean that information is not consistent or not fully communicated, this can have especially difficult implications for people needing additional assistance. And when individual staff lack appropriate soft skills and sensitivity, this can cause real discomfort and difficulty, and can put people off from traveling by train in the future.

Delivering effectively on the Promises means **customers expect staff, and the systems and processes behind them, to work extra hard to serve people with additional accessibility requirements** (rather than seeing them as an add-on to their day to day responsibilities).

Living and breathing the Promises

Workshop discussions indicated that, for customers, **if the Promises are to be delivered optimally, they must be embedded into the culture of railway organisations** as a consistent thread running through all internal communication and management (rather than as a superficial veneer to employee handbooks, for example).

While community participants are not employment professionals, they do have expectations for how rail organisations are being run behind the scenes and how this therefore affects staff and ultimately themselves as customers. There were three main pillars to their expectations:

Empowerment & input, not instruction

Workshop participants frequently suggested that:

- ✓ **Staff themselves should be engaged in similar workshop exercises**, to gain both their buy-in and support for the Promises, and their ideas for shaping and executing them successfully
- ✓ This should be **cemented with regular internal listening and sharing opportunities, to review and improve upon Promise delivery**, especially as customer expectations may evolve, and as technology, and other possible solutions and tools to delivering on the Promises, advance

Personnel management

They felt strongly that **all staff needed training in customer facing work, including regular refresher training**.

Several participants articulated that this should involve looking at real-life scenarios and reflecting on authentic, tangible experiences of customers and staff – that it must not involve only classroom-based courses that are removed from reality

The **Promises should inform the structure and language of recruitment & job descriptions, and of ongoing performance management and reviews**

No role differentiation

The **language and principles in the Promises should be part of the way railway organisations talk internally to all employees**, at all levels and in all functions

Customer service and the ways of working that the Promises commit to are what customers expect from all staff, irrespective of their job title and specialist skills or functions.

This is true for both the overtly customer-facing staff, and those who work with them, manage them, and have any role in shaping how the railway is run – since all of this impacts on customers.

The following are some real life examples of the community's expectations for how the Promises should be delivered, to illustrate some of the key points made over the preceding pages.

These examples are based on customers' own recent experiences and/or their views for how things should be executed in the future.

In some cases these examples are given in participants' own words (e.g. via an online discussion board set up to capture their reflections on the workshop immediately after it took place. In other cases, anecdotes are relayed from specific points made by participants on the day.



Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #1

Approachable, knowledgeable and available staff

Trained to support you and provide assistance throughout your journey



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ High staff presence and visibility
- ✓ Effective alternatives to f2f contact
- ✓ Well equipped, informed, supported staff
- ✓ Inclusive attitude, meeting diverse needs
- ✓ Personable, empathetic outlook

Had a journey to Birmingham with my sister. Coming back **there were no staff on the gates - I like to see a human to ask any questions. My sister had a code that wouldn't scan but there was no one to ask and we started worrying about time and missing the train.** There was a big queue at the customer service desk. Luckily we tried the app and managed to sort it ourselves, as she has taken a screen shot of the QR code, but it would have been nice and reassuring to have a member of staff just to be there on hand.

Layla

High staff presence and visibility

Euston ...was chaotic and packed - with only the boards giving information. All Avanti services were delayed... and **I saw only one employee being inundated with travellers' questions.**

Simon

High staff presence and visibility

When travelling back from Milton Keynes **I was struck by how pleasant and engaging the train manager was** when she came to check my ticket. I always make the effort to give train staff my attention and to smile and say hello, because **I appreciate at times it must be a thankless task.** Sometimes I get a good response and sometimes I don't. Yesterday I definitely did.

Benjamin

Personable, empathetic outlook

I have found **the majority of staff on platforms and trains are fantastic, friendly and always happy to help me.** I've had challenges, and had to resort to WhatsApp, as well as email, and face to face. **But I've not felt like any problem has been beyond solving, and their willingness to assist keeps me travelling.**

Chloe

Personable, empathetic outlook
Inclusive attitude, meeting diverse needs

For any journey I always book passenger assistance ...due to my sight loss. I need assistance to board and get off the train so that I do not fall down between the platform's edge and the train. I feel positive because I can travel on different types of public transport including by train. If I go to stations on a regular basis, the station's assistance staff get to know you on a more personal level which brings even more of a personal touch to your journey. Some railway staff are fantastic at what they do and they go above and beyond to ensure that you're okay.

