

Shaping Rail's Future: Customer Community

Report: Mar 2023

Customer Service



Shaping Rail's Future: objectives



- ✓ Hear about rail users' – and potential users' – experiences, impressions and opinions of the railway in Britain
- ✓ Understand our strengths and weaknesses, where improvements are needed
- ✓ Involve customers in potential solutions and new ideas to help shape the future of rail

Introducing our customer community

40

Participants with a mix of:

- Rail usage purpose and frequency
- Rail dependency
- Disabilities and not, and other needs e.g. travelling with buggies
- Demographics, lifestyles, attitudes
- Regions and urban, rural or suburban context

Names have been changed throughout this report to protect anonymity



Each month, participants complete activities and answer questions around a particular topic

Via short videos, text, images

Individually, interacting with a moderator, and/or with each other

In addition, two face to face workshops to discuss topics further, generate ideas, and feed back on proposed concepts and solutions



12 months from February 2023



Topic focus in March 2023:

Customer service

In March 2023 our community...



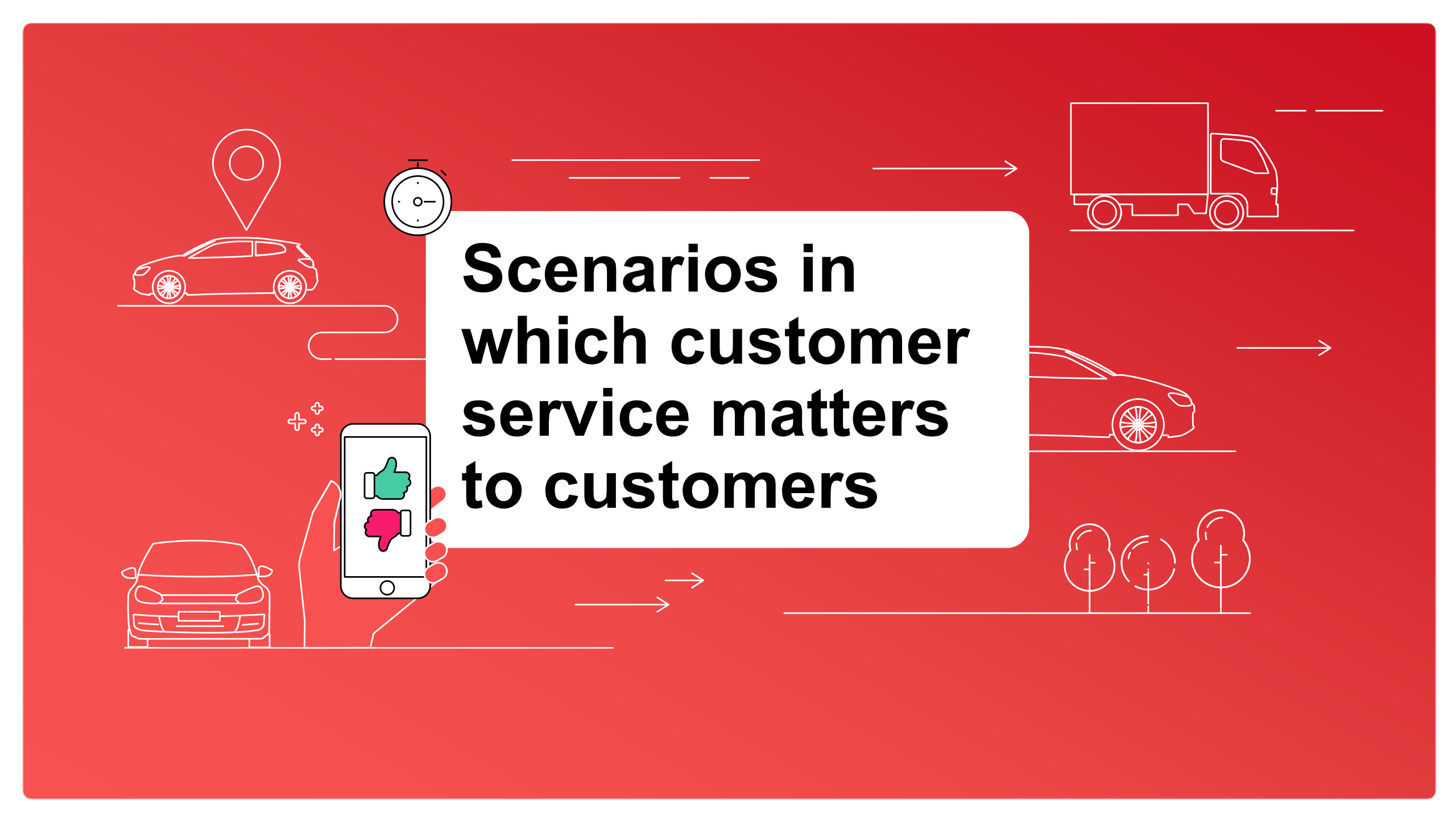
Told us about times when they have received or witnessed good and poor customer service when travelling by train



Suggested appropriate ways to respond to some examples of real problems customers have had when seeking or receiving customer service



Some participants walked us through a “day in the life” train journey, pinpointing the times in the journey when they wanted or experienced customer service of any kind, to help us understand in detail where, when, and why customer service touchpoints are needed, and how they can be best delivered.

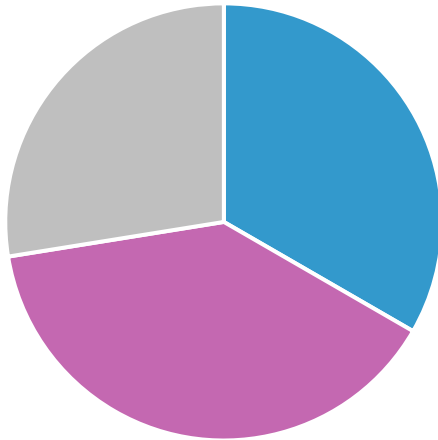


Scenarios in which customer service matters to customers

What do rail users themselves see as “customer service”?

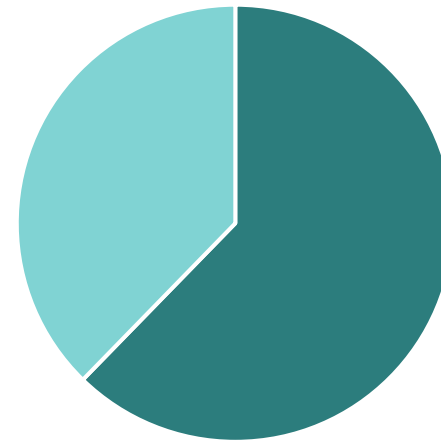
Our community described c. 70 different examples of customer service they had experienced on the railway. These were split fairly evenly as:

- “Everyday” information and assistance needs
- Service in the context of disruption
- and a variety of other scenarios



In all scenarios (whether “everyday”, “disrupted”, or other) customer service is more consciously noticed when the journey is less familiar to the customer

- Occasional or unfamiliar journeys
- Fairly regular or familiar journeys



The community includes a broad spread of different rail users, but is not designed to represent various user types or journey scenarios proportionately. Graphs are used here to illustrate the relative frequency of the types of scenarios covered here, among the examples given by the participants; they give a qualitative indication of how important customer service is to customers in different circumstances.

Some examples of where and when our community feel that customer service is important *(see Appendix for more detail)*

“Everyday”

Common, relatively straightforward assistance and ensuring logistics happen

- Assisting with route planning / onward travel
- Selling and advising on tickets
- Managing passenger flow / bottlenecks through ticket gates
- Directing people to correct platforms / trains
- Clarifying / confirming signage and electronic information boards
- Controlling fare-evasion (ticket inspections)
- Managing / preventing anti-social behaviour
- Keeping passengers up to date with current service status

Non-functional, enjoyable interactions

- Welcoming people to the station / on board
- Showing an interest in passengers' journey and its context

During disruption

- Providing advance information of what is happening and the implications
- Providing ongoing, in-situ information
- ...and practical help with alternative trains or other transport, ticket validity issues, compensation implications
- ...and sometimes “softer” help, reassurance and maintaining calm
- Dealing with complaints / follow-up issues
- Arranging compensation

Other scenarios

- Dealing with diverse, ad-hoc issues and needs, from lost property, to passengers accidentally getting stuck on a train, to helping with making up bottle for a young baby
- Being sensitive and responding to customers travelling in unusual circumstances, such as very late at night or during a heatwave

These types of service are valued regardless of how regularly a particular journey is made, but some other specific elements are also important where customers' journeys are relatively...

Unfamiliar to them

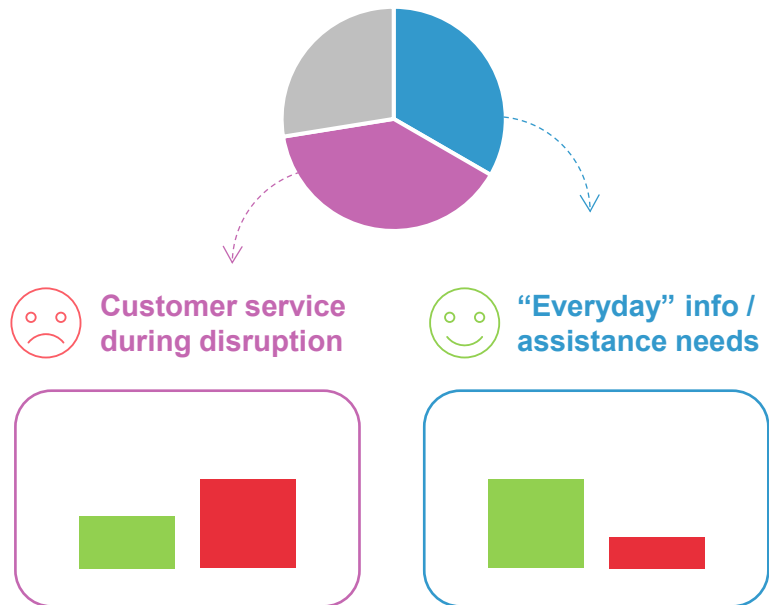
- Assisting where passengers have made mistakes with their booking or their station stop
- Pro-actively ensuring that passengers know where to go and when at stations, when to alight from trains, etc.
- Advising on routes, tickets and onward travel

Familiar to them

- Notifying people of changes to the norm: platform, timings, etc.

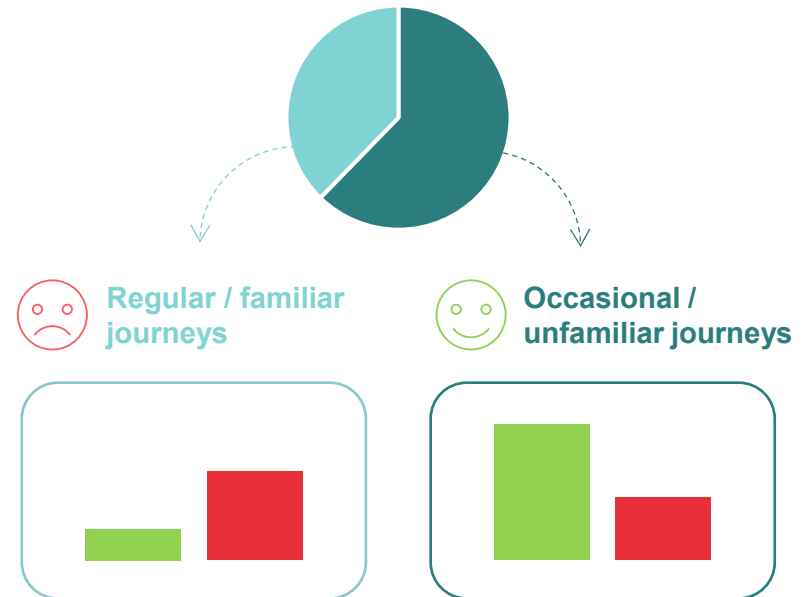
How well does the industry deliver customer service in these different scenarios?

