



What do we know about stations?

November 2009

What passengers tell us about stations?

Introduction

The National Passenger Survey reveals that satisfaction with individual station service attributes vary greatly. Passengers are most satisfied with the way station staff deal with requests (82%) whilst they are least satisfied with facilities that are provided for car parking (44%)¹.

This is also reflected in a report by the National Audit Office (NAO) which reported that the 95 largest rail stations enjoyed the highest levels of passenger satisfaction². These were fully staffed, had a range of facilities and served more than half of all rail passengers. However, passengers were consistently less satisfied with the 2000 plus medium- to small-sized stations; which were largely unstaffed, or only staffed for part of the day, and had few facilities.

In more recent times the varying quality of stations was also highlighted by Lord Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport, who as part of his six-day rail tour of Britain, commented that conditions at some stations were “downright poor”.

The rail industry has worked hard to improve stations. Likewise Government has made funds available – for instance, the 2007 White Paper, “Delivering a Sustainable Railway”, allocated funding for the National Stations Improvement Programme³, while the Access for All scheme⁴ aims to make stations more accessible.

But despite these – and other schemes - it is clear that there is still more to do. To help focus the debate even further the Secretary of State for Transport announced a review of passengers’ requirements at stations across England and Wales. The review, by Sir Peter Hall and Chris Green⁵, was designed to look at how the basic needs of passengers can be met as well as the broader role of stations in the future. In November 2009 Network Rail began its own consultation exercise on the future of stations.⁶

Passenger Focus welcomes this renewed emphasis on stations. It is crucial, though, that the debate is based on, and reflects, what passengers actually want. This report draws together our existing research and seeks to highlight which aspects of stations passengers are most satisfied and dissatisfied with, and identifies what passengers want from the station. A separate report has already been published on passengers’ perception of personal security

¹ National Passenger Survey Spring 2009, Passenger Focus (June 2009)

² Maintaining and improving Britain’s railways, National Audit Office (2005)

³ The National Stations Improvement Programme (NSIP) is an initiative worth £150 million to modernise approximately 150 intermediate stations in England and Wales in 2009-14.

⁴ Access for All is a £370 million ring-fenced fund for station accessibility improvements under the Government’s 10 year Railways for All strategy. Station selection and prioritisation is made by the Department for Transport.

⁵ Sir Peter Hall is the Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration at University College London and President of both the Town and Country Planning Association. Chris Green is a non-executive director of Network Rail and a former Chief Executive of Virgin Trains.

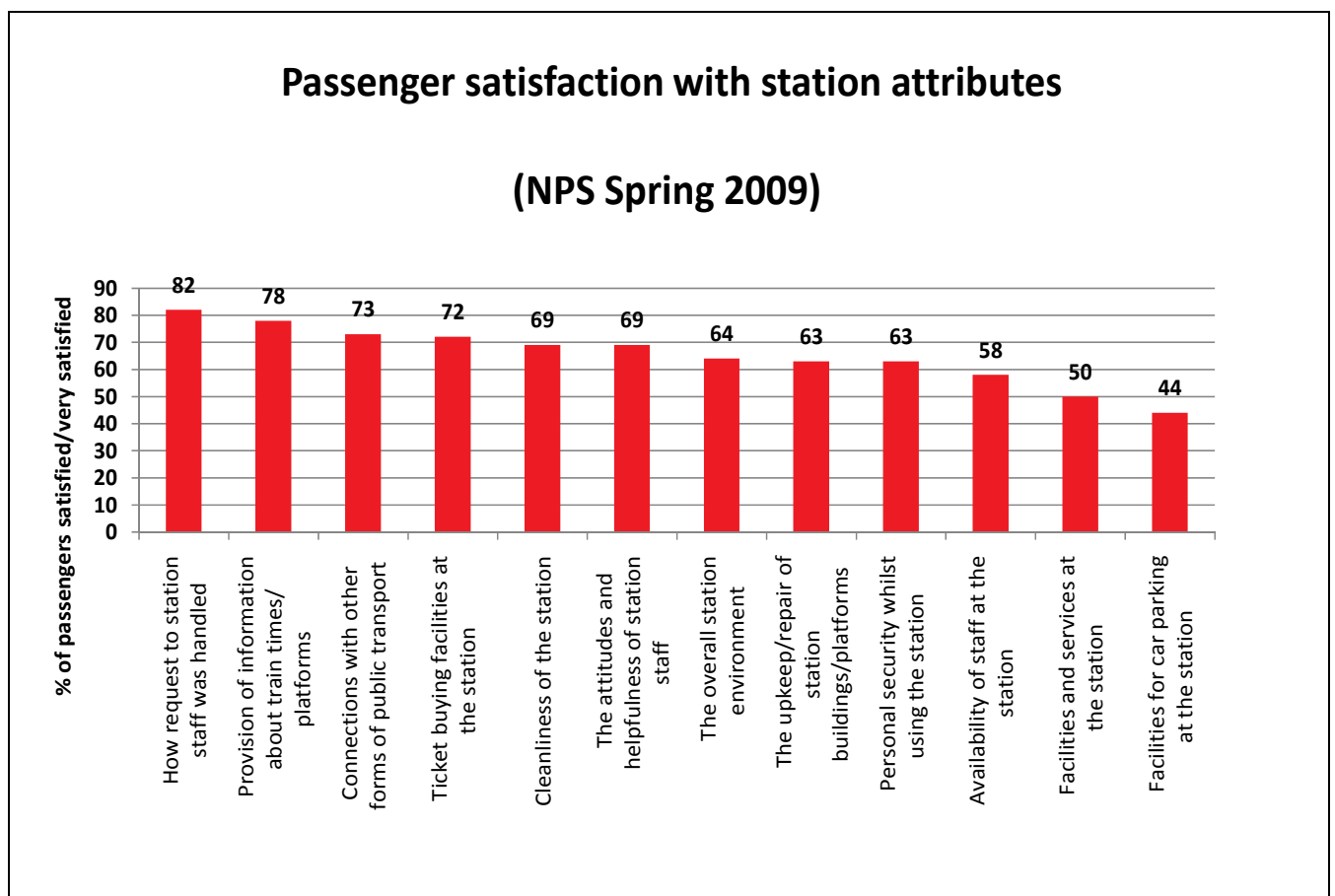
⁶ Action Stations, Network Rail. November 2009

on the railway⁷ and it is our intention to produce a further report on looking at the ways in which passengers access and depart from stations as part of their end-to-end journey. This report, therefore, focuses on the station fabric and environment.

Passenger satisfaction with stations

Overall satisfaction

When asked to rate their satisfaction with stations in the latest wave of the National Passenger Survey (Spring 2009) passengers told us that they were most satisfied with the way in which station staff had dealt with a request (82%) whilst (those that need it) were least satisfied with station facilities for car parking (44%).



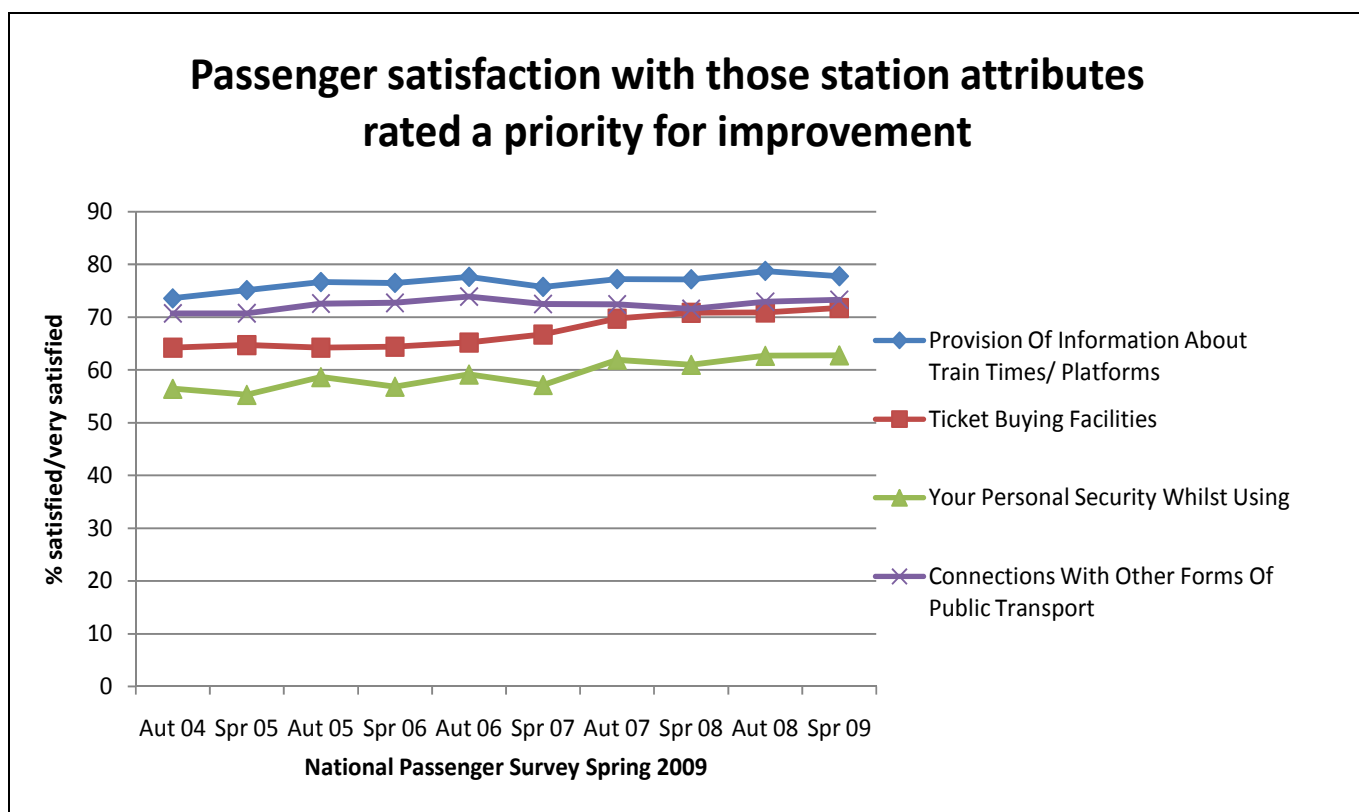
In July 2007 Passenger Focus asked passengers what they wanted to see improved on the railway. The research⁸ revealed, that out of 30 separate station and train based attributes, two station attributes featured in the top ten national priorities for improvement: queuing times for tickets, and information on train times/platforms. These were considered to be the sixth and seventh priorities for improvement respectively. Outside of the top 10, personal

⁷ Passenger perceptions of personal security on the railways. Passenger Focus (March 2009).

⁸ Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services. Passenger Focus (2007).

security at stations and good connections with other forms of transport were placed eleventh and twelfth.

Passenger satisfaction for these top-four station attributes shows a slow but steady improvement across the board. That said, the satisfaction scores for both personal security on the station and ticket buying facilities remain relatively low.

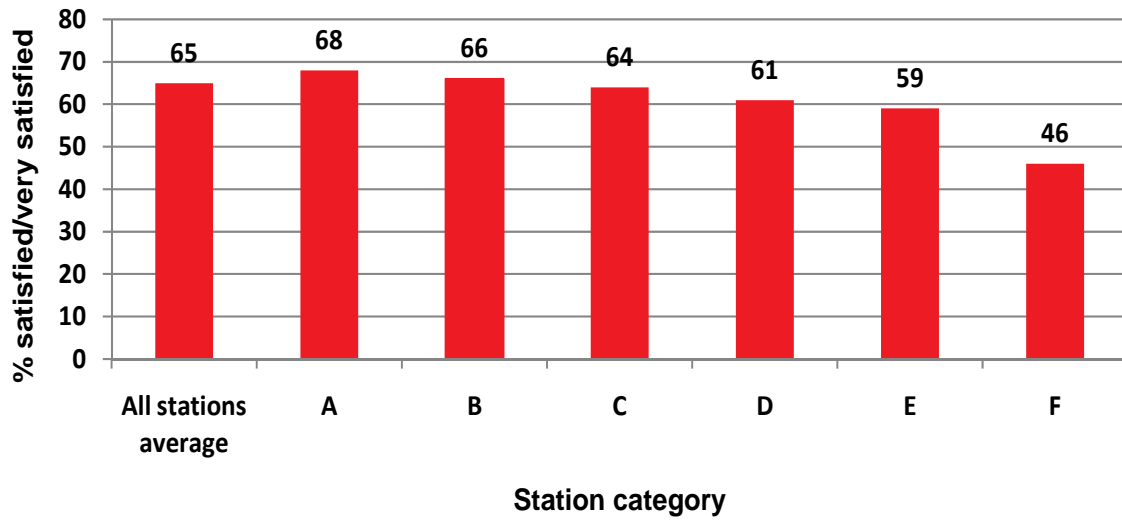


Satisfaction by station type

Within the rail industry there are six categories⁹ of station, which broadly correspond to their level of use. Major termini, for example, are found in band A, unstaffed halts are found in band F. A clear relationship exists between the size of the station and the level of satisfaction; with category A stations scoring the highest and Category F the lowest.

⁹ National Hub A Stations; Regional Hub B Stations; Large Feeder C Stations; Medium Staffed D Stations; Small Staffed E Stations; Unstaffed F Stations

Overall satisfaction for station attributes combined



NPS Spring 2009

The other station-based criteria in NPS also show a similar distinction according to size.

| Satisfaction with station attributes by station category (NPS Spring 2009) | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | All stations average | A | B | C | D | E | F |
| | | Ticket buying facilities | 72 | 68 | 73 | 75 | 72 |
| Provision of information about train times/platforms | 78 | 81 | 77 | 79 | 74 | 73 | 62 |
| The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms | 63 | 68 | 61 | 60 | 61 | 61 | 57 |
| Cleanliness | 69 | 74 | 65 | 67 | 67 | 67 | 58 |
| Facilities and services | 50 | 65 | 56 | 45 | 34 | 20 | 11 |
| Connections with other forms of public transport | 73 | 83 | 80 | 68 | 63 | 51 | 43 |
| Facilities for car parking | 44 | 28 | 40 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 44 |
| The overall environment | 64 | 72 | 64 | 61 | 58 | 57 | 51 |
| Your personal security whilst using the station | 63 | 69 | 65 | 61 | 56 | 54 | 42 |
| The availability of staff at the station | 58 | 60 | 63 | 60 | 52 | 52 | 21 |
| How request to station staff was handled | 82 | 82 | 81 | 83 | 85 | 87 | 74 |
| Below average by more than 10% points | | | | | | | |
| Above average by more than 10% points | | | | | | | |

Looking at the station attributes identified as priorities for improvement we see:

- Provision of information about train times and platforms**
 With the exception of category B stations the pattern of satisfaction generally mirrors that of overall satisfaction across the six different types of station. Category A stations score the highest (81%) whilst category F stations receive the lowest scores with only 62% of passengers rating the provision of information as good/very good.
- Connections with other forms of public transport**
 Passengers travelling from category A and B stations on the other hand consider this attribute to be better than average.
- Ticket buying facilities**
 Aside from category F stations, where over a third (40%) of passengers purchase their tickets on the train (due to a lack of booking offices/ticket machines on the

stations) category A stations received the lowest scores for ticket buying facilities from passengers (68%).

- **Personal security**

Again, levels of satisfaction drop from category A (69%) to F (42%).

Looking at the lowest rated station facilities in terms of satisfaction by station type we see:

- **Station facilities for car parking**

Satisfaction was lowest at category A (28%) and B (40%) stations. This is not surprising as most category A and B stations tend to be located in large towns and cities, where space for car parking is at a premium; most passengers would therefore access the station by other forms of public transport. This is supported by the fact that category A and B stations received the highest satisfaction scores for connections with other forms of public transport.

- **Station facilities and services**

Some of the lowest scores were, predictably, received at smaller stations (Bands D-F) where the stations are not of a size to accommodate a large number of services. In many instances the fact that there is limited or no staff presence at these stations will mean that even where there is space, facilities are not provided due to concerns over vandalism and crime.

- **Availability of staff**

Whilst the average level of satisfaction is relatively low in itself (58%) even lower scores are recorded for category D-F stations.

Satisfaction with station attributes by passenger group

By looking at the demographic data of those passengers that responded to the National Passenger Survey (Spring 2009) it is possible to identify which groups are the most dissatisfied with the different attributes of stations.

Age groups

When asked to rate their satisfaction with 11 station attributes, those aged over 65 appear to be the most satisfied of all rail passengers, whilst those aged between 26 and 34 tending to be the least satisfied.

Journey purpose

Commuters are less satisfied than either business or leisure users, for all station attributes. For all except two (connections with other forms of transport and the availability of staff at the station) of the station attributes they were asked about, leisure passengers gave satisfaction scores at least 10% points higher, than commuters - the biggest difference being for how station staff dealt with a request, then the upkeep and repair of station buildings.

| Satisfaction with station attribute by journey purpose (NPS Spring 2009) | | | | |
|--|-------|----------|----------|---------|
| | Total | Commuter | Business | Leisure |
| Ticket buying facilities | 72 | 66 | 73 | 79 |
| Provision of information about train times/platforms | 78 | 73 | 80 | 83 |
| The upkeep/repair of the station buildings/platforms | 63 | 57 | 62 | 71 |
| Cleanliness | 69 | 63 | 67 | 75 |
| Facilities and services | 50 | 43 | 55 | 56 |
| Connections with other forms of public transport | 73 | 70 | 75 | 77 |
| Facilities for car parking | 44 | 38 | 42 | 52 |
| The overall environment | 64 | 58 | 63 | 71 |
| Your personal security whilst using the station | 63 | 58 | 63 | 68 |
| The availability of staff at the station | 58 | 55 | 58 | 62 |
| How request to station staff was handled | 82 | 72 | 85 | 87 |

Disabled passengers

Of the disabled passengers¹⁰ who responded to the National Passenger Survey passengers with a visual impairment were most dissatisfied with the following station attributes: facilities and services (48%), personal security whilst using the station (54%), the overall environment (61%), the upkeep and repair of station buildings (64%) the attitude and helpfulness of staff (66%) and the provision of information about train times and platforms (67%).¹¹

Ticket buying facilities and the availability of staff both received the lowest scores for satisfaction from those disabled passengers with a hearing impairment (66% and 55% respectively). Facilities for car parking were rated the lowest amongst those with mobility impairment (41%).¹²

The Disability Discrimination Act requires operators of stations to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) issued a Statutory Code of Practice on the provision and use of transport vehicles. This set out a number of factors which might be taken into account when considering what reasonable provision is.

In 2006 the Government committed £370 million to the Access for All scheme with the aim of providing full obstacle-free accessibility at priority stations in England and Wales in the period up to 2015. These are defined as the 500 busiest stations in terms of passenger arrivals and departures. Disabled access issues will clearly not all be solved by this scheme,

¹⁰ This does not including those with a speech impediment due to the small sample size

¹¹ National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus, (Spring 2009)

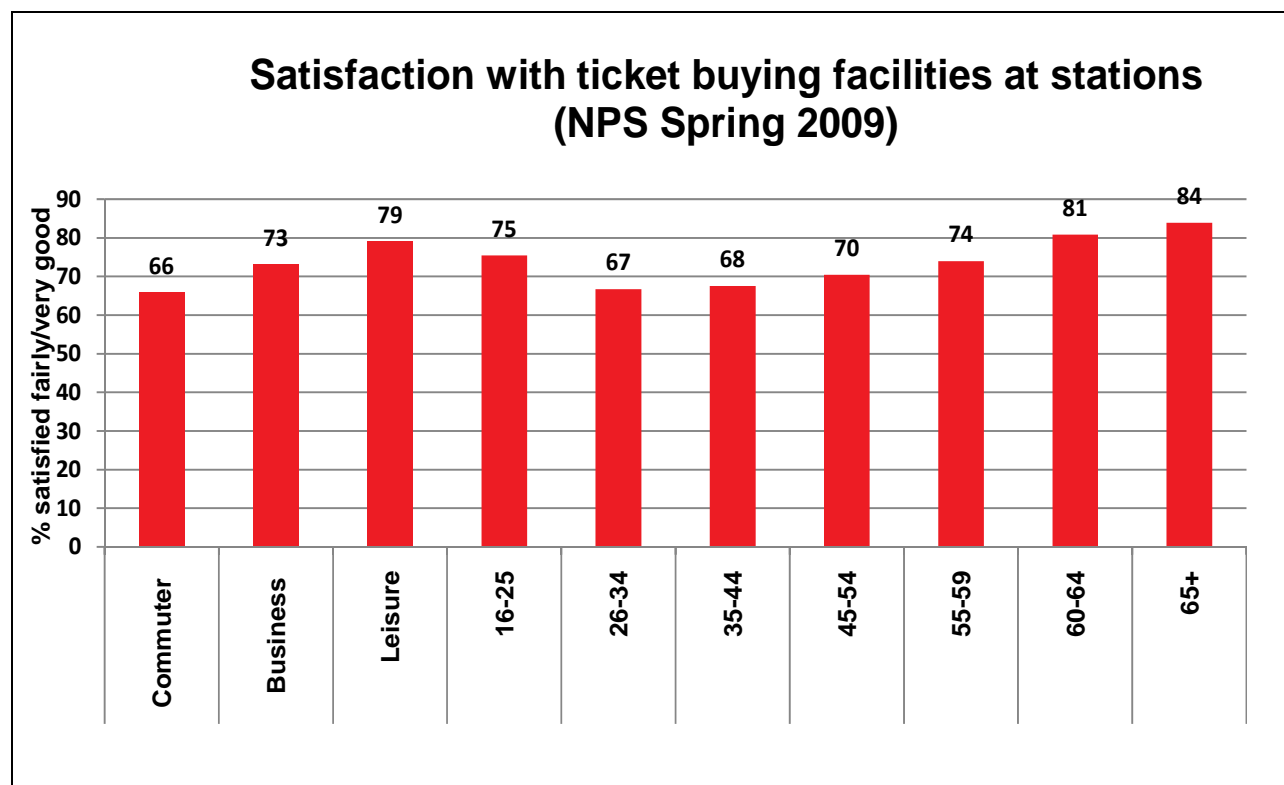
¹² National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus, (Spring 2009)

and a great deal of effort will also need to be invested in improving the assistance provided to disabled passengers by staff. In its 2007 White Paper, “Delivering a Sustainable Railway” the Government confirmed its intention to review the benefits of the Access for All scheme and determine whether the travel patterns of disabled passengers had changed as a result. The intention is to then incorporate the results of the review in the next High Level Output Specification for rail in 2012¹³.