Amelia

Personable, empathetic outlook
Inclusive attitude, meeting diverse needs

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #2 (1/2)

Clear, honest, and accessible information before and during your journey

Including real-time updates and planned changes – so you can make informed choices



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Particular attention & effort during disruption
- ✓ Timeliness is paramount
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Embrace a wide & evolving scope

Luke routinely experiences **patchy Wi-Fi and phone signal** for a long stretch of his usual journey through the Scottish Highlands. Online information and texts are therefore not reliable, and **he needs good quality audio announcements, on-board screens, or in-person communication from on board staff** to update him on next calling points and other run of the mill information.

And, if **any kind of disruption happens during this time, he is entirely reliant on staff** to relay information (either in person or over loudspeaker on train), and again on the on board staff to help with onward plans.

Particular attention & effort during disruption
Be truly informative
Embrace wide scope (inc. a need for staff presence)

I like to be well informed. I think the railways could do better.. **[I was frustrated at] their decision to cancel the service at will with no valid reason given...** [and] the fact that they sometimes leave cancellations to the very last minute. **I'd have thought if they were cancelling a service they would have prior knowledge hours beforehand.**

Simon
Particular attention & effort during disruption
Be truly informative
Timeliness is paramount

I usually check official train or coach websites and apps for timetables, ticket prices, and seat reservations. **Google Maps helps with routes and station details.** During the journey I rely on onboard announcements, station displays, and staff for updates on times and stops. I also check the operator's app for live tracking and delays [and] **Google Maps to confirm progress and see connections.**

Maulika
Embrace wide scope (inc. multiple channels, and 3rd parties)

I love [the idea of a tool that] automatically tracks what station [you're at while on the train]. **I am someone with anxiety who watches google maps to see what station I am at and this [is] so beneficial in reducing travel anxiety** and keeping me informed of where I am andhow much train journey I have left to go.

Mia
Embrace wide scope (inc. multiple channels, and 3rd parties)

...there were once again **issues with the audio quality of announcements** [on board]. ...dull and almost imperceptible ...it sounded like the announcements were being made inside a fishbowl. At the station the announcements were so quiet I couldn't make out what was being said ... **This made it difficult for carriages full of people to work out whether they needed to take any action.**

Benjamin
Embrace wide scope (inc. ensuring everyone can access & use info.)

Coming back [home] last week I entered London Bridge on ground level, [and] there were no Borough Green trains on the board. I panicked but asked a station worker and he informed me I had to go up to the next level – **why couldn't the notice board have told me that info?**

Evelyn
Embrace wide scope (inc. ensuring everyone can access & use info.)

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #2 (2/2)

Clear, honest, and accessible information before and during your journey

Including real-time updates and planned changes – so you can make informed choices



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Particular attention & effort during disruption
- ✓ Timeliness is paramount
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Embrace a wide & evolving scope

*At Edinburgh Waverley train station there is a platform 9e and 9w; but **on the board in the waiting area it only mentions platform 9. I found this really confusing as I wasn't sure which part of the platform I needed to go to** board the train.*

*On the Transport for Wales train the train had to be stopped at Shrewsbury as the train wasn't safe to be used that evening due to the emergency stop feature if the driver fell asleep or passed out wasn't working. **I found this out through the conductor** who came around and chatted to the passengers and provided free bottled water.*

*[While this was useful] **the announcement was very intense** for us to leave the train and wait on the next platform and **could [have] been more calming for persons [like myself] who are very anxious.***

Lucas

*Particular attention & effort during disruption
Embrace wide scope (inc. a need for staff presence, and ensuring everyone can access & use info)*

*Layla was on board a train when there was an announcement to say they were delayed. **The train manager didn't know the reason for this, but explained what she did and didn't know, promised to give another update in 15 mins, and then did so, even though the news was still the same.***

*Layla was frustrated about the delay but at least **felt that she was not being left in the dark** about information that might be available somewhere, and that she and the other passengers were not being ignored – **the train manager clearly empathised** and was clearly going to help more constructively when she could.*

*Particular attention & effort during disruption
Be truly informative
Timeliness is paramount*