The industry is typically **better at customer service when the “everyday” service is running to plan**; delivering less well when things go wrong operationally



Customer service quality is more mixed across “other” scenarios

...and is **better at dealing with (often more straightforward queries from) customers who are less familiar with their journeys**; less so for more frequent users



- Good customer service examples
- Poor customer service examples

Graphs give a qualitative indication of how relatively often our community talked positively and negatively about customer service experiences in different circumstances.

“

I think it's just people being pleasant ...when somebody is positive and doesn't come across as though you're making their life more difficult or giving them work to do ...I think it's just nice when people make the effort and seem happy to help.

”

Becca (40, suburban, travels mainly for business)

The industry is often pretty good at interacting with customers in everyday situations, when running the railway according to plan



Feedback indicates the industry is more often good than poor at this



For example when:

Staff know the answers or can help in practical ways

*...when we arrived in Axminster, obviously we weren't really sure where we were or where to go to the nearest bus or taxi, and the person at the station ...was **so helpful to us, gave us clear instructions, offered to show us the directions to the bus stop or said that we could order a taxi if we wished.** And we found him very pleasant. And it gave the train company a really good name, to be honest.*
(Anne, urban, leisure journey)

When they're easy to find and access

*I needed help to navigate exactly where I needed to be. I carried on walking through the entrance of the train station, slightly panicking where I needed to go as I got closer, and **there was a customer service advisor walking around the place...** he kindly navigated me to the correct place... He was so helpful!.*
(Michelle, urban, leisure journey)

When they provide assistance pro-actively and happily

*I'm pretty au fey with technical things, but I reckon you need a degree [for] this ticket machine. The queue was building up behind me and a member of staff **...came over very quickly [and helped me]...** I was relieved because it's a bit embarrassing.*

*...[Then later] an elderly passenger [was]...a bit confused. We helped her to scan her ticket to open the barrier, but I think she... was rather overwhelmed at Paddington ...A member of staff **came over, took her by the arm, helped wheel her case and took her to the bus stop***
(Mark, suburban, leisure journey)

...or are simply pleasant

*I would like to highlight the individual at Reading West ticket station. He is **pleasant and always helpful**, and helped me during the early days by **suggesting ways to save money***
(Charles, urban, commute)

*At the station my friend and I had a **very nice conversation with the two workers** about the amount of bags we had, and where we were going! **Made both of our days!***
(Cerys, suburban, leisure journey)

(However, note that, **while this customer service really makes a difference** and many in our community speak about these types of interaction with real enthusiasm, **this type of service is expected and rarely seen as exceptional**)

Though less frequent, there are of course examples of when “everyday” customer service isn’t delivered so well



Feedback indicates the industry is more often good than poor at this



In particular, our community highlighted the importance and impact of:

How staff come across, including before any interaction with customers takes place (which staff may not always even be aware of)

I think because I was quite young and unsure, I was a bit nervous about asking anybody. So I ended up actually just phoning my parents ...But I remember feeling really anxious and not knowing whether my ticket was going to be valid or not ...it was quite stressful.

(Becca, urban, leisure journey)

(Could staff be more alert to customers who might be feeling like this? For example, younger customers, elderly customers, people who appear unfamiliar or confused in busier stations, etc.?)

*I was trying to find the platform for the next train on my journey. I could not see the destination on the electronic noticeboard and **all of the staff were chatting in a huddle. I did not know if they were platform staff or there for something else.***

(Julie, urban, leisure journey)

*...the face of train companies on the ground is one of **guards rather than customer representatives** [and often] the **staff seem to merge into one workforce**. Most are male... [and] they seem **more like security staff rather than representing the company.***

(Riz, urban, travels for leisure/business)

I would have preferred an acknowledgement with the staff ...at the station. As simple as "Hi, how are you?".

(Charlotte, suburban, business journey)

Empathy when customers make a mistake or lack knowledge

On my return from Florida to Manchester Airport, I was tired, out of sorts and had no money on me. Due to my miscalculation of the time difference ...[my pre-paid ticket to Birmingham] was one day out and I explained this to the customer care assistant.

I am a lady in my late 50s, alone and felt vulnerable. The assistant had no compassion said the ticket was not valid for that day and I would have to sort it out...

I sat down in tears with my luggage having to try and get hold of my son ...I would have expected the assistant to speak to a supervisor to try and help me out as I had purchase a return journey

(Anne, urban, leisure journey)

The learning here is that any staff in a customer-facing area or scenario should appear “open” and ready to help, regardless of their usual role

Not coming across like this can be off-putting, and can prevent some customers from getting the help they deserve and which could prevent them getting into problems – and which is often actually very easy and quick to provide.

(While there are pockets of excellence), the industry needs to give particular attention to improving customer service around disruption



Feedback mixed but overall more negative about customer service here



...there was one lady providing excellent customer service (I would say it is the level that I would like to expect)...

My train was delayed and she had already announced it over the radio. ...I heard one man ask if he could ...pop to the shop opposite and she let him through the barrier to go out and then come back ...that really stood out

...She was really helpful when I asked her if I could use any alternative route in saying that the delayed train would probably still be quickest to get to my destination.

...I saw many people approach her and ask questions and ...even if she was repeating herself multiple times, she was pleasant in each and every interaction ...it stuck with me as I thought this lady ...really likes her job and provides excellent customer service.
(Jay, suburban, commute)



Travelling from Hebden Bridge to London via Leeds, the morning after heavy snow, I had Advance tickets booked from Leeds to London; I intended to buy a ticket to Leeds at the station.

Before setting off, I wanted to check that trains were running as I could see online that numerous trains were getting cancelled. I also wanted to check that my ticket would be valid ...if I suffered delays. **I tried calling... for almost an hour and didn't get through** ...So I went to the station...

...staff members walking around the platform...**they tried their best [but] they had no idea** which trains were running or what the situation would be with missed connections.

...[Later at Leeds] I'd missed my designated train so was trying to get assurance that I could travel ...without incurring a penalty. There were ...staff on the platform fielding questions ...One of them wanted to know why I had missed my train (he wasn't aware of the snow) and **couldn't assure me that I wouldn't be penalised. Another told me it was no fault of my own so I would be okay...**
(John, rural, business)

(Recap: in our community's earlier evaluation of disruption more generally, their feedback also indicated that all types of disruption are (remembered as being) managed quite poorly)



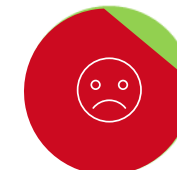
Cancellation



Delay



Termination en route



Other

Traffic light colours used here to give a qualitative indication of how often our community talked about poor, good or neither / nor ways in which problems they encountered were handled.

(Overlapping partly with “everyday” assistance needs), those making relatively unfamiliar journeys usually feel well served



Feedback in this context is usually good



This is when, in addition to simply providing information and assistance, staff...

Are understanding about customers' lack of knowledge

*I was lost, I thought that I had to go to [Cardiff] Central, which normally you do to catch a connection, [but] I was in the wrong station. [I was] worried... **I didn't know where I was, I had to be somewhere by a certain time...***

*Someone on the helpdesk ...let me through because my tickets weren't working on the barriers – I had already gone through once and was stuck. So **she called ...someone to come and help me, and then directed me to the right place.** I was **thankful** for that because otherwise I would have missed everything.*
(Katherine, suburban, commute)

Create a sense of reassurance

*I was early [at Kings Cross] and I sat in a separate family area with work areas so you can plug your laptop in... A **member of staff did the rounds every few minutes, checked in with everybody**, asked them what train they were on and reminded them what time they needed to go to their platformI **appreciated that** customer service.*
(Fiona, suburban, leisure journey)

*Coming back from Gatwick, I had booked [Passenger Assist] but being an airport journey I had not been sure if I would make the specific train. But **the guy was good: stayed with us, kept us up to date with the service, was really polite, really smiley** [which]... makes all the difference. [He] made sure we were on the train safely and phoned ahead so the next station would expect us. **He didn't do anything extraordinary, but ...he delivered it really well.***
(Joshua, rural, leisure journey)

Are knowledgeable / reassuringly confident

*My train was cancelled and **I had no idea what to do** ...I went [to the “helpdesk hub” at Euston] ... And **the lady ...was absolutely amazing.***

She printed me off a whole new route journey, reprinted my tickets under a new one to make sure that I didn't have any issues with any barriers or on-train staff. She guided me through what to do next and where to go, and also helped me to with the [compensation] process.
(Tom, suburban, leisure journey)



When it goes less well, it's often due to inconsistent assumptions and attitudes toward customers' own proficiency

*I had been to Crufts ...I wrongly assumed there would be a train back to Reading at 9.30 pm [but] when I got to [Birmingham International] the last train had left. I asked ...staff on the platform for advice, [but] they shrugged and told me there was nothing that I could do. I was made to feel stupid and was extremely upset. I eventually worked out that I could get home via London... **I had made a genuine mistake but felt I was not treated with compassion or understanding***
(Tracy, urban, leisure journey)

*We missed our stop, which for people that don't catch a train a lot, **it was quite stressful.** [Staff helped us] to find out what platform we had to go to, to get back to where we just came from, told us the train times... **I feel like they did help a lot.***
(Michelle, urban, leisure journey)

Customer service may be acknowledged less frequently by those making familiar journeys, but it makes a difference

Most examples of poor customer service experienced during familiar journeys came **in the context of disruption**

Other examples include localised **issues which staff seemingly could, but do not, address**



Feedback about customer service on familiar journeys is more negative



Lack of, or incorrect information

I was trying to get home ...the board would just tell me the train was delayed, then cancel the train but inform me that next train would be on time. This happened with multiple trains and I was stuck. I would have liked [to know] if the train was cancelled instead of saying that it was still coming ...so I could have tried to find alternative way back.

...I did contact someone about this and they told me to contact a different department, which I did but I had no response ...it impacted so many people
(Katherine, suburban, commute)

Lack of improvement, and apparent apathy from staff, for ongoing issues

Trains are ALWAYS late ...it has been happening for months now. Whenever I try to complain to the company, they were unbothered, apathetic and hardly ever offered to provide explanations. Even when they did, reasons given for delays were vague and irrelevant.
(Anna, suburban, commute)

I receive poor customer service regularly at my local train station. The lift is blocked off during rush hour and I have a mild disability. As a young person it can be challenging to convince the member of staff blocking the lift to let me use it. I have missed a train due to this on at least one occasion.

