

Shaping Rail's Future: Customer Community 2025-26

Face to face workshop February 2026

Revenue Protection:
What do customers want

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

February 2026: the second of this cohort's in-person workshops



Saturday 28th
February 2026



Central
Manchester



26 participants
+ industry reps



Topic: **customers' perspective on
how the railway should approach
revenue protection**



The workshop: an outline of the day

10am

4pm

Outlining objectives



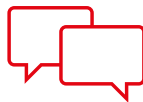
Overview of how the railway is funded, including the proportion funded by ticket sales, and the impact of ticketless or wrong-ticket travel

Key questions posed for the group to consider throughout the day

(see following page)

Setting the scene

Customer experiences and perspectives of travelling without a ticket or with the wrong ticket



Informal discussions

Introducing some of the activities performed under the umbrella of “revenue protection”

And some of the ways in which passengers travel without a ticket



Revenue protection quiz



Meet some fare-evading personas

Exploring the issues



Participants divided into six smaller groups to discuss in detail:



Morning

How should the railway address ticketless and wrong-ticket travel when it happens, on the ground?



Afternoon

How else can ticketless and wrong-ticket travel be prevented and addressed?

Summarising

Key takeouts shared by both participants and industry attendees



Key questions

Should “revenue protection” be a priority ?	What should the consequences be for travelling without a ticket?	How should warnings, penalties and prosecutions be imposed ? (Where / when / why / standardisation?)	How should we communicate to passengers about rules, rights, consequences?
How should fare evasion be deterred , and mistakes prevented ?	What do passengers want from revenue protection officers ?	How should front-line staff be equipped / supported and trained ?	How should data be used to spot and stop repeat offenders?

Seven fare-evading characters

These characters were introduced to the workshop participants to illustrate some of the ways that people have avoided paying correctly for train journeys. Their purpose was to stimulate discussion about the range of issues involved in addressing ticketless and wrong-ticket travel, throughout the rest of the workshop sessions.

The characters were introduced via a show reel of still images, and spoken words from the characters themselves. The characters and their words were based on examples of real behaviour, but were otherwise fictional. The images and audio were created using AI. See the characters' words in full, in the Appendix.



Harriet

Short journeys, does not buy ticket

26, lives with her mum in Kent

Shop assistant in London, and travels to work by train.

Ticket gates are often open, and Harriet knows where to sit on the train to avoid the ticket inspector

Has the ticket ready to buy on her phone, but only actually buys it if she "has to"



Callum

Fraudulently uses a child ticket

19, lives at home near Manchester

Goes to university in Manchester, by train

Buys a child ticket because he can get away with looking about 15 years old

Takes his younger brother's ID in case he is challenged

Says he will pay full fare when he's earning, but money is tight now



Jay

Falsely claims Railcard discount

23, from Gateshead

Travels occasionally to see friends in Leeds

Once used a 16-25 Railcard, realising later it had expired

Has since done the same... on purpose

If caught, will claim she has forgotten the Railcard or didn't realise it has expired.

She saves money overall even if caught out occasionally



Jerome

Claims to be unaware of Advance ticket restrictions

Runs a consultancy business in Exeter

Travels monthly at peak times to clients in London & Southampton.

Once accidentally boarded the wrong train using an Advance ticket.

He was let off... so now does it on purpose.

He will pay if caught, but saves money overall in the long run.



Ceri

Screenshots a real ticket

Early 30s, likes to go to festivals, gigs and seeing friends.

For a recent festival, she and her friend bought one ticket, her friend had the real ticket, Ceri had a screenshot. They sat apart and when checked, Ceri pretended her friend must have sent her the wrong thing.

It felt fair to Ceri, as the return journey was on a replacement bus – not what they paid for.



John

Shortfares

Late 30s, works for a tech firm in London

Commutes daily from Buckinghamshire. Trains can be late, crowded, and sometimes dirty.

He realised he can pay for a ticket for part of the journey rather than the whole way. He buys a ticket between London and Wembley, but travels further.

This is much cheaper and seems fairer, since the trains are below his expectations.



Adam

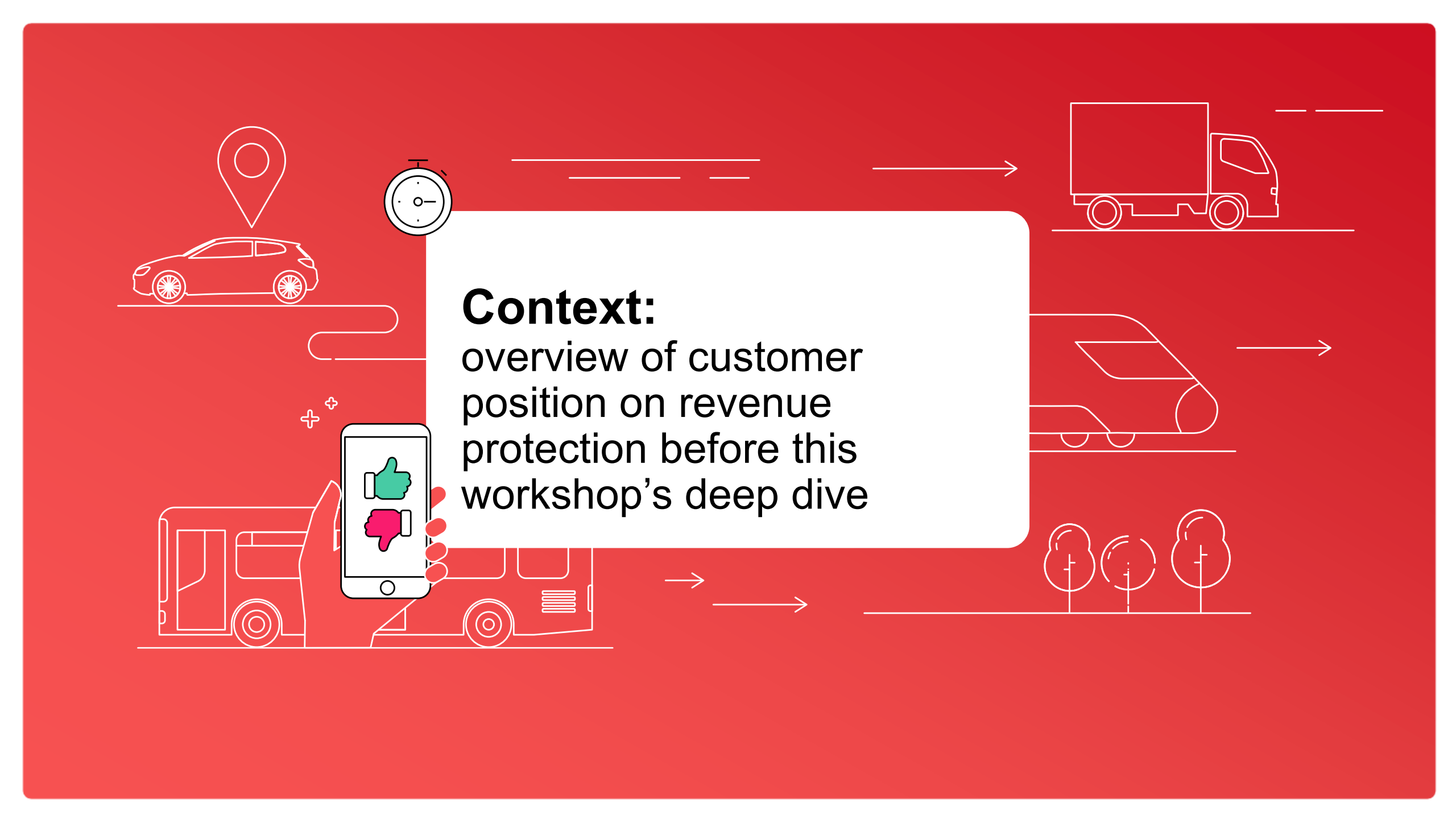
Fraudulent Delay Repay claim

50s, working part time, but previously worked full time and commuted by train for 20 years

Buys an Anytime ticket.