Station attributes in more detail

Purchasing a ticket at the station

When asked to rate the ticket buying facilities at the station they started their journey, passengers undertaking journeys as part of a regular commute and those aged between 26 and 34 were the least satisfied. Those passengers over the age of 65 and leisure passengers were the most satisfied.



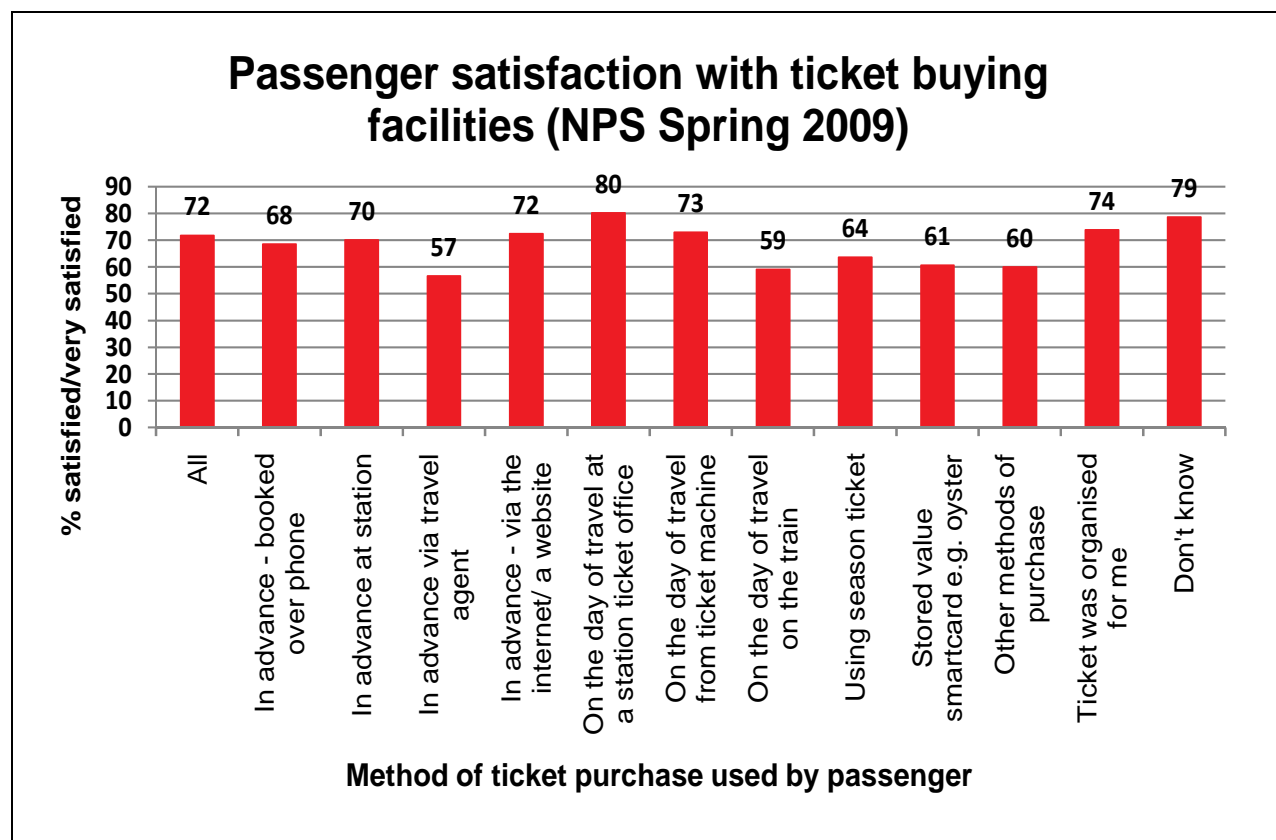
NPS shows that 21% of passengers surveyed were using a season ticket for the journey that they were asked to rate. Of these, 28% had chosen to purchase their ticket on the day of travel at a station ticket office; a further 12% had purchased it from the station before the day of travel; while 13% waited until the day of travel, but chose to buy their ticket from a ticket vending machine.

¹³ Delivering a sustainable railway, Department for Transport (July 2007)

Passengers aged 16 to 25 are most likely to use ticket machines when buying a ticket on the day of travel (21%), whilst those passengers over the age of 60 are more likely to purchase their ticket on the day of travel from the station booking office¹⁴.

When asked to rate their satisfaction with the ease of ticket purchase, those passengers that purchased their ticket on the day of travel from a station ticket office were most satisfied (88%). Whilst still a high rate of satisfaction, those passengers purchasing their tickets from ticket machines at stations gave a lower score of 83%.

Similarly when asked to rate their satisfaction with ticket buying facilities, those that purchased tickets from the booking office on the day of travel gave the highest scores.



Although satisfaction with ticketing buying facilities is relatively high, reducing the queuing time, for those purchasing a ticket on the day of travel, is one of the top 10 passenger priorities for improvement.¹⁵

In May 2008 ticket queuing time research revealed that at 12 major stations, queues at ticket vending machines (TVMs) were on average shorter than those at ticket offices during the peak and off peak (including weekends). It also showed that at 41% of all the observations undertaken at ticket machines there were no queues, compared to just 18% at ticket offices.

¹⁴ 34% of passengers aged between 60 and 64, 3% of passengers aged over 65, National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus, (Spring 2009).

¹⁵ Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services, Passenger Focus (July 2007)

Seemingly, TVMs, despite train operating companies making a large investment in installing more of them, are not used as heavily as the ticket offices¹⁶.

Given the priority passengers attach to reducing ticket purchase queuing times, Passenger Focus, in conjunction with South West Trains, sought to try and understand why passengers choose ticket office windows over ticket machines. It did this by looking at:

- the proportion of passengers queuing at ticket offices who could have used a ticket vending machine (TVM)
- passenger's reluctance to use ticket machines
- other ways passengers could have purchased their tickets to avoid a long queue.

The results of this additional research revealed that although most passengers queuing at ticket offices could have bought their tickets from a machine, a large proportion choose not to do so. The non-usage cannot be attributed to a lack of awareness, as nine out of 10 passengers in the ticket office queues were aware of the TVMs at the station (78% had used them in the past). Instead the decision to buy a rail ticket at the ticket office was often a conscious one; largely driven by one or more of the following:

- the purchaser's lack of confidence in using the machine
- the purchaser's lack of confidence in their ability to select a ticket at the appropriate price with the necessary validity or relevant route (as specified on the ticket and reflected in the price)
- a preference for face-to-face transactions for reassurance.

That said, one in five passengers have no particular reason for not using a TVM – they simply just do not consider the idea¹⁷.

In 2007 the strength of passenger feeling on this subject was revealed when train operating company Southeastern launched a public consultation on proposals to change ticket office opening hours at some of its stations. In a small number of cases complete closures were proposed. In response to the consultation Southeastern received nearly 3000 objections to the proposals, which led to substantial revisions to the proposed reductions. Similarly, in July 2008, South West Trains launched a consultation in which it proposed a reduction in ticket office opening hours at 114 stations.

In the three week consultation period Passenger Focus received over 3100 postcards and 360 letters and e-mails objecting to the proposals. Such was the depth of feeling, that we received representations from county, district and parish councils, rail user groups, both houses of parliament, trade unions and individual passengers alike. Although the two consultations involved two different train operators, and two different sets of passengers, the underlying reasons for the objections can largely be attributed to:

¹⁶ Buying a ticket at the station, research on ticket machine use, Passenger Focus (October 2008)

¹⁷ Buying a ticket at the station, research on ticket machine use, Passenger Focus (October 2008)

- a perceived reduction in customer service – in the provision of advice, information and availability of staff
- safety concerns - the expectation that a reduced staff presence would result in increased vandalism and less supervision of youngsters and anti-social behaviour
- ticket Vending Machines – were not considered a suitable alternative to real staff as they could not give passengers advice, for instance, about disruption, the best value fares or journey options. Some concern was also expressed about the reliability of the TVMs and the fact that they could not retail the complete range of tickets.¹⁸

Passenger Focus recommends

Apart from certain safety regulations, the only general requirement to provide staff at a station comes from the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA), which governs ticket office opening hours. We have never taken the line that the opening hours should be 'set-in-stone' - the onus is, though, on the train company to justify the need for change and to show how it will benefit passengers overall.

Whilst Passenger Focus understands the wider context in which technology is bringing innovation to retail activities – for example: through such things as smartcard technology and tickets via mobile phones - we press for stations to be staffed wherever possible. This isn't just for ticket sales, staff also provide a reassuring presence for personal security, provide information and act as a deterrent to crime.

With train companies taking revenue protection much more seriously – both in terms of checking tickets and installing ticket gates - it is crucial that passengers are given every opportunity to purchase a ticket before they get on a train. This coupled with the ever growing number of people using rail, means that the ease of purchasing a ticket is increasingly becoming a concern for passengers. While part of the solution is to provide alternative points of sale (for example: internet or telesales) many people still rely on the station ticket office and, for those, the issue of queuing times is uppermost.

There are many valid reasons why passengers need or prefer to speak to staff. In some cases the rail products they need are simply not available. Even where the ticket is theoretically available, the complexity of the fares structure means that it can be extremely difficult to get the cheapest fare without advice. We do not want to see a situation where off-peak travellers find it increasingly difficult to purchase the right ticket and either find themselves spending more than they should, or choosing to travel by other means. In research passengers consistently say they want to see staff at stations – more ticket machines should not necessarily mean fewer staff.

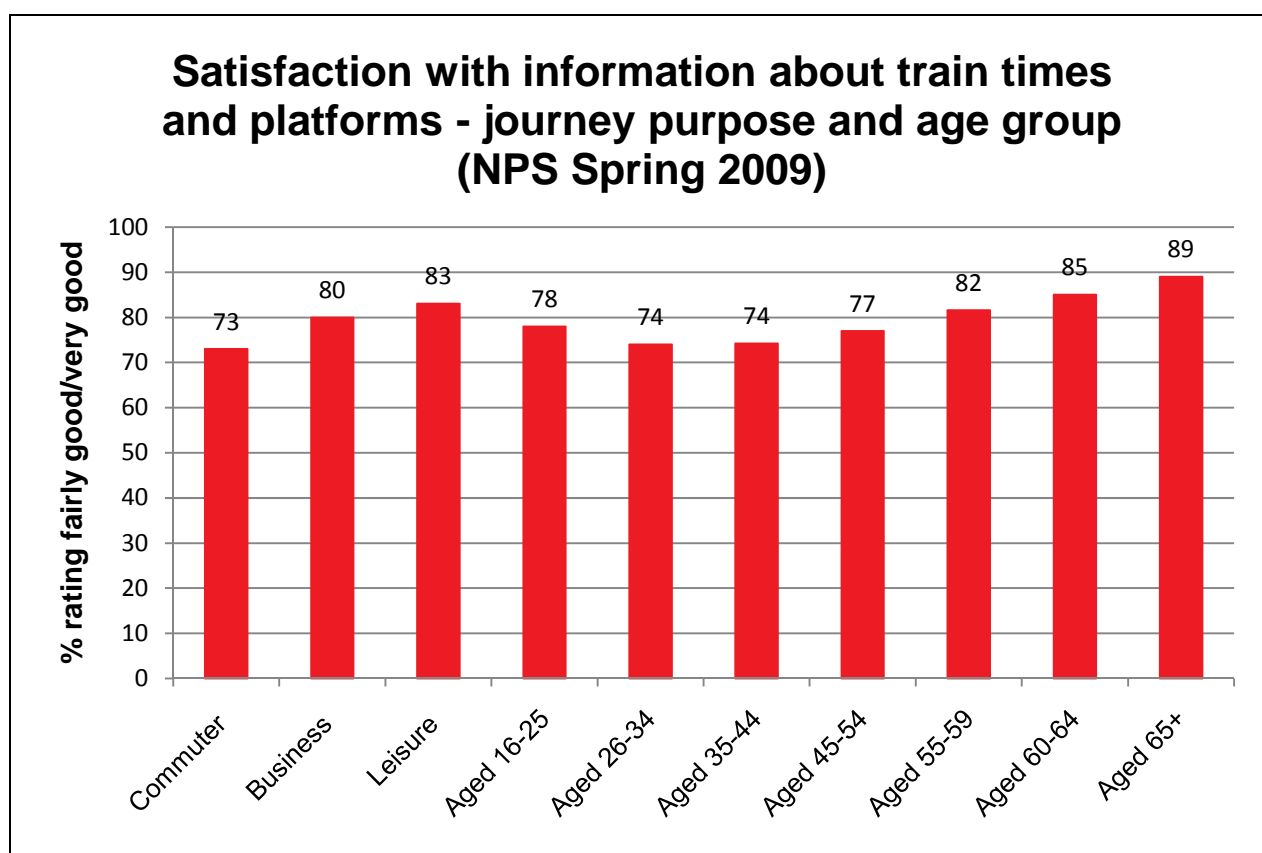
¹⁸ Formal response to Southeastern's consultation on major changes to ticket office opening hours, Passenger Focus (March 2007) & Response to South West Trains' proposals to reduce ticket office opening hours, Passenger Focus (August 2008)

Provision of information about train times and platforms

When asked to rate their satisfaction with 12 different station attributes, passengers placed the provision of information at stations on train times and platforms second (78% satisfaction).

Passenger satisfaction with this attribute was reasonably consistent amongst those using category A-C stations (ranging from 81% to 77%); it declined slightly for those using D-E stations (74% and 73%) and dropped sharply for those who used category F stations (62%).

Once again it was commuters that were most dissatisfied (73%), whilst those under the age of 25 were likely to rate the provision of information lower than other age groups.



Although passenger satisfaction with the provision of information about train times and platforms has been gradually increasing since Spring 2004 (an increase from 74% in 2004, to 78% in Spring 2009) this particular service attribute remains a relatively high passenger priority for improvement. National research by Passenger Focus in 2007 placed two elements of information ('passengers kept informed of delays' and 'information on train times/platforms accurate and available') in the top 10 priorities for improvement¹⁹. There is clearly room for the industry to improve.

The importance that passengers place on the provision of information was further confirmed by research that Passenger Focus undertook in December 2007 looking at what passengers

¹⁹ Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services, Passenger Focus (July 2007)

wanted for the future South Central rail franchise. Of the eight routes that Passenger Focus surveyed, passengers on four of them placed the provision of train and departure times as the top priority for improvement. A further two routes considered it to be the second highest priority. Moreover, when asked about importance of station facilities – information about train times and departures featured strongly. Visual Information was top, whilst announcements on train times and delays were placed fourth and fifth respectively²⁰.

Similarly when conducting research in Wales, to inform Passenger Focus' response to the Welsh Rail Utilisation Strategy passengers told us that accurate visual information on train arrival times was the most important, of 14, station attributes to have at the station they boarded²¹.

When at the station information is largely obtained through three media: visual screens and signs, audio announcements and by talking to staff. Passengers tend to use the visual screens or station timetable posters to obtain information in the first instance; and then make their own assessment of whether they need additional information, which might mean seeking advice from a member of station staff. There is less emphasis on audio announcements as a direct source of information, as passengers are often concerned that they are too brief, intermittent and not necessarily clear/comprehensible. The risk of missing an important announcement can create anxiety.²²

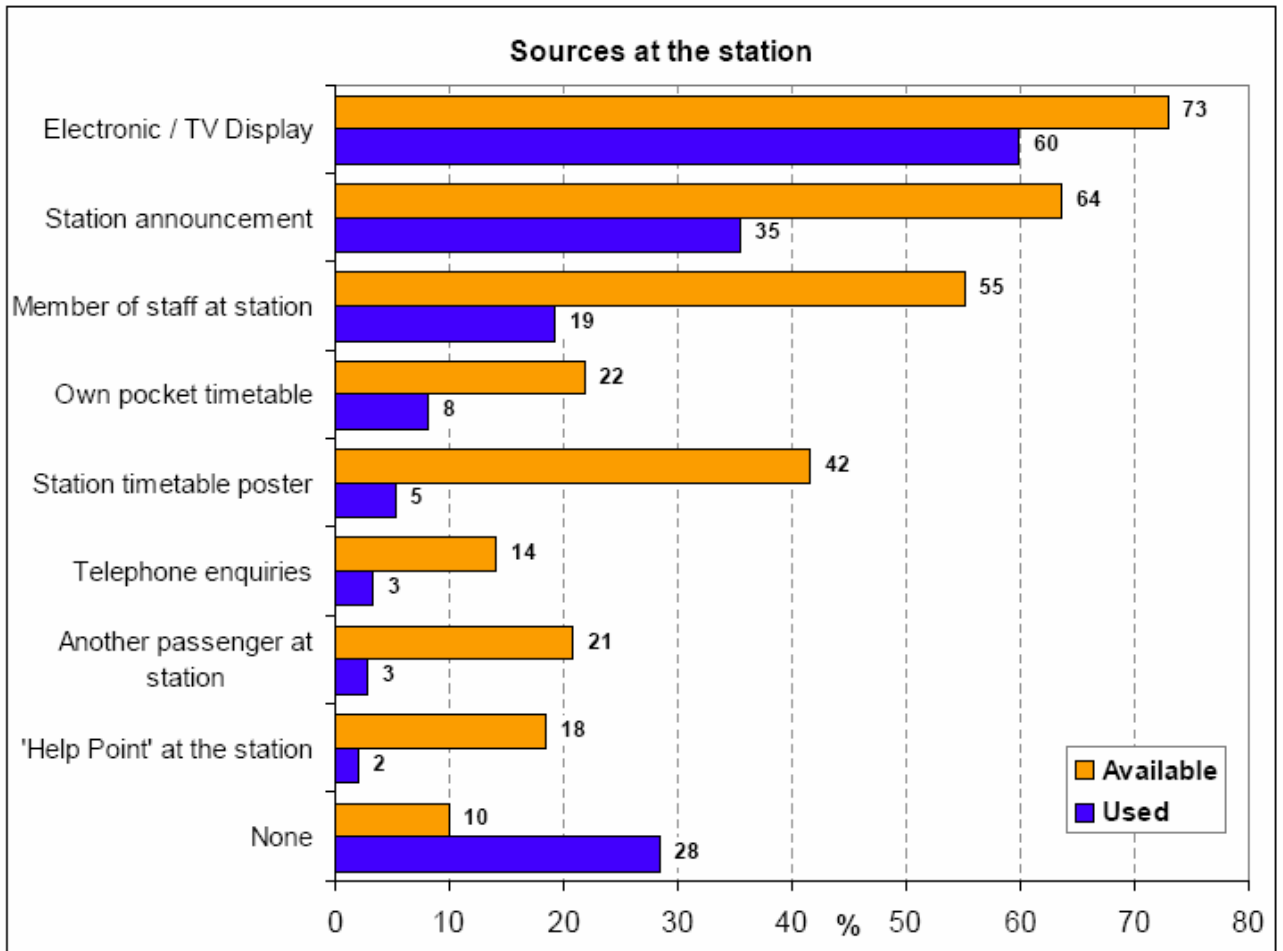
This reinforced research in 2004 which also showed the importance of visual information²³.

²⁰ Route based research – identifying what passengers want from South Central, Passenger Focus (April 2008)

²¹ Research report – Welsh Routes, Passenger Focus (May 2009)

²² Passenger information: a vision, Passenger Focus (July 2008)

²³ Passenger information: what, where, when, how? Passenger Focus (Sept 2004)



Passengers identify a range of information requirements as being essential, on the basis that if they are not provided it would be difficult to plan and undertake a journey. At stations passengers expect the following information to be clearly displayed:²⁴

- platform information for arriving and departing trains
- expected (as well as scheduled) time of arrival of trains
- details of train formation (including number of carriages, particularly if reduced)
- the location of specific carriages and the facilities on board the train
- any delays/cancellations, alternative routes/modes in the event of significant delay.

This information should be easily and quickly obtained, clear and easily understood, accurate and issued in a timely manner.

Passengers consider a staff presence on stations to be an extremely important medium for delivering information about their journey. The ability to communicate with staff face-to-face is, therefore, often considered essential; especially during times of service disruption, when staff can provide reassurance in confusing and fast changing situations. Passengers consider the traditional staff-centred information and more hi-tech channels to be complimentary.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

However, passengers are concerned that station staff do not always appear to have access to up-to-date information. As such, improving staff access to real time information was considered to be a high priority for improvement by passengers.

As was:

- information at smaller stations when engineering work is disrupting services
- how passengers are told that engineering work will disrupt future journeys.²⁶

Focus group research in June 2005 revealed that at larger stations the level of information provision was perceived to be higher than that at medium and small stations (category D, E and F). Information at larger stations was also considered to be clearer in terms of directing passengers to trains and informing them of train times. This included real time information, departure and arrival trains and directions to different parts of the station to access services and facilities. Smaller stations were felt to offer inadequate information about which platforms serve particular destinations. Passengers feel this information should be displayed more clearly on departure boards rather than on maps.²⁷

Although real-time information, in the form of TV or dot matrix style screens was provided on the platforms at most larger stations, passengers at category E and F stations were often left without access to such information sources. Passengers therefore considered real-time information at smaller stations to be a high priority for improvement.²⁸ The primary benefits being that passengers could obtain information on delays; particularly at stations where there isn't a staff presence.

Passenger Focus recommends

In December 2007 the Association of Train Operating Companies produced a good practice guide on providing information to passengers, based on Passengers Focus' research report "Passenger information: what, when, where and how?" The guide contained guidance on four specific areas: information 'off-station', at the station, on the train and at times of planned engineering work. In order to address the recommendations in the research report and ensure that the good practice guides were adopted across the industry the Passenger Information Strategy Group (PISG) was established, composed of representatives from National Rail Enquiries, all Train Operating Companies, Network Rail and Passenger Focus.