(Eammon, urban, mainly leisure)

There is always a big crowd waiting to [board] trains ...from St Pancras, and ...long queues... There were several members of staff at the gates and I think they could have been more communicative ...about which train would be boarding next ... I think that is poor... They just didn't seem interested in the fact that there was a huge amount of people waiting ...There were boards up, but you can never be sure exactly which train they're going to let people through for. So you have to kind of try and get to the front of the queue in order to find out whether you need to be at the front of the queue or not

(Becca, urban, leisure journey)



When regular travellers do come across good customer service, it's typically where they notice an **attitude, if not in a transactional interaction**

Just the local ticket office. Staff at Levenshulme are just extremely helpful, extremely friendly. Every day. Every time of day. And willing to engage and offer a friendly service.

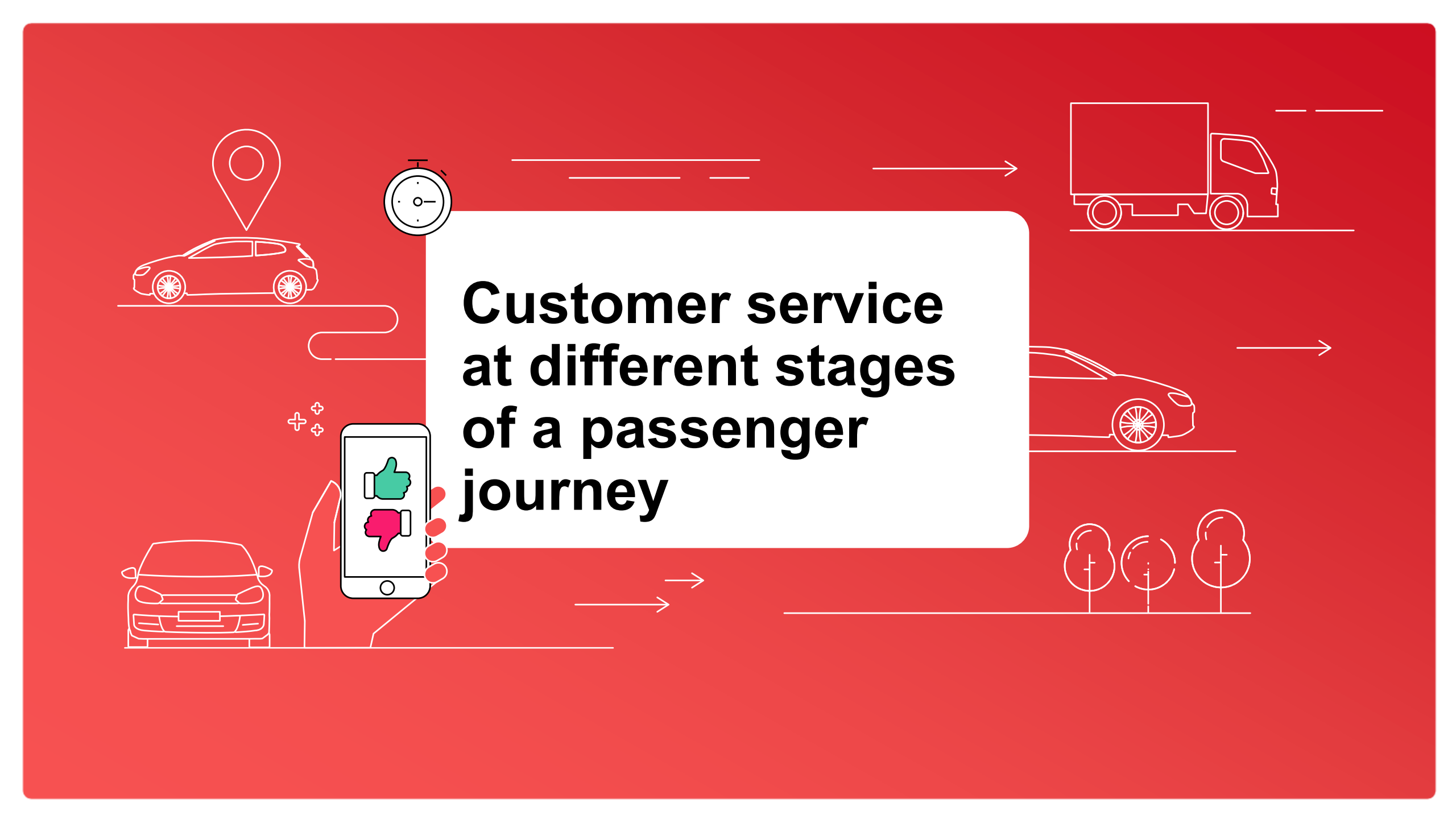
(Gavin, urban, mainly leisure)

As I went to the platform the gentleman at the gate said afternoon and smiled... At my destination ... [were] a couple of staff by the gate chatting to themselves. I am ok with this as I am sure they would [have] assisted anyone had they needed it.

(Neville, suburban, business)

People making regular journeys are perhaps **inevitably more likely to have a more negative experience of customer service**, since their interactions will be less often about simple everyday queries, and therefore disproportionately related to when things go wrong.

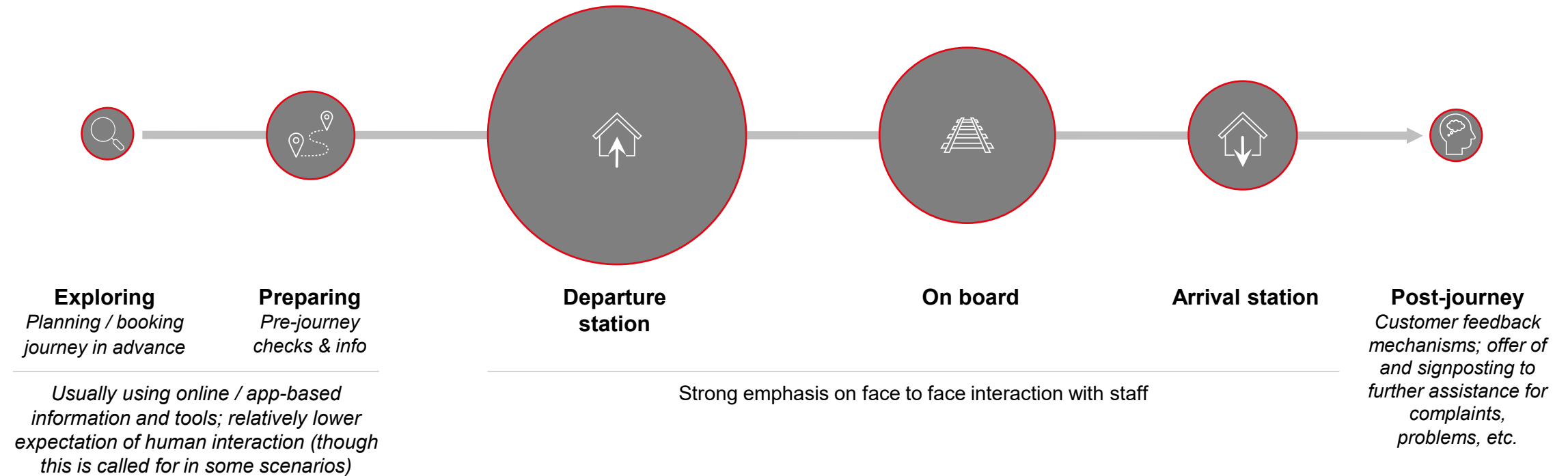
Nevertheless, arguably **this further cements the importance of everyday attitudes**, even where there is no functional interaction, **and of presenting a really constructive, personable face to customer interactions during disruption.**



Customer service at different stages of a passenger journey

Customer service matters throughout a train journey, but it is **most wanted, appreciated – and/or missed – at departure (or interchange) stations**

Bubble sizes are a qualitative indication of the relative importance of customer service (regardless of whether or how well it was delivered), from passengers' perspective, at key journey stages.

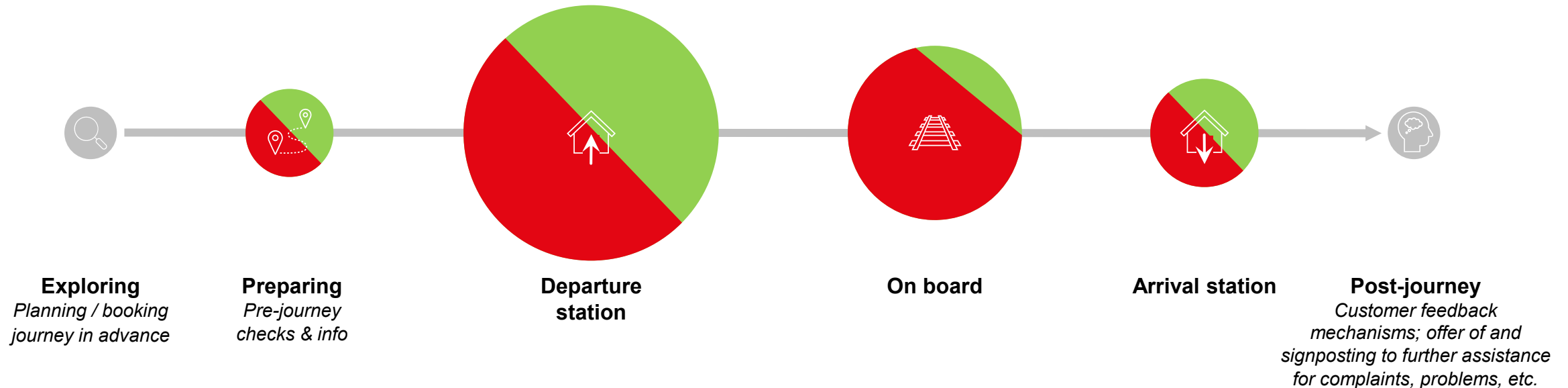


Our community talked through the customer service interactions they encountered or would have liked to have encountered through the course of a real, end to end journey, made in the last week of March 2023 (outside of holiday periods and any strike action). Analysis here is therefore based on a small number of journeys which represent a typical week, rather than being based on what is most memorable from previous journeys our participants had made.

Patterns in the ideal concentration of customer service are similar across different journey contexts (i.e. “normal service” vs disrupted journeys, and those making familiar and less familiar journeys, across different distances), albeit that the types of assistance or information needs that people have from customer service touchpoints may vary.

From passengers' perspective, the **availability and quality of customer service is very mixed** in all of the phases of a journey where it matters most, with **particular focus needed to improve delivery on board**

"Traffic light" colours used here provide a qualitative indication of how often our community describe positive examples of customer service they have received at different stages of a journey, compared to more negative examples (including where they needed some assistance but could not find or access it).



The biggest themes in our community's feedback about customer service touchpoints: offering some practical areas for potential improvement **at stations**

Other learnings about principles for good customer service, including around less tangible factors, like attitudes and staff culture, are on later pages



Some aspects of customer service at stations are working generally well:

- ✓ **Signage** about train times (when services are running to plan)
- ✓ Many **individual members of staff** who are friendly and genuinely engage with customers

The major theme influencing how well customer service is felt to be delivered is the **presence, or not, of roaming / visible staff around on the concourse and / or platform**

Customers **really want to see staff around at stations**, for example for:

- Assistance with TVMs
- Wayfinding / directions to correct platforms, especially (but not limited to) during disruption
- Assistance with luggage / bulky items / personal mobility
- Other localised features of stations

Customers also see a need for more information via signage, announcements, or in advance / with ticket booking, to reduce the need for in-person assistance (that is, to ensure the face to face assistance is available for those who need it most, not to remove the need for it entirely)

Other key practical ways in which customer service can be optimised at stations are:

- Greater pro-activity and / or broadening responsibility of **ticket gate staff** in particular
 - Managing crowds / bottlenecks
 - Consistency in assisting when passengers cannot make their ticket work at gates (for whatever reason)
- Clearly signposted, open / staffed **ticket offices**
 - For ticket purchase needs themselves
 - A natural place for customers to go to for other queries in the absence of roaming staff
- **Appearance of staff, and the way they come across** as readily available to help

The biggest themes in our community's feedback about customer service touchpoints: some specific areas for potential improvement **on board**



Again the major theme in our community's feedback is the **presence or absence of visible staff**.