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #3

Help finding the best ticket for your journey

With clear, impartial advice on options, discounts, refunds and compensation



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Individual, relevant help with your journey
- ✓ Fair refund outcomes, as well as advice
- ✓ Embrace a wide & evolving scope
- ✓ Constructive help to access relevant help, where ticket purchase is not available at certain locations

When discussing different web/mobile interfaces for choosing and buying tickets, John and others suggested that it would be useful if an **integrated AI tool could help you find the journey and ticket that is most suitable to you – to help cut through the large volume of confusing options, and to make sure you don't miss the best deal**, by deliberately asking it to check this for you. Other participants were not put off by this idea, and there was a **general sense that this could – and would – become the expected way of interacting with ticket retail sites in the very near future.**

*Individual, relevant help with your journey
Embrace wide scope (inc. for 3rd party & AI integration)*

The staff at my local ticket office... are always helpful when I ask about ticket options for my journey and **I certainly prefer consulting them rather than using a machine** to purchase a ticket.

*Zoe
Individual, relevant help with your journey
(inc. having multiple channels that includes f2f staff)*

As a disabled traveller, Amelia is able to travel for free on all trains within Scotland, which she really appreciates. She often travels into England however, and sometimes **needs help from staff to make sure she gets the right tickets that deal with this relatively unusual complexity. She can also need help again if she subsequently needs to claim for compensation**, because depending on which operator was responsible for any disruption (which may have been on the free portion of her journey) this can make a claim complex.

*Individual, relevant help with your journey
Embrace wide scope (inc. ability to buy tickets for full end to end journey)*

...I finally received confirmation of my ticket booking and attached passenger assist. **It isn't easy to use and a first time user will find it awful to navigate. Three apps required, the system isn't conducive to encouraging disabled travelling.** To book any ticket I need to check times, [station facilities], etc., and book.

Then I have to book passenger assist. Unfortunately there is no way to actually check if there are wheelchair spaces on a train. You just have to book the ticket, request the passenger assist and hope the space will be available.

*Chloe
Individual, relevant help with your journey*

-----> Amelia also gave feedback about ticket formats and implications this has for help she might need with purchasing and using them:

Paper tickets are no good to me as I cannot see to read the information on them... I prefer buying (where possible) digital tickets [which can be used with a screen reader]. Sometimes, digital tickets may not always be possible for all parts of any long journeys [so if I do need to buy a ticket at a station] touch-screen ticket machines are inaccessible for visually impaired people to use [so] it is a case of trying to find a member of staff ...to help.

Individual, relevant help with your journey (inc. having multiple channels that includes f2f staff)

The outward train on my journey was cancelled... I got that part of my journey refunded but the company I'd booked with told me **after several days** that I had to claim the return half separately with the train company [that operated] my return journey. Eventually, that second company refused because their train back had run on time. **So even though I could not get to my destination, they insisted I could have travelled back.** By then, I was out of time to claim...

*Ellen
Fair refund outcomes, as well as advice*

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #4

Safe, secure and clean stations and services

With well-maintained facilities and security measures to keep everyone protected and confident when travelling



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Demonstration of safety & cleaning
- ✓ Easy, usable reporting mechanisms
- ✓ A passenger side to the bargain
- ✓ Clarity around when / where there will and won't be safety measures in place, and presented constructively

For the first time in my life, I was assaulted [and pushed off my mobility scooter] just outside my home train station by a drunk who got off the train ahead of me. I was not seriously hurt but shaken. Two of his friends dragged him off before it was more serious, so I'm just a little sore from hauling my scooter back up.

It was 7.20pm, so no staff at that time. And because [the TOC] insists I fold my mobility scooter to get off the train, the platform and station were empty by the time I'd unfolded it. If I'd been able to get off with everyone else [and I hadn't been on my own as I left the station], it wouldn't have happened. [In addition, there is no] CCTV on that corner.

[I feel that they should] sort out scooter policies and get more CCTV. And that the station needs staff at weekends when football fans are travelling.

Ellen



Other participants echoed this sentiment:

...communication boxes installed at stations are insufficient to deal with incidents like the one you experienced - by the time someone remote has been alerted the damage is already done. There should be a physical presence at stations linked to events, football being one example..