Recently avoided major disruption, but claimed for the delay anyway through Delay Repay.

It felt like "back-dated compensation" for all the times he had been delayed or inconvenienced over the years, without having claimed.



Context:
overview of customer
position on revenue
protection before this
workshop's deep dive

Overview of the customer position on revenue protection before this workshop's deep dive

Current awareness about what revenue protection involves



Customers see the “front line” activity and technology:

- Ticket inspection staff on board trains
- Barriers at stations, sometimes manned by staff
- Some awareness, and varied understanding, of localised policies and processes related to ensuring people pay the right fare, like tap in / out (e.g. within London zones), Promise to Pay (e.g. Northern), etc.



Broad awareness of a penalty system, but inconsistent knowledge of how it is applied and value of the fine



Currently, customers are rarely aware of other aspects, such as using data to identify behavioural patterns, the implications of having a ticket scanned and the information RPOs gain from scanning, etc.

Current experience and perception



Most of the customer perception of revenue protection activity is fairly positive:

Staff are usually seen to be courteous, professional, and non-intrusive when checking tickets which are correct for the journey

Many interactions with passengers who do not have the correct ticket are also professionally handled

... even helpful and supportive, where the passenger has made a genuine mistake



But most people have also experienced or witnessed less positive examples, where they felt the RPO was rude, abrupt, or un-sympathetic.

Even if less common, the more negative occasions are memorable. They can therefore contribute to a perception that the industry prioritises revenue over customers.

What passengers want



Participants in this and previous equivalent communities have consistently highlighted the **importance of seeing staff at stations and on board trains.**

- ✓ Important for safety perceptions, general help and assistance.
- ✓ Not limited to ticket verification / gateline staff, but they are an intuitive and key part of this.

For RPOs and gateline staff specifically, **customers consistently expect a customer service element to the role in addition to ticket verification.** They expect help with various queries, wayfinding, and help with navigating through delays and disruption when they happen.

(Even before beginning this deep dive workshop on revenue protection), **participants regularly fed back that they would like and expect to see ticket verification staff on board.**

- ✓ They do want to know that all passengers are paying their way – those who don't pay are letting everyone down
- ✓ But they also want clarity, fairness, and having staff available to help navigate confusing situations rather than simply enforce rules
- ✓ ...as well as having staff around for broader customer service and staff presence purposes).

Feedback prior to this workshop has been consistently supportive of seeing staff on board – regular ticket checks an intuitive part of this

Appreciation for staff presence and assistance

It's always good to have it checked by a ticket officer as I often hear people who have purchased an incorrect ticket being assisted

Anonymous, 2024-25 community

The ticket workers on the trains on south east are very freindly and sometimes the ticket office is closed and can't get signal on phone to pay on app they allow me to pay on train

Evelyn, infrequent & anxious traveller

Comments that ticket officers are not seen frequently enough

I've only had my ticket checked once in many dozens of journeys

Anonymous, 2024-25 community

Frankly more conductors which can enforce tickets and maintain a clean train would improve the service and ensure everyone buys a ticket.

Anonymous, 2024-25 community

Complaints about too many ticket checks are rare / non existent

There seemed to be a bit of a revenue protection blitz on [TOC]. My ticket was checked on three different trains by revenue protection staff ...No problem for me, as all were courteous.

Anonymous, 2024-25 community

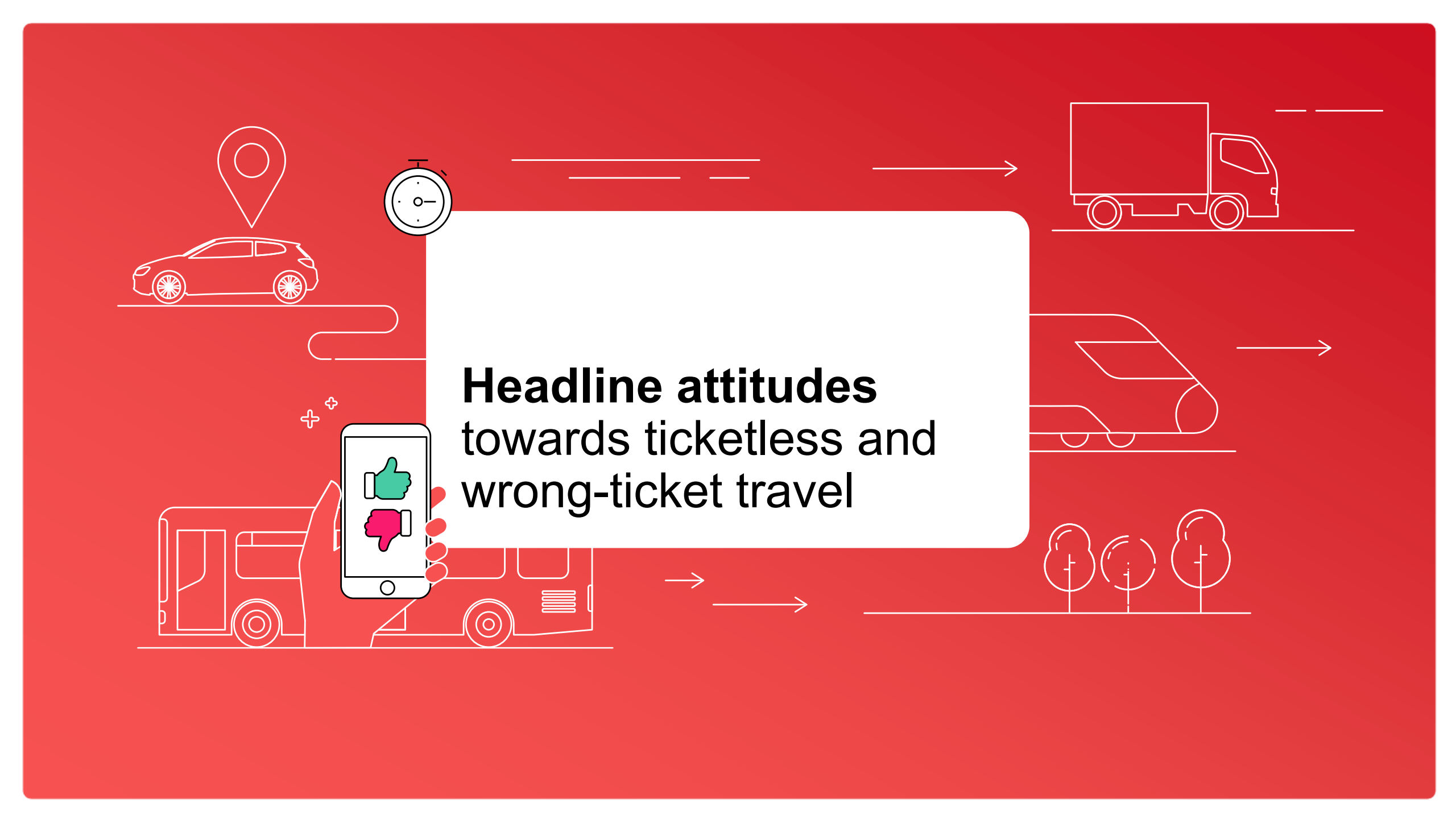
Any negatives about RP activity are always about the how it is done, not the fact that it is done

The ticket-barrier guard was really blunt with me.