Customers generally like to see some member(s) of staff on board (usually expected to be a ticket inspector), and their **absence is a key reason for criticism**

On-board staff are desired for...

- Specific queries and assistance
- Reassurance, that assistance is available if needed
- For safety, and as a (perceived, if not always actual) anti-social behaviour deterrent
- To prevent fare-avoidance by others

Face to face staff may not be practical for every train service, but wherever possible – and in more cases than currently – train companies should consider this for the value it adds to customer experience.

Where customers do encounter staff on board, they are usually served well

Staff (usually inspectors, but includes customer hosts and catering staff) are:

- ✓ Usually polite, friendly, helpful
- ✓ Often more willing / able to engage with individuals, helping those passengers to feel more valued (aided by what is sometimes more of a “captive audience” context)

However there, is inconsistency, especially between shorter distance and more commuter / regular journeys, versus longer distance services which lend themselves more easily to customer engagement – though this should not be a barrier

On board announcements are considered customer service

And can make or break a journey, where they...

- ✓ Feel more human, with some (positive) personality
 - × Are absent, not providing information, or not corroborating information from other sources
 - × Lack consistency or even contradict information from other sources
 - × Use unusual or unclear terminology
- Feel like an avoidance of face to face interaction

The biggest themes in our community's feedback about customer service touchpoints: some specific pointers for **before and after the journey**



While these pre and post stages of customer journeys – especially “exploring” and “post-journey” – were mentioned relatively less often in the context of customer service, some do regard the information and interactions they have here to be part of this

(Not relevant to all journeys)

- ✓ Where relevant, our community has usually found **online / app information and planning / booking tools to be useful and relatively straightforward**
- However, further exploration of customer experience and needs for journey planning will be worthwhile, given this is only touched upon lightly within this set of activities which are about customer service more broadly.

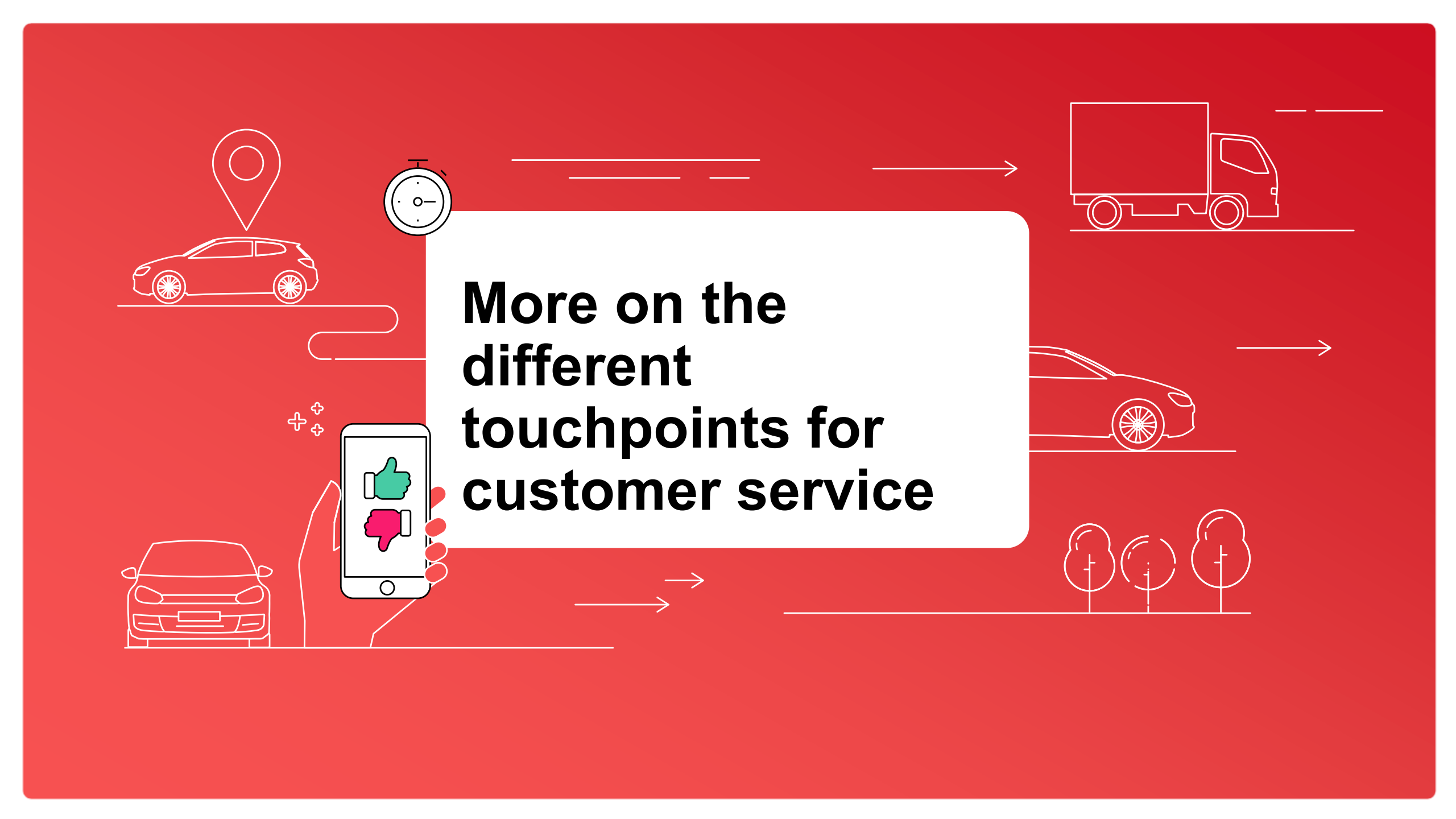
(Mentioned only occasionally as customer service, but relevant to many)

- ✓ **Online / app** information – where the customer comes to the industry – usually found to be useful
- However, some would like **more proactive information**
- And direct but remote **interaction via contact centres, while relatively infrequent, comes in for criticism**

(Very important to the minority who wish to follow up on an issue)

TOCs lose some ability to influence the nature of customer interactions here:

- By nature this is often instigated when a customer has a problem – so is **inevitably framed in a negative way**
- ...and often **involves remote rather than face to face contact**, arguably making it harder to make customers to feel heard, understood and valued
- ...and the customer journey doesn't end after they exit the station: **onward travel providers** – especially bus replacement services which can be seen as connected to the train company – **also have an influence**



More on the different touchpoints for customer service

“

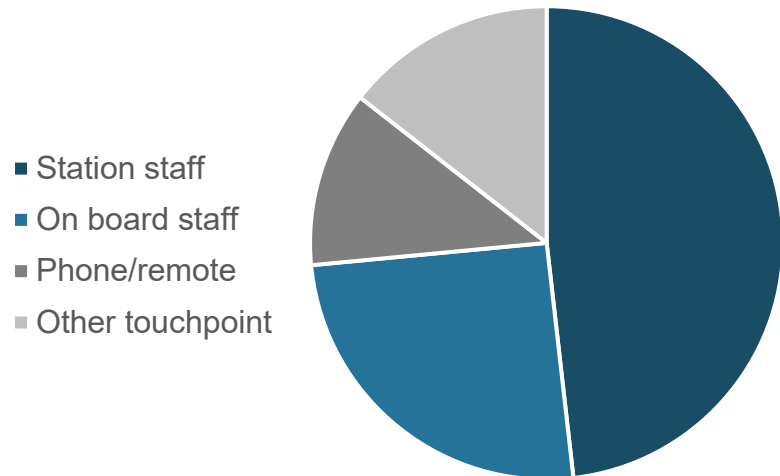
Most attendants on platforms are really good at giving customer service, where you want to know what time a train is departing or what platform you need to be on. They just have an instant knowledge in their head of everything. They're always happy to help... The ground staff, I think, are probably one of the better things about train travel

Andy (25, urban, travels mainly for commuting and business)

”

Across all journey stages, there is (naturally) an emphasis on front-line, visible staff as the face of the industry and therefore the providers of customer service

Of the 70+ different customer service experiences described by our community, **around three quarters involved face to face contact with staff during the journey itself**, with about half interacting with staff at stations specifically



Graph gives a qualitative indication of how relatively often our community talked about different “touchpoints” for customer service, among the examples they described

It’s where people naturally expect to go for help, where they can **need it – and miss it – the most**

The situation at the station was one of complete chaos. Everyone was in the same boat - not knowing what was running and when.
(John, rural, mainly business)

I have felt very uncomfortable before by myself on the train ...with no staff members or anyone in sight to ask for help...I’m not saying every train must have a security guard but it would be good ...especially late at night.
(Claire, suburban, mainly leisure)

Customers often recognise that staff can’t always be everywhere, but overall there is a preference to see them and have the **opportunity to interact if needed**

It would be nice to have the possibility [to interact with staff] should we need to. Considering the cost of all the staff ...[them then] not having much customer interaction is a concern.
(Oliver, suburban, commuter / leisure)

People gravitate towards and have expectations for **key points of reference**, e.g.:

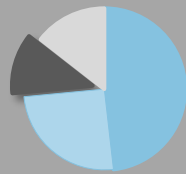


...but all visible staff are game: if you look like staff, customers (want to) expect that you are ready and willing to be customer-facing, and to interact accordingly

...I went to locate someone on the train from TFW.... I found someone who was working the food trolley who was in TFW uniform, and asked for his help.
(Rob, suburban, leisure)

As we have seen, face to face staff are valued for assisting with everything from everyday queries to one-off, specific scenarios. Our community also highlighted some of the needs that customers come to **other customer service sources** for:

Phone / remote (mainly Contact Centre)



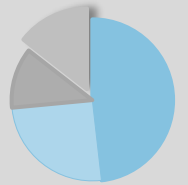
Barbara **phoned her TOC** when she needed to **cancel a journey and have a ticket refunded** when she had Covid recently and couldn't attend a meeting

Rob **phoned his TOC** whilst on board for **help, when he discovered his train would not call at his stop** (despite having been advised to board this service after a previous cancellation), and on-board staff were unhelpful

He also **phoned again after the journey (multiple times) to complain** about how it had gone badly wrong due to delays, cancellations, and poor information throughout, and **to seek compensation**

Tom **tweeted his TOC to ask for help in finding an alternative route when his train was cancelled** (after station staff had been unable to help) .

Other



Several participants lacked, and so wished for better **information in advance of a journey**, either for reassurance about their train's **status, or to let them know about a specific problem**, preventing them from making other arrangements. Others also wanted better direction on specifics like **how to collect tickets, which part of the train to board for a service that would split**.