*Demonstration of safety (with staff presence & CCTV)
Easy, usable reporting mechanisms*

*I'd like **more information** about safety in and around stations, platforms and trains - **with respect to raising concerns and who to contact in case of emergencies.***

Ava

*Easy, usable reporting mechanisms
Clarity around when / where there will and won't be safety measures*

I have noticed that there are cleaners in at least Edinburgh Station collecting rubbish and cleaning toilets...[which is] appreciated. It's a dirty job as there are some awful people who don't care how they treat toilets especially cubicles.

Police should be present at all stations to make all feel secure, checking for drunkenness as an example.

Demonstration of safety & cleaning

Some participants observed that train managers and ticket inspectors may not be physically strong enough to confidently intervene in violent – or even rowdy – behaviour on board. **They both felt for these staff, and were concerned about the lack of protection for passengers. They strongly felt that police or security personnel should be present more often in more places.**

Demonstration of safety

Sometimes passengers too should be mindful of their own behaviour. I've seen aggressive, rude, critical, inappropriate and threatening behaviour from passengers towards ...staff.

Penelope

A passenger side to the bargain

Perhaps there could be a public information campaign reminding users that the railway system is owned by us all (rather than by a corporate entity) and encouraging people to take care of it and not drop litter etc.

A passenger side to the bargain

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #5

Inclusive and accessible travel and facilities

With assistance when you need it, and alternative transport if these are unavailable



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Comprehensive, always-on empathy
- ✓ Applies to all aspects of rail travel
- ✓ Customer expectations involve staff in particular
- ✓ Where execution of Promises is in doubt, be constructive in providing alternatives

Chloe, a wheelchair user, recently found herself on a long distance journey where **the disabled toilet was out of order. Eventually she was forced to ask the on-board staff to let her off the train at a station** so that she could use the facilities there.

(Although it should have been a given), she expressly asked the staff to be discreet about this because she knew this pause in the journey would inconvenience other passengers. Despite this, **the train manager announced over the train's loud speaker that the reason for the delay at the station was because they needed to allow a disabled passenger off to use the station toilets. This insensitivity was incredibly humiliating**, to compound an already uncomfortable journey where the facilities were not adequate for Chloe's needs.

Comprehensive, always-on empathy
Applies to all aspects of rail travel
Be constructive in providing alternatives

My mum is a carer for a wheelchair [user], and she always tells me stories about how **accessible stations are often not what they appear to be on the app and have caveats.**

One [example] was ...where **the station was only accessible on one side of the platform not the other, even though it was listed as accessible**, so they had to ride to the next stop and then get a train in the other direction.

Matthew
Applies to all aspects of travel (inc. facilities being present & working)
Be constructive in providing alternatives

Amelia, who is totally blind and has a hearing impairment, recently travelled from her home in Scotland to visit a friend in Kent. She had intended to use the WCML to London from Glasgow, but discovered the route was completely out of service when she arrived at Glasgow. She was advised to make her way to Edinburgh and travel on the ECML instead. Staff helped her to begin the journey from Glasgow to Edinburgh, but **nobody phoned ahead (despite her asking) to help ensure her pre-booked Passenger Assistance from Glasgow could now be arranged from Edinburgh, nor did anyone subsequently meet her in London** later that day. This was a crowded, very delayed and stressful journey for all the passengers on the train that day, but this was heightened even further for Amelia who had less access to information, and who was also let down by the help she had pre-booked and expected.

Comprehensive, always-on empathy
Be constructive in providing alternatives

As usual I prebooked assistance. When I arrived at Rotherham **the ticket office/waiting room was locked and the lights were off.** [So] I asked two passengers to hold the doors open when the train arrived until the train crew saw me. **The conductor managed to get me on without the ramp, not very safe** or easy for me, and this delayed the train, but at least I was on.... **No assistance at Sheffield as no one had confirmed I'd boarded the first train.** The conductor got me off ...but **didn't ask if I needed help to transfer platforms...** And then **no one came to meet me until my connection was pulling in.** I thought I'd have to hold the door open again!

...[Also] on the 3rd train, the longest leg, **the accessible toilet was out of order.... No one checked if I was OK.**

It is very stressful travelling when assistance isn't available and not good for my health to avoid liquid because I can't access a toilet.