Lucas

I really don't like [how some] ticket officers argue with people who are [affected by] cancellations

Dan



Headline attitudes towards ticketless and wrong-ticket travel

Most workshop participants felt that fare evasion is wrong and must be addressed



From a moral perspective

- × Goes beyond the railway: people deliberately evading the correct fare are bad role models for others, setting a negative precedent for others to follow → a poor contribution to society

...it's immoral, cheating the system and it is not fair for people who actually pay full price
(Savannah)



Recognising tangible, financial implications

- × Reduces potential for investment in the service for everyone
- × Drives up ticket prices for everyone

So who pays for the staff and service if he takes money out of the system?
Ellen

*I can't approve of this...
Unfair on taxpayers*
Levi

However, most also had some degree of empathy with the example characters who had avoided paying correctly



There are variations in the way participants felt toward each character, but despite the actions often being repeated and deliberate, they often agreed that **the rail industry had either driven, enabled, or allowed this behaviour**

Key factors felt to be:

The railway makes it **too easy to evade fares**
(or too hard to buy a ticket)

Tickets and their usage restrictions can be **complicated, leading to mistakes**

Unsatisfactory quality of service
(cleanliness, information, staff etc.)

Poor reliability / punctuality

High fares

And / or perception that other people get away with it (because of slack enforcement) so why shouldn't I

If there is no one to check then why buy it? Should be regulated more, I don't really blame [Harriet] (Yasmin)

These findings are based on qualitative feedback, from a relatively small group, and so are indicative.

Workshop participants' immediate reaction on how RPOs* should respond to these example fare-evaders:

Some high-level themes

There are variations in the approach that participants felt was most appropriate – depending on how exactly the correct ticket price had been avoided, how culpable the industry might be in enabling or driving the fare-evasive action, and whether or not it was a mistake, a first offence, or a repeated pattern.

Nevertheless some key take-aways, true regardless of the scenario, are:



Even where an action has been non-deliberate, **being “let off” unconditionally is rarely felt to be right**



Even where action is deliberate, requiring the person to **pay for the journey at point of challenge was felt to be most appropriate, most often**



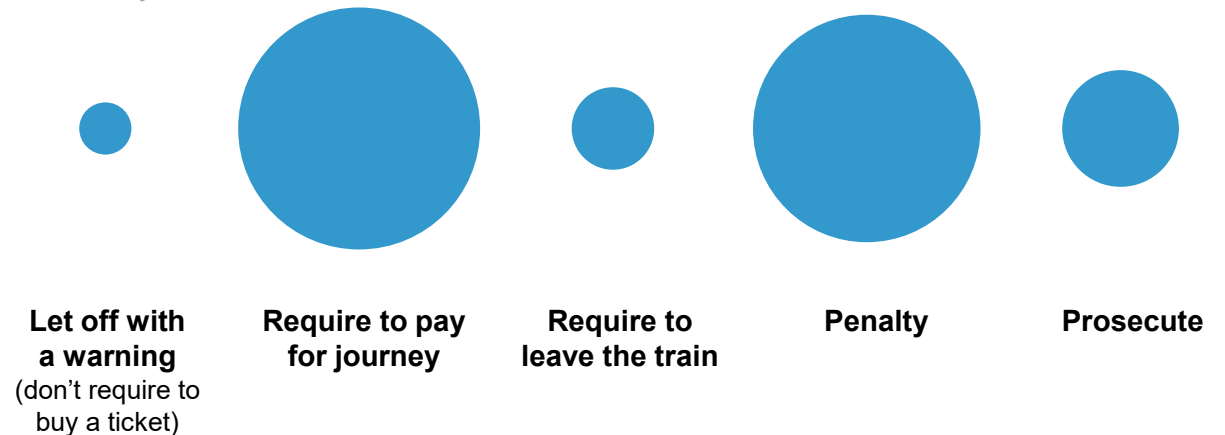
There is **support for using penalties in many circumstances...** and for prosecution in more serious scenarios



They felt **requiring someone to leave the train was rarely the right approach** (at least not by default), as this could leave people vulnerable (but a passenger might reasonably choose this as an alternative)

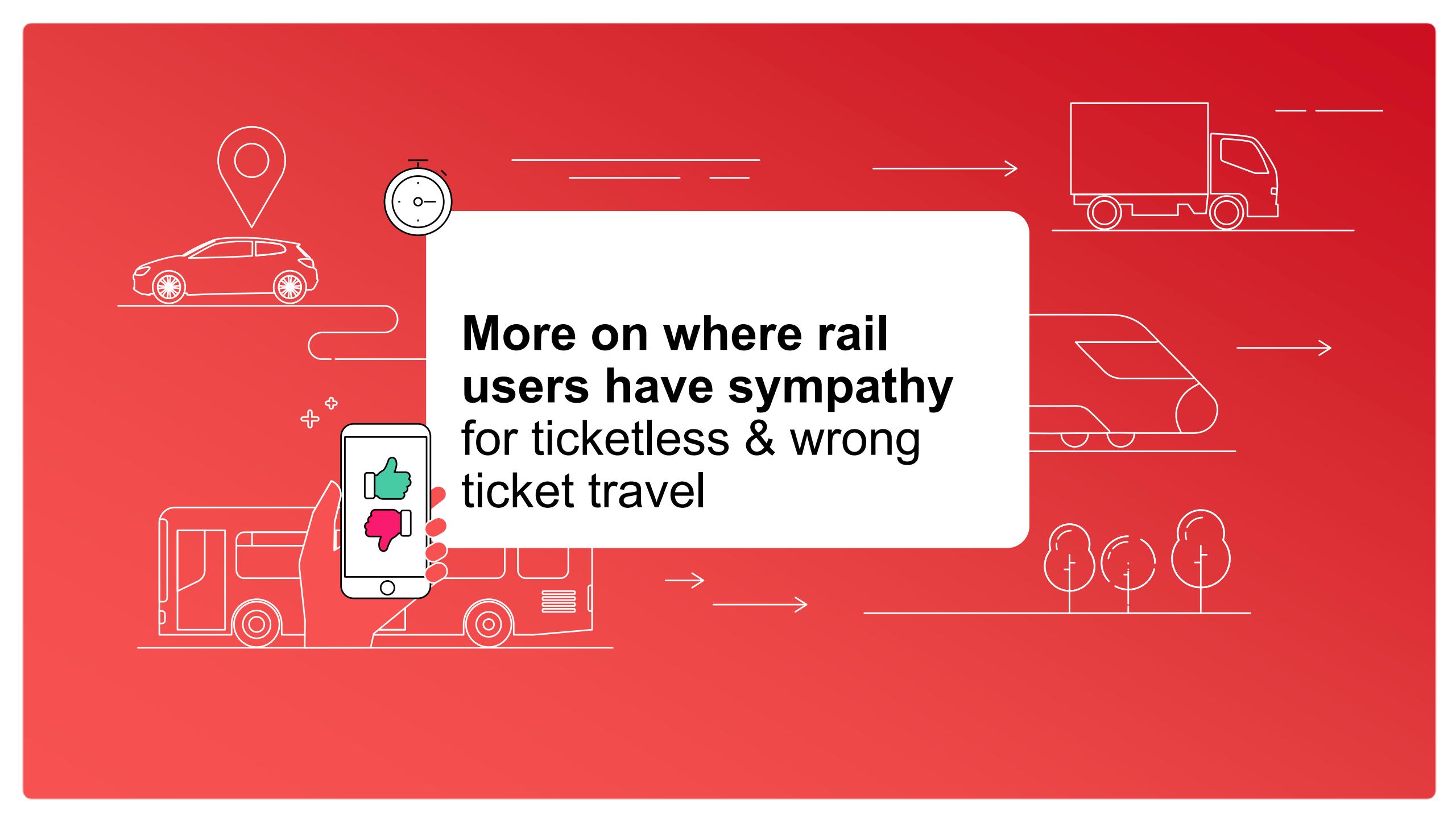
Participants privately completed a mini questionnaire, to capture their immediate response to each of the seven fare-evading characters.