Email, text, app notifications, or information appended to booking confirmation (i.e. all tailored to given services) were likely to have made a difference in these scenarios

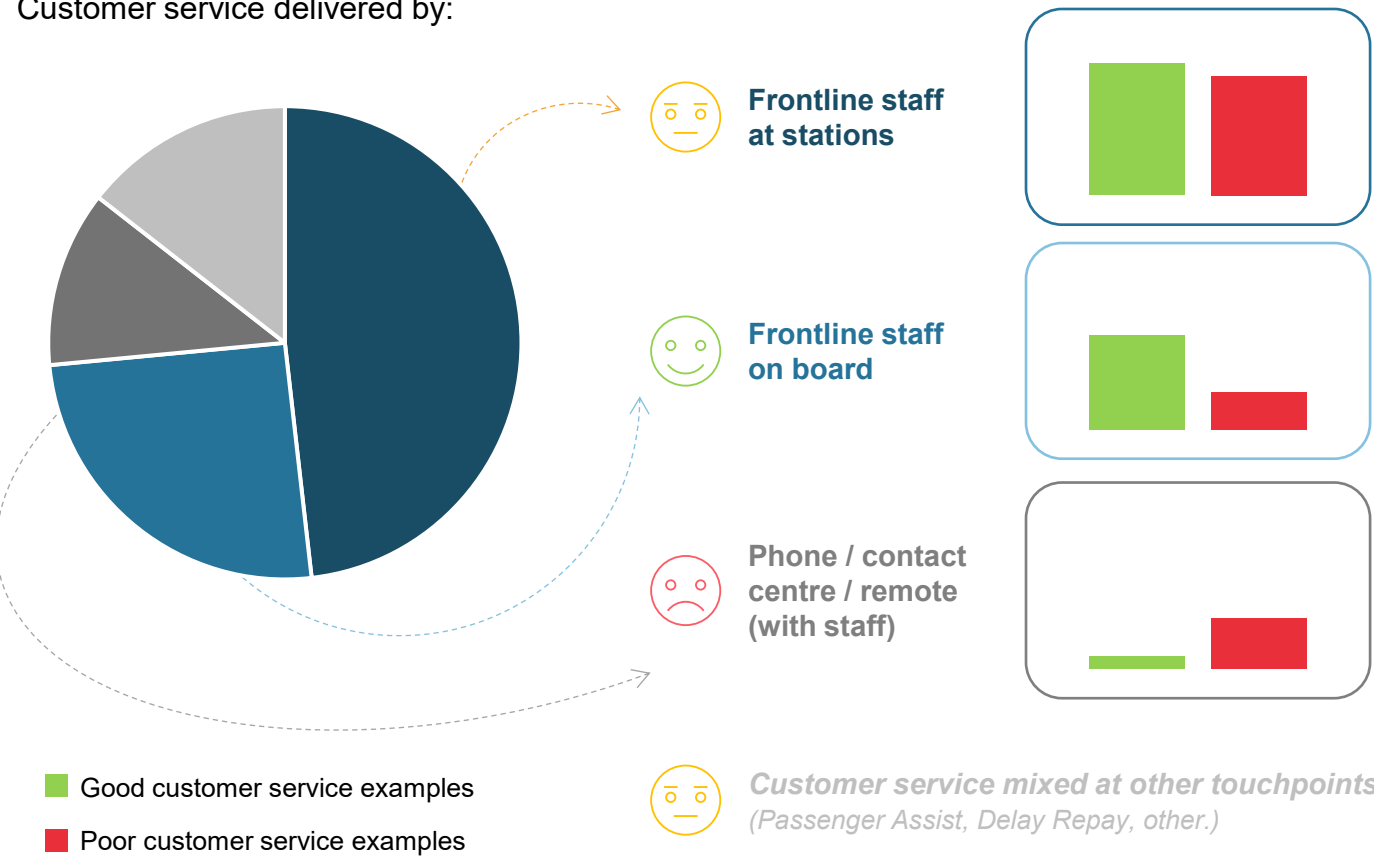
Clive received a partial refund via **automatic Delay Repay** (which he didn't realise he was signed up to), which to him counted as great, proactive, efficient customer service

Members of our community who have a disability have had variable experiences with assistance, including with bookable **Passenger Assist** specifically. This also includes a variety of experiences with the **remote booking element**, with the **practical, in-person delivery**, and with **how the two elements work together**

Mark witnessed **engineers boarding his train in hot weather to force-open windows**, when air-con was not working; he saw them as providing important customer service at the time. However, it felt it was very **poor customer service when, a year later, the air con was apparently still out of order** and the same thing happened

On the whole, participants gave a lot of positive feedback about frontline staff

Customer service delivered by:



(though overall delivery of service is mixed at stations in particular)

Customer service delivered remotely often comes in for more criticism

Graph gives a qualitative indication of how relatively often our community talked about different “touchpoints” for customer service, among the examples they described, and how often these examples were more positive or negative

When front line staff serve customers well, it's because they **engage fully with individuals** and their own circumstances, however big or small



Though mixed overall, participants had a lot of positive feedback:

At stations



On board



Noticed by customers in both what staff do

Simple, no fuss, provide what's needed

*I needed information on the best route ... [They] helped, [telling] me the platform number and the next train.... it was good service because **he was approachable and friendly and quickly gave me the details.***
(Julie, urban, leisure)

Practical help

*...instead I had to catch a replacement bus ... the gentleman **apologised, even though nothing was his fault...** [and] **coming in person made it lot better than just seeing it up on screen.** He was very friendly and helpful and **took us to where we needed** which was great as if you didn't know where to go ...you may miss the replacement bus*
(Katherine, suburban, commuter)

Pro-active

*From Glasgow to Manchesterwas extremely busy, not pleasant...the train attendant was ...**not passively making an announcement but really actively going up to each passenger** and ... taking people ...to find somewhere where they could sit ...She [also] took all the hassle out of ...the awkward moment of saying [to others], "Would you mind moving your bags so I can sit down." ...She went out of her way ...[she] really did her job very, very well.*
(Simon, suburban, mainly business)

Unrestricted by rules / "common sense"

*[Travelling] from London to Edinburgh... was packed ...I had the pram, baby... changing bag ...luggage ...And the attendant ...**said we could go into first class where there was more space...** really good customer service, I **thought, because he saw a struggling family** ...also, the catering... were really nice helping us [with] boiled hot water so I could make up [baby] formula.*
(Jay, suburban, leisure journey)

And how they come across

- ✓ **Human, personable**
- ✓ **Honest & addressing issue head on**
- ✓ **Empathetic, fair**
- ✓ **Reasonable / benefit of doubt**
- ✓ **Professional**

Staff should be understanding...** even when the passenger has made a mistake. Travel can be confusing and stressful, but the staff can really help ... [For example] if the passenger has to buy another ticket [due to their own mistake], **even just the way this is explained can make a difference.
(Simon, suburban, mainly business)

*I had to ask ...where the platform was.... I was waiting in line ...[then] **another customer pushed in front of me and asked a question. He ...said, "Sorry this lady was waiting first",** and continued to ask me what my question was.*
(Claire, suburban, leisure)

*[I was going from] Meadowhall to Doncaster, to London... my [first leg] train was running late and I had a specified train ticket, [but] I just got the train before that ...to make my Doncaster train on time. The [ticket] collector scanned [it] and said, "This isn't valid". **I explained... And she said, "That will be fine, normally it shouldn't be, but I can ...on this occasion. So I'd say that's reasonable,** good customer service..*
(Alice, urban, leisure journey)

When face to face customer service is not delivered well:

It's very often where staff appear to be **hampered by systems, rules or tools**

→ ...which also often reveals **inconsistency and silos**

*Great communication from driver, prompt, clear, upbeat.
Shame his public address system was a bit muffled.*
(Fiona, suburban, leisure journey)

*I am a wheelchair user... I called in advance to make sure there would be a ramp or assistance ...[However] **there seemed to be no record of assistance logged for the journey and staff had trouble locating the ramp...***

Staff were apologetic and seemed embarrassed by the incident but I should not have been put in a situation like that in the first place ...possibly missing my train because equipment could not be located..
(Sarah, suburban, mainly leisure)

*I think the majority of people will go out of the way to help whenever they can. But now and again, you will have somebody that is just in a rush and**they've got too much to do themselves***
(Katherine, suburban, commuter)

*...they're possibly just being friendly, not necessarily from their point of view a reflection of the railway service, but **these people have got space in which to be who they are and to deliver a service that [is more than] just for getting from A to B.***
(Gavin, urban, leisure)

*I tried to get assurances from various staff
...given different information by everyone I asked.*

*I think I'm not alone in being driven mad by the **lack of cooperation between networks / companies.** Most long journeys constitute more than one... it's maddening when you can't be reassured about onward journeys because it's beyond their remit.*

(John, rural, mainly business)

...and (systemic?) **emphasis on logistics, not people**

*The train was delayed... I was never informed
...I eventually got off and asked around for information and I was just told to get back on the train with no advice/explanation. ...[Then] to make it worse I was [just] told to apply for a delay repay ...**sometimes you want to feel understood, that your grievance is real and not just a silly complaint.***

(Una, urban, commuter/leisure)

...guards rather than customer representatives.
(Riz, urban, leisure/business)

For disruption in particular, there is sometimes an impression of **poor contingency planning**

While I accept that ...weather is [beyond] control, [they] could have had better procedures in place to deal with problems which ensued.[It was] chaos... this sort of situation is something I would expect [them] to have planned for and been able to handle a lot better... [It was] needlessly bad
(Simon, suburban, mainly business)

And of course there are (somewhat less frequent) instances of **poor staff attitude or apparent lack of conscientiousness**

All he did was shrug his shoulders ...and he replied, "Not my problem".
(Rob, suburban, leisure)

(...in sometimes what might otherwise have been "quick win" situations")

*...there are no readers for electronic tickets [there], and no signage to say [so] ...I was walking up and down with my phone not understanding why I couldn't exit. Eventually I was told to go to the end barrier, **queued for about 5 minutes ...He eventually just said, "Oh there's no reader", and... let me out.** I would have liked an acknowledgment ...and sorry to have kept me waiting.*

(Tracy, urban, leisure)

“

Everybody I encountered in person was polite and as helpful as they possibly could be ...but they just had no information. They basically couldn't help, they couldn't answer the questions I had, which isn't very reassuring

”

John (42, rural, travels mainly for business)

“Remote” customer service (usually through contact centres) is felt to be delivered well / poorly when:



Feedback for remotely delivered customer service is usually more negative



It's fast / efficient

*I usually go to the office [in London, from Manchester] once in a while ...and I couldn't go, because I had Covid, but I had booked a train ticket already. [My corporate] booking agent... **talked to the train company ...and I was able to get it refunded halfway**... It's been credited to a voucher, so I'll use that the next time I travel*
(Barbara, urban, business)

Handler has authority to be effective

*I [finally] had **good customer service when the managers got involved** [and apologised, and sorted out my compensation]. But it shouldn't have got that far. It should have been sorted first time round..*
(Rob, suburban, leisure)



It feels like a barrier sits between customer and service



Julie illustrated how she feels about customer service sometimes as “talking to a brick wall”

...for example where the customer:

Is passed around / doesn't know where to go

*I did contact someone about [multiple cancelled trains] and **they told me to contact a different department, which I did but I had no response**. I would have at least liked a response since it impacted so many people by me being delayed ...**but not to be ignored**.*
(Katherine, suburban, commuter)