Ellen
Comprehensive, always-on empathy
Expectations involve staff in particular
Applies to all aspects of travel (inc. facilities / equipment being present & working)

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #6 (1/2)

Support when things go wrong

Keeping you informed, listening to your feedback, and providing Delay Repay compensation



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong" & compensation
- ✓ Demonstrate issues are taken seriously
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Expectations involve staff in particular

*I'm currently on this [TOC] train which is running slightly late. I was very impressed with **the train manager who was giving regular updates** as we were pulling into Nuneaton earlier for those passengers who had a connection. The connecting train was going to Stansted and **he advised passengers to go to the front carriage of our train as it would be nearest the overhead walkway to the platform they needed and they only had 3 minutes to make it. This sort of customer care and thinking goes a long way** when trains are running late. Very impressed!*

Benjamin

Expectations involve staff in particular
Be truly informative
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

*I just wanted to make a comment on the staff that we encountered ... It was very refreshing to have such friendly and welcoming staff ... There was one specific incident where my son was struggling to get his ticket to scan at the station. Inverness station is small and has only a handful of ticket barriers, and our train was due to leave at the same time as one of the Edinburgh services... [with] over a hundred people... trying to squeeze through those barriers at the same time. It was pretty chaotic! While my son struggled, one of the staff members calmly helped him and got us through. It wouldn't have surprised me if they were impatient due to the volume of people there but **he gave my son all the time he needed. These are the small interactions ...that go a long way and would encourage me to continue to make the most of our rail services.***

Luke

Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong"
Expectations involve staff in particular
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

*One memorable experience ...was when several trains were cancelled due to severe weather. I'd arrived at the station confused about which services were still running, and the information boards were updating slowly. I approached a member of staff ...they went above and beyond. **Instead of just pointing me toward the next train, they checked multiple routes, explained the quickest alternative options, and even printed the revised timetable** that had just come through on their internal system. What stood out was how **calm and reassuring** they were—everyone around was stressed, but they **took the time to make sure each person understood their options.***

John

Expectations involve staff in particular
Be truly informative
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

*I was in Edinburgh.. going to Glasgow when just about everything [that] could've gone wrong [did]. First, I couldn't navigate Edinburgh Waverley Station and found a staff member ..who was able to tell me where my train platform was. Next ...I then picked up the wrong ticket in the machine and once I realised [the correct one] had disappeared. The **staff were remarkably friendly** and trusted me to go through the barrier and to the customer service desk where a receptionist **wrote down a note saying I could travel** with my incorrect ticket because she'd seen I'd brought the wrong one, **the ticket inspector on board was incredibly friendly about it too.***

Matthew

Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong"
Expectations involve staff in particular
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

Illustrative examples of customers' experiences, informing expectations for Promise #6 (2/2)

Support when things go wrong

Keeping you informed, listening to your feedback, and providing Delay Repay compensation



What customers expect from in practice

(summary of their priorities as covered earlier in this report)

- ✓ Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong" & compensation
- ✓ Demonstrate issues are taken seriously
- ✓ Be truly informative
- ✓ Expectations involve staff in particular

*I left my hiking sticks on a train. I realised straight away but the train had already left. I went to a member of staff who gave me a number to ring for lost property. She basically said I'll never see them again, and didn't give me any hope. **I felt very disappointed and felt she didn't really care.***

Layla

Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong"
Expectations involve staff in particular
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously

*One experience that stands out was when a service was heavily delayed, and the **communication felt inconsistent. The announcements on the train didn't match the app, and the operator's website said something different again. It made it harder to work out what my options were. It wasn't that staff weren't trying, but the information clearly wasn't joined up.** It's a good example of why clearer, centralised information would help passengers make decisions faster.*

Arjun

Be truly informative
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously (incl. empowering staff to help effectively)

*All services were delayed [and] **there was nowhere for passengers to sit while they wait** for their service (a problem for anyone with disabilities).*

Simon

Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong"

*...I got off at Cardiff [to connect with my train to get home], it arrived late. No problem, just had to waste time waiting for the next train. [While waiting] I asked the Cardiff staff if the lift is working at my home station and they didn't know, they told me to ask guard on train. **No offer to actually find out** while I was waiting for twenty minutes for the next train...*

[Then on board, the] train guard didn't come round until my journey was almost complete. He rang immediately and tried his best, but found out [that there were] no lifts operational at my home station, [this was] one stop before getting off. The guard on train tried his best, but the only offer the staff on the end of phone would offer was for me to remain on train to the end of its journey, and then come back and be on the right side of the station.