Bubble sizes here summarise the frequency with which they felt each of these actions was most appropriate. This summary takes into account all seven characters, and does not show the variations by scenario.



*RPO = Revenue Protection Officers.

Note, in practice to passengers this means any staff who are or appear to be able to check tickets, and this therefore includes on board revenue protection officers, gateline staff, platform staff who might check tickets before boarding, conductors, and other on board staff who could sell or check tickets.



**More on where rail
users have sympathy
for ticketless & wrong
ticket travel**

Workshop participants felt that the railway has a degree of culpability in many of the ticketless and wrong-ticket travel examples given

Allowing for – or even driving – non-deliberate action



For example...

Participants felt that the railway had steered **Jerome** and **Harriet** to their fare-evading action (the first time), with its **confusing range of ticket types**, and **inconsistent gatelines and ticket inspection**.



(Jay receives slightly less sympathy: while she made a mistake, some feel there is an obligation on passengers to read and abide by Railcard T&Cs, including being bound by expiry rules.)

Nevertheless... 



Provoking fare evasion by profiting from customers' limited choice



For example...

(Despite feeling strongly that their actions were wrong), participants felt **John** and **Adam** were somewhat pushed towards this by **sub-standard service, high prices**, but with **no option** but to remain as customers**.



Low affordability combined with limited choice was also noted as a driver of **Callum** and **Harriet's** behaviour



In contrast, **characters with choice** (on frequency and timings) are viewed extremely negatively



In all cases, there is **strong opinion that the railway should take more responsibility to prevent actions that are non-deliberate, or which some feel are “justifiable”****

✓ For the sake of protecting revenue from these cases

✓ To prevent people from discovering such loopholes for future exploitation

✓ To reduce anxiety and inconvenience for those who do want or need to buy a ticket*

**For instance, we have heard from multiple participants about difficult passage through stations in (for example) Wales and the South West, where people have been unable to buy a ticket at their local station or on board, and so have had queue up for lengthy periods at the destination station in order to buy a ticket that will let them pass through barriers there*

***Previous Transport Focus research also identified fare-evader segments including “natural justice campaigners” – rail users who feel justified in refusing to pay for poor service, equivalent to withholding rent from landlords for substandard property*

Workshop participants felt that the railway has a degree of culpability in many of the ticketless and wrong-ticket travel examples given – **in their own words**

Allowing for – or even driving – non-deliberate action

She got the go ahead the first time. Once people know they can do what they can get away with they will do it continuously. So it's bad that this was allowed to happen.
Workshop participant (unnamed)

Repair the gates so he can't just go through!
Workshop participant (unnamed)

...if you are in a place with no signal you will be unable to buy a ticket.
Isabella

If [Jerome] was allowed to do this the first time he will do it again and again. This should have been prevented from the start and then he would have never done this and thought of it.
Workshop participant (unnamed)

...If there was a conductor on the train and did their job, this would not happen!!!
Anaya

Provoking fare evasion by profiting from customers' limited choice

I get it because the difference between peak and [other] tickets is shocking.
Savannah

I understand [Adam] wanting compensation for all the years he was late.
Matthew

He's being overcharged as he's paying for a service that isn't being provided, and at least he's offering something.
Isaac

“Direct” approaches to revenue protection are important to customers, but ahead of this, they feel strongly that the industry needs to tighten up in other areas



Indirect measures towards revenue protection feel equally important. These might be thought of in two strands:

- Reducing factors that allow for mistakes and justifications
- Reducing effort involved in doing the right thing

Where the rail industry is seen as partly culpable in ticketless or wrong-ticket travel, customers want more done indirectly to **reduce the extent to which key factors can drive innocent mistakes, and / or enable claimed excuses**

Remove drivers of “natural justice”

Improve on what you get for your money

- Service **reliability**
- **Comfort** / environment on board

Don't think it's right, but train conditions [provoke this attitude]

Amelia

*As a student money is tight and I feel sympathy [for Callum]. **There should be a student discount***

Isabella

Find ways to improve the price and / or perception of price

Create VFM, and help people feel they're getting VFM.

E.g*....

- Real, tangible value in season tickets
vs buying regularly (incl. for regular but non-daily travel)
- Concessions, e.g. for
 - Younger people
 - Minimum wage / key workers
 - Special offers
(e.g. on festival travel, for scenarios like Ceri's)
- Loyalty schemes / rewards
(that by their nature encourage correct ticket purchasing as a bi-product of their main purpose)

And improve awareness of such initiatives

...and, even more ideally, reduced ticket prices

**All of these are examples of ideas floated in the workshop, but are not exhaustive and illustrate a broader appetite for creativity in this area, among others*

Remove drivers of ticketing mistakes

Simplify ticket market

Shouldn't be penalised for going off peak or peak but should be stricter. Don't blame him...

Yasmin

The Advance tickets shouldn't exist anyway...

Dan

If you brought down the fare [Jerome] wouldn't need to dodge it. Fares are too expensive!

Anaya

Where the rail industry is seen as partly culpable in driving people to ticketless or wrong-ticket travel, customers want more done indirectly to **make it easy for people to do the right thing by default**

Reduce effort in buying & using tickets, and make not buying & using tickets more difficult

- **Enable ticket purchase** at more stations, more of the time (and/or enable purchase on board, more often)
- **Install and operate ticket barriers** consistently, and more often (all the time!)
- **Implement technology in other ways to verify passengers' right to travel**
 - * ideas discussed included tap in/out mechanisms, scanners / barriers at entry and exit to the train itself, and others.
 - GPS and other passive methods of tracking phones to record journey details have also been discussed previously by this community.

Help facilitate better Railcard compliance

- **Alert people** to Railcard expiry
- (Or allow opt in to **auto-renewals**)
- Some say this happens already – but not all; it is inconsistent

I know many people with Railcard expiry issues where they aren't identified.

Grace

There is no strong consensus on the popularity of any of these ideas individually, but they are illustrations of **customer appetite for the industry to continue to explore and develop ways of verifying passengers' right to travel**, which might include these innovations and others.

Almost universally, participants felt that any passenger should be treated leniently for a genuinely, non-deliberate action – the first time

Examples of ticketless or wrong-ticket travel that was non-deliberate (first time)



Jerome

Claims ignorance of Advance ticket restrictions

Once accidentally boarded the wrong train using an Advance ticket.

He was let off... so now does it on purpose.

Misuse of Advance ticket was a **genuine mistake**, first time around



Jay

Falsely claims Railcard discount

Once used a 16-25 Railcard, realising later it had expired

Has since done the same... on purpose

Not registering Railcard expiry date was a **genuine mistake**, first time around

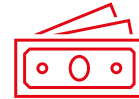


Harriet

Makes short journeys, does not buy ticket

Ticket gates are often open, and has the ticket ready to buy on her phone, but only actually buys it if she "has to"

Some give **benefit of the doubt that Harriet may have been unable to buy a ticket**, or unable to verify right to travel, on some occasions



For most participants, **lenient action means requiring these people to pay the full fare for this journey**

Some different views on whether this means, for example:

- paying the difference or buying a completely new ticket
- If the full fare should be the price of an Anytime ticket, an Advance, and so on...



We recommend that having a consistent policy here is what is important.



Requiring the person to leave the train was felt to be a **reasonable alternative** if the passenger is unable or unwilling to pay the fare, but this is **rarely felt to be the right default approach**



Letting the person off entirely is rarely felt to be acceptable, even where there has been a mistake – though discretion can come in here.

Where it does feel appropriate in individual scenarios to let someone off, participants felt it was crucial, even for a first mistake, to:

- Educate and inform the person of how and why they have made a mistake. Hand-out leaflets can be a useful tool as part of this
- Record name and journey details, to enable tracking of any possible repeat



Any subsequent, deliberate action is felt to warrant a penalty

Rail users typically want slightly harsher treatment for deliberate fare evasion that comes from frustration around paying for a necessary service, with no choice and no control

Examples of ticketless or wrong-ticket travel that is driven in part by affordability, and/or perception of poor value for money



Callum

Fraudulently uses a child ticket

Commutes to university; money is tight as a **student**.