Can't get through / no response

*I wanted to check that trains were running ...[and] that my ticket would be valid later if I suffered delays. I tried calling [TOC 1, for the first leg] and my partner called [TOC 2, for the second leg]. **We were waiting for almost an hour and didn't get through to anybody**.*
(John, rural, business)

Finds it difficult / convoluted

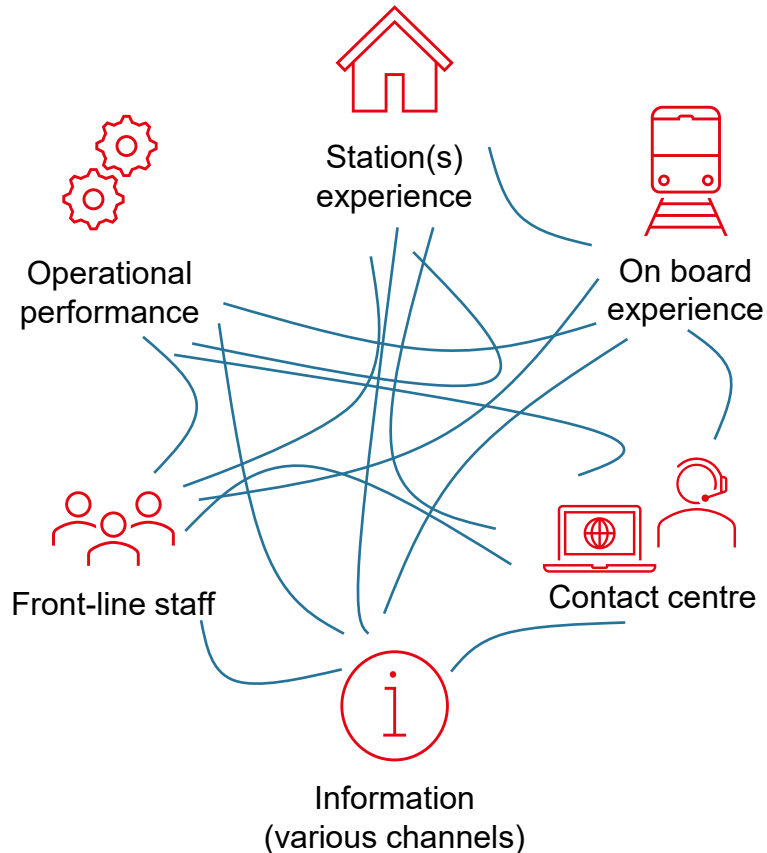
*I tried to get a refund as I had to rearrange [dates]... This is challenging: **the refund page is hard to navigate and instructions are not clear** ...my claim was rejected as I had not sent a picture of the original ticket cut in half, despite having never collected [it]. ...[So] I had to resubmit [it] after... collect[ing] the ticket. Unfortunately there is no room for free format typing ...to explain fully either. **It took 6 attempts online and two visits to the station... [for] a simple exchange of tickets** ...even **the customer service team was no help**, saying I wasn't eligible ...even though their website states you can exchange for a fee.*
(Clive, rural, commuter/business)

Receives “stock” answers

*I sat on the floor for the whole journey. It was so overcrowded it [didn't] stop at some stations, and ...it took 20 minutes to get people off and others on!! I tweeted [TOC], I got **just a standard reply** blaming Covid, lack of staff and rolling stock **I didn't receive any compensation for the delay**.* (Colin, urban, leisure journey)

But customer service isn't only about interactions with front-line (or other) staff: customers' experience of the whole railway operation is felt to be "the service"

Each element of the operation can influence the experience of other parts of it



Describing customer service experiences (examples):

[I used] accurate planning and live information to get to my destination ...It would be good to know which part of the train to join dependent upon where you will alight... At [the station there were] unclear announcements all at once, confusing in a large space ... I could not see any lifts ...with large heavy bags this was a problem, [and] no one offering help or any signage...Noticed a 'help hub' on the platform for assistance of any kind; this is good ...At [my destination], the gate [staff] watched someone try a paper ticket in the scanning gate three times before inviting her to go through a different gate!

(Fiona, suburban, leisure journey)

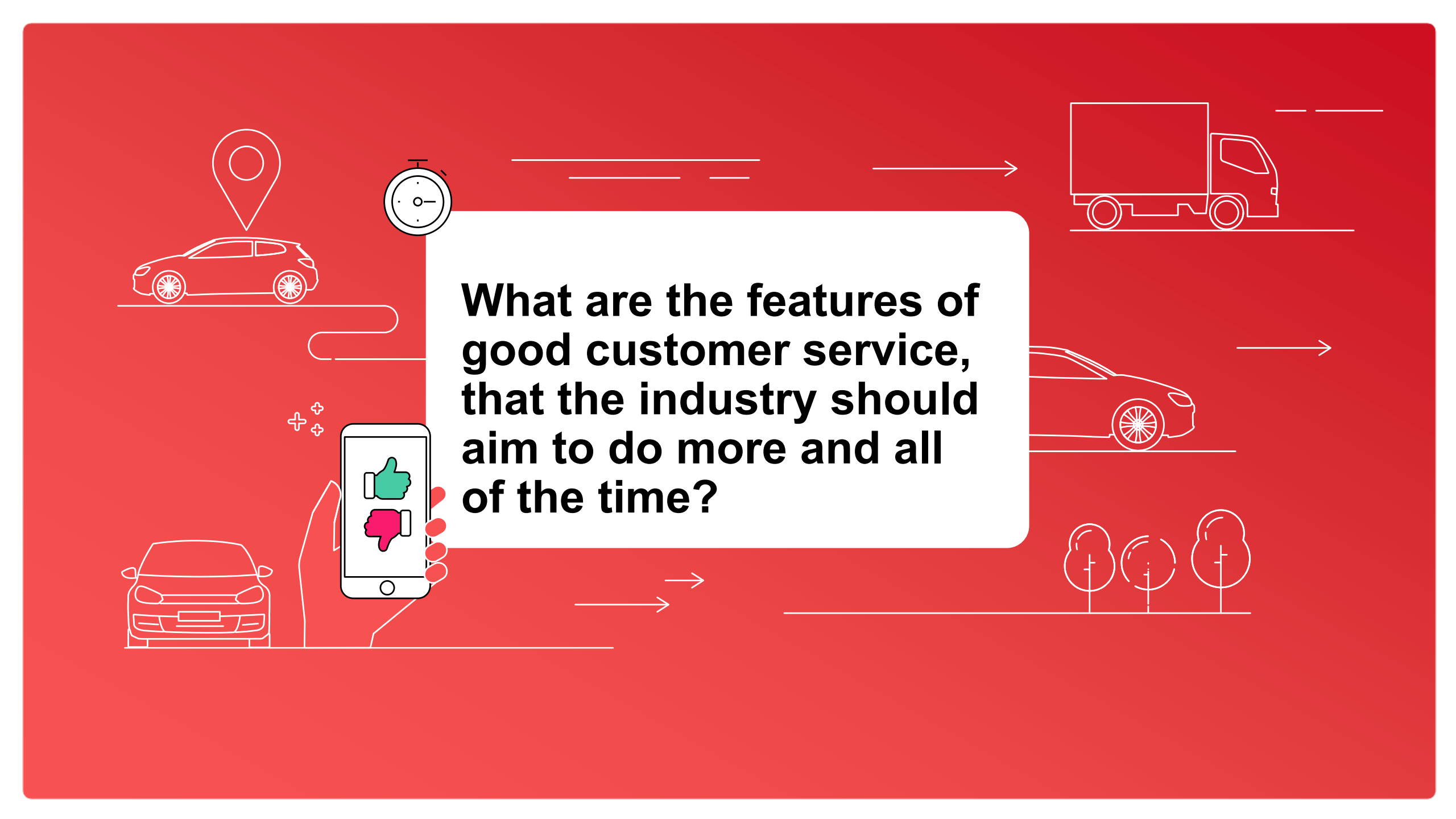
Trains are ALWAYS late ...Whenever I tried to complain to the company, they ...hardly ever offered explanations. Ticket prices keep increasing but quality of the service only ever decreases...

(Anna, suburban, commuter)

Customer service doesn't necessarily exist in customers' minds as an isolated element within the overall delivery of a rail journey: the whole package, part of which may be human (or remote) interaction with the TOC(s), is the service the customer receives.

As such **perhaps customer service should not be seen (only) as a discreet issue or function within the way train companies and the industry is managed.**

While management of staff is clearly a vital area worthy of serious, dedicated attention, **all functions and operational teams within railway management should take a customer experience mindset:** paying attention to how they are experienced by customers and how this contributes to the total impression of the railway. (This includes how, and how well, front-line staff can represent or deal with operational aspects of the service).



What are the features of good customer service, that the industry should aim to do more and all of the time?

Providing good customer service requires key principles to be consciously embedded in three central ways:



**Structural /
systematic**

How things are set up within the industry
to facilitate customer interaction



**Practical
considerations for
staff roles &
responsibilities**

What staff do



Attitudinal

How they do it

...and the principles under each of these pillars need to be extended across remote customer service touchpoints, as well as for front line staff

The key principles in good customer service:



Structural / systematic

- ✓ **Consistency** across TOCs – so customers know what to expect, from whom, and where to go
- ✓ **Staff given space and agency** to be empathetic, pro-active and effective
- ✓ **Ensuring customers know what customer service and information resources are available** – to avoid being passed around or wasting time looking for information, and to avoid a feeling of being left in the dark about service status