By using the good practice guides it is hope that Train Operating Companies can deliver a better, more accessible, service to passengers and potential passengers.

Passenger Focus places great importance on the provision of accurate, impartial and timely information, especially in times of disruption, so we are pleased that the industry is taking the provision of information seriously. Information is clearly an important element of a successful journey by train, in some cases information is key to whether a journey is made by train at all. At times of unexpected disruption keeping people informed about what is happening can

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ What passengers want from stations, Passenger Focus, (June 2005)

²⁸ Ibid

be the difference between passengers in angry despair about “the railway” and resigned acceptance that from time to time things go wrong. We want the rail industry to implement the good practice guides on passenger information as quickly, and as thoroughly, as possible.

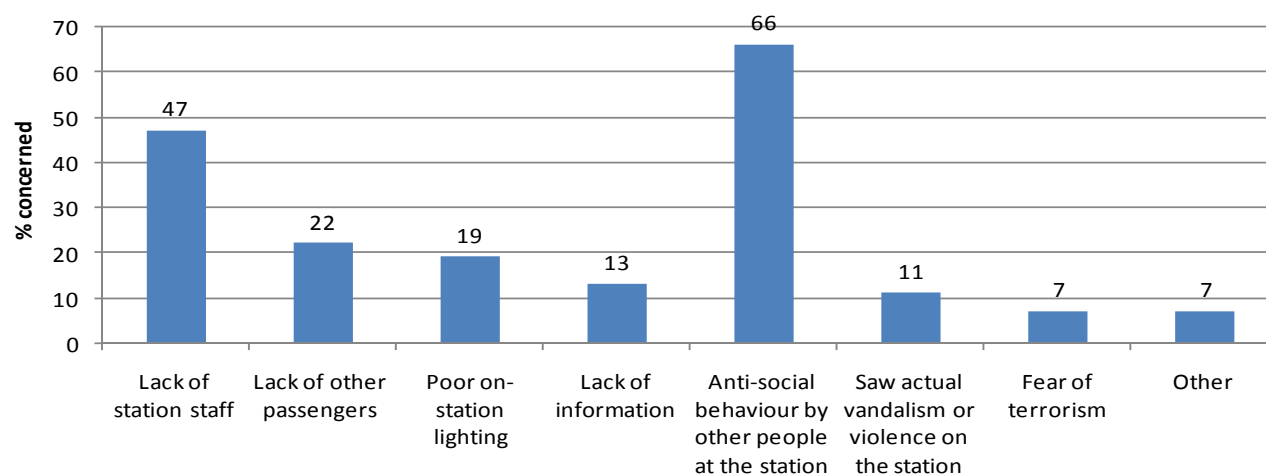
Another key area is to ensure that the various sources a valuable to passengers give the same advice and information – in effect that they are fed by a single, accurate source of information.

Your personal security whilst using the station

Passenger Focus’s work on national priorities for improvement highlighted issues such as value for money, punctuality and getting a seat but it also revealed the continuing importance of personal security. Out of 30 separate station, and train-based categories, security on trains and on stations were ranked tenth and eleventh highest priorities respectively²⁹.

Although the general trend in recent years has been one of steady improvement in passengers’ satisfaction with station security, the Spring 2009 results from the National Passenger Survey reveal that there is still considerable room for improvement (only 63% rated it as good/very good). Passengers have continued to express their concern at the anti-social behaviour of others and at the lack of visible staff across the rail network; particularly so when travelling after dark.

Cause for concern with personal security at the station (NPS Autumn 2008)



Passenger Focus research into passenger security found that when passengers compared journeys that they had made before and after 20:00, they were far less satisfied with personal security and the availability of staff when travelling after 20:00. Satisfaction with

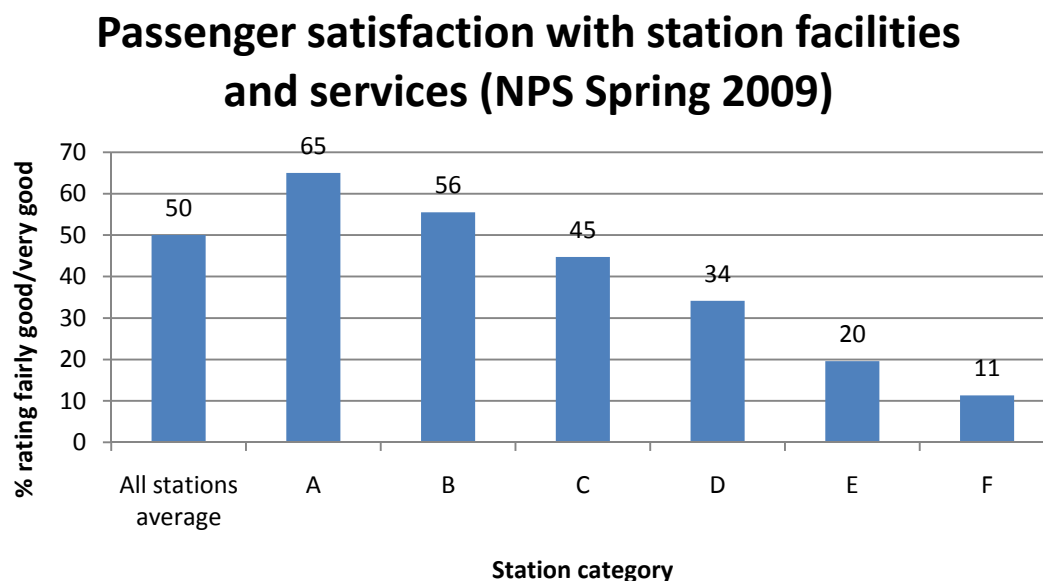
²⁹ Passenger priorities for improvements in rail services, Passenger Focus (July 2007)

personal security dropped 12 percentage points, from 61% to 49%, while satisfaction with the availability of staff fell from 48% to 37%.³⁰

These issues – and our recommendations - are covered in much more detail in Passenger Focus’s report on passenger perceptions with security³¹.

Facilities and services

Passengers today have a much wider experience of transport infrastructure than previous generations; they see what motorway services and airports can offer in the way of facilities, and not unreasonably want to enjoy some of the same things when they travel by rail. Needs and expectations however need to be realistic for each type of station; it would be impractical to suggest that a wayside halt station should have the same facilities as a major London termini. It is therefore important to ascertain what minimum level of facilities each type of station should make available to passengers. National Rail stations are currently divided into six categories, A-F³² and each provides different levels of facilities in terms of: information provision; security, waiting rooms and shelter, platforms, footbridges and subways, transport integration, customer facilities, disabled access, and general facilities.



A practical way of considering the different level of needs that passengers have at stations is to place them in a hierarchy. At the bottom are the basic facilities and physical requirements needed to enable people to find, and use, the station. Once these needs have been satisfied passengers turn their attention to “comfort” factors which make the station more pleasant to use. At the top, are the luxury elements, which make the station more attractive to passengers. In June 2005 the Rail Passengers Council sort to identify what facilities and

³⁰ Evening Rail Travel, Passenger Focus, (April 2008)

³¹ Passenger Perceptions with personal security. Passenger Focus. (2009)

³² Category A being major termini providing access to major centres and Category F being small unstaffed stations found in low-population or rural areas.

attributes fall into each level of the hierarchy and how these might vary according to the type of passenger, the journey being made and the way the station is being used. Through talking to passengers, in a series of focus groups, it was discovered that the basic needs of passengers are generally consistent:

Passengers need:

- to be able to find the station and their way around it
- to be able to get to the station and their platform
- to feel safe
- adequate light and shelter.

Once these basic needs have been met differences between passengers' requirements start to appear. The different needs become conditioned by factors such as time spent at the station, how busy it is, time of day and the passenger's familiarity with the journey. There are some facilities however that are a common need for all passengers – for example: real-time information.

Regardless of the above factors passenger expectations will also vary depending on the size of the station; with passengers being fairly pragmatic about what facilities the smaller, unstaffed stations, should offer. For instance, remote stations that merely act as a pick up point would require a simple shelter and seats, adequate lighting and real time information. Passengers agree that more comfortable waiting areas and retail facilities should be concentrated at busier stations, where people spend more time.

Our report in 2005 set out a matrix of needs:

| Basic features | Universal features | Comfort features | Attractor features | Special features |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Essential features at all stations | Facilities that are expected by customers at all stations | Facilities which make the stations easier to use or more comfortable and should ideally be at all stations | Facilities which help to attract people to busier stations | Facilities appropriate only to particular stations which help to make them special |
| Reasonably safe and secure | Ramps | Bus Stop | Travel info in the waiting area | Airport lounge style waiting area |
| Well lit | Car parking | Taxi ranks | Range of shops | TV with news |
| Basic shelter and seating | Signs to the trains | Cycle racks | Cash point | Office facilities |
| Basic signage | Real-time information screens | Signs to facilities | Baby changing facilities | Luggage trolleys |
| | Real-time PA announcements | Station maps (visual) | Escalators and travelators | |
| | Timetables | Station maps (tactile) | Lift | |
| | Departure boards | Newsagent | | |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| | Clocks | Kiosk | | |
| | CCTV | Cafe | | |
| | Staff | Vending machine | | |
| | Pay phone | Help point | | |
| | Ticket machines | Booking office | | |
| | | Heated waiting room | | |
| | | Disabled access toilets | | |
| | | Automatic doors | | |

What passengers want from stations, Rail Passengers Council (June 2005)

Those facilities/services highlighted in grey are more relevant to less regular leisure and business passengers, than commuters.

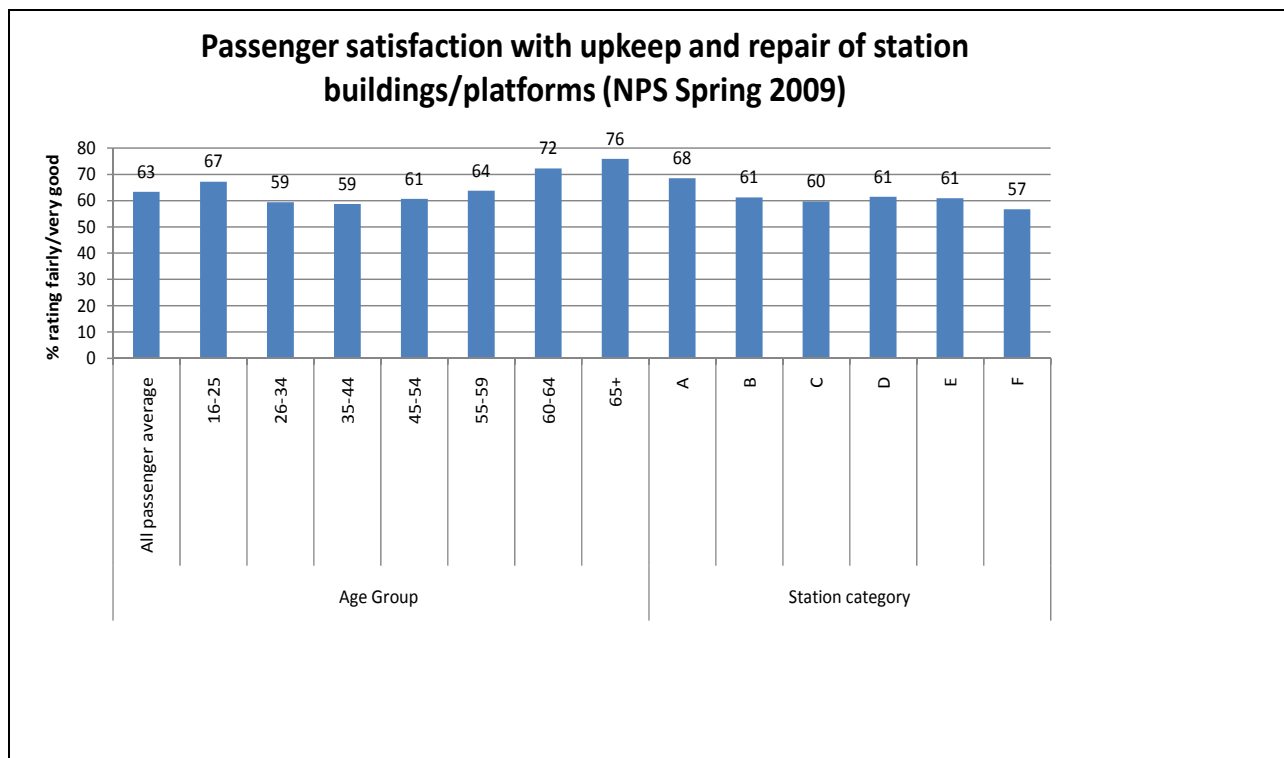
At many D and E category stations most passengers felt there were often a lack of basic facilities such as real time information, ticket machines and waiting rooms. They felt that providing these things would take the stations up to an acceptable level. With category B and C stations passengers want the environment to be more comfortable and to have plasma type information screen³³.

Upkeep and repair of station buildings

The upkeep and repair of station buildings scores relatively poorly in the National Passenger Survey with an overall rating of 63%. This places it eighth out of 12 station attributes in terms of satisfaction. Looking at the ratings provided by the different age groups, scores are reasonably consistent, though those over 65 years of age again have a higher level of satisfaction than others.

There is little variation in satisfaction between category B – E stations. However Category A and F stations are very different. As may be expected category A stations receive the highest score of 88% while only 57% of passengers at category F stations considered the upkeep and repair of the station buildings to be either fairly or very good.

³³ What passengers want from stations, Rail Passengers Council (June 2005)

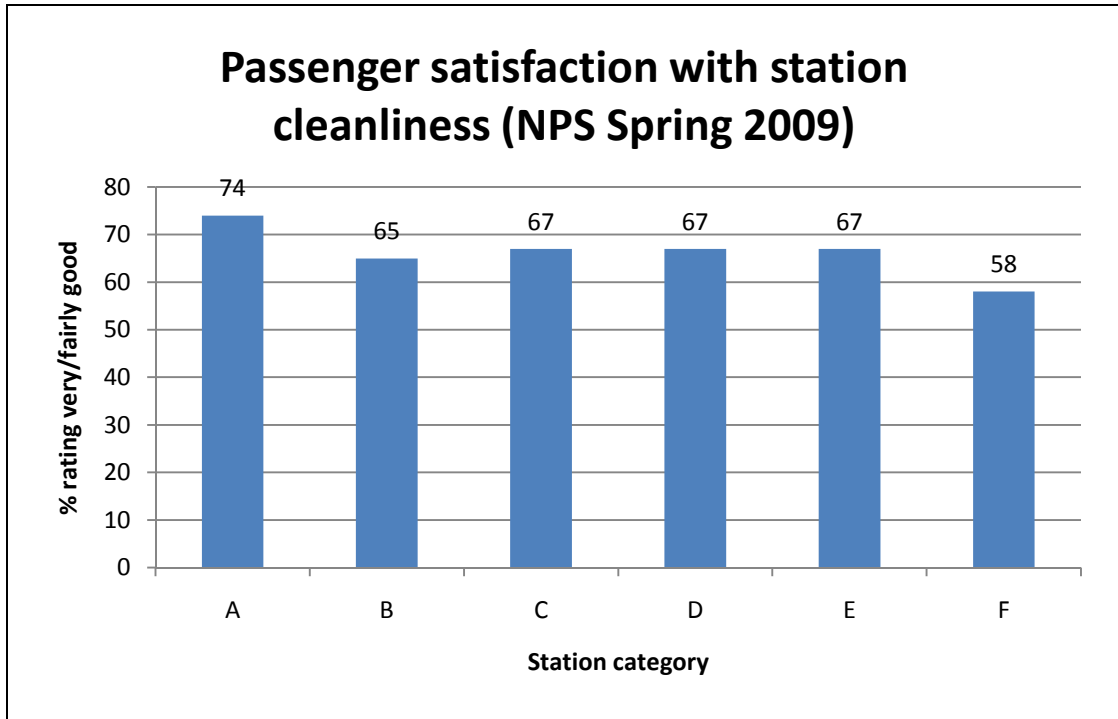


Cleanliness of the station

Litter is a persistent problem on the railways, inflicted on passengers by a minority of rail users and neighbours; and in many cases it contributes to the perception that the railway is a poorly managed environment. Train companies and Network Rail do not cause the problem but they have legal responsibilities for litter control and should do what they can to reasonably fulfil them.

Station platforms and other public areas are generally kept free of litter but other railway land, such as trackbeds, are all too often in an unsatisfactory state. This is made worse by the lack of rigorous procedures to ensure the line side is kept free of litter.

However satisfaction with the cleanliness of the station scored relatively well, with an overall score of 69%. Typically those over the age of 65 were most satisfied and there was little difference between the scores provided by men and women, or disabled and non-disabled passengers. Similar to other station attributes, however, station cleanliness received the lowest scores from commuters (63%) whilst leisure passengers were the most satisfied (75%). As with 'upkeep and repair of buildings' the cleanliness of category A and category F stations was rated very differently by passengers, with the latter only scoring 58%.



Passenger Focus recommends

On main line railways the responsibility for clearing litter is divided between the station operator, usually a train company, and the infrastructure operator, ordinarily Network Rail. In most cases the distinction is clear. Station buildings and platforms are the station operator’s responsibility, while operational areas such as the trackbed and trackside land are Network Rail’s. There are also some areas associated with the station, which are also Network Rail’s responsibility. These are usually fenced off from the public.

Passenger Focus is keen to see litter control provisions from the Environment Act take full effect. Much can be done by local authorities and individual citizens to encourage railway operators and land owners to comply with the letter and spirit of the legislation; not least through the use of litter abatement orders. The report ‘Good riddance to bad rubbish’, produced by The Rail Passengers Council and London Transport Users Committee, provides guidance on how to get reluctant operators to clear stations (and linesides) of rubbish within the terms of the Act. Partnerships between railway operators, local authorities, rail user groups and others, to raise awareness of the issue amongst law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities are also to be welcomed.

As with station facilities, Passenger Focus would also like service quality targets for cleanliness to be set within the franchises and a rigorous monitoring regime required of the successful bidders.

The need for change

One third of all national rail journeys start, or end, at one of the 15 largest railway stations in Great Britain, where provision for passengers is often excellent. However urban regeneration schemes and investment in new trains only serve to emphasise the comparative lack of progress at some 'intermediate stations'. A fact that is reflected in the lower satisfaction scores of category B-F stations.

When asked about what aspect of the railway they consider to be a priority for improvement passengers tend to place issues connected with the station fabric and environment fairly low down the list³⁴. However there is much room to improve passenger satisfaction with stations. By asking passengers what aspects of the station environment they consider important, a good indication of where Train operating companies (TOCs) should target their resources can be gained.

Facilities that are important to have at stations

When surveyed by Passenger Focus in 2007³⁵ passengers travelling on the Southern network gave a clear indication of what station facilities they consider to be important. Across eight Southern rail routes passengers stated that the most important facilities to have at their station were³⁶.

| Most important facilities to have? | Total % | Commuter % | Business % | Leisure % |
|--|---------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Accurate <u>visual</u> information as to when trains will arrive | 52 | 57 | 60 | 49 |
| Toilets | 47 | 43 | 49 | 51 |
| Staff at station | 44 | 45 | 44 | 44 |
| Accurate <u>announcements</u> about <u>delays</u> | 34 | 41 | 35 | 30 |
| Accurate <u>announcements</u> on <u>arrival/departure times</u> | 30 | 33 | 32 | 29 |

Passengers in Wales attach similar levels of importance to the same facilities. When asked which is the most important to have at the rail station you boarded the train, passengers selected the following five facilities as being most important³⁷:

³⁴ National Priorities for improvement, Passenger Focus, (June 2007)

³⁵ Route based research – identifying what passengers want from South Central (April 2008)

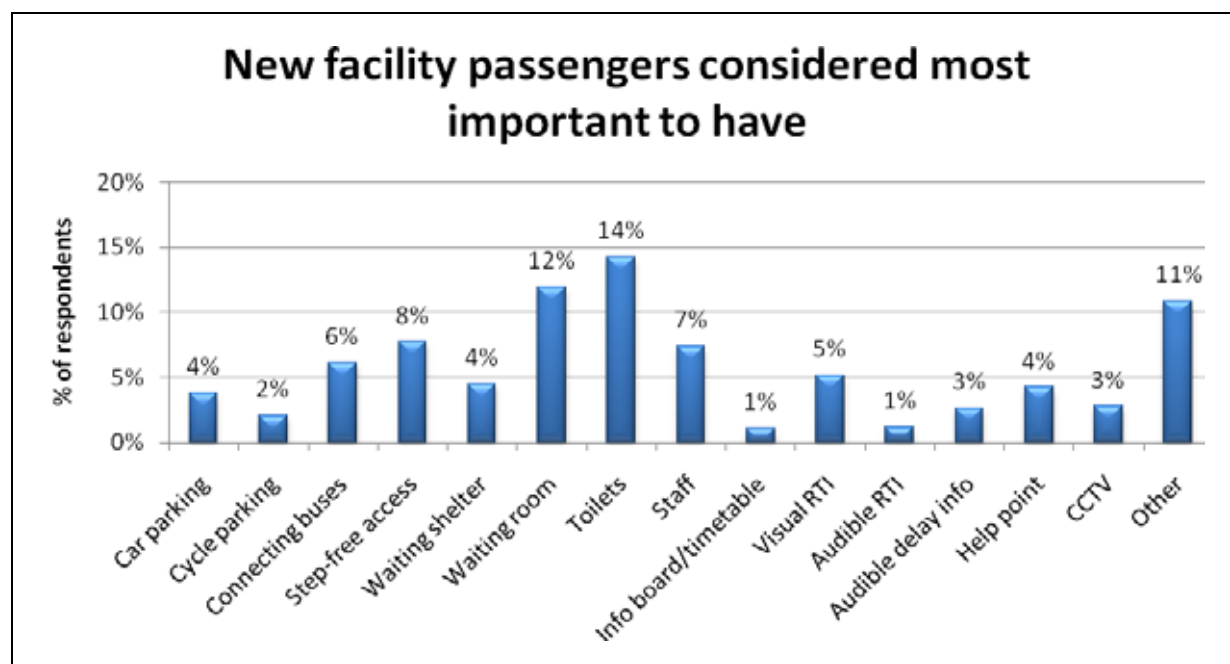
³⁶ NB. Respondents could choose up to four categories