Harriet

Makes short journeys, does not buy ticket

Commutes for work; assumed to earn a relatively **low wage**



John

Shortfares

Commutes at peak times; regularly experiences **delays, overcrowding and unpleasant trains**



Adam

Fraudulently claimed Delay Repay

Commutes for work; collecting "back-dated compensation" for **previous disruption**.

Despite having some sympathy for these characters' position, any **deliberate** fare evasion is felt to be:

- × **Morally wrong** and unfair on other rail users
- × ...or at least **not the "answer"** to a situation which is recognised to be dissatisfactory

I understand that prices are ridiculous ...but don't agree that he is deciding what he thinks is fair, he doesn't provide the service.

Grace

Complain about the poor service... Don't fix your own idea of the ticket cost, it's theft.

Penelope



Workshop participants felt that **paying the full fare or a penalty was appropriate where it is clear that the behaviour is deliberate**

Penalties (and in some people's view, prosecution) were more popular where there appears to be more calculated action, and likely higher ticket prices and greater loss to the railway



...a different attitude
where ticketless or
wrong-ticket travel is
deliberate and a choice

Rail users want to see robust consequences for deliberate evasion of fares where there is more choice, nuanced for severity

All of the example characters used here were avoiding fares deliberately, but the “worst offenders” were most often felt to be:



Jerome

Claims ignorance of Advance ticket restrictions

Makes **higher value** (peak time, intercity) journeys, with timings somewhat out of **choice**

Exploits (mis)pre-conceptions of the typical offender



Ceri

Screenshots a real ticket

Travel is unequivocally perceived to be a **choice**

Highly **calculated** tactic, and **exploits weaknesses** (e.g. practicality of RPO inspections)



Adam

Fraudulently claimed Delay Repay

Retrospective claim feels like a choice, even if travel is necessary

Exploits a loophole

Deliberate evasion tactics prompts genuine outrage – with both the offenders, but again with the industry for allowing this to happen

A genuine mistake once is reasonable but regular choices is fraud...
Emily

If he's that bothered, get a car. If you travel you should pay
Dan

Deliberate and repeated. Ticket officer is too lenient [with Ceri].
James

Surely tickets can be checked ...He was not entitled [to a refund] and he may repeat [this] now.
Penelope



In all of these cases, fewer participants could relate to the situation, and **more than half would support a penalty or even prosecution**

✓ Punishment, revenue recovery, and deterrent



Differences in participants' attitudes to the various characters also highlighted an implicit consensus that **punishments cannot be black & white, but should be proportionate, and consider context**

For instance, higher fines or harsher punishment are felt to be merited for:

- Higher value / more repetitive offences
- Offenders with greater choice over whether and when to travel by train
- Offenders with smarter evasion tricks, where operator(s) are already doing what they can to try and prevent their actions

Regardless of fare evasion being deliberate or not, participants were clear that **activities to identify this behaviour must be more robust, frequent, consistent**

Preventative / capture measures for deliberate evasion



Perform more ticket checks

General consensus that **being checked up to three times during a journey is more than acceptable** – at least once on board (more for long journeys is also acceptable), and by scanning a ticket to open a gate at either end.

More checks, at more points including earlier in the journey (to prevent scenarios like Ceri's, where "it's too late to address it")

More effort on busier trains.



Perform them in a more consistent manner

Workshop participants observed, for example:

- People like Jerome consciously exploit the fact that he "looks" respectable...
- Wheelchair users report being waved through barriers without scanning a ticket, suggesting that in theory they could travel ticket-free and not be identified.



RPOs should **approach, check, and treat everyone in a consistent way**

Ensure RPOs **check Railcards, and ask for age verification** more consistently



Use and operate ticket barriers more consistently

(or verify right to travel in other ways)



Be more consistent in the outcome

(use penalties and prosecutions where fare evasion is known to be deliberate)

At the moment it can be worth trying your luck, for what might be lenient consequences



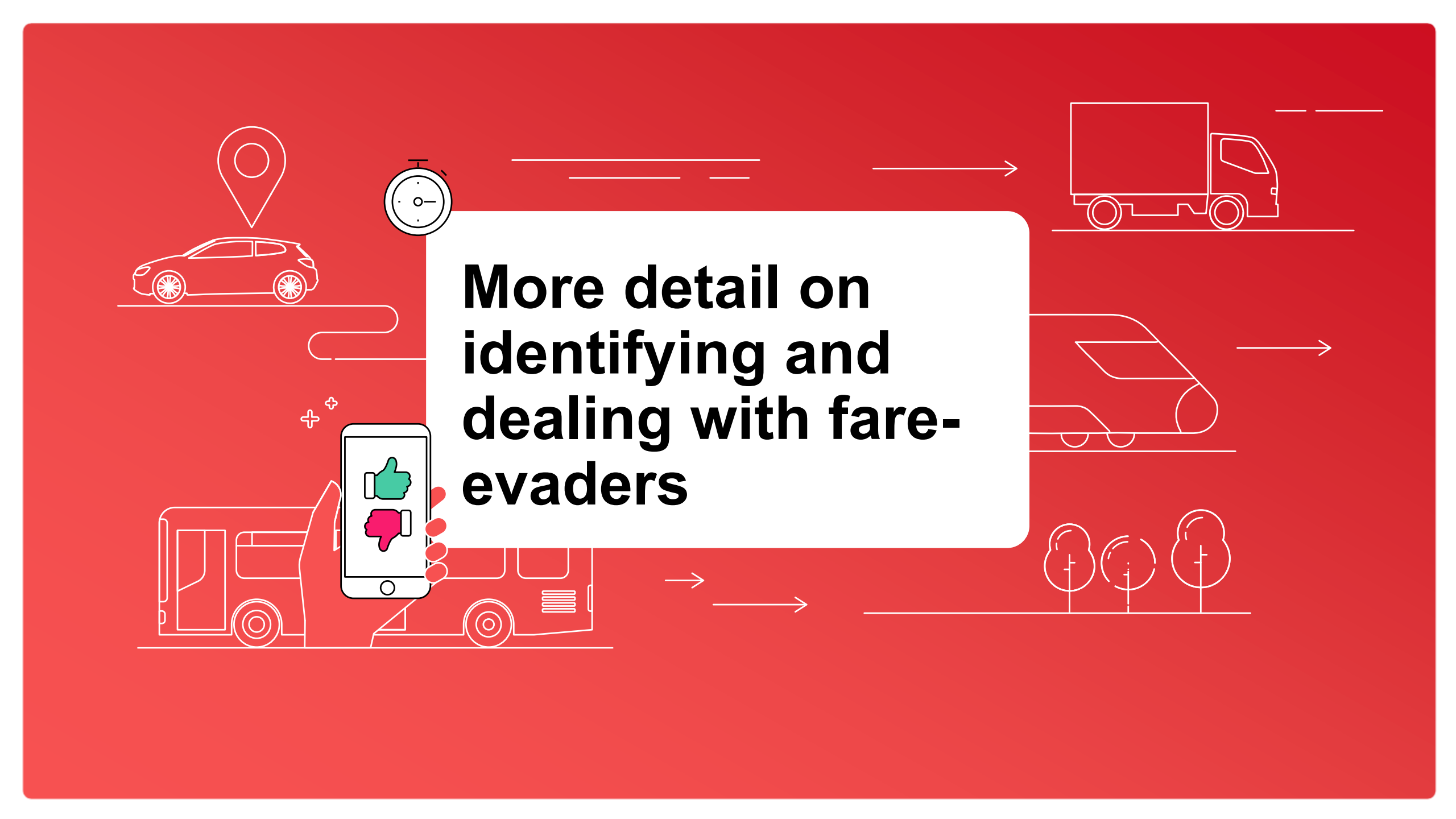
... on the whole, there is **support for collecting and using data about individuals** to catch repeat offenders

Use all the tools that might be available. For example...