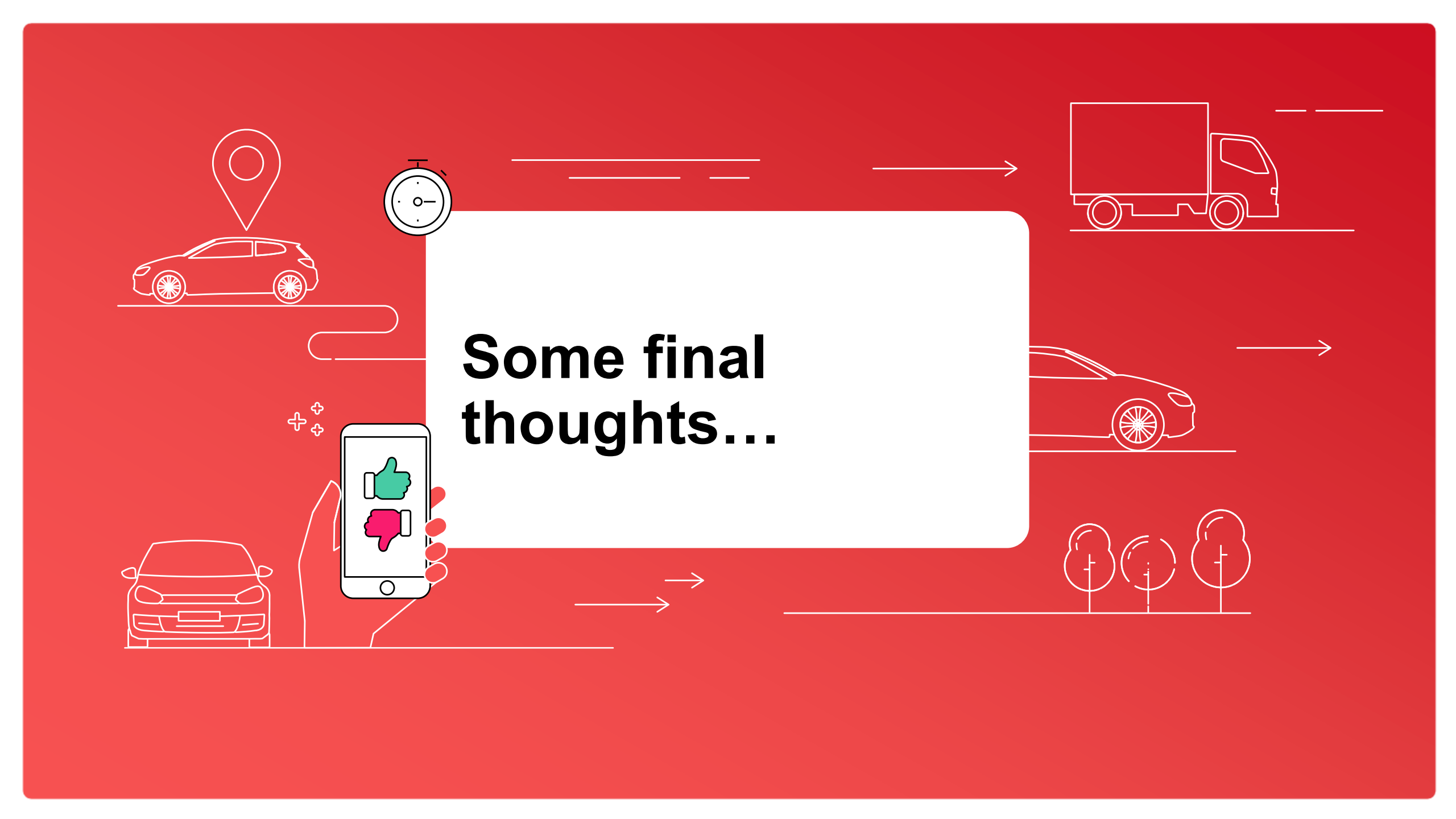
Practical considerations for staff roles & responsibilities

- ✓ **More visible, easy to find and access, face to face staff**
 - As often as possible, especially at stations
 - Ticket offices & gate staff as a minimum, plus info/help desks and roamers
 - Clear, customer-service appropriate uniforms
- ✓ **Widened responsibility of any customer-facing staff**, especially ticket gates staff, dispatchers, on-board catering staff (all staff are “game”)
- ✓ **Ensuring staff have knowledge to be able to help** (via training, live comms channels when on site, tools like tablets, etc.):
 - With everyday queries
 -and strong, clear contingency plans for customer service during disruption
 - ...and in relation to other TOCs and even onward transport
- ✓ **Clear, customer-relevant, pro-active information** via written channels, announcements, individual staff interactions



Attitudinal

- ✓ **Open, approachable** (consider body language and positioning around stations, as well as personal attitudes)
- ✓ (Actively) **empathetic**, patient
- ✓ **Pro-active**
- ✓ **Pleasant** / friendly / personable
- ✓ **Straightforward**, efficient, no quibbles
- ✓ **Honest**, transparent



**Some final
thoughts...**

Our community participants highlighted some further principles which are important to customers, when receiving a response to complaints

✓ **Apologies are sincere, tailored:**

- “normal”, not “official” language,
- acknowledging an individual’s issue, as experienced by them
- accepting mistakes

✓ **Explain what will be done** to recompense the customer and avoid similar happening again

✓ **Refunds and compensation** (including with acknowledgement of additional costs customers incur)

✓ **Goodwill gestures** (where normal refunds might not be possible or appropriate)

✓ **Providing any recompense swiftly**, without further steps for the customer to go through to “claim”

And while many defaulted to feeling that “staff need more training”, some made **practical suggestions for staff management and training** in response to individual customer complaints (across a range of scenarios):

- ✓ Regular **sessions where staff share their experiences** of dealing with customers with particular issues, or who are unhappy – **to work together to find best practice**, tips, etc.
- ✓ **Practical, scenario-based** training
- ✓ In general: **emphasising the need for empathy and rapport-building** with customers
- ✓ Easy to access staff / information at stations
 - Information on who staff are, possibly an indication of hierarchy, and where to find them
 - Displayed on posters and elsewhere
 - Clear, mapped, “zones” for specific help requirements
 - Specific help / info desks – dedicated customer assistance
 - Clear uniforms / hi-vis
- ✓ (And as we have seen, physical staff presence at stations is really desirable)
- ✓ Continual efforts towards diverse workforce, to aid with empathy in different scenarios

The intention is to **explore some of these points further as part of a workshop session** with the participants themselves

While feedback from our community does not provide a quantifiable evaluation of how customer service is experienced by passengers with disabilities, it does highlight some variability in both its availability and quality

Joshua

Part time wheelchair user

Coming back from Gatwick Airport in January, I had booked [Passenger Assist] but being an airport journey I hadn't been completely sure if I would make the train (after the flight) that [the assistance] was in relation to.

*But the guy I found was **really good: stayed with us, kept us up to date with the service (whether it was running on time), really polite, really smiley – in those high pressure situations, a smile makes all the difference.** He then made sure we were on the train safely and phoned ahead to the next station so they would expect us. **He didn't do anything extraordinary, but what he did do, he delivered really well.***

Sarah

Full time wheelchair user

[For a journey] from London to Brighton... I called ahead to make sure there would be a ramp or assistance in getting on the train as I would be travelling on my own.

*I also arrived early in case of any issues, [and] lucky I did because **there seemed to be no record of assistance logged for the journey and staff had trouble locating the ramp** which was required to get me on the train.*

*Ramps should be easily accessible for travellers in wheelchairs when they need it, **regardless of it was booked in advance or not.***

*Staff were apologetic and seemed embarrassed by the incident but **I should not have been put in a situation like that in the first place, being made to feel helpless and vulnerable and possibly missing my train** because equipment could not be located.*

Marie

Carer for son with Autism Spectrum Disorder

*There seems to be a **general lack of awareness. I think training around disabilities would be great for rail staff including hidden disabilities.** My son ... can often get distressed when travelling.*

A lot of airports have introduced sensory rooms / quiet places for people with a neurodiversity. There is also the sunflower lanyard. We usually sign up at the airport for help with people with hidden disabilities. This is great as it makes what can be very stressful for the person with a disability more relaxed. ... people with hidden disabilities may get really distressed at their day not going to plan [if they don't] deal with change well. A little empathy goes a long way.

Experiences of customers with disabilities to be explored further throughout our year-long project, with further reporting on this area towards the end.

Summary



Summary: Defining customer service

Rail users think of customer service, and find it valuable, in **all journey scenarios**:

- **“Everyday” assistance** with platform queries, directions and tickets – often simple pieces of help / advice which keep journeys running smoothly
- **“Non-functional” interactions**, appreciated by young and old, in all types of journey context
- Information and practical help **during disruption**
- And help with a diverse range of individual and ad hoc needs.

Customer service is more often noticed and needed by those making unfamiliar journeys – perhaps superficially implying, for example, that routes serving lots of leisure or occasion journeys may have the most obvious role for dedicated customer service staff.

But still around a third of customer service examples discussed by participants in this study related to regular, familiar journeys: **there is no reason not to aim for excellence in customer service on heavy commuter routes** (for example) as well.

Front-line, visible staff are the natural face of the industry and are therefore seen as the most obvious providers of customer service – and can be **keenly missed when not available**.

People gravitate to places or people that they expect to be able to help: ticket offices, information / help desks, and anyone appearing to be employed in rail – meaning there is an **expectation of willingly-given, well-informed assistance from all**: platform dispatchers, ticket gate staff, catering staff and others, as well as back office and management personnel when they are in customer areas.

...but the whole package – the entire operational delivery of a rail journey, along with human interaction with staff – is the service the customer receives.

While “customer service” should rightly receive dedicated attention within management structure, all functions and teams within railway management should also take a customer centred mindset, being alert to how they contribute to overall experience and impressions.

Summary: How the industry delivers, and where it needs to improve

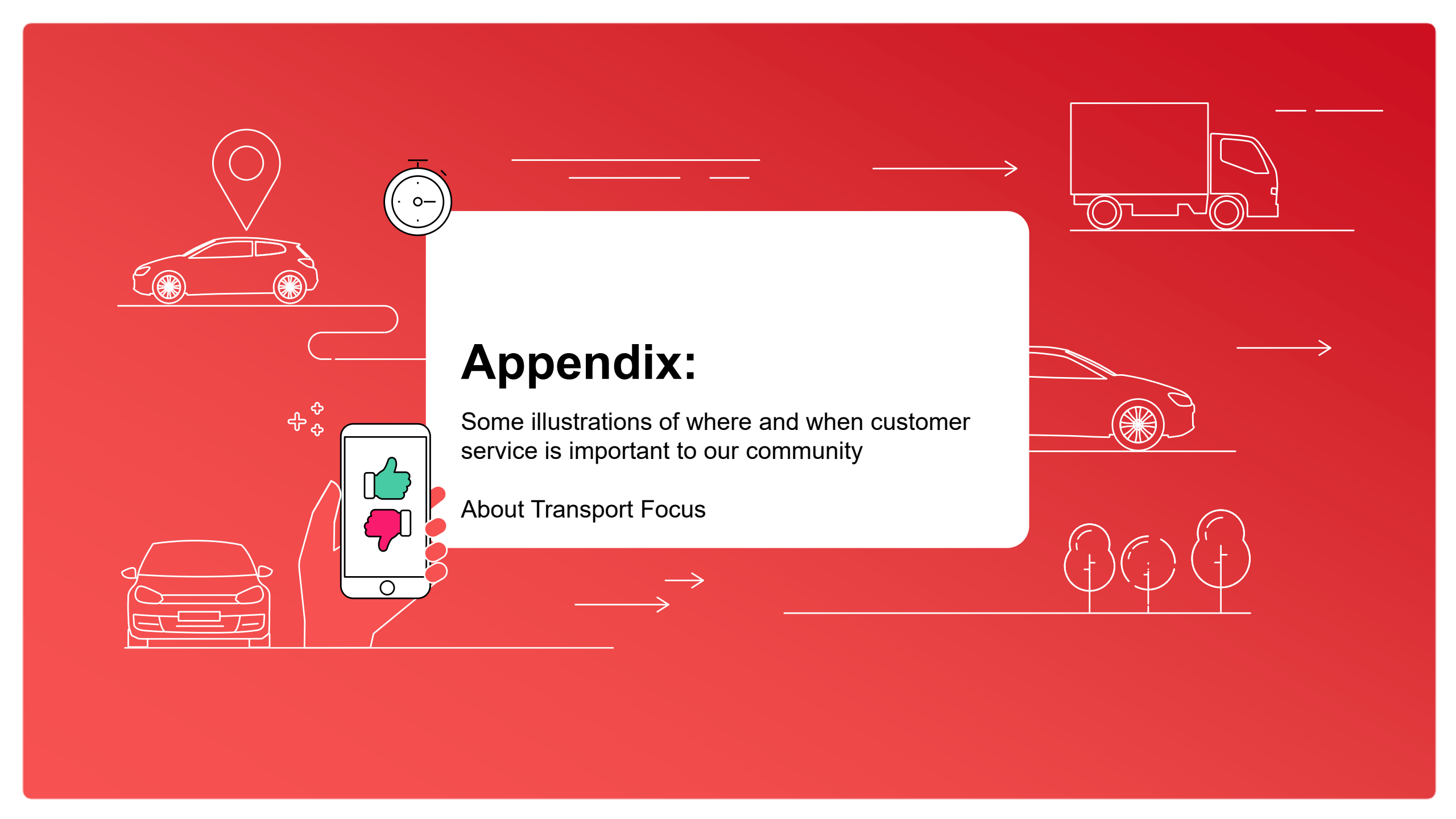
Customer service is typically **delivered well when the “everyday” service is running to plan, and front-line staff in particular do well**, on the whole, at engaging with individual customers to provide required assistance.