*I wasn't willing to waste so much time due to their error. I would have been over an hour later arriving home than originally planned. In the end I got off at next stop and paid the extra taxi fare to get home ... **There is no understanding, nor willingness to help regarding access. It isn't my fault my wheelchair stops me doing stairs, and the system isn't available for me to check if staff aren't willing to do so.***

Chloe

Embrace wide definitions of "when things go wrong"
Expectations involve staff in particular
Demonstrate issues are taken seriously
Be truly informative

**The public face of the
Promises:**
Communication and
accountability

Reflecting previous feedback, participants felt it was essential to understand how the rail industry would be held **accountable** for the Promises, and by whom



This is a fundamental part of the Promise → **information on how the commitments are measured and held up, and by whom, should be a salient part of any comms** (if not included alongside the text used in the Promises, itself)



Customers want to see an organisation or “panel” that is **independent** from the railway, with **real enforcement power**
Several were also keen to see a **passenger voice** as part of this independent panel



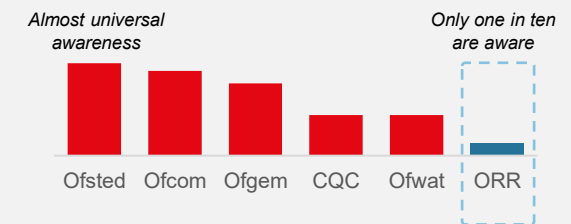
...but existing **awareness of ORR is quite low** → **raising its profile** (and, arguably, that of Transport Focus) **should be considered alongside launching the new Promises**, to give the Promises themselves genuine meaning and credibility

Many workshop participants gave examples of other industry regulators, and felt that the railway should have a similar body!

“ *In my work in healthcare for vulnerable adults, we get inspected by the CQC (rightly so). There should be something similar for trains.* ”

Awareness of some industry regulators, measured via an online poll among community participants

(All participants, Dec '25)



How might the railway communicate progress against the Promises with the public?

Feedback in July 2025 indicated that, while most people are probably unlikely to go searching for detailed information about how the rail industry is performing against key commitments, there is a **strong appetite for brief snapshots of information, to be consumed “passively” by the public.**

This included:

- Updates on what is / has been happening, via information boards / screens at stations
- News articles or bitesize social media comms
- Interactive dashboards and full reports on industry websites – publicly available for those interested, albeit a more limited audience



Workshop discussions confirmed this overall attitude, and the expectation for passive consumption of comms around delivery of commitments

- ✓ Ultimately, rail customers want to see and experience services improving and running to expected standards in practice, and do not wish to see excessive resource being used on communicating the progress
- ✓ Nevertheless, people often want reassurance that checks and enforcement are going on in the background, even if they don't feel any need to engage closely with it themselves.

...they also built on this a little further, with key expectations highlighted as:

Communications about how the industry is delivering need to be:



- ✓ **Low profile but easily available** (as above)
- ✓ **Credible & transparent** (some suggest using current punctuality stats, inherently “unspun” if they are “live”)
- ✓ **Up to date**, showing momentum, new news
- ✓ **Specific / localised** – high-level, national statistics on the number of complaints or reported security incidents (for instance) can feel meaningless, even disingenuous if they do not reflect individual experience. People want to know how Promises are being delivered on, as relevant to their local line / station, etc.



Performance (punctuality, cancellations, etc.), and how it is being managed, is something customers expect to be told about, within the context of accountability for Promises. Reliability is (rightly, from customers' perspective) highlighted in the overarching commitment, if not an explicit element of individual six Promises.

Punctuality and reliability matter so fundamentally to passengers, that it makes sense to talk about delivery on this alongside any communications about the Promises themselves. This is likely to feel like a conspicuous gap, and come across as non-transparent, if it is not the case.

(Some incidental feedback on using visuals in any communication of the Promises to the public)

When they were presented to workshop participants, the Promises used AI-generated, placeholder visuals. These are not intended as the final imagery to be used in any public communication, and it was not an objective of this workshop to gather feedback on the visuals.

Nevertheless, some of the images did provoke feedback or influenced interpretations of the Promises, and therefore also may have impacted on expectations for their execution.

Relevant feedback is therefore included here should it be informative in future design and publication work.



In the overarching Promise and all six commitment areas, visuals include staff. This may reinforce expectations for staff involvement in delivering all of the commitments.