- Historic data on the ticket
- Historic data on the person
- CCTV footage to determine whether someone has moved around the train to avoid ticket inspection, etc.

(Using CCTV in this way may not be pragmatic for regular use, but this is an illustration of how passengers know there is some information and tools available, and want the railway to use whatever it can to efficiently identify more instances of fare evasion)

And do more to identify repeat behaviours



More detail on identifying and dealing with fare- evaders

Revenue Protection Officers: the face of revenue protection



Customers want to know that RP work is being done, for everyone's benefit

RPOs are the most salient illustration of this: **their presence is important in its own right**

RPOs – like all passenger-facing staff – are also the face of the industry: **their attitude, manner and actions influence industry perceptions and trust**



Customers want to see more ticket inspection taking place, more often, alongside use of barriers and other technology to prevent, deter and identify ticketless travel

It's worth investing in RPOs...

- **To ensure they project** what customers want from the railway more broadly (and **how the railway itself wants to be seen**): fairness, clarity, trustworthiness
- Taking the provision of and support for RPOs seriously illustrates taking revenue protection seriously



More than ticket verification alone

There are wider expectations of RPOs

Ticket purchase ability

Education and assistance

Helping passengers understand tickets, the rules and their rights, including what happens if they travel without the correct ticket, whether deliberately or not

Discretion

See more on the next page

An example of staff presence more broadly

- *Wider customer service beyond tickets and journey details*
- *Safety perceptions*



A clear expectation from customers that RPOs need greater support than they (may appear to) have now

(When they engage with the concept) **customers sympathise with RPOs**, doing what they perceive to be a nuanced, potentially confrontational job.

They want...

✓ **More of them!**

- *To manage workload (because customers want to see more checking)*
- *To increase staff presence more generally*
- *For their own safety and moral support*
- *More access to / better back up from BTP where needed*

✓ **RPOs to have more access to more data**

To make it easier for RPOs to do their job, by giving them evidence (that they can also explain to the passenger) to facilitate good decisions

E.g. having data to spot repeat offending, and having information about a ticket's previous use. This is really welcomed by passengers, and they expect all RPOs to have this information (shared across TOCs / regions where feasible)

✓ **Personal care and safety measures**

- *Body cams, some degree of PPE on certain lines, etc.*
- *Background emotional or moral support as employees*

✓ **Autonomy** to act with discretion within publicly transparent guidelines

Discretion vs consistency in addressing fare evasion scenarios



Inconsistency and confusion around rail travel is a recurrent issue for passengers

In revenue protection specifically, community members have experienced or observed what they perceive as inconsistent treatment of passengers when they are challenged – either in the manner of the interaction, or the punishment / action taken.

- anxiety and confusion
- compounds perception of disjointed industry that takes effort to use



In theory, a rigidly consistent approach to identifying, interacting with and meting out consequences to ticketless travellers, might make sense

However, when workshop participants responded to examples of ticketless & wrong-ticket travel...

⇒ While there were some patterns in the way that people felt towards each of the scenarios and the illustrative characters, and the way that their behaviour should be addressed, **this was subjective in many ways.**

Opinions on fare evasion, and individual fare evaders, can vary *according to factors such as...*

- *Whether the person can (is assumed to) afford it*
- *Whether the train journey is made out of choice*
- *How much money they are defrauding the railway of*
- *Whether it's deliberate*
- *How good or bad the train service itself is perceived to be*
- *How much the railway is felt to have driven this behaviour*

⇒ And even when being more objective, participants felt that **while there is a need for consistency in principle, there may be circumstances in which the same action cannot be applied to all.**

E.g., it might be appropriate to ask Jerome to get off the train at the next station. It might not be the same if it the next station is remote and unstaffed, if Jerome has carer responsibilities he needs to get to, or if this was a more vulnerable passenger travelling alone.

⇒ In fact, when given real-life examples of discretionary decisions made by RPOs, workshop participants **largely agreed with the level of discretion applied.**



A professional, empathetic and courteous but firm manner is essential in all interactions regardless of the person involved or what they might (or might have mistakenly) done.

However, from the customer perspective **it is right to allow for some discretion around the action taken as a result.** Not having room for discretion can be seen as lacking empathy and connection with customers.

- Where possible discretion should be applied, within consistent **guidelines**, to help both the RPO and to ensure that discretion also feels fair to all
- While guidelines should be centrally agreed, such **decisions must be made at the front line** by those interacting directly with the passenger

Customer understanding and expectations around the use of penalties

In principle, penalties are felt to be an appropriate tool

Some inconsistency in understanding of existing policies and rules

No strong consensus on what the value should be, but some principles:

- ✓ Revenue recovery
- ✓ Punishment
- ✓ **Deterrent**

Some appetite for publicising statistics on number / value of penalties issued, and case study examples of when they have been used to :

- Reinforce deterrent potential by bringing this idea to life
- Reassure good citizens of action being taken



General awareness that if you are caught deliberately traveling without a ticket, a penalty might be given.



However, inconsistent awareness and assumptions on:

- ? Where and when exactly penalties apply (with real differences by operator / route)
- ? Penalty values
- ? Whether penalties are applied instead of, or in addition to paying for an appropriate ticket



This research gave **no reason to change current value**

£100 in England, reduced to £50 if paid within 21 days



Some concerns that:

- ? If penalty is lower than ticket price it lacks deterrent factor
 - (Knowing that) being required to **pay correct fare plus penalty** may help overcome this
- ? £100 / £50 penalty can feel disproportionate for short, low-value journeys
 - **A scaled system, with penalties triggered for repeat behaviour** rather than first occasion, may help overcome this



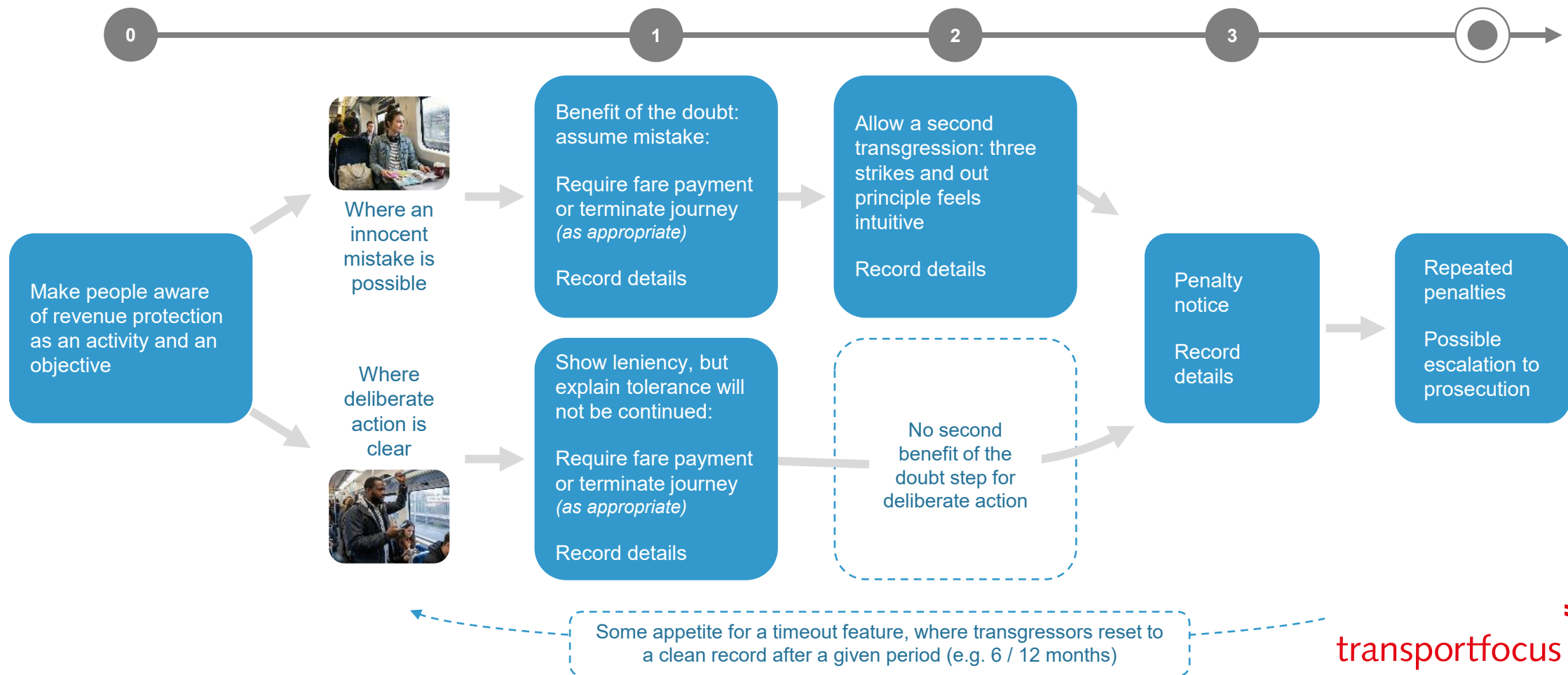
Rail ticket equivalent to speed awareness courses were a popular idea to enhance the (scaled) penalty system