³⁷ Research report Welsh routes, Passenger Focus (May 2009)

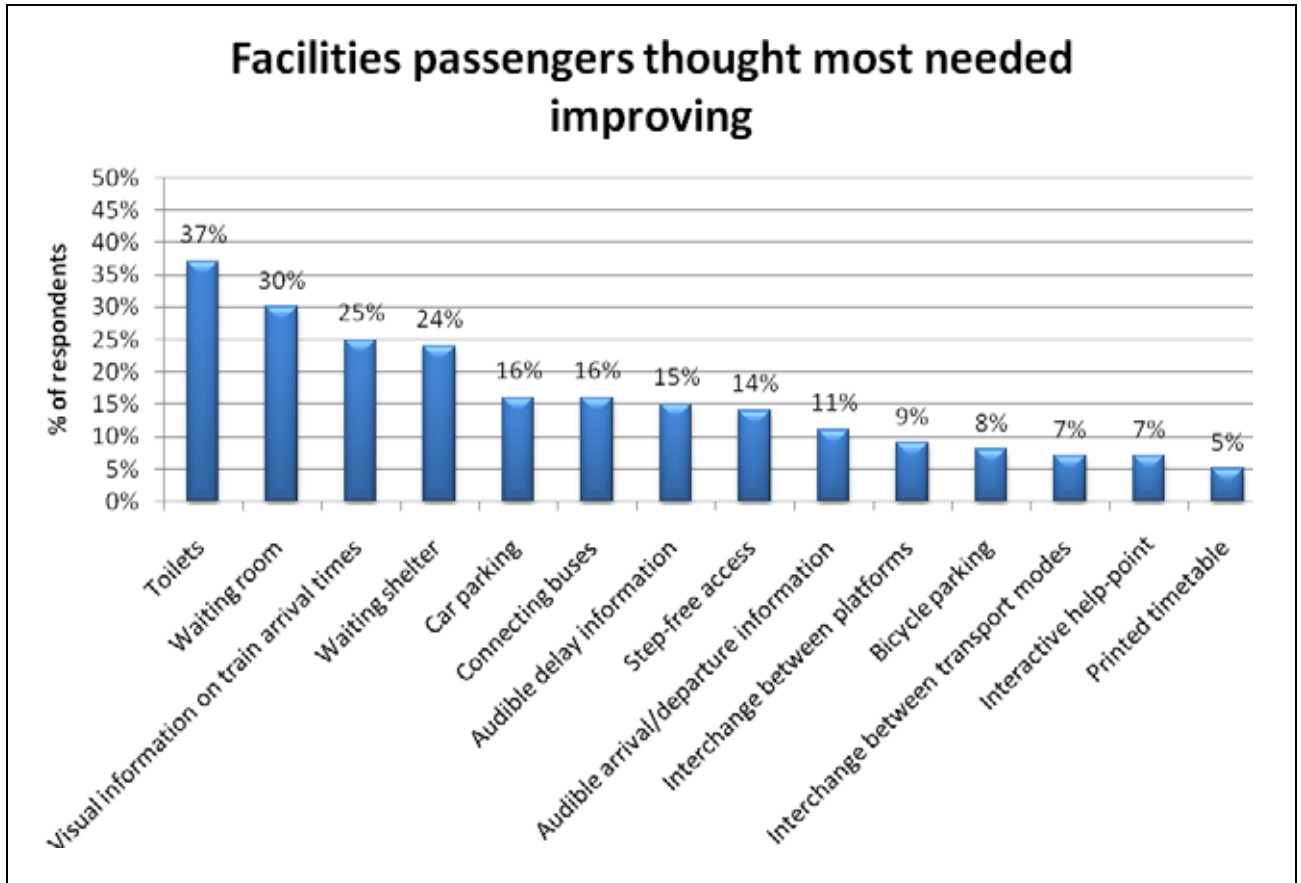
| Most important facilities to have? | Total % | Commuter % | Business % | Leisure % |
|--|---------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Accurate <u>visual</u> information as to when trains will arrive | 50 | 54 | 58 | 48 |
| Toilets | 45 | 39 | 47 | 48 |
| Accurate announcements on arrival and departure times | 37 | 37 | 35 | 38 |
| Staff at stations | 36 | 34 | 39 | 38 |
| Accurate <u>announcements</u> <u>about delays</u> | 36 | 42 | 27 | 35 |

In order to start improving the passenger experience at stations (with a focus on those stations in the top 500 in terms of footfall) the government has provided funding for the National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP). To help monitor whether NSIP funding makes a noticeable difference to the passenger environment at stations, Network Rail and Passenger Focus have undertaken an ongoing piece of research, to measure and benchmark the level of passenger satisfaction at the first 25 stations to undergo improvement works funded by the scheme.

As with the two research projects on passenger views of the Southern and Welsh rail networks, passengers at the NSIP stations attached a great deal of importance to visual real time information, staff, and toilets. The level of importance attached to these stations attributes was broadly consistent with the desire of passengers for these facilities to be installed where they don't already exist. When asked directly what new facilities they would like at their station passengers gave the following response:



Passengers at the 25 stations were also asked to rank the top three facilities most in need of improvement.



Passenger Focus recommends

Network Rail owns most of Britain's 2507 stations and is responsible for their structural repair and renewal. It also operates 17 of the largest stations. It leases the remaining stations to train operating companies (TOCs) who take responsibility for day-to-day maintenance and operations, such as selling tickets and providing travel information. TOCs have to comply with basic station requirements set out in their franchise agreements.

Passenger Focus expects stations to be welcoming and convenient, providing a suitable and pleasant gateway to the railway and to the town/place of destination. They have for too long been the Cinderella of the network, with vital refurbishment funding held back during lean years when almost all available funding was spent on maintaining train services. Whilst the gap has been narrowed there is still a significant difference between stations' fabric and facilities and passengers' expectations. Passenger Focus accepts that minima have to be specified to ensure that standards are met, but is keen to drive up the standard and level of facility provision. Passengers are becoming more sophisticated in their requirements and are used to the level of facility and comfort offered at Motorway service areas or at airports.

Minimum station standards are currently ill-defined and there is no consistent level of provision applied system-wide, so passengers do not know what they are likely to find at a particular category of station unless they make enquiries before they travel.

The original franchises let between 1996 and 1997 placed obligations on train operators to provide basic facilities such as: adequate lighting during train running hours after nightfall, a public address system, public information displays and/or a freephone link/help point to provide passenger information. Train operators in PTE areas tended to have additional obligations placed on them, which were written into the franchise agreements. These were all minimums and it was expected that train operators would go beyond the basic requirements. In many cases they did, but often only with regard to CCTV and passenger information systems rather than station buildings/fabric. More recent franchises, however, have shown an increased emphasis on station facilities but again these have tended to be based around CCTV, Help-points, passenger information systems and accessibility. There is also a raft of requirements specified under disability legislation/requirements.

It has been suggested that standards at stations are unlikely to be driven up in the absence of an enforcement regime and that the absence of a single organisation co-ordinating the development of stations and the facilities at them has not helped. The service quality incentive regime (SQUIRE) used in Scotland and the English Passenger Transport Executive areas, for example: the major conurbations outside London, has indicated a need for effective monitoring of station standards.³⁸ We are therefore keen to see more attention placed on stations through the franchising regime.

Passenger Focus would like to see franchise specifications made more prescriptive in respect of station standards and more use made of Service Quality Management Systems to drive up the quality of service offered. Station operators need to be incentivised through the terms of their franchises to deliver improved station standards, measured through the systematic tracking of users' perceptions. We support therefore the decision to make passenger satisfaction targets part of the franchise agreement for the South Central franchise - failure to meet them being backed up with financial penalties.

When a franchise comes up for renewal, bidders should be required to indicate what internal targets they intend to set, what the monitoring regime will be, how they will use internal benchmarks to drive up standards, and what they consider the acceptable standards to be to help achieve a significant improvement in passenger satisfaction.

³⁸ Maintaining and improving Britain's railways, National Audit Office (2005)

Conclusions

Although passenger satisfaction with stations has been gradually improving since 2004, it still varies greatly depending on the size of the station, with satisfaction lowest amongst those passengers that use the smallest stations. When looking at the specific station attributes that passengers consider most important, it is clear that real-time information on train arrival and departure times, including information on delays, tops the bill. This is followed closely by the provision of toilets and staff.

- While the **provision of information** scores highly in terms of satisfaction (78%), it is an attribute that passengers consider to be a relatively high priority for improvement (ranked seventh highest out of 30 station and train attributes). This particularly applies to the information that is provided on delays when disruption affects rail services.
- While the industry tends not see the question of **toilets** as a major area to be addressed, passengers consistently flag up the importance of providing them at stations. Furthermore, where they already exist, passengers tell us that the toilets are in need of improvement. At those stations where toilets are not already provided, passengers frequently tell us that they are the most important new facility that they would like to see installed. This is even more important when the trains calling at those stations have no toilets onboard.
- Although not a structural consideration, the **presence of staff** is greatly valued by passengers. Despite telling us that of all station attributes, they are most satisfied with the way station staff deal with their requests, the absence of staff from a large number of stations denies passengers the benefits they can bring. This is reflected in the low satisfaction score given for the availability of staff at stations (58%). As can be seen from the publication “passenger perceptions of personal security on the railway”³⁹ the role of staff goes beyond just providing advice about ticketing and information on train times. The provision of staff also helps provide reassurance to those passengers that are concerned about their personal security whilst travelling by rail.

When looking purely at passenger satisfaction alone, the two areas that would seemingly need most improvement are the facilities provided for car parking at the station and the facilities and services provided at the station.

- It is a fact that for some rail passengers, driving to the station remains the most viable and practical means of travel. The increasing length of a working day and the shift towards a ‘24-7’ week means that it is hard to provide a comprehensive rail-bus service that meets the needs of commuters and/or weekend travellers. Fears over personal security also inhibit the use of alternative transport or walking. For these reasons, **car parking** facilities at stations remain important.

It is the intention of Passenger Focus to cover the issues surrounding access to

³⁹ <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/news-and-publications/document-search/document.asp?dsid=2572>

stations in a future publication. However, it is likely that the key concerns about car parks, for those that wish to use them, relate to the availability of spaces and the price.

- Whilst there are no minimum standards set for each category of station, every passenger is reasonably entitled to expect that their basic needs will be met when using a station, and that some features such as customer information should be universal. Research indicates that passengers are fairly pragmatic about what level of facilities different sized stations should offer. The low satisfaction score for **facilities and services** (50%) would therefore suggest that in many instances stations are still failing to meet even the most basic expectations. This can only be resolved by providing the facilities where they are missing, which is not always practical because of the infrastructure available, or where they already exist introduce more rigorous cleaning and maintenance regimes. The latter can be ensured by building more service quality targets into the train operating company franchises when they come up for renewal.

What next?

Passenger Focus will continue to provide evidence on passenger perceptions of stations to the industry and seek to identify the most relevant opportunities to use this to influence change. As such Passenger Focus will use its stakeholder role in the re-franchising process to put forward aspirations for new rail franchises. These will include reference to the installation of new passenger facilities at stations, such as toilets (where relevant) and the need for tighter maintenance targets for the existing facilities. These can be set as part of the service quality management system that train operators are asked to adopt by the Department for Transport, and could also be used to address: station cleanliness, lighting, provision of seating, removal of graffiti and maintenance of lifts.

Passenger Focus will also continue to call upon the industry to ensure that the facilities at stations are appropriate to passenger's needs; at present it is often common practice for audits to simply catalogue what facilities are at stations, rather than ensuring they are fit for purpose.

Over the next 12 months Passenger Focus will aim to produce a similar publication on how Passengers access stations, and what the barriers are, which prevent passengers from considering alternative modes of access.



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Passenger Focus is the operating
name of the Rail Passengers Council

Annex C: RPC reference material

Station Inspections 2004/05
RPC Eastern England (April 2005)

Barriers to interchange
RPC North Western England & North Western
Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF)
(February 2005)

*No charge – An examination of station
car parks policy in West Midlands 2003/2004*
RPC Midlands (March 2004)

East Midlands station access guide 2004/05
RPC Midlands (October 2004)

*Driving up stations standards –
station inspection programme phase four*
RPC Midlands (October 2003)

Action stations – station survey
RPC North Western England (2002)

Integrated transport station surveys
RPC Eastern England (March 2002)

Brief encounters – station survey
RPC North Western England (2001)

Driving up station standards
RPC Eastern England (February 2000)

Where is this? – an audit of station name signage
London Transport Users Committee (March 2004)

*Whose station are you? – A survey of joint
Underground/National Rail stations in London*
London Transport Users Committee (August
2004)

*Passenger transport interchanges in Scotland –
a review of implementation of recommendations*
RPC Scotland (June 2003)

Isle of Wight transport interchange study
RPC Southern England & Wight Track
(March 2003)

*London for the continent – a survey of public
toilet provision at London's interchanges*
London Transport Users Committee
(January 2003)

Passenger transport interchanges in Scotland
RPC Scotland (April 2001)

*Easing the trip – meeting the
needs of disabled rail users*
London Transport Users Committee (March 2001)



What passengers want from stations

For further information about the work of the Rail Passengers Council and Committees please call **08453 022 022** or visit the RPC website at: www.railpassengers.org.uk

June 2005

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Stations are the gateway to the rail network for all passengers – and many passengers are dissatisfied with the current state of stations. Despite some of the high-profile major station makeovers in recent years and the modernisation of some other more humble locations, stations still have much catching up to do after decades of under-investment when almost all available funding went into keeping the trains running. We aspire to the highest standards for passengers at stations. In an ideal world, the interests of the rail industry would coincide with those of passengers. However, everything points to the fact that many station facilities often fall far short of what passengers can reasonably expect in the 21st century. For this reason the RPC network has always kept stations high on its list of priorities.

Rail passengers today have much wider experience of transport infrastructure than previous generations. They have seen what motorway services and airports can offer in the way of fixtures, fittings and facilities and, not unreasonably, want to enjoy many of the same when they travel by rail. Needs and expectations must be ranged to suit each particular type of station. Clearly it is not possible to provide every creature comfort at every wayside halt, but it is vital to examine the minimum facilities which each type of station should have and ensure that they are provided and properly maintained.

The industry has its views on what those facilities should be. To compare how these correspond with users' needs, the RPC went straight to passengers to seek out their aspirations, in line with one of our long-term goals of understanding the needs



and representing the views of passengers. The first-hand passenger feedback gleaned from this not only endorses and confirms the views which RPC has long held but also provides us with empirical evidence to strengthen our hand when discussing station matters with operators.

We shall also be using these results to identify further possible areas of research to ensure that passenger concerns about all aspects of stations – safety and security; car parking; lighting; seating and waiting accommodation; toilets; booking offices; information systems; retail outlets; cash machines; telephones and so on – are fully addressed.



Stewart Francis
Chairman of the Rail Passengers Council

Against a background of increasing emphasis on service provision, current franchise agreements between train operating companies (TOCs) and the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) do not specify the facilities which should be provided at stations.

The Rail Passengers Council (RPC) would like to be in a position to advise on passenger perceptions of current provisions and their priorities for the future.

Steer Davies Gleave was therefore commissioned to undertake research with the key objectives of:

- > identifying passengers' current perceptions of station facilities
- > assigning priorities to facilities/features at stations within each of the specified categories
- > identifying the additional needs of disabled passengers.

The study involved two elements: focus groups with passengers, and interviews with disabled passengers. The methodology of the research can be found in Annex A.

The RPC wants the recommended improvements highlighted in this report to be implemented at stations.

1.1 Station categories

National Rail stations are currently allocated to one of the six following categories:

- > A: National hub
- > B: Regional hub
- > C: Important feeder
- > D: Medium-sized staffed
- > E: Small staffed
- > F: Small unstaffed.

Different levels of facilities are then provided according to station size in terms of:

- > information provision
- > security
- > waiting rooms and shelters
- > platforms
- > footbridges and subways
- > transport integration
- > customer facilities
- > disabled access
- > general facilities.

Category A: National Hub Number = 27

e.g. London Euston, Newcastle and Leeds
Category A stations are major termini providing access to major centres and connecting major cities across the UK. They contain, and are perceived to provide, the highest number of facilities of all station types. Some category A stations have been developed into 'flagship' stations, refurbished to serve the increasing demand and needs of passengers. A good example of this is the refurbishment of Manchester Piccadilly station to serve the needs of visitors to the Commonwealth Games (2002), as well as to cope with the demands of existing and potential business and leisure passengers.

The RPC, sees category A stations as the gold standard with a proven level of facilities.

Category B: Regional hub Number = 66

e.g. Cambridge, Oxford and Dundee
Category B stations or regional hub stations service important cities, towns or business centres.

Category C: Important feeder Number = 255

e.g. Blackpool North, Hereford and Luton
Category C stations provide important

regional connections as well as having the capacity and facilities to serve large numbers of passengers.

Category D: Medium-sized staffed

Number = 312

e.g. Frome, Aylesbury and Aberystwyth

These stations serve local populations, acting as pick-up points and commuter stations.

Category E: Small staffed

Number = 653

e.g. Iver, Treherbert and Sandy

These serve areas with smaller populations than C and D stations, and mainly act as pick-up points.

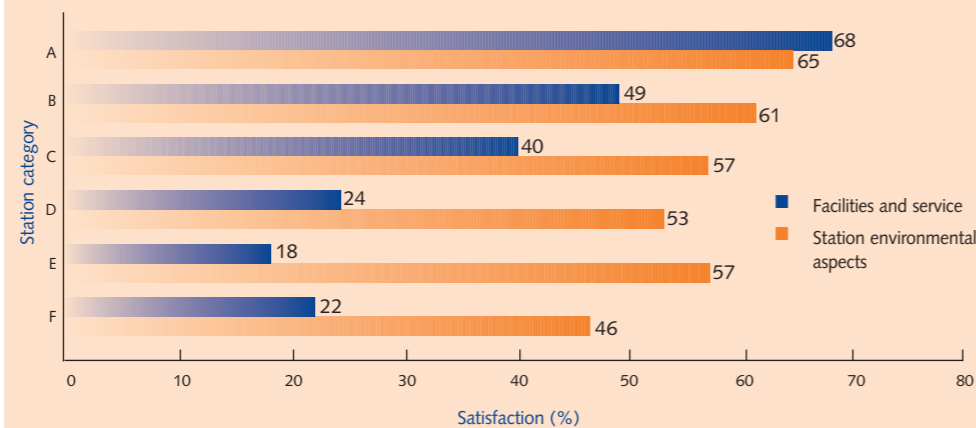
Category F: Small unstaffed

(Small unstaffed). Number = 1180

e.g. Matlock, Bridge of Allan and Hawarden

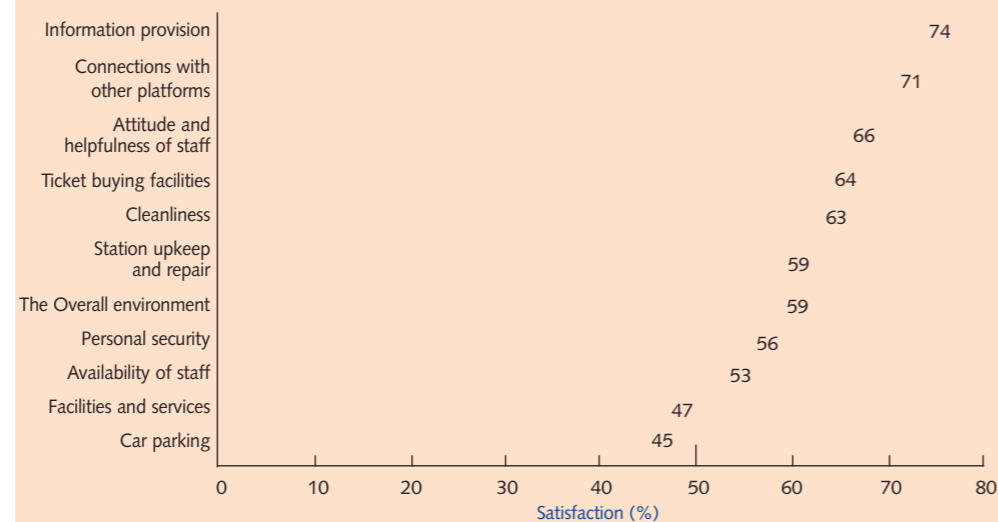
Small unstaffed stations are mainly found in

1 Satisfaction level with station facilities and environment



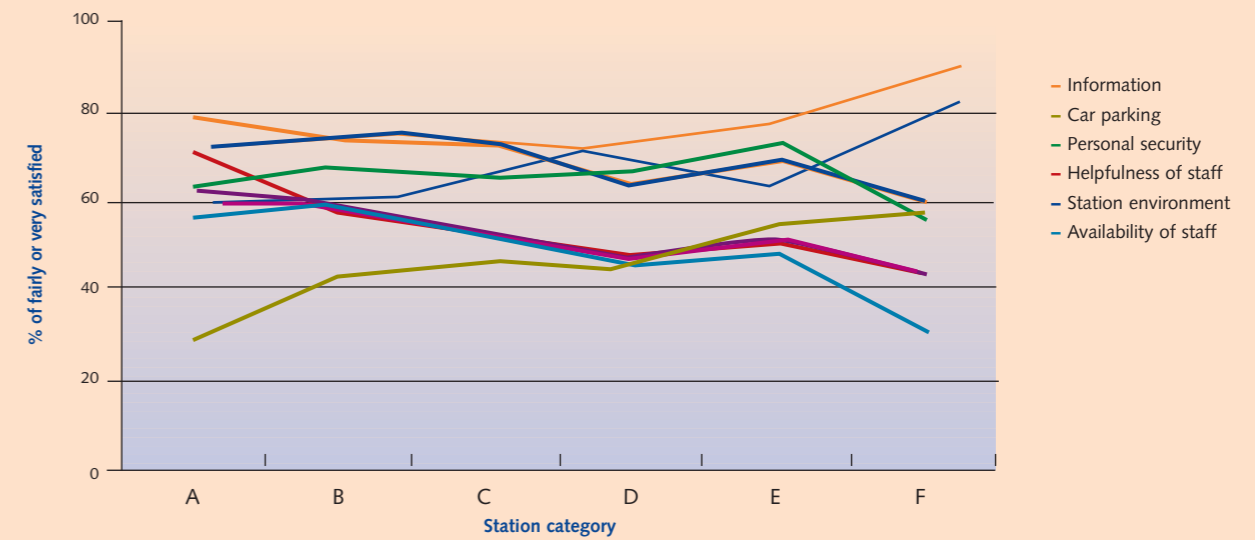
The chart shows those passengers very or fairly satisfied with a) the facilities and services at stations and b) average of environmental attributes including station upkeep and repair, friendliness of staff, personal security, cleanliness, station environment and availability of staff. Source: National Passenger Survey (waves 1-11 combined), SRA (2005)

2 Average satisfaction with station facilities (all stations)



Source: National Passenger Survey (waves 1-11 combined), SRA (2005)

3 Satisfaction levels



Source: National Passenger Survey (waves 1-11 combined), SRA (2005)

low-population or rural areas. For this reason services may be infrequent.