This is highly welcome for customers – participants in this and previous communities have consistently emphasised the importance of in-person interaction with staff (as well as their opinion that staff presence needs to be greater than it is now). However, rail operators and others should be aware that this additional, visual reinforcement may strengthen the expectation for staff presence, and that will need to be delivered upon.



Avoid using images which may feel unrealistic or unrecognisable in everyday experience.

For example, the conspicuous cleaning activity in #4 prompted cynicism (“This never happens!”) – potentially undermining the credibility of the commitment

In #4 specifically, consider stronger emphasis on security to balance the image more toward this part of the Promise, in addition to cleanliness.

Workshop participants tended to be more interested in safety and security than on cleanliness, and this is also reflected (rightly) in the “what you can expect” text. Therefore, cleanliness is still vital and should be incorporated if possible, but not at the expense of security. (Some people noticed the CCTV camera here but the visual cues to keeping people safe could be stronger).



In #5 and others which feature passengers needing assistance: avoid perpetuating a stereotype by acknowledging non-visible and non-wheelchair based disabilities, as well as other accessibility needs such as luggage, prams, etc.



Key takeouts

Key takeouts 1/2

Throughout several feedback exercises to date, **community participants have largely supported the principle of setting commitments** for how rail will deliver for customers. They can be hesitant to trust that the Promises will be delivered on effectively. **The latest research exercise has sought to understand what their expectations are, to help inform how to deliver for customers and highlight any areas where this might be more difficult.**

Every person's expectations and interpretations of the stated Promises is likely to be a little bit different – as demonstrated by diverse range of response in this workshop.

However, **at a high level their expectations centre around some key principles:**

- **High staff presence and visibility**
- **Staff who are well informed, well equipped and well supported**
- **Inclusive, empathetic, “in customers’ shoes” and pro-active attitude**, that is always on and underpins everything about the way people in the industry work, and the way processes and customer experiences are designed and managed
- **Special attention** (and more than currently) to customer needs during any kind of **disruption**
- **Wide definitions for the scope of what is covered by the Promises**, e.g. in what aspects of rail travel passengers may need help with, in what constitutes “when things go wrong”, and so on
- **Preparedness that expectations may evolve**, particularly as technology advances to improve what is possible in terms of customer experience and customer service
- **Demonstrating and making visible the work that is being done**, especially around safety and cleanliness, and letting passengers see that the industry cares about the impact of when things go wrong.

More specific expectations are given throughout the report.

There is also an acknowledgement that passengers also hold up their side of the bargain – to behave respectfully and to pay their fares. Although it is not an explicit part of the Promises, there is some expectation – certainly an appetite – for the rail industry to have a deliberate role in encouraging and enabling passengers to do so.

Key takeouts 2/2

For the most part, customers feel that, in theory, the Promises are deliverable.

They perceive that **staff have the right attitude and motivation to execute their expectations well.**

Where they have concerns about the delivery of the Promises in practice, it is usually because they doubt the systemic support or culture in the organisations that railway staff work for.

As such, while the feedback has highlighted some specific, tangible expectations for how staff themselves should execute the Promises, **it has also strongly emphasised the (perceived, or real) need for staff to be better supported.**

That is, customers feel that staff need better and more consistent information, technology and equipment, greater confidence and agency to take decisions or action, and more time and capacity to serve customers as well as to do specific technical aspects of their job description.

As part of this, **they also strongly feel that more staff are needed, more visibly, more of the time and in more locations.** (This is also felt to be important for staffs' own morale and their safety).

The Promises for which this perceived issue is strongest are #1, 4, 5 and to some extent 6.

In order that the Promises are truly meaningful, **customers want to understand how the rail industry will be held accountable.**

They do want to hear about how well the industry is performing against its commitments, and what measures are being taken to address shortcomings – albeit that most people simply wish to know that this type of information is available but are likely to only **engage fairly passively** with it themselves.

They expect there to be an **independent body with real enforcement power** – because of this it may be worth ensuring that the regulatory and watchdog organisations have a higher profile than they do currently.

(Finally, while it was not an objective of the workshop in November 2025, it was observed that the term Promise is still problematic for some – many prefer “what you can expect” as a more realistic and meaningful phrase)

About Transport Focus

Transport Focus is the independent consumer organisation representing the interests of:



Bus, coach and tram users across England outside London.



Rail passengers in Great Britain.



All users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads (the Strategic Road Network).

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Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

We work to make a difference for all transport users.