Having a **standard penalty policy** (if not a standard value) across the whole industry broadly makes sense to customers

A scale of measures was popular with many

An example model, proposed based on workshop feedback, and likely to draw broad consensus from customers like those participating, although a specific proposal for a scaled system was not developed directly as part of this work. Principles here need further exploration to define the ideas more fully.



A scale of measures was popular with many



The benefits

- ✓ Allows for innocent mistakes
- ✓ ...but prevents innocent mistakes triggering future repeat, deliberate behaviour
- ✓ Likely to “weed out” potential repeat offenders before they get to becoming repeat offenders
- ✓ Treats the worst offenders appropriately

Some requirements



Effective identification of ticketless / wrong-ticket travel

More and comprehensive ticket inspections, scanning, etc.



Effective and safe tracking / data collection over time

Effective and safe sharing of data between operators / stakeholder parties



Clear and salient information that the scale of measures is in place

Transparency and consistency in what the scale of measures involves, how it is applied etc.

More on collecting and making greater use of passenger data as part of revenue protection

Workshop feedback highlighted several benefits

- ✓ Identification of repeat offenders
- ✓ Differentiating deliberate and non-deliberate behaviours, promoting fairness
- ✓ Facilitating scaled consequences

In addition:



There is **appetite for making passengers aware of the historic and contextual information that RPOs can see** when they scan tickets and link them to ticketing accounts or Railcards: i.e. that they can be alerted to a repeat offender.

This is felt to serve as **a potentially powerful deterrent**.



It works both ways: some customers would like more **reward for positive travel and ticket habits, e.g. via loyalty schemes**

Indications that most might broadly support this, but concept of collecting, storing & sharing personal information is not straightforward



Workshop participants **cautiously supportive**, in context that:

- The person being recorded may indeed have done something wrong
- There is a clear purpose*, and a wider rail user and taxpayer benefit

Some even advocated for a license or "passport" to travel by train, that must be used at the point of buying a ticket, so that the passenger is traceable.

This was not widely discussed and was not popular with everyone, but is an illustration of the type of thinking that passengers expect from the rail industry: i.e. they expect the railway to be creative, and keep up momentum on exploring ways to protect revenue (as indeed they expect continued momentum in other areas of rail delivery)



However, it is necessary to acknowledge that a focussed, **day-long session on revenue protection may have amplified opinions** about it



And, even in this context, **safeguards around data usage are on customers' minds and will be essential:**

- Transparency and trust around how it is managed are critical
- Likely to need clear supporting comms around any increase in data collection and usage to ensure its purpose is understood
- Timeout feature may provide reassurance: records may not be permanent

Addressing ID refusal

Customers recognised that **some ticketless travellers may refuse** to give personal information or may not carry ID

Discretion is needed, but people **generally agree that involving BTP can be appropriate** here.

And despite this, they perceive circumstances where that it should be easy to establish ID, e.g. where a Railcard, or TOC / retailer account has been used to buy and manage tickets.

Implementing the recording of IDs for revenue protection as often as possible is better than not doing so at all.

*Similarly, when other topics have been discussed with this community, data collection and sharing is disliked by some, but discomfort eases somewhat (if not universally) when safeguards are in place, and the purpose is clear and itself popular.

There was also a substantial desire for more information, education and a higher profile for revenue protection and passengers' responsibility

What customers want to hear about



What's involved in revenue protection, e.g.

- ✓ What RPOs do, what information they can see when they scan
- ✓ What gateline and other scanners do, details of ticket technology
- ✓ What data analysis goes on behind the scenes to identify patterns



Because it...

- ✓ Sounds like constructive activity by the railway
- ✓ Acts as a deterrent
- ✓ Is interesting! And humanises the role of RPOs and others working behind the scenes



Why it's important

- Financial implications for the railway and ticket prices
- Consider both negative and positive positioning, e.g. this is how much we've lost, vs 98% people buy a ticket on this line and this means we can fund XYZ).



Contextualisation

- People want to know that money and effort is being well spent
- Consider illustrating some of the tangible benefits of RP activity (e.g. for every £1 spent on this we save the industry £xxx)

Pointers on how to communicate around this



Broadcast

- Posters on board / at stations, and short videos on social media both popular
- No major consensus on public information campaign e.g. via TV.... Some felt the scale of impact that this could have could be important, others felt this style is patronising and easy to ignore



Education

- In schools – how to use the railway and be a responsible citizen
- Ticketless travel and rail revenue awareness courses



Micro / face to face interaction

RPOs delivering information & education on the go:

- Explaining to passengers how they have made a mistake / what they have done wrong, at point of RPO challenge
- Provide / signpost to printed & online literature



Consumer language as appropriate for the topic and channel (not "revenue protection")



Key takeouts

In summary:

Rail users want:



- ✓ Revenue to be protected
- ✓ To know it's happening, and that it's effective
- ✓ Differentiation of, and accommodation for, both intentional and non-deliberate ticketless & wrong-ticket travel

✓ **An increase in each of these**



To achieve this they expect:

Direct activity

Identification of ticketless & wrong ticket travel

Deterrent & direct prevention

Staff

- To check tickets
- Help & assistance to avoid mistakes

Infrastructure

Gates, scanning

Technology

Ticket innovations to prevent fraud / enable detection

Enforcement

- Enforce fares, use penalties, escalate where needed
- Ensure people know about this

Indirect activity

Education & sensitising people to implications of ticketless travel

(make people think twice)

Respect / pride & perception of value in the railway

(give people a reason to pay)

Raise profile of RP as a part of the industry

- Comms: what's involved, why it matters
- Education – using the railway as a responsible citizen
- Everyday micro interactions

Quality service

Reduce grudges

Ensure people get the best price

- Awareness of relevant discounts / concessions
- Awareness of Railcard benefits
- Reduce effort in accessing discounts & Railcards
- Ensure season tix are value for money
- (Less complexity)

Returning to our key questions

From a customer perspective, **should revenue protection be a priority** for the industry?

(Acknowledging that a full-day workshop on this topic may amplify opinions), **making sure ticket revenue is correctly collected is important to customers**. They recognise direct implications for rail investment, and for tax payers.