However, there are some key areas for improvement:

- **Customer service during disruption** – of course, it's harder in this context where customers have a less positive mindset, but all the more reason to present a constructive, personable face to customer interactions. Customers also need more pro-active information (through all channels, both pre- and during journeys), more practical help, and often have a perception that staff themselves lack information and/or the agency to act.
- **More visible staff**, both on board and at stations
- **Staff to do (and be able to do) more, and more pro-actively** (with higher expectations for ticket gate staff in particular)
- **Contact centres and other remote channels for customer interaction** – arguably limited to a degree by not being face to face (and in many cases by the context for interactions which is more often around disruption or other problems), but companies therefore need to work harder to remove as much friction as possible, and improve on engaging fully with individual customers' circumstances rather than homogenous responses.

And some further principles to support this:

- **Clear and easy to access** customer service channels (encompassing everything from staff to web pages and other information and tools), so customers know where to go
- More **consistency across the industry**, to aid this, and so that customers know what to expect
- **Ensuring staff have the knowledge and tools** to be able to help – including with contingency plans, and knowledge beyond their own TOC/line of route
- Consistency in **(perceived) attitude of all personnel encountered by customers** – particularly in terms of being open, approachable, and genuinely engaged with individuals and empathetic

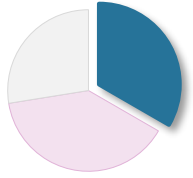


Appendix:

Some illustrations of where and when customer service is important to our community

About Transport Focus

Some illustrations of where and when “**everyday**” **customer service** is important to our community: this comes in two main ways:



Common, relatively straightforward assistance, queries, and ensuring the logistics happen

Queries about platforms and tickets, help with ticket gates and machines, directions to onward travel, managing anti-social behaviour, and so on

Becca often sees **crowding as people wait to board at St Pancras, which she feels could be managed better**: if passengers understood which trains were leaving when / next, some could hang back and reduce the crowding for others. She always sees several **ticket gate staff nearby who could feasibly help** but do not.

When interchanging at an unfamiliar station, Julie needed **help to find the right platform**.

Overhead boards showed train destinations but not calling points, meaning she didn't know which train was hers and therefore which platform to use.

Neville was helped by a friendly and polite **ticket office clerk, to work out the quickest way into London**.

At the destination, he didn't need any help but noticed **staff at the ticket gates** chatting amongst themselves; he felt they were **approachable and able to help anyone who needed it**.

Una **couldn't buy a ticket because the station ticket office was closed**, and she didn't have any Wi-Fi / data connection to buy online.

Neither could she find anyone on board other than catering staff who were unable to help.

Charlotte sat on a train near to a rowdy, drunk **group who were bothering other passengers**. A ticket inspector came through and ignored their behaviour which she felt was wrong; **the inspector should have asked them to reduce the noise**.

Michelle used a digital ticket on her phone and hadn't downloaded it. She was worried about not having a signal to be able to access it for inspection. However **nobody came to check tickets** at all, which **she found really concerning because it could allow for fare dodging**.

At Stoke-on-Trent she could not scan her ticket to go through the barriers, but was relieved to be **let through manually by a helpful member of staff**

When her train stopped briefly outside Lewisham and again outside London Bridge, Fiona was happy that **the driver made a “cheery” announcement explaining why** and that they would be on the move soon.

Non-functional (arguably unnecessary), enjoyable interactions

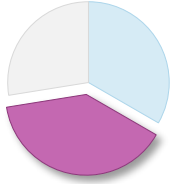
Cerys and her friend had **a nice conversation with staff at their departure station**, about where they were going. It made their day!

When seeing off a friend in emotional circumstances (who was also nervous about train travel), **gate staff allowed Lucy onto the platform to say goodbye properly**.

She subsequently enjoyed a further conversation with the staff about it, and overall the **genuine care and interest they took** was really meaningful.

Gavin appreciates the consistently **friendly nature of ticket office and gate staff at his local station**, Levenshulme

Some illustrations of where and when our community feel that customer service (should) come into play during **disruption**



Clive's train from Bath to Reading was cancelled, meaning he also missed a train to Heathrow and a subsequent flight.

He was frustrated at the lack of **prior warning** which prevented him from making other travel arrangements, the apparent apathy of staff at the station when **he needed assistance relating to alternative trains or travel options**, the lack of **updates thereafter** which caused him to waste more time rather than finding an alternative, and the **resulting partial refund** which he felt was inadequate to the situation.

When his train was delayed meaning he would miss a subsequent connection, Nathan wanted **advice from station staff**.

When they could not help, he **tweeted the company and was disappointed to be directed to generic sections of the website**.

Katherine waited at Cardiff station for train home from work. **Information boards** showed that the train was delayed, but then this changed to cancelled.

This happened multiple times, and **she would have preferred to have known trains were cancelled at the outset**, so she could make other arrangements.

On **contacting the company afterwards** to complain, she was advised to **speak to "a different department"**, from which she then had no response.

Jay's train was delayed by more than 20 minutes. While waiting at the station she was impressed to see **a member of staff in an information desk area making announcements, walking in and out of the desk area itself to answer questions**, often needing to repeat herself but not seeming to mind, and being **polite, pleasant and helpful throughout**.

(On another occasion)
Katherine's train was cancelled and a replacement bus service was in place.

She was really grateful that **staff "came out" to explain the situation in person**, and to **take customers right to where the buses were**

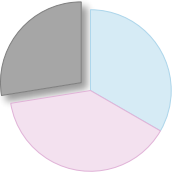
John was due to travel long distance including with a change, the morning after heavy snow.

Before setting off that morning, **he wanted to check that trains were running for both legs, and that his Advance ticket for the second leg would be valid if his first leg was delayed** which he suspected would happen.

He phoned both train companies but couldn't get through, so did eventually go to the **departure station to try and get information and answers from staff**.

He struggled at both the departure and interchange station to get coherent and consistent information and (as he had suspected), staff across different companies were not aware of disruption on other networks.

Customer service is also important to customers in a **variety of other situations**: neither “run of the mill”, nor where anything has gone wrong



Customers with specific needs

John needed to help his grandmother to her seat with her luggage. It was crowded, and the train departed before he could get off.

Staff on board were understanding and printed him a complementary ticket so he could travel back again without issue

Sarah booked **Passenger Assistance** to help her onto a train to Brighton, but when she arrived there was no record of it.

Jay travelled on a very crowded train from London to Edinburgh, with a young baby and related luggage. There was little space to store her pram and have everything to hand, and Jay was struggling generally.

Staff offered her space in the First Class area, and also helped with hot water to make up the baby's bottle, all of which was a big relief and made a huge difference.

Lost property

Gavin's phone fell out of his coat pocket when it was in the overhead storage area. He realised much later, and rang his phone to try and find it.

A member of on-board staff heard it, answered it, and passed it to **staff at Manchester Piccadilly** the next day from where Gavin was able to collect it. He was really grateful for the effort and collaboration between staff to get it back to him.

Other difficulties

Charlotte's ticket did not fully print and she was missing the outbound portion; she didn't realise until she was about to board.

Eventually she was given a written ticket, but initially received a rude and unhelpful response from **staff that she sought help from at an information desk**.

Travel in unusual circumstances

Cerys' train was cancelled, meaning she had to travel even later, arriving home at 2am.

She upgraded to **First Class because it felt safer**, and felt really well looked after by the **staff there who checked on her** and her sister regularly (and provided snacks), and **stood by the carriage doors at stations so they felt safer**.

Tracy travelled in a heatwave on a very crowded train.

The **guard walked through all the carriages throughout the journey**, explaining honestly that the air con was broken, providing water, and checking people were coping with the heat.

Genuine customer mistakes

Anne returned to Manchester Airport from the USA and, due to the time difference, mistakenly booked a ticket from there to home for the wrong day.

She felt tired, alone and vulnerable, and had no money at that point.

She needed **compassion and practical help to sort out a new ticket**.

Staff lacked empathy and left her alone to resolve it, with help from her son on the phone.

Some illustrations of where and when customer service is important for those making journeys which are relatively...

Unfamiliar:



When Tracy went to Crufts, she misread the timetable for her train home. When she arrived at Birmingham International, the last train to Reading had departed and they didn't know what to do.

She asked platform staff for advice but they "shrugged and said there was nothing they could do". She eventually worked out (for herself) a route home via London but was upset and angry about how she was treated when she really needed help.

Alice used an Advance ticket from London to Doncaster, with an interchange. Her first leg was delayed so she missed the connection, and technically her ticket was now invalid.

She explained the situation to the ticket inspector, who was understanding and allowed her to travel without penalty given the problem had not been Alice's fault.

Fiona was happy to find a **waiting area** at Kings Cross, for her trip to Darlington.

As well as the area itself, which had family and work spaces, she appreciated **a member of staff who made regular rounds to check on people** and make sure they knew when and from where their trains were departing.

For a day out with a friend in London, Claire was unfamiliar with both the train journey, and travel within London, so **asked at the ticket office for some advice**. The clerk there really helped with **information about using Uber boats within London, and ensuring she had the right ticket** for all travel through the day.

Peter needed to buy a ticket for a colleague, and his employer has a limited budget.

The ticket office clerk he spoke to at Birmingham New Street took the time to really understand his needs and find him the best ticket for the circumstances.

Frequent or familiar



Una was travelling home from Birmingham New Street, and her platform was changed at relatively short notice, which she hadn't realised. **A member of staff stopped her as she was heading to the platform** to let her know, and which platform to head to instead.

She was grateful because she could have missed the train – partly because, despite using the station fairly often, she sometimes gets confused given the number of different platforms and their separation into A and B.

William was travelling to London from King Lynn for work, when the connection from Cambridge was cancelled.

He was impressed that **station staff arranged replacement buses** within 25 minutes "which was amazing", and then did a great job of **interacting with passengers in person** to keep them up to date, provide timetables, and so on.

Eammon feels that he regularly receives poor customer service at his local station. He has a disability and needs to use the lift, but finds that during peak busy times it is blocked (presumably to manage footfall).

He asks staff manning the lift to allow him to use it, but often finds this a challenge and has missed trains as a result.

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).

Any enquiries about this report should be addressed to:

Louise Coward – Head of Insights
Louise.coward@transportfocus.org.uk

Transport Focus
10th Floor, 25 Cabot Square, London
E14 4QZ

www.transportfocus.org.uk

Transport Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council

We work to make a difference for all transport users.