1.2 Satisfaction with stations

Passenger satisfaction with stations (as demonstrated by the National Passenger Survey and highlighted in Table 1) varies depending on the category of station and the type of attribute.

There is a high level of satisfaction with category A stations but satisfaction with facilities is lower for smaller stations, with category D, E and F stations having very low satisfaction levels for facilities and services.

The pattern for environmental attributes, including staff, security and cleanliness, is somewhat different, with some smaller stations performing well.

1.3 Satisfaction with individual aspects of stations

The overall satisfaction with different station facilities and attributes is shown in Table 2, with highest

satisfaction for information provision. The lowest satisfaction levels were with availability of staff and car parking.

In view of the current lack of satisfaction with B-F stations, the National Audit Office (NAO) carried out a review of rail stations which is due to be published in Summer 2005.

1.4 Satisfaction with selected aspects of stations

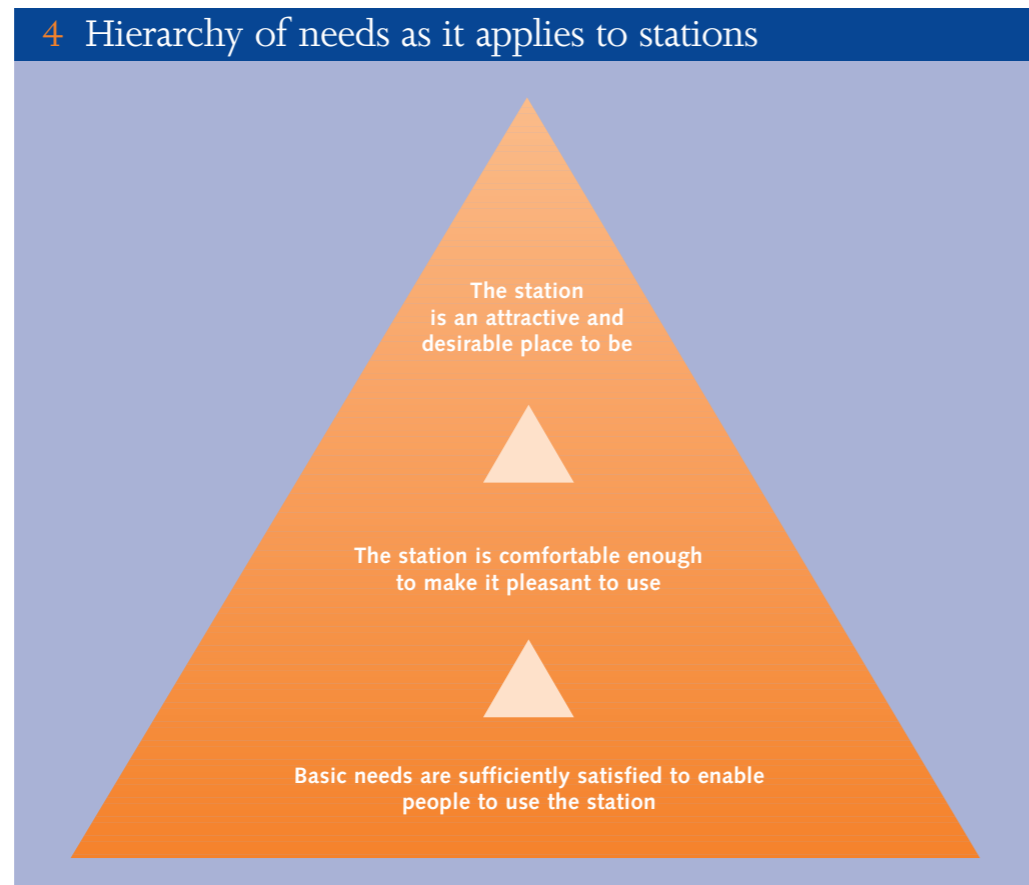
Satisfaction with a number of individual aspects of stations is compared by station category in Table 3.

Personal security and station environment follow very similar patterns and reflect the general trend of lower satisfaction ratings for smaller stations.

The two attributes which do not quite follow this pattern are car parking (which is best at category E and F stations), and helpfulness of staff, which is slightly higher for category E stations.

2 Summary and recommendations

4 Hierarchy of needs as it applies to stations



1.5 Hierarchy of needs

A useful way of considering the needs of station users is in terms of a hierarchy, along the lines of Maslow's well known "hierarchy of needs" (see Table 4). At the bottom of the hierarchy are the basic facilities and physical requirements needed to enable people to actually find, and use, the station.

Once these have been satisfied, passengers' attention is turned to what might be termed "comfort" factors which make the station more pleasant to use.

At the top of the hierarchy are the cosmetic or luxury elements which make the station more attractive to people.

One aim of this research was to identify what facilities and attributes fall into each level of the hierarchy, and how these might vary according to the type of passenger, the journey being made, and the way the station is being used. The implication is that anything at the base level is an essential which must apply to all stations. The comfort factors, on the other hand, could vary by station category.

2.1 Overview of needs

The basic needs of passengers do not differ significantly:

- > passengers need to be able to find the station and find their way around the station
- > they need to be able to get to the station and their platform
- > they need to feel safe
- > they need adequate light and shelter.

Not all stations appear to be meeting even these most basic of needs, with examples of poor signage perhaps most common.

Differences between passengers' requirements do start to appear once the basic needs have been met, with needs conditioned by factors such as the time at which the station is being used, how busy it is, whether it is after dark, how long the passenger is at the station, and how familiar they are with their journey. Even so, a good deal of common ground exists with, for example, the need for real-time information is pretty well universal, as compared with the which need for retail facilities, which do vary.

There are clear differences in the expectations for smaller versus larger stations, and a good deal of pragmatism about what can be expected at category F stations in particular. The purpose of some remote stations is similar to that of bus stops, in that they act as pick-up points. These just need basic facilities such as a simple shelter and seats, adequate lighting and real-time information. It is generally agreed that more comfortable waiting areas and retail facilities should be concentrated at busier stations in which people spend more time.

The D and E stations examined in this study are seen as commuter stations, and ones where there is a lack of basic facilities such as ticket machines, real-time information and waiting



rooms. Providing these were the focus of the discussions.

At the larger, category B and C stations, people start to think about making their environment more comfortable with the introduction of aspirational facilities such as plasma screens, wireless internet access and healthy food options. Flagship stations such as Manchester Piccadilly are seen as good role models for this.

The more specific priorities for stations are shown on page 10. The first categorises passenger needs based on a hierarchy, also highlighting some key differences between commuters (that is, passengers who are familiar with their journey, travel at busy times, and spend little time at the station unless there is disruption) and other passengers (characterised by less familiarity, travelling in the off-peak, and probably spending more time on the station). This is then followed by a summary of the recommended facilities provided at each station category, bearing in mind some of the practical limitations which inevitably exist.

| 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | Basic features | Universal features | Comfort features | Attractor features | Special features |
| | Essential features of all stations | Facilities which are expected by customers at all stations | Facilities which make the station easier or more comfortable and should ideally be at all stations | Facilities which help to attract people to busier stations | Facilities appropriate only to particular stations which help to make them special |
| | Reasonably safe and secure | Ramps | Bus stop | Travel info in the waiting area* | Airport lounge style waiting area |
| | Well lit | Car parking | Taxi ranks | Range of shops* | TV with news |
| | Basic shelter and seating | Signs to the trains | Cycle racks | Cash point | Office facilities |
| | Basic signage | Real-time information screens | Signs to facilities* | Baby changing facilities* | Luggage trolleys* |
| | | Real-time PA announcements | Station maps (visual)* | Escalators and travelators* | |
| | | Timetables | Station maps (tactile)* | Lift* | |
| | | Departure boards | Newsagent | | |
| | | Clocks | Kiosk | | |
| | | CCTV | Café* | | |
| | | Staff | Vending machine | | |
| | | Pay phone | Help point | | |
| | | Ticket machines | Booking office | | |
| | | | Heated waiting room | | |
| | | | Disabled access toilets* | | |
| | | | Automatic doors* | | |



2.2 Passenger priorities

Features and facilities of stations are categorised in Table 5, based on overall passenger needs and expectations. All the facilities in levels one (“basic features”) and two (“universal features”) apply to all stations and passenger types.

Facilities marked with an asterix* are more relevant for less regular leisure or business passengers than daily commuters.

2.3 Additional needs of disabled passengers

Contrary to perceptions about the inaccessibility of the rail network it is clear that many disabled people currently use and enjoy travelling by rail. Although fundamental barriers exist for some passengers in wheelchairs such as

footbridges and steps into the station, these are currently overcome in various ways, from taking an alternative mode to opposite platforms at smaller stations to being escorted over the track by station staff, or using an alternative station. The only problem encountered was with the booking system of making sure staff are available at stations to help people onto and off trains.

For people with visual impairments and non-wheelchair users it was found that small changes to improve accessibility such as defining steps more clearly, introducing handrails on staircases, suitable flooring, ramps and automatic doors, could greatly improve the experience for most passengers. And not just for people with disabilities, but for older people, people with heavy shopping and people with buggies and small children.

Information provision was found to be fairly inadequate at smaller stations both for people with and without disabilities, making them all dependent on station staff to a certain extent. The introduction of real-time information would benefit all users. When real-time information is not provided, it is clear that visually impaired people rely heavily on platform announcements.

Station staff are extremely important to passengers to provide information and help. There is also the psychological benefit of an increased sense of security at night when stations are staffed. In this respect all thought that stations should be staffed or staffed for longer.

All of our disabled respondents agreed that increasing the level of provision at larger stations (A-C) including extra vigilant staff, tactile maps and accessible toilets, would enable them to travel more widely, visiting unfamiliar stations with more confidence.



2.4 Station categories

Currently the station categorisations are used purely within the industry, but there could be a wider role for them in helping to provide passengers with a better idea of what to expect at a station they have never visited before. If network maps and timetables identified station categories, and there was consistent application of the standards, then passengers would know whether there was a car park, bus stop, newsagent or a café at the station and could prepare accordingly.

For the full potential of this application to be realised a full review of categorisations is necessary.

2.5 Recommended standards by station category

| 6 Station access | B | C | D | E | F |
|------------------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Signs to the station | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Ramps | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Disabled access to platforms | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Car parking | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible |
| Bus stop | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible |
| Taxi ranks | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Cycle racks | Yes | If possible | If possible | If possible | If possible |
| Automatic doors | Yes | Yes | If possible | No | No |
| Escalators and travelators | Yes | Yes | If possible | No | No |
| Lift | Yes | If possible | No | No | No |
| Non-slip flooring | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |

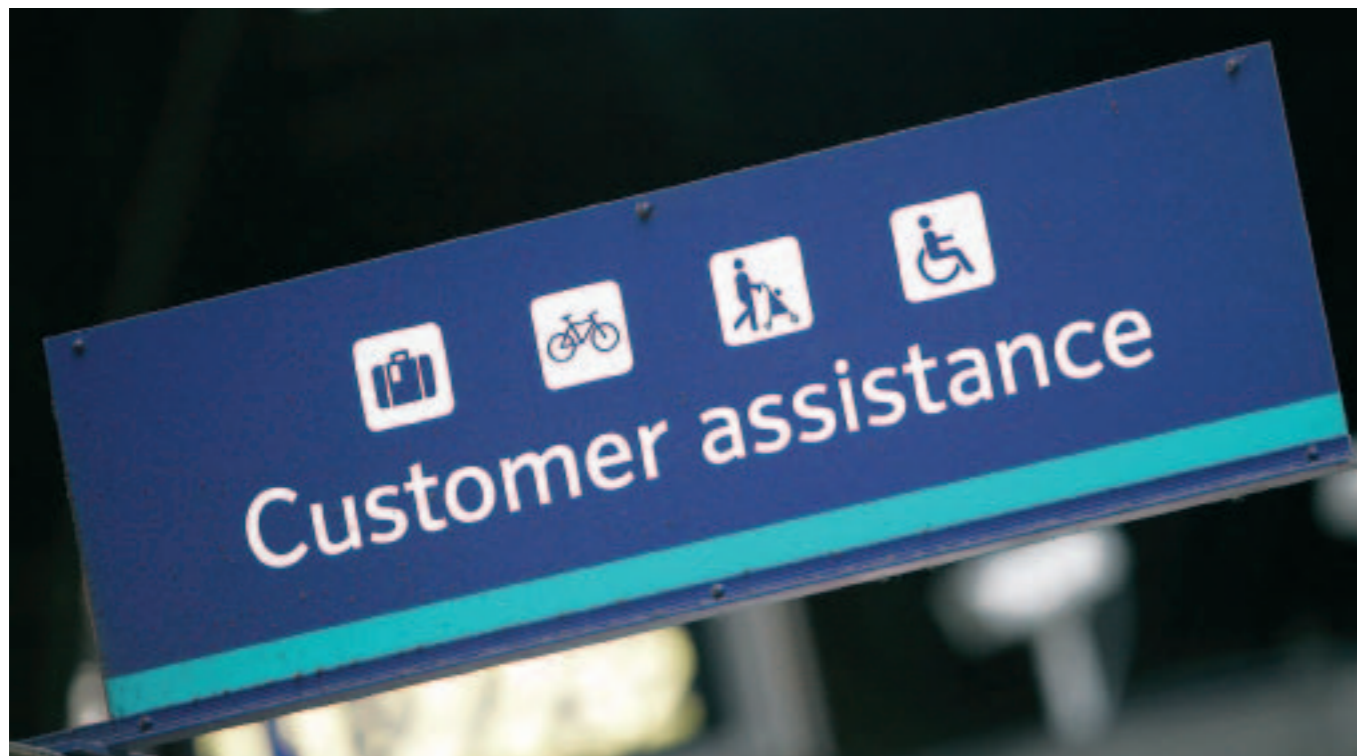
| Information | B | C | D | E | F |
|--|-----|-------------|-----|-----|-------------|
| Signs to the trains | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Real-time information screens | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Real-time PA announcements | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Timetables | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Departure boards | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Signs to facilities | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Clocks | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Station maps (visual) | Yes | If possible | No | No | No |
| Station maps (tactile) | Yes | If possible | No | No | No |
| Travel information in the waiting area | Yes | If possible | No | No | No |

| 7 Retail Facilities | B | C | D | E | F |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Newsagent | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible |
| Café | Yes | Yes | No | No | No |
| Kiosk | Yes | Yes | If possible | No | No |
| Vending machine | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible | No |
| Range of shops | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible | No |
| Cash point | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible | No |

| Security features | B | C | D | E | F |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Adequate lighting | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| CCTV | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Station staffed | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible |
| Pay phone | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Help point | If possible | If possible | If possible | If possible | If possible |

| Ticketing | B | C | D | E | F |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-------------|-----|
| Ticket machines | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Booking office | Yes | Yes | Yes | If possible | No |

| Waiting facilities | B | C | D | E | F |
|---|-----|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----|
| Sheltered waiting/seating | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Waiting room | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Heated waiting room | Yes | Yes | If possible | If possible | No |
| Toilets | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Disabled access toilets | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Baby changing facilities | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Comfortable (airport lounge style) waiting area | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| TV with news | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Office facilities | Yes | No | No | No | No |
| Luggage trolleys | Yes | If possible | No | No | No |



3 Results: Station access

Most of the focus group participants accessed their starting station on foot, or by their own car. Only a small proportion of participants accessed the station by bus, or by other modes (taxi, cycle or being dropped off). This can be illustrated with responses to the RPC questionnaire shown in table 8.

During the focus group discussions it was revealed that the apparently high car/low bus mode to station was partly due to the fact that some (especially E and F) stations were not served by bus routes, and if they were, buses were not frequent enough to coincide with train departures.

3.1 Station access: modes

Car parks

Car parks at medium and small (D, E and F) stations were considered to be a benefit, particularly amongst frequent users such as commuters and business users. The main issues amongst car users were lack of car park capacity; car crime and personal security in car parks, especially at night.

“Hazel Grove’s got parking but it’s not secure parking. There are loads of cars broken into on that car park.” *Business user, Manchester*

“The only thing about Wilmslow is it’s got a bit of a dodgy passage from the (overflow) car park, which



is behind a sort of office block that you have to walk through to actually get onto the platform.” *Business user, Manchester*

Older respondents in Cardiff were frustrated by the frequent inaccessibility of the Queen Street station car park because of its use by non-rail using shoppers. A priority for these users was the provision of parking exclusively for the use of rail travellers.

“The car park belongs to the train station but it’s open to the general public. It’s the cheapest place to park so everybody parks there and if you’re using the facilities you very often can’t park your car there and you’ve got to use one of the more expensive car parks quite a long way away.” *Older user, Cardiff*

In contrast to Cardiff some commuters in the South East felt that their local station car park was being under-utilised because of prohibitive car parking charges and advocated a package deal with their season ticket.

“What you need is something with appropriate rates, a commuters’ car park with reasonable rates for the whole day, done with your season ticket, maybe offer something off the season ticket – Hampton Court car park is almost empty.” *Commuter, Kingston*

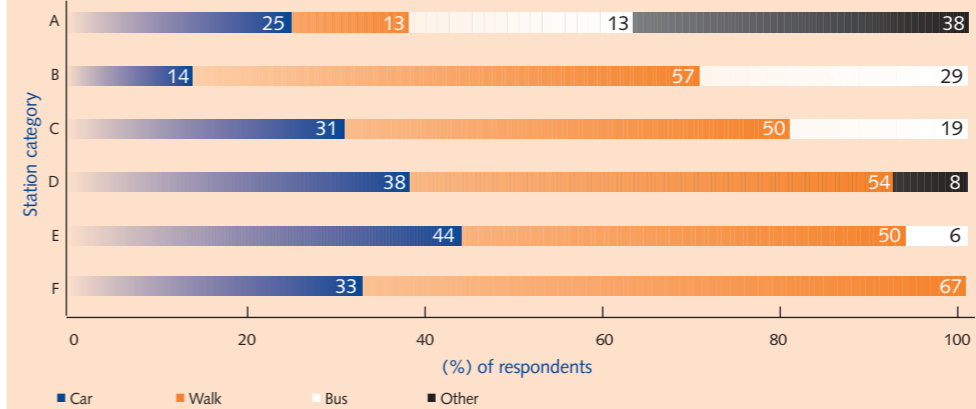
Public transport

In general, participants believed that access to larger (B and C) stations was very good, with convenient links to other transport including buses, taxis and other trains.

The main issues particularly among non-car users regarding access to smaller (E and F) stations were a lack of a regular bus service or bus stop serving stations and a lack of alternative bus routes to the rail service.

“They should also have the buses run in time with trains, when trains are going to leave. Because you often find that you get to a station and there’s

8 How passengers normally reach the station



Source: RPC focus group stations questionnaire 2005

not a bus to take you to wherever you’re going, at the smaller places.” *Local leisure user, Scotland*

“My bus arrives in the train station at ten to nine, and my train doesn’t leave until twenty five to ten, so I’m sat there for 45 minutes.” *Local leisure user, Scotland*

“If they’re going to cancel trains, they should have a bus for every station, so everybody can get into work.” *Local leisure user, Scotland*

Cycle racks

There was a mixed reaction to the installation of cycle racks at stations. While some participants (particularly commuters) believe that they are an important facility to have, lack of adequate security or responsibility of station staff to look after them stops people from leaving their bikes at stations. Even the installation of CCTV and manned stations would not convince participants to leave their bikes at smaller stations. The only place where it was felt they could be left securely was at larger stations which are staffed and supervised by police, e.g. Glasgow Queen Street station.

The fear that property is not safe at stations is similar in some ways to the fear of car crime at stations.

In some cases the installation of cycle racks was considered to be an actual incentive to thieves.

“I wouldn’t leave my bike there.” *Young person, Scotland*

“I don’t know anyone that would leave their bike at a station.” *Business user, NW*

“If they [thieves] take it then it’s up to you, So there’s no way I can trust leaving my bike with them if they say well, ‘if it gets snatched it’s not really our problem it’s your belongings’, so, they’ve contradicted themselves, trying to encourage people to leave bikes there.” *Young person, Scotland*

“When I don’t get the train I cycle, but I still don’t really use the train when I’m cycling, but some of my friends do. And they said there’s no cycle racks or there’s only a few, probably about three or four and that’s about it. They leave bikes there, but sometimes there’s nowhere to leave them.” *Commuter, NW*

“I think they’re vital for a sufficient number of people. They might encourage more people to cycle.” *Commuter, SE*

3.2 Station access: mobility-impaired

Rail users in each of the groups expressed concern at the relatively high proportion of particularly smaller (E and F) stations which have limited access to mobility-impaired passengers or wheelchair users because of the lack of ramps or lifts. For most people this was seen as a major priority which should be addressed before any of the other, more 'aspirational' facilities are considered.

"In this day and age there should be access to all stations. The buses all have to have lowered access and the shops have to have ramps."

Older user, Cardiff

Disabled respondents were asked if they had any particular difficulty accessing the stations they use most often and responses are summarised under the main issues below.

Footbridges

Footbridges cause the most serious obstacle to passengers who are wheelchair users: they make access difficult for people with visual impairments, restricted mobility and cognitive impairments as well as older people and people with buggies.

For people with more serious mobility difficulties, alternative access to platforms without crossing footbridges was undertaken using a variety of different methods including:

- > by road to the opposite platform
- > across the railway tracks accompanied by station staff
- > avoiding the station altogether and using an alternative means of transport to destination e.g. taxi, or a larger station with more facilities such as lifts.

"I work at a school for special needs, and sometimes we take the kids and we'll go from

Johnstone to Ayr, and that's our day out. So we have to go to Johnstone station and buy the ticket, but we can't take these kids over the bridge because some of them are in chairs and some of them won't take it, it's just too much, so you have to put everybody back on the bus and then drive all the way round to the other side to get the Ayr train." *Local leisure user, Scotland*

For the visually impaired, including partially sighted people, uneven flooring, lack of stair definition and handrails on staircases make access to platforms difficult.

"My visual impairment means that I can't judge how high things are and can't normally see where stairs start and end. At Leicester station the steps, coloured silver grey with black runners appear as 'one big black blob'."

Partially sighted respondent

Footbridges are especially a problem for passengers with more than one disability. Most people who are visually impaired would prefer to use a lift to a footbridge. However lifts are not always easy to find in the station or be operated without help.

"There is a lift at Arbroath station to the main road to exit the station, however passengers must be accompanied by station staff to use it and although the staff are helpful, I don't feel that I can ask because staff are always busy selling tickets. I would use a lift if I were able to operate it myself."

Visually impaired respondent

"I always book ahead to ensure there is someone available to take me across the tracks. I would not expect help to be available if I just 'turned up' but booking usually guarantees everything runs smoothly."

Wheelchair user

Automatic doors

Doors that have to be manually opened are

another obstacle to the visually impaired as it is not immediately obvious whether to push or pull them open, or whether one side of the door is locked.

Automatic doors are viewed as desirable for larger (B and C) stations in several of the groups, because of their perceived usefulness to disabled people especially when carrying luggage.

"Wide entrances/exits into the station with automatic doors are a big benefit to people with disabilities." *Partially sighted and restricted mobility respondent*

Floor surfaces

A high proportion of disabled respondents found floor surfaces in stations unsuitable and "not good for walking". Even non-slip flooring is a large benefit for people with all types of disabilities because it makes them feel more secure underfoot. Ramps are also useful.

3.3 Passengers with disabilities

The priorities of passengers with disabilities are highlighted in Table 9. All of the disabled respondents were reliant on station staff to some degree. People with severe mobility impairments alert the station staff before they arrive at the station or on upon arrival at the station they are travelling from so that they can get the necessary help they require to get

on and off the train. People with visual impairments are often reliant on staff for information.

"The station staff are very helpful when they are on hand to ask. For this reason, I would like the stations to be staffed for longer."

Disabled passenger

3.4 Security

Security both in and outside the station is a high priority for passengers with fear of or direct experience of car crime and a low perception of personal security in and around station entrances and exits, especially so at night. Commuters and business passengers feel that some smaller stations are "lonely places" and that leaving them at night is "dangerous". Other participants do not use train services at all at night because this is considered "too risky".

The main concerns with travelling at night can be summed up as:

- > no staff or supervision at the station when returning home late
- > ticket office is closed
- > gangs of youths hanging around the station or in waiting rooms drinking
- > lack of people
- > lack of adequate lighting at station and in car parks
- > bushes and foliage along walkways/exits.

9 Priorities for stations (all sizes)

| | Visual impairment | Restricted mobility* | Wheelchair user | Cognitive impairment |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Trained staff assistance | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL |
| Ramps | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE |
| Lifts | NICE TO HAVE | VITAL | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE |
| White stripes on stairs, escalators and travelators | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE | N/A | VITAL |
| Handrails on stairs | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE |
| Automatic doors | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE |
| An even, non-slip floor surface | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL |

* Includes older people, people with young children and people with heavy baggage who are seen to be struggling

4 Results: Buying a ticket



Booking offices and ticket machines

Participants said that some category D stations had part-time ticket offices which were open for a limited time as well as ticket machines. It was felt that ticket machines were only useful on their own if they worked and if they gave change. Most E and F stations were perceived to have no facilities for buying tickets including no booking office, ticket barrier or ticket machine. Some E stations (e.g. Guide Bridge, Cardonald) are staffed during peak hours and it is possible to buy a ticket (typical hours are 8.00-15.00 Mon-Sat); however it is not possible to buy a ticket out of office hours because there is no ticket machine.

A focus group representing Scotland considered it was normal practice to buy a ticket from a conductor on board a train, whereas groups held in other parts of the UK did not think this would be possible. Although participants wanted to have the option of buying a ticket on the train, they believed that not being 'forced' to buy a ticket at the start of a journey encouraged people to fare dodge. Participants felt 'cheated' when they heard people saying



they had not bought a ticket and felt that the train operators were losing revenue because of this.

Some participants felt that buying a ticket at their destination was sometimes intimidating. Others saw them as a further waste of precious commuter time. Cash machines which do not charge for withdrawals, alongside ticket machines, were also thought to be a good idea.

"The Kingston ticket machine doesn't take credit cards or any notes that are more than a day old...." *Evening user, South East*

"Berrylands doesn't even have a ticket machine – just a permission to travel thing. That's really annoying because when you get to Waterloo and you're late you have to queue for a ticket." *Commuter, South East*

"You can't pay at the actual bit where you're supposed to because there's no one there. There's sometimes no conductor, so you're not paying at all, which is good!" *Local leisure user, Scotland*

5 Results: Waiting for the train

Results from the RPC focus group questionnaires show that participants spend on average 7 to 8 minutes at the station prior to departure. Analysis of (unprompted) activities undertaken during this time involved the use of station facilities including information provision, waiting and retail facilities. Responses to the question "What do you usually do at the station prior to departure?" are shown in table 10.

5.1 Information

Information at larger stations (B and C)

In general, larger (B and C) stations were perceived to have a higher level of information provision than medium-sized and small stations (D, E and F). Information at larger stations was also considered to be clearer in terms of directing passengers to trains (knowing where to go) and informing them of train times (knowing when you are going to get there). This included real-time information, departure and arrival times, and directions to different parts of the station to access services and facilities. Having a high level of travel information gave participants more

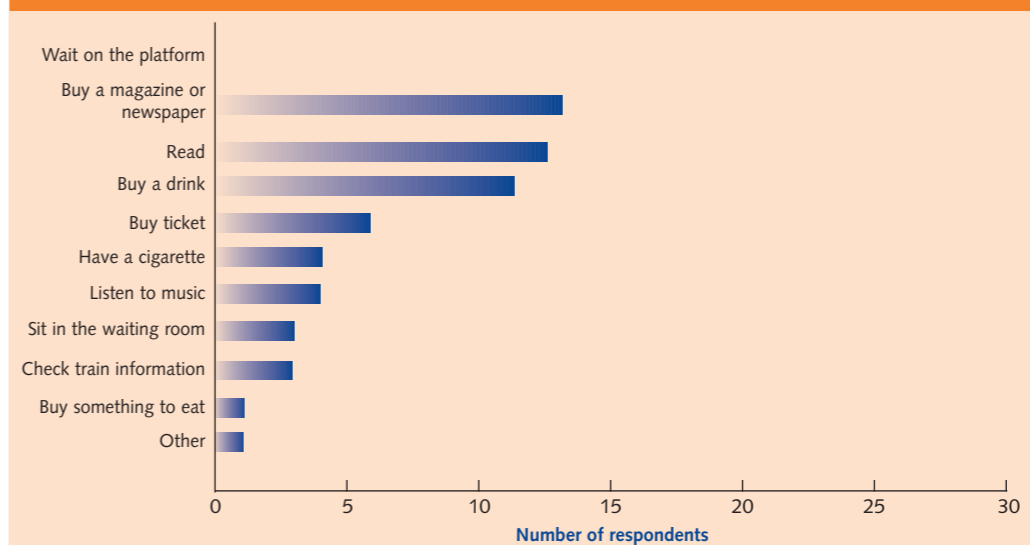
'confidence' to use other station facilities such as cafés and shops.

Signs to platforms (knowing where to go)

Smaller stations (D to F) lack clear information telling passengers which platform serves their destination, which had led to confusion amongst some participants in the past. At some stations the only way of getting information about which platform to wait on is from station maps displayed in the station. These were described by one younger user as "tiny" and "difficult to understand" in the context of the journey they wanted to make. For example, they would have to try and work out where the train was going before getting onto the right platform. Participants thought that information regarding which platforms served particular destinations should be displayed more clearly (on departure boards) rather than on maps.

"It should be clearly stated which train goes which way. (At the moment) it's just on maps, and the maps are always tiny, so you have to stand there and try and work out where it goes and everything... then you realise that you're at the wrong platform and then the trains go..." *Younger user, Scotland*

10 What passengers usually do prior to departure



Source: RPC Stations Questionnaire, 2005

“I’ve done that ... stand on one side for ages and realised it should have been the other, there’s nothing that tells you that.” *Younger user, Scotland*

5.2 Visually/mobility impaired

Visually

Participants who were mobility or visually impaired tended to be very familiar with the layout of their home station because it is the station they used most regularly. For this reason it was thought that facilities such as tactile maps should be concentrated on larger stations where it is more likely that such passengers might become lost.

“It would be a good idea to concentrate facilities for the disabled such as tactile maps and better information provision at larger stations such as London stations, or interchange stations which would make them easier to use.” *Visually impaired respondent*

“I am just about able to see the older style white on black flip-over departure boards and electronic departure information if it is large, or brightly lit on a clearly defined background. If train timetables are big I can read them. However, I will generally ask station staff for information if there is anyone available.” *Partially sighted respondent*

Large digital clocks are easier to see than the round analogue clocks whose hands are too slim to be seen by partially sighted people.

Real-time information (knowing when you are going to get there)

Real-time information in the form of TV or dot matrix style screens was provided on the platforms of most B and C stations and some (but not all) D stations, but was not found to be provided at E or F stations.

Real-time information at smaller stations (D, E and F) is considered to be a high priority by all groups, the primary benefit of which were being informed of delays and knowing when you would arrive at your destination. This information was considered to be essential in today’s environment and especially when there was no other perceived way of getting the information; i.e. when booking offices are shut.

“It’s not just for the big stations. If you turn up at a station and there’s only one train an hour and it’s not running then you should get that at every station really....If you go down to London they have it at even the smallest stations.” *Commuter, NW*

“To tell you if that train’s on time, or there’s a delay.” *Local leisure user, Scotland*

One visually impaired participant said that he did benefit indirectly from their implementation because he could ask a fellow passenger what it said. Real-time information screens do not directly benefit people with visual impairments as they are unable to see the text.

“The introduction of real-time TV style departure screens has been an indirect benefit to me because I can ask people what is displayed on them.” *Visually impaired respondent*

Platform announcements

Station announcements were described as often difficult to hear, sometimes because they come from a larger station some distance away. Help Points were found not to be used ‘at all’ to obtain train information.

“There is one of those speaker phone things, but you can never hear it, because it’s coming from Glasgow Central all the way down the track.” *Local leisure user, Scotland*

For visually impaired people platform announcements are extremely important and they tend to hear them more clearly than most other people. If the PA

11 Waiting for a train: mobility-impaired priorities

| Priorities for stations (all sizes) | Visual Impairment | Restricted mobility* | Wheelchair user | Cognitive impairment |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Staff assistance | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL |
| Help Points | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL |
| Platform announcements | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL | VITAL |
| Digital clocks | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE |
| Real-time information | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE | VITAL | VITAL |
| Clearly defined station information (large print, white on black or orange lights on black) | VITAL | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE | NICE TO HAVE |

* Includes older people, people with young children and people with heavy baggage who are seen to be struggling

system is not good, however, the level of background noise at larger stations can make announcements harder to hear.

5.3 Retail facilities

The primary retail facility expected is a newsagent, which is seen as vital for all but the smallest stations. Even here, some kind of peak-hour provision is called for.

Refreshments, albeit incorporated into a waiting room or, on smaller stations, in the form of a vending machine, are seen as vital for many rail users. While there was an acceptance that the ‘bus stop’ style F stations which merely have a platform with sheltered seating would be too small to accommodate a refreshment kiosk, there is now an expectation that D category stations and above would provide a facility, at least in peak hours.

An issue for partially sighted customers is the need for better information to be forthcoming about ingredients and the range of products available. There is a tendency for self-service to be taken for granted, even though staff are available, and some reluctance to answer questions or provide physical help (e.g. with carrying drinks or helping with selection) is encountered by disabled passengers.

Table 12 shows responses to the question: ‘If station facilities currently don’t satisfy your requirements, what facilities would you like to have?’

5.4 Waiting rooms

Waiting rooms of various types and quality were found at all station categories. They were considered to be an important facility for all station types but most important at stations where you might have to wait longer for a train. In general, waiting rooms were found to be inadequate because they were too cold, or not accessible because locked.

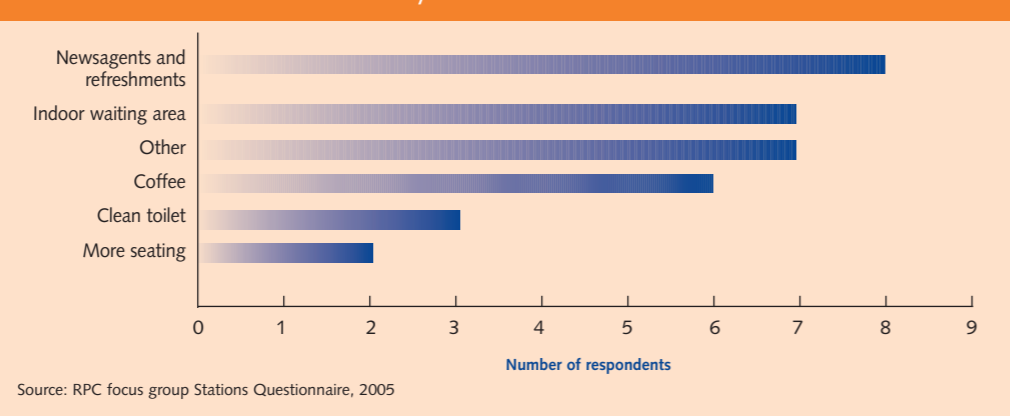
A large B station e.g. Manchester Airport and Victoria, waiting rooms were considered to be very important because one might typically be spending a longer time at the station. Participants wanted somewhere warm, comfortable and more inviting to wait for trains at this size of station, preferably on platforms. A similar level of service provision to airport lounges in terms of cleanliness and comfort is considered appropriate for B size stations.

The main benefits of better waiting facilities were described as the ability to relax, do some work, and get to the station a bit earlier to ensure that trains are not missed.

At smaller stations waiting rooms are considered to be important but impractical in terms of being able to cater for all peak travellers at once. Improving waiting facilities involved extending outside sheltered waiting areas and providing coffee-vending machines. Station categories D to F were considered to

Annex A: Methodology

12 What facilities would you like to have?



be 'pick-up points' only, so waiting facilities were not expected to be of as high a standard as that of larger interchange stations.

For these stations participants thought that if comfortable seating were to be introduced, it would be vandalised, therefore heated waiting rooms with plain hard seats were considered adequate. Participants thought that waiting rooms should be regularly checked by station staff.

5.5 Additional facilities

Toilets

Generally people did not use the toilets at medium and small stations because they were perceived to be of low quality, or people did not know about them (not adequately signed). People typically waited until they reached a larger station (e.g. Manchester Piccadilly, Glasgow Queen Street) and used toilet facilities there. However, toilets were considered to be an important priority for evening travellers or people with small children, and for this reason baby changing facilities should also be available.

Participants would only use toilets if they were much cleaner and warmer than they are now. Most are prepared to pay a small fee for a much

cleaner, staffed facility. Some participants thought a staffed toilet at smaller stations might be possible if it was inside the station near to the booking office.

Cash machine

Cash machines not charging for withdrawals are considered to be necessary for people who might need to operate the facility to buy a ticket or pay for a taxi home from the station.

Luggage trolleys

Luggage trolleys are thought to be important to have on hand at major interchange and airport stations.

It was thought that station staff should offer assistance to mobility impaired people if they were seen to be struggling with heavy luggage, or small children.

The study involved two elements: focus groups with passengers, and interviews with disabled passengers.

Focus groups

A series of focus groups was undertaken with rail users in four regions, as shown in Table 13.

An average of eight respondents attended each of the groups. Rail users were recruited at stations and on street, using a recruitment questionnaire.

Quotas were applied to ensure both an even gender split and a reasonable spread of station category usage, so that each of the three categories to be covered in the groups was well represented in terms of recent usage by at least two members of the group. The sessions each lasted approximately 1½ hours and were tape-recorded.

In-depth interviews

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted by telephone with disabled rail users (or their carers), each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

Respondents were recruited from a list supplied by Tripscope.

The eight respondents were spread geographically and were selected to be representative both in terms of types of disability and categories of station used. Table 14 summarises the sample.

Methodology – discussion format

Initially, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire provided by RPC relating to frequency of travel, stations used, facilities provided and priorities for improvement.

The second part of the discussion involved generating lists of facilities at each of the station types used by the respondents at each stage of their visit to the station: arrival, buying a ticket and waiting for the train:

- > which are currently provided
- > which should be provided.

Respondents were encouraged to consider their usage of stations in different weather, time of day and journey type conditions, including travelling with children, at night, when the service is disrupted, etc.

Stimulus material in the form of A5 cards was provided, showing, on one side, the name of a facility currently provided at some stations (e.g. pay phone, Help Point, lift) and, on the other side, a visual image of this facility. This helped to stimulate discussion and to ensure that all the current range of facilities was considered for each station category.

The facilities listed were then assigned importance for the type of station under consideration, those which were considered to be 'nice to have' (rather than 'vital' or 'pie in the sky') were taken forward to a resource allocation exercise undertaken on an individual basis by respondents at the end of the discussion.

- During the focus groups respondents were also asked to complete a questionnaire in which they
- > listed those facilities which they perceived were currently provided at stations in each of the three station categories the group was dealing with
 - > named the stations in each of the three categories with which they were most familiar
 - > stated how frequently they used each of those stations
 - > described the usual journey purpose and travelling companions when using those stations.

Annex B: Stations questionnaire

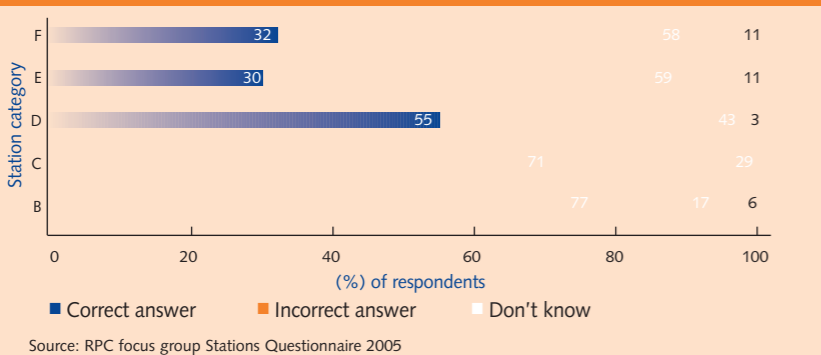
13 Focus group format

| Southern (Kingston) | North West (Manchester) | Scotland (Glasgow) | Great Western (Cardiff) |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Commuters B, C, E stations | Commuters B, D, E stations | Local leisure users C, D, E stations | Older users C, E, F stations |
| Evening users B, C, E stations | Business users B, D, E stations | Young people C, D, E stations | Infrequent leisure users C, E, F stations |

14 Focus group format

| | Region | Disability | Station categories |
|---|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | North Eastern | Restricted mobility | E |
| 2 | Scotland | Visually impaired | D |
| 3 | Scotland | Learning difficulties | B |
| 4 | Midlands | Visually impaired | E |
| 5 | Southern | Learning difficulties | B, C, D |
| 6 | Southern | Visual impaired | B, C |
| 7 | Southern | Wheelchair user | E, F |
| 8 | Great Western | Wheelchair user | C, D, F |

15 Awareness of station facilities provided



Awareness of facilities

Participants were asked whether the following range of facilities were available at the stations listed (B to F).

- > CCTV
- > Disabled toilets
- > Real-time information
- > Platform announcements
- > Car parks
- > Help Point
- > Sheltered areas on platforms
- > Toilets
- > Cycle racks
- > Non-slip floor surfaces
- > Waiting Room
- > Tactile station maps.

Participants' perceptions of facilities often did not match the list of facilities which were supposed to be present, either because they were unaware of them, or they were not actually there (see Table 15). Answers which were "correct" or "incorrect" seem to correlate to station size, i.e. the smaller the station, the larger the mismatch between facilities people thought were present and those that should be provided.



Q1 What is the purpose of your journey?

- To/from work
- To/from college/university
- Shopping
- For business
- Leisure day trip
- Leisure evening trip
- Sport or entertainment
- Visiting friends or relations
- Other leisure
- Other (please write in)

Q2 How often do you make this journey?

- 5 or more days a week
- 3 or 4 days a week
- Once or twice a week
- Once every 2 to 4 weeks
- Once every 1 to 2 months
- Less often

Q3 Which station do you usually start your journey at? (please write in)

Q4 Which station do you usually end your journey at?

Q5 Do you usually change trains? If so, where?

Q6 How do you usually get to the station?

- Car
- Walk
- Another train
- Bus
- Other (please write in)

Q7 And how do you usually travel onwards from the station where your train journey ends?

- Car
- Walk
- Another train
- Bus
- Other (please write in)

Q8 How soon before you are due to depart do you arrive at the station?

- 0-2 minutes
- 2-5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- 15-20minutes
- 20+ minutes

Q9 What do you usually do at the station prior to departure? (please write in)

Q10 What do you usually do at your arrival station before you leave it? (please write in)

Q11 Do you have a choice of stations? And if so, why do you choose to use this specific one?

Q12 Do the facilities at your station satisfy your requirements?

- Yes
- No

If no, what facilities would you like to have?

Q13 What are the three best things about your station?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Q14 What are the three worst things about your station?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Q15 Do you have a car available which you could have used for this journey?

- Yes
- No

Q16 Which age group are you in?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65+

Q17 Are you?

- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Full time student
- Retired
- Self employed
- Full time looking after home
- Looking for work

Q18 What is your home postcode (if UK resident)?

□□□□ □□

Thank you for your help



Assisted Passenger Reservation Service: Mystery Shop

September 2008

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1. Introduction

The Government and the rail industry are investing significantly to enable disabled passengers to use the railway. However, adjustable-level ticket counters, accessible toilets, lifts, ramps, wheelchair spaces and automatic doors are only part of the solution.

For many disabled passengers, the assistance provided by the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS) is crucial in enabling them to travel on the National Rail network. However there are disabled passengers who do not use the APRS. Perhaps this is an area for future research to understand why these passengers do not use the service.

A combination of direct complaints, personal experience and anecdotal evidence led Passenger Focus to investigate the service using mystery shoppers to determine how well rail companies meet the needs of disabled passengers.

The research showed a wide variation in assistance provision and quality. This ranged from instances of excellent assistance to mediocre performance, to no assistance at all on a number of occasions. The research shows that the industry still has some way to go before these passengers can have full confidence in using the railway.

We urge the industry to look carefully at this report and its recommendations so that it gets better at delivering the quality of service that disabled passengers are entitled to expect.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Colin Foxall'.

Colin Foxall CBE
Chairman
Passenger Focus



2. Foreword from Ann Bates, DPTAC

I am delighted to have been asked to write the foreword to this expanded research by Passenger Focus into passengers' perceptions of the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service provided by the train companies and Association for Train Operating Companies (ATOC).

DPTAC have campaigned for many years for the effectiveness of this service to be researched, as it is a crucial component of the travel experience by train for passengers with disabilities.

It is in everyone's interest for this system to work smoothly and effectively, from the passenger whose confidence in travelling is enhanced with every good journey, to platform staff who wish to provide a professional and excellent service to their passengers, to train company executives whose profits can be so adversely affected by dwell time delays caused by its failures.

With an ageing population, most of whom wish to travel outside peak hours but are unwilling to follow previous generations in restricting their travel horizons after retirement, the potential market for disabled travel is one that companies cannot afford to ignore.

It is, however in the best interests for many with complex impairments and given the continuing inaccessibility of many stations, that passengers be encouraged to use booking services and be given realistic advice to enable journeys to be successful. Train companies benefit from forward booking as it enables them to deploy staff more effectively.

Only a reliable and statistically robust system, free at the point of booking, will encourage disabled people to travel and build their confidence in what for most, is an ideal form of travel.

Ann M Bates

Ann Bates

Chair of the Rail Group and Deputy Chair
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee(DPTAC)

3. Executive summary

The mystery shopping research was carried out in two phases. Phase one was undertaken in 2007 in London and the South East. Phase two was undertaken in early 2008 covering Scotland, Wales, and the rest of England. The findings from both phases have been combined, unless specified.

National Rail Enquiries (NRE)

- On nine out of 10 occasions shoppers were given an appropriate¹ train company number to book assistance through APRS.

Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS)

- the majority of calls to APRS were answered within a minute
- on average, shoppers spent six to 10 minutes booking assistance for each journey
- three in five shoppers were advised to get to the station early²
- fewer than half were told of a reporting point at stations.
- 45% of shoppers were given a reference number for their booking
- on one in three occasions, staff did not inform shoppers whether the station has an accessible toilet
- on one in five occasions, APRS did not advise the shoppers if the stations were accessible
- APRS failed to inform shoppers on over half of occasions that one of the stations was inaccessible, and did not book alternative transport for them
- some train companies telephone passengers who have used APRS after their journey to obtain feedback. On 36 occasions (one in five), APRS offered to call shoppers for feedback - only 15 calls were received
- one in four shoppers were not confident that their needs would be met having phoned APRS, mainly due to staff attitude and the lack of information
- overall, shoppers whose questions were not answered were more dissatisfied with APRS staff.

Staff assistance on journey

- staff at stations were prepared for shoppers on only two out of three journeys
- of those shoppers given an appointed meeting place, only 58% were actually met there by staff

¹ We define 'appropriate' in this case as the number of a company operating the station of departure or the train on any part of the journey.

² The need to arrive early should reflect the personal circumstances of the passenger needing assistance, the nature of the station and its staffing, if any.

- despite requesting a ramp when booking assistance with APRS, it was not deployed on one in 10 occasions
- in 15% of all cases, no assistance was provided to shoppers to alight from the train, as a result of which more shoppers (especially mobility- and visually-impaired shoppers) found it harder to get off the train than on
- more shoppers (96%) were able to make their connection in phase two than phase one (66%)
- most shoppers missed their connection in phase one due to non-arrival or late arrival of assistance
- despite APRS failing to inform shoppers on over half of occasions that one of the stations was inaccessible, staff at those stations provided alternative transport to all shoppers who needed it on the day
- overall satisfaction with the journey experience was slightly higher in phase two, with three out of four shoppers rating themselves as very/fairly satisfied with the assistance
- only six out of 10 shoppers were satisfied with the assistance in phase one
- those who had previously used APRS were asked to compare their journey experience with their previous experience; around half stated that it was the same, but more than a quarter (29%) found it worse.

4. Background

The Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS) is a National Rail service enabling train companies to book assistance for passengers with disabilities without which many could not travel by train.

Research was commissioned to test:

- whether National Rail Enquiries (NRE) directed passengers to an appropriate train operating company (TOC) to book assistance
- the quality of the APRS booking service and information supplied
- the service provided on the day of travel by station and/or train staff.

The aim was not to judge individual rail companies' processes and performance; rather, the intention was to investigate the overall delivery of assistance by highlighting where the system fails and where it needs to be rectified.

This mystery shop research was carried out in two phases by people with disabilities to assess the efficiency and quality of the APRS service.

Phase one³ was carried out in 2007 in the London and South East area. Phase two was commissioned in spring 2008 to survey other areas of England, and Wales and Scotland.

This report combines the findings from both phases and presents the experiences of passengers using the service. Comments from the mystery shoppers who undertook this research are included in the report (highlighted in red), showing both the positive elements as well as the areas which need to be addressed.

³ A summary of phase one research "Mystery shop of the Assisted Passengers Reservation Service (APRS) offered to rail passengers with disabilities" can be found on our website at www.passengerfocus.org.uk

5. How we carried out the mystery shops

Passenger Focus carried out:

- journey mystery shops and
- telephone mystery shops.

5.1 Journey mystery shops

A survey form was developed for structured and objective assessments. In phase one, we recruited 18 shoppers from the agency's panel of mystery shoppers. In phase two, we recruited 16 shoppers using various means, including advertising online and through disability organisations.

Training was provided to all participating mystery shoppers on the purpose of the research, completion of the survey form, objectivity and health and safety.

5.1.1 What the mystery shops involved

All shoppers were allocated specific journeys. Some journeys were carried out by two people travelling together, not necessarily with identical disabilities. Some shoppers travelled with a companion who remained apart when assistance was provided. Shoppers were required to book assistance at least 24 hours prior to making the journey, so as to replicate the experience of a typical disabled passenger.

- most shoppers called NRE to find out the relevant number to book assistance
- all shoppers booked assistance with APRS by telephone, online or in person at a station (shoppers were advised of the method to use) and
- all shoppers undertook the return rail journey (specified by Passenger Focus) spending some time at the destination.

5.1.2 When they took place

Phase one took place between March and April 2007.

- shoppers were allowed to choose the times of journeys and most of these were undertaken during the off-peak⁴.

Phase two took place between February and April 2008.

- where services were operated exclusively by a single TOC, shoppers were able to travel at a time to suit themselves
- where a choice of TOC was involved, Passenger Focus specified which services to use to ensure all TOCs were covered
- for the full journey experience, shoppers also bought their own train tickets where necessary.

⁴ We define peak hours as 7am-10am and 4pm-7pm, Monday to Friday. Off-peak hours are defined as all other times.

5.1.3 Number of journeys

| Passenger | Phase one | Phase two | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | London and South East | Wales, Scotland and elsewhere in England | |
| | Number of journey mystery shops | Number of journey mystery shops | Number of telephone mystery shops |
| Mobility-impaired | 12 | 12 | |
| Wheelchair user* | 38 | 48 | |
| Visually-impaired | 32 | 38 | |
| Total | 82 | 98 | 100 |

* Users of 'reference sized wheelchairs'. Mobility scooters were not used.

Overall 180 survey forms were completed for the 90 return journeys. However, one shopper decided not to undertake her last journey due to a bad experience on the previous journey. The journeys undertaken in phase one and phase two can be found in Appendix A.

5.1.4 How the journeys and routes were determined

The selection covered a wide range of journeys, including:

- direct journeys
- journeys with change of trains
- journeys made using trains operated by more than one TOC
- using stations operated by different TOCs and Network Rail
- journeys where stations and trains were operated by different TOCs
- using stations inaccessible to the shoppers - where the TOC must make alternative arrangements
- journeys using staffed, unstaffed and partially staffed stations
- a range of train types from 'commuter metro' to 'intercity', and
- smaller stations where assistance bookings are likely to be infrequent.

The survey covered 24 train operating companies, some of which no longer exist due to franchise changes. Details of the operators are shown in Appendix B.

5.2 Telephone mystery shops

In addition to the journey shops, during the second phase trained interviewers undertook 100 telephone mystery shops. Eight scenarios were devised covering a range of disabilities and journey types. The telephone mystery shoppers initially contacted NRE then APRS. However, no assistance was booked as part of the telephone mystery shops.

Fieldwork was carried out between March and April 2008.

6. Research findings

The following sections cover shoppers’ experiences of: NRE; APRS; staff assistance on the journey; on-train experience; connections; inaccessible stations; and overall satisfaction.

As these data include results from those journeys involving a change of train, the base size exceeds the total number of journeys (180).

6.1 National Rail Enquiries (NRE)

Almost all shoppers contacted NRE for the telephone number to make an APRS booking. On four occasions they did not contact NRE because they sought information and booked assistance in person at the station or online.

6.1.1 Information provided by NRE

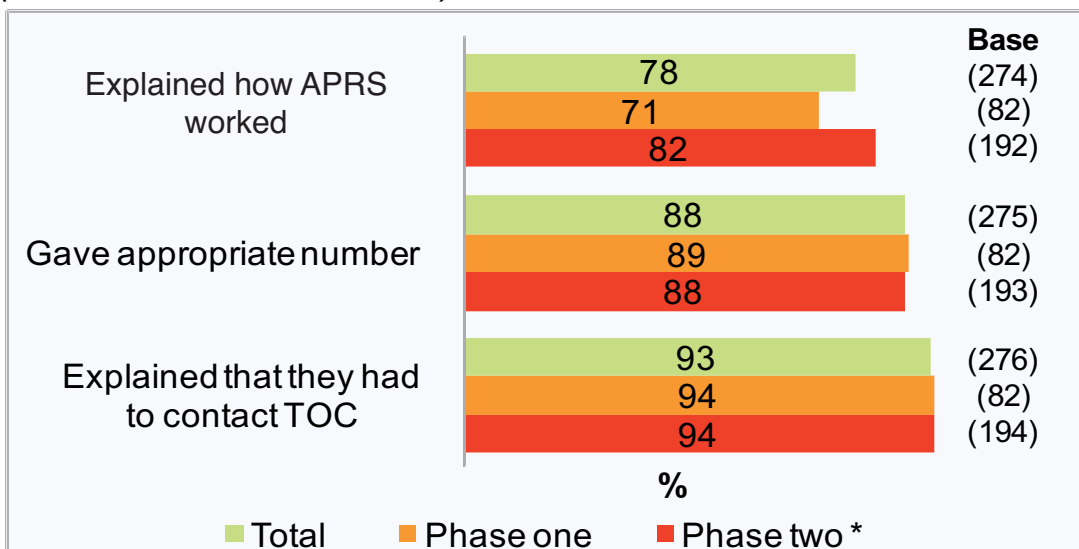
On almost nine out of 10 occasions mystery shoppers were given an appropriate⁵ TOC number through which to book APRS assistance.

“The operator was helpful. However, it took two attempts to get through and they gave the wrong train company.”

“It took three attempts to get through. I was told it was the wrong number.”

Chart 1: Did NRE staff explain the APRS process?

(Base is shown in brackets)



* The base includes the results from the telephone and journey mystery shops

⁵ We define ‘appropriate’ in this case as the number of a company operating the station of departure or the train on any part of the journey.

6.1.2 Train Times

- on nine out of 10 occasions in phase two, NRE staff provided information about train times for the journeys⁶
- on some occasions NRE staff directed shoppers to TOCs as soon as they heard that they required assistance, suggesting they obtain further information when making the booking

“As soon as I said I was in a wheelchair he said it would be better to ring the assisted line.” (Wheelchair user)

- on one occasion NRE directed a mobility-impaired shopper to an inaccessible station.

6.2 Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS)

Passenger Focus instructed some shoppers to book online; one shopper was instructed to book at the station in person. All other shoppers were required to book by telephone.

6.2.1 Booking online

Three journey shoppers were instructed to book assistance online using the relevant train company’s ‘Assisted Travel’ web page. Not all TOCs offer this facility.

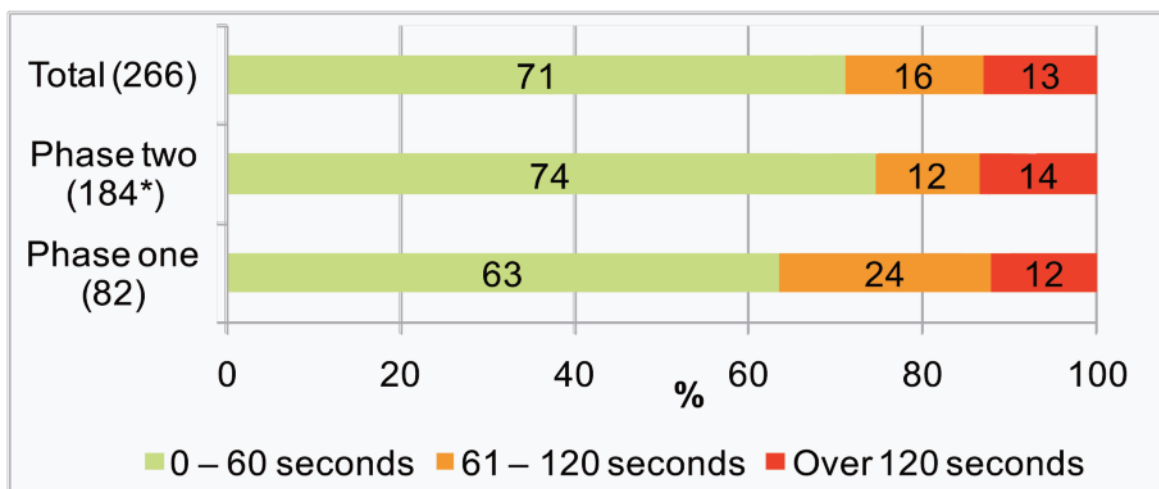
- two found the assisted travel page ‘not very easy’ and one found it ‘impossible’
- two shoppers completed the online form; of these, only one heard back from the TOC within 48 hours
- the other online booker received no response from the TOC and resorted to booking by telephone.

6.2.2 Booking by telephone

All other shoppers booked assistance by telephone. Separate bookings were made for the outward and return part of each journey. Most calls to APRS were answered within a minute. Only one shopper in 10 waited longer than two minutes.

⁶ No data was collected on train times in phase one.

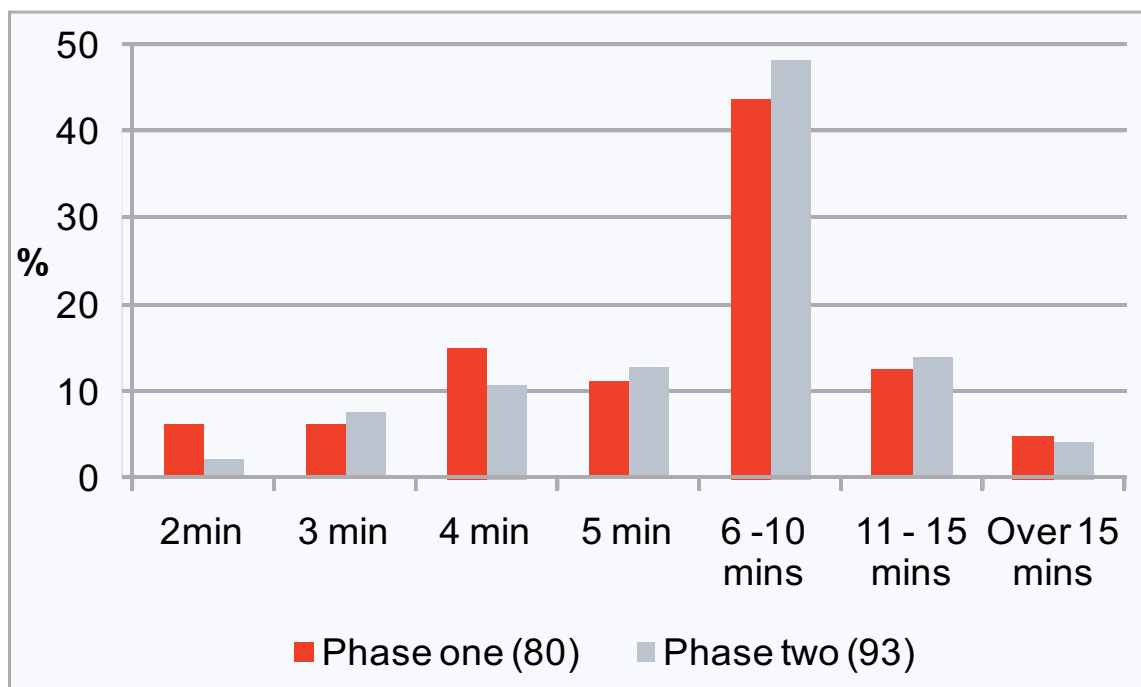
Chart 2: Time taken by APRS to answer calls
(Base is shown in brackets)



Note: percentages shown in the table do not add up to 100 due to rounding
 * Includes the results from telephone and journey mystery shops

Once through to APRS, on average shoppers spent around six to 10 minutes booking assistance for each single journey.

Chart 3: Duration of call to APRS
(Base is shown in brackets)



6.2.3 Information provided by APRS

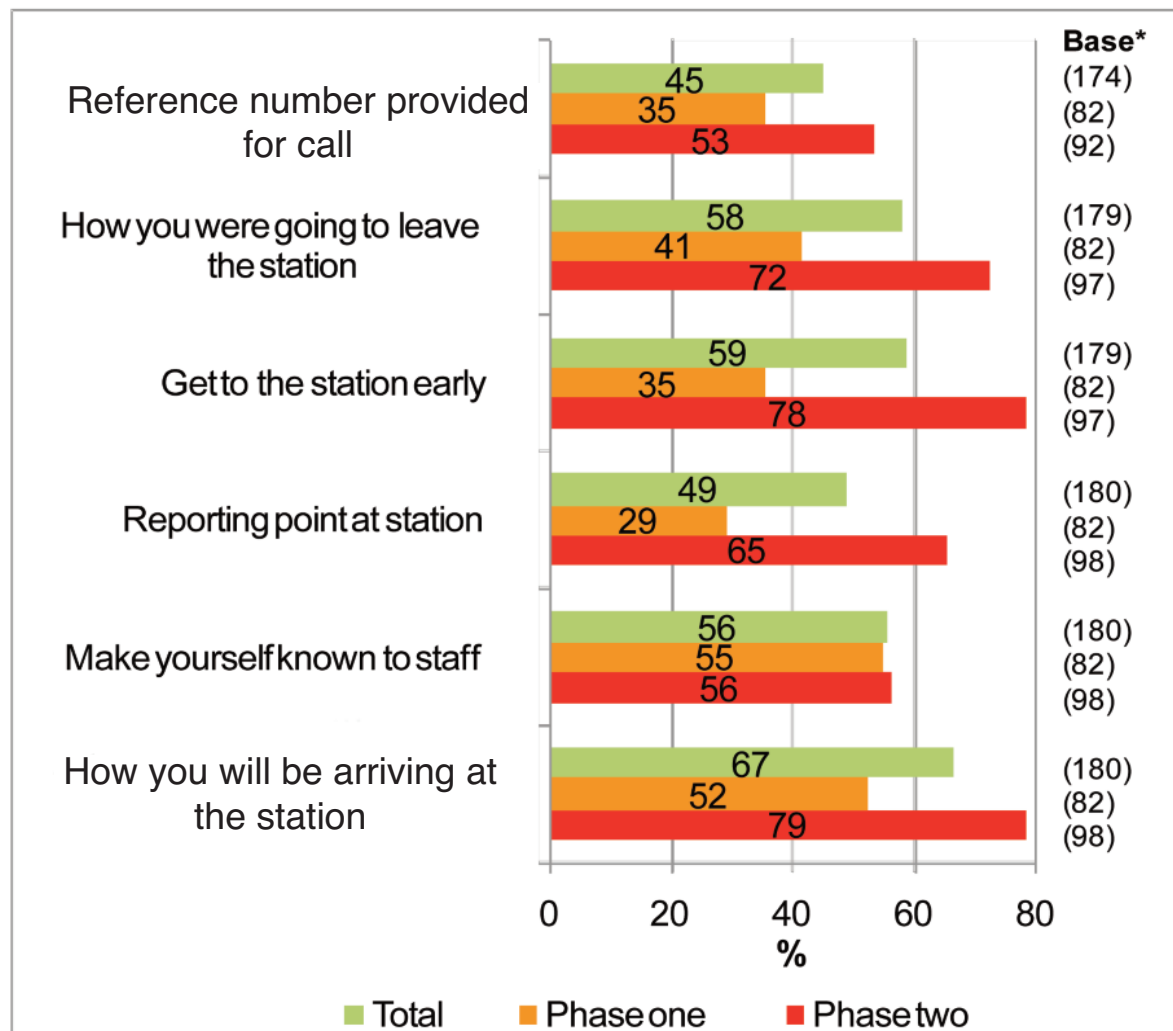
- three in five shoppers were advised to get to the station early⁷
- fewer than half were told of a reporting point at stations
- 56% of shoppers were told to make themselves known to a member of staff on arrival at the station
- 45% of shoppers were given a reference number for their booking.

“No reference number was given. I wasn’t confident and couldn’t prove that assistance had been booked.” (Wheelchair user)

Visually-impaired shoppers were asked more often how they would arrive at or leave the station than mobility-impaired or wheelchair-using shoppers.

Chart 4: Did APRS staff mention these when you booked?

(Base is shown in brackets)



*Base fluctuates as not all shoppers responded to these questions.

⁷ The need to arrive early should reflect the personal circumstances of the passenger needing assistance, the nature of the station and its staffing, if any.

6.2.4 Information on station facilities

In phase two, additional questions were asked about the facilities at the starting station, destination station and on trains.

Generally, APRS staff were more forthcoming with information about starting-station facilities than about the destination station. Some shoppers were directed to another TOC for details. Others reported no opportunity as APRS staff terminated the call before they could ask. One shopper found the manner of the staff too off-putting to feel comfortable to even ask.

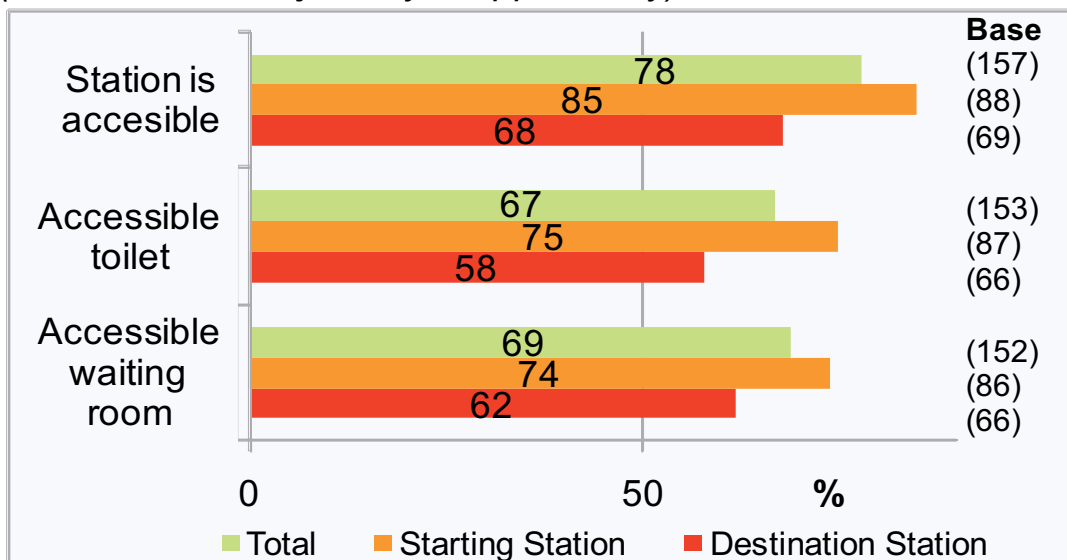
On a significant number of occasions APRS staff gave no information, even when asked, on certain aspects.

- on one in three occasions, APRS did not inform shoppers whether the station has an accessible toilet
- on one in five occasions, APRS did not advise the shoppers if the stations were accessible.

*“Information given by APRS was no way detailed enough and when I asked specific questions about facilities they didn’t seem to know.”
(Wheelchair user)*

Chart 5: Did APRS advise about station facilities?

(Base: Phase two journey shoppers only)



Note: base fluctuates as not all shoppers responded to these questions.

6.2.5 Information about on-train facilities

When asked about on-train facilities, staff were even less forthcoming than they were about station facilities.

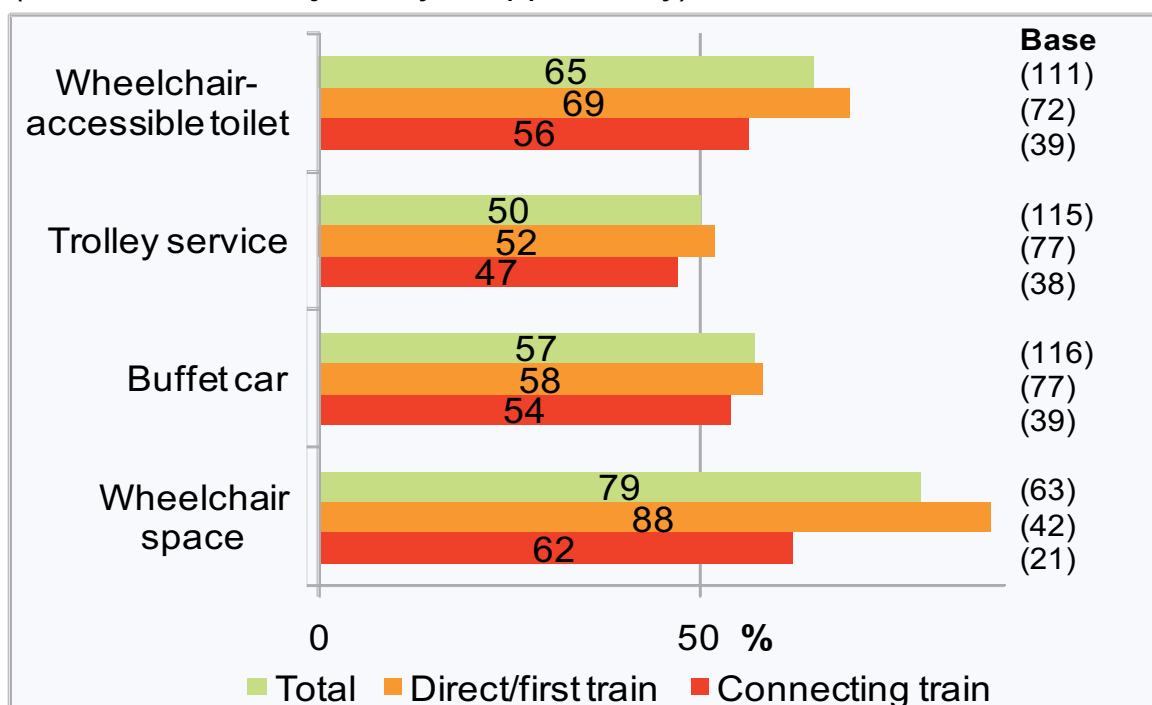
- on 21% of occasions staff did not say whether a dedicated wheelchair space was provided
- on 35% of occasions staff did not say whether there was a wheelchair-accessible toilet aboard the train.

Comments from shoppers who did not receive the information asked for: *“They could give me no information about my train..; disabled toilet facilities, buffet car, or trolley service.” (Wheelchair user)*

“APRS said this was not one of their trains and they didn’t know which services would be available.” (Wheelchair user)

Chart 6: Did APRS advise about on-train facilities?

(Base: Phase two journey shoppers only)



Note: base fluctuates as not all shoppers responded to these questions.

6.2.6 Need for information to make informed decision

Full information on station and train facilities is vital for passengers to decide for themselves if the journey is possible.

Our research found that one in four shoppers were not confident that their needs would be met having phoned APRS. This was mainly due to the lack of information and in a few cases, staff hurried the booking process and denied passengers the opportunity to ask further questions.

“The operator was polite and friendly but uncertain of the details needed to arrange for help and how the service worked, which did not generate confidence that the service would be forthcoming.” (Visually impaired)

“Not at all helpful, just felt like she couldn’t get rid of me quick enough.” (Wheelchair user)

“The operator seemed very unfriendly and put the telephone down before I finished asking questions about my journey.” (Wheelchair user)

6.2.7 Satisfaction with APRS staff

Overall satisfaction with the APRS staff varied between phase one and two. Nine out of 10 shoppers in phase one said that the staff were friendly and had won their confidence.

“The operator sounded confident and was quick when inserting information and responding to my questions.” (Visually impaired)

“The operator was very helpful, took my mobile number and promised to call me back after they had made all the arrangements. They duly did call me back which was brilliant.” (Wheelchair user)

However, in phase two only three out of four shoppers rated APRS staff as ‘excellent/pretty good’ in terms of their helpfulness. Shoppers whose questions were not answered were more dissatisfied with APRS staff.

Comments from shoppers who were dissatisfied:

“He failed to provide information about the station, failed to ask about a companion, failed to give the correct fare information, and failed to ask for a contact number or give an opportunity to ask about facilities at the train station.” (Wheelchair user)

“The lady was hesitant with her responses and did say she was having problems with her computer. She ended the call by saying, ‘Okay, that is it, sir’, and was gone.” (Visually impaired)

6.2.8 Call backs

Some TOCs telephone passengers who have used APRS after their journey. This enables TOCs to assess passengers’ satisfaction with the assistance and to address any failures. Call backs are an important direct means of obtaining passengers’ feedback.

On 36 occasions (one in five), APRS offered to call shoppers for feedback. Only 15 calls were received.

6.3 Staff assistance on day of travel

This section looks at staff assistance at various stages of the journey:

- arriving at the station
- ticket purchase
- boarding the train
- alighting from the train
- ramps
- on-train experience
- connections
- inaccessible stations and
- overall satisfaction with the journey.

6.3.1 Arriving at the station

Shoppers booked assistance at least 24 hours in advance as specified within most train companies' own Disabled People's Protection Policy. However, station staff were prepared for them on two out of three journeys. In phase one, staff were prepared on only half of all journeys.

Of those shoppers given an appointed meeting place, only 58% were actually greeted by staff there. In phase one, staff met shoppers on 38% of occasions, though this doubled to 80% in phase two.

Despite this, nine out of ten shoppers found station staff friendly and helpful, even though staff were not expecting them.

Table 2: Were station staff prepared?

| <i>(Base is shown in brackets)</i> | Phase one Number of occasion | Phase two Number of occasion |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Staff prepared for the arrival of shoppers at station | 43 (82) | 72 (89) |
| Staff greeted shoppers at appointed meeting place | 29 (76) | 52 (64) |

6.3.2 Ticket purchase

Shoppers bought their tickets at the departure station, either from the ticket office or ticket machine.

Those shoppers who held a Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC) used them for a reduction for themselves and their travelling companion.

Reduced fares also apply to certain categories of disabled people (wheelchair users, alone or accompanied, and accompanied visually-impaired passengers) who are non-DPRC holders. Some wheelchair users were asked to seek these non-railcard reductions. Of those, not all obtained the correct discount; one was actually undercharged.

It is unclear whether NRE or APRS advised any shoppers of cheaper advance purchase fares, as many passengers could have bought them for their journeys, but none did so.

One shopper was over-charged and had to make a much longer journey because APRS sent him via a longer and more expensive route.

Shoppers holding local authority travel passes, e.g. a Freedom Pass, used those tickets within the applicable areas.

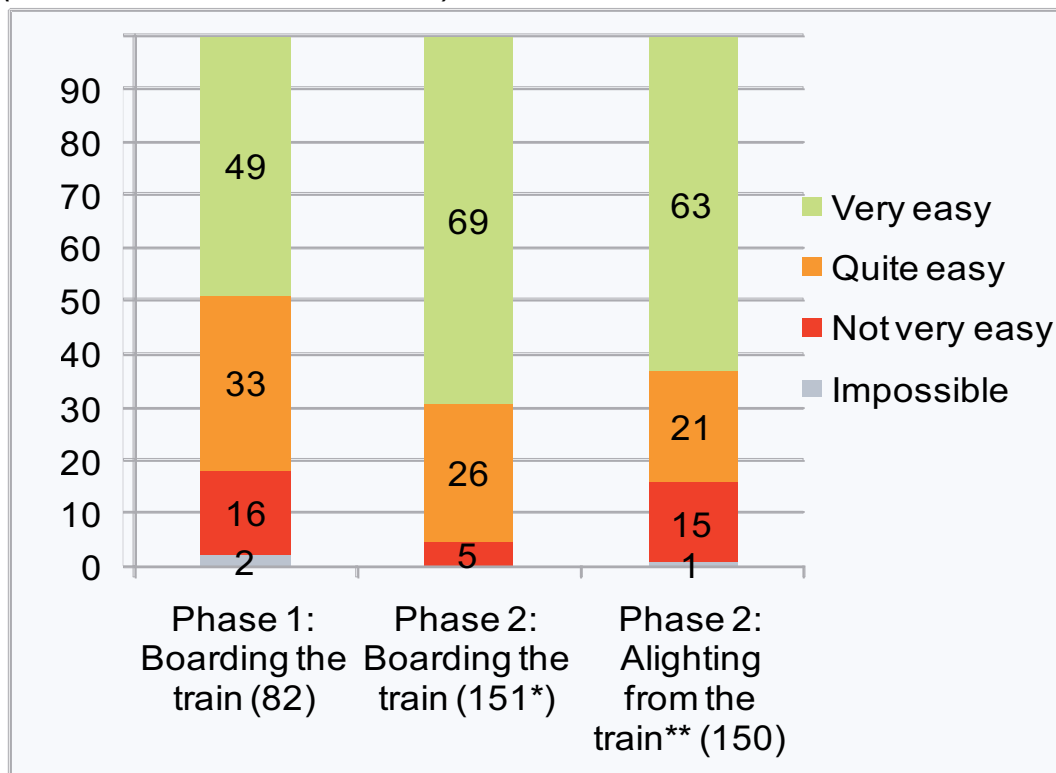
6.3.3 Boarding the train

Generally, shoppers found it easy to board trains; eight out of 10 experienced no major issues. In phase one, wheelchair shoppers found it easier to board the train than visually or mobility-impaired shoppers.

However, in phase two, visually-impaired shoppers reported a more positive experience with boarding the train than wheelchair users and mobility-impaired shoppers. Also, more shoppers experienced difficulty alighting from the train than boarding (see Chart 7).

Chart 7: How easy was it to get on/off the train?

(Base is shown in brackets)



* Phase two is based on 151 train journeys but excludes six journeys where the shopper travelled by taxi/bus.

** No data was collected on ease of alighting in phase one.

Comments regarding staff who were aware of the booked assistance:

“The station and assistance was very busy, but the service provided was courteous and efficient. I was kept informed of what was happening at all times.” (Wheelchair user)

“The assistance was very good. As soon as he arrived at my side he offered his arm to guide me. He mentioned where steps were and even hesitated, explaining that he was guiding me around pigeon poo.” (Visually impaired)

“They were waiting for me as the train pulled in, looked after me well, and took me to the customer lounge. They asked me if I needed to go to the toilet, got tea for me, and offered to carry my bag.” (Visually impaired)

Comments regarding staff who were unaware of the booked assistance:

“The station staff didn’t have the correct ramp for this train. He had to contact the train company to make sure it was available. The train staff were not prepared, as the message had not gone through. However, the ramp was produced and the delay was minimal.” (Wheelchair user)

“Nobody knew about my arrangements. The member of staff was quite rude and said it was not their job to assist people. They said if I had previously arranged this, someone would come to meet me. No-one did and the other ticket office was abandoned as were the information points.” (Mobility impaired)

“I had to board the train by myself as the member of staff left me in the waiting room and informed me when my train would arrive. The member of staff said they had not received a reservation for my assistance.” (Mobility impaired)

“When I arrived at the station my pre-booked request for assistance had not been passed on and it took some time for a member of staff to be found. On arrival they were clearly irritated at being pulled away from their work and walked me very quickly through the station.” (Visually impaired)

“There was no-one waiting for me. My companion had to look for someone to assist me. I managed to get assistance before the train left the station which was very stressful.” (Wheelchair user)

6.3.4 Alighting from the train

In 15% of all cases, no assistance was provided to shoppers. This was particularly the case in phase one, with one in three shoppers receiving no assistance to alight. This caused shoppers great difficulties, anxiety and stress.

On one occasion a blind shopper found it impossible to get off a replacement bus service because the member of staff who helped her onto the bus did not tell the driver of her needs. In the end, another passenger had to locate a member of staff to assist.

On another occasion, a wheelchair user could not alight at her destination because booked assistance did not materialise. Her travelling companion, who was on the platform to attract station staff's attention, was left behind when the train moved off, with the shopper still aboard.

Comments by shoppers whose assistance failed:

"I was left on the train, my companion had already alighted, the doors closed and I was carried on to the next station." (Wheelchair user)

"The staff at [Station A] should be ashamed of themselves. There should be staff available and they should be disability aware. I was very disappointed and felt quite vulnerable when the train I arrived on departed. The train staff hadn't come to my aid, then there was silence except for the wind blowing." (Visually impaired)

"The telephone request was booked but failed to be passed on which presented problems during my journey, especially at [Station B]. I could not find a member of staff who could assist me. After 15 minutes I was approached by a recently arrived passenger who escorted me to the ticket hall so that I could leave the station. I found the attitude of the platform attendant completely unsatisfactory as they could see that I required help but made no move to assist me." (Visually impaired)

Although most shoppers were assisted off the train by station or train staff, on 18 occasions shoppers had to be assisted off by their companion or another passenger. On three occasions, shoppers were assisted not only by a member of staff but also a passenger.

Mobility and visually-impaired shoppers experienced the greatest difficulty getting off the train: staff were not expecting them or failed to understand why they required assistance as the disability was invisible.

Table 3: Assistance provided getting off the train
(Base is shown in brackets)

| | Phase one (82) | Phase two* (151) | Total (233) |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Station staff | 37 | 106 | 143 |
| On-board train staff | 10 | 42 | 52 |
| Another passenger | 4 | 11 | 15 |
| Other | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| No assistance provided | 27 | 8 | 35 |

*The total does not equate to the base figure as some shoppers were helped by more than one person (i.e. both station and train staff)

“When they called for a team leader they arrived and asked why I needed assistance to board the train. When the train pulled in to the platform the team leader said ‘that’s the train’ then left me to board by myself. Because I am partially sighted they could not understand why I needed assistance.” (Visually impaired)

6.3.5 Ramps

Despite requesting a ramp when booking assistance through APRS, on one in 10 occasions it was not deployed. This mainly affected ambulant mobility-impaired shoppers. In some cases, the shoppers were helped by passengers. Others, however, had to get on/off by themselves with great difficulty and potential danger.

In a few cases wheelchair users got off the train without ramps and without any staff assistance. On one occasion staff assisted a wheelchair user off the train without a ramp. On another occasion, a wheelchair user was not helped to alight at all and had to get off at the next station and return by another train (on which no assistance was booked) to her destination.

Table 4: Ramps provided for getting on/off the train
(Base is shown in brackets)

| | Phase one (44) | Phase two (146) | Total (190) |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Ramp provided | 38 | 130 | 168 |
| Ramp not provided | 6 | 16 | 22 |

Comments from shoppers who requested ramps:

“There was no one to meet me again and staff asked if I had booked assistance. The ramp used was broken and dangerous. I did point it out but they weren’t interested.” (Wheelchair user)

“The train manager pushed me off the train without a ramp. I was not very happy about this as the last time my wheelchair was damaged when the person had to get me off when assistance didn’t arrive.” (Wheelchair user)

“No one was expecting us. We hung around for a few minutes, but no one took any interest. The carer took the wheelchair off himself as it was not too far from the train to the platform.” (Wheelchair user)

“I couldn’t see anyone there to help. I managed with great difficulty to get off alone. I think someone may have come to find me, but as I was concentrating on getting down safely I didn’t look up and they went past me.” (Mobility impaired)

6.3.6 On-train experience

In 27% of cases, shoppers were not assisted to their seat⁸. This was mostly the case with mobility-impaired shoppers.

- in 72% of cases, wheelchair shoppers were assisted to a dedicated wheelchair space
- more than half of the wheelchair shoppers in phase one were accommodated in the door-way vestibule⁹
- a small minority moved the wheelchair to the aisle between the seats because of draughts in the vestibule.

However, in phase two, on most occasions wheelchair shoppers were accommodated in a dedicated wheelchair space.

- on several occasions when the wheelchair space was cluttered with luggage, staff did not remove it and left the shoppers in the aisle
- on one occasion the wheelchair user called the member of staff back to remove the luggage to allow her wheelchair to occupy the space.

Comments by shoppers who could not access the wheelchair space:

“I was not shown to the wheelchair space. I had to call the guard back to have the luggage removed from my space” (Wheelchair user)

⁸ This excludes wheelchair users and is based on phase two results only (base 139).

⁹ It is unclear whether station staff accommodated wheelchair users in the nearest available vestibule to minimise dwell time at the station even though a dedicated wheelchair space is provided on the train.

“The wheelchair space was free, but there were cases in the wheelchair space” (Wheelchair user)

“Space was available, but the door was half partitioned off so the wheelchair could not get to the space. I had to get out and the staff folded the chair to go through the gap¹⁰. It would not have been possible for some” (Wheelchair user)

Most could reach the accessible toilet on board. However, as expected, wheelchair users could not use the non-accessible toilets or move through the train.

Comments by wheelchair shoppers about accessibility of facilities:

“The trolley did not come to the wheelchair space.”

“APRS advised that there was a buffet service, but none was available.”

- eight out of 10 announcements on the train were clear and audible
- on just over half of all trains shoppers reported their ability to see the electronic information display¹¹.

6.3.7 Connections

Shoppers changed trains on 38 occasions in phase one and 62 in phase two.

- shoppers in phase two were able to make their connection on more occasions (96%) compared to phase one (66%)
- shoppers missed their connection in phase one due to non-arrival of assistance (seven occasions), assistance arriving too late (three occasions) or train arriving late (three occasions).

Missing a connection affects booked assistance for the rest of that journey: if unaware of the passengers' delay, staff will await the wrong incoming train. Severed connections are a problem not only for passengers but also for staff as booked arrangements will not apply.