In practice, **revenue protection is likely lower down their list of priorities, compared to issues like service reliability and affordability**

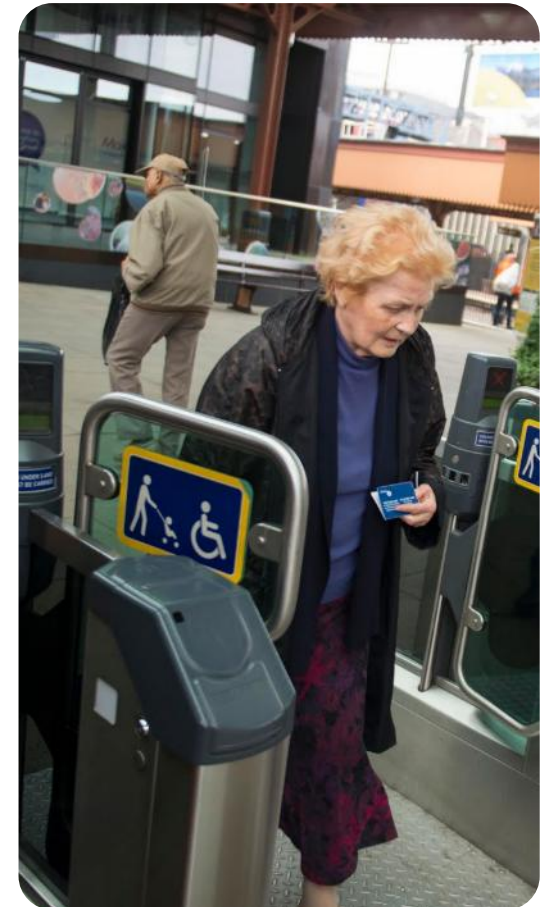
But it certainly does have a role from the passenger perspective, both for immediate revenue reclaiming and to help future proof the railway in these other priority areas)

As such, feedback here indicates that **it is worthwhile both to do more to protect revenue, and to raise the profile of revenue protection**.

- Identify and address any quick win opportunities very swiftly. Perceived quick wins include, for example:
 - More checks to be made on passengers' tickets, both on board and at stations
 - Check Railcards alongside checking tickets, and implement reminders / auto-renewals for Railcards
 - Posters / announcements alerting passengers to the presence of ticket inspection activity, and social implications of evading fares
- Some appetite for the industry to prioritise the biggest revenue-loss areas and repeat offenders rather than smaller scale / lower stakes offending

Note that **many of the wider areas that customers want to see improved on the railway would likely also contribute to better revenue protection** – especially having more staff, simplifying tickets, and promoting stronger sense of value for money across the service as a whole.

Protecting revenue is not an entirely separate workstream.



Returning to our key questions

How should fare evasion be **deterred**, and mistakes **prevented**?

Customers want the industry to strengthen its revenue protection

This doesn't necessarily mean being more punitive and more hard line

- Although this can be appropriate in many cases and is certainly part of the answer from customers' perspective
- In fact, response to what the TOCs would do now in several given scenarios was largely felt to be appropriate and well measured

Customers' bigger priority is that **the industry must do much more to prevent ticketless and wrong-ticket travel, and to identify it when it happens**. They want to see more:

- Ticket checks and scanning at stations / more verification of passengers' right to travel
 - Data collection to identify patterns and individual offenders
 - Creativity and innovation in ticket and tracking technology to make fraud and mistakes harder
 - Awareness of the importance of collecting the right revenue
 - Awareness of consequences, as a deterrent
- 

How should we **communicate** to passengers about rules, rights, consequences?

Customers want more to be done in this area than is the case today

While it doesn't need to become noisy and overpowering, work to raise passengers' consciousness of revenue collection themes is worthwhile to be everywhere and all the time

- As a deterrent
- To minimise ignorance and mistakes, and reduce justification for excuses

They feel it should include a mix of:

- Broadcast comms, including social media shorts on the importance of collecting correct fares / humanising RPOs and analysts, etc.
- In-situ reminders, including announcements & posters on the railway to set expectations (e.g. that RPOs will be present, reminders to have your Railcard ready to show alongside the ticket, etc.)
- Education (through schools, revenue awareness courses)
- One to one interactions with RPO staff at the point of a check or a challenge

It could also usefully:

- Highlight case studies, and provide statistics around fare evasion, penalties, prosecutions, and their impact – to make it tangible
- Contextualise any resource spending in this area, e.g. communicating to customers about what ROI has been achieved by revenue protection activity in a given time period – to reassure
- Highlight both the positive and negative consequences of revenue protection activity – to help find a balanced, constructive, non-confrontational tone

Returning to our key questions

What should the **consequences** be for travelling without a ticket?

Consequences should be proportionate.

This has implications including:

- The railway should do **more to differentiate between intentional and non-deliberate behaviours**
 - including more and better recording of ticketless travel occasions and individuals has merit. Finding ways to improve and expand this in a safe, transparent, standardised way should be explored further.
- **Discretion at front line is appropriate**, within clear, centrally agreed guidelines
- **A scale of potential measures feels fair**, with
 - The benefit of the doubt for potentially non-deliberate actions
 - Lenient consequences for first-time transgressions
 - Punitive consequences for repeated behaviours, and for higher value frauds

This might mean more people being given the smaller and more lenient measures (being asked to pay the difference, taking revenue awareness courses, etc.), **more often**, rather than necessarily meaning more penalties and prosecutions.

Passengers must be clear on their obligations, their rights (including around appeals), and what the potential consequences are – including any data records, any scaling of measures, and the details of potential penalties

How should warnings, penalties and prosecutions be **imposed**?

Reminders, warnings and comms to raise awareness of the importance of collecting revenue, to deter and prevent ticketless and wrong ticket travel before it happens, **are as important as addressing it after the fact.**

When it comes to payment or fines, **consistency and transparency are important**

- People must know where they stand if they find themselves without a correct ticket
- And they want to know there are measures to deal with deliberate fare evaders
- Knowing that if you do X, Y will always happen (rather than depending on where or when you do it, or who you are) is felt to be a deterrent that is not in place currently, where taking a chance can pay off

(this also contributes to broader perceptions that the industry is not sufficiently joined up which affects trust more generally)

Revenue protection needs clear, industry-wide rules / guidelines / policies

But discretion at the point of face to face interaction with customers is also critical, and guidelines need to make room for this. This also necessitates:

- **Clear guidance for RPOs to apply discretion in the right way**
- **Ensuring that RPOs have the right information** that enables them to use discretion, including history on the ticket and the person, shared across operators

A transparent, well publicised, easy to access appeals process is also essential.

Returning to our key questions

What do passengers want from **revenue protection officers**?

Rail users certainly want to see more ticket inspection taking place – so **they want to see more of these members of staff**

(Up to three checks during a journey, across gates and face to face interactions, is more than acceptable – more than this can be acceptable on long distance journeys)

But to customers, RPOs are more than ticket inspectors. They also expect them to provide:

- The ability to buy tickets on board trains
- Education and assistance around ticket types, and around travelling without the right ticket
- Broader help and customer service

...and they are a key example of staff presence on the railway more generally: **customers want to see staff of all types more often, for reassurance, assistance, and safety perceptions.**

RPOs' presence (or lack of presence) reflects on perceptions of the industry more widely

How should front-line staff be **equipped / supported and trained**?

Customers want to see **more front line revenue protection staff**, both for revenue protection objectives, but also **for their own safety and moral support.**

Background support as employees is also presumed to be given.

They also expect RPOs to be facilitated to do their jobs, including with:

- **Access to data** about ticket and the individuals using them – shared across operators
- **Personal care and safety measures**, like PPE, bodycams, access to BTP
- **Autonomy, along with appropriate guidelines and training**, to use discretion on the front line



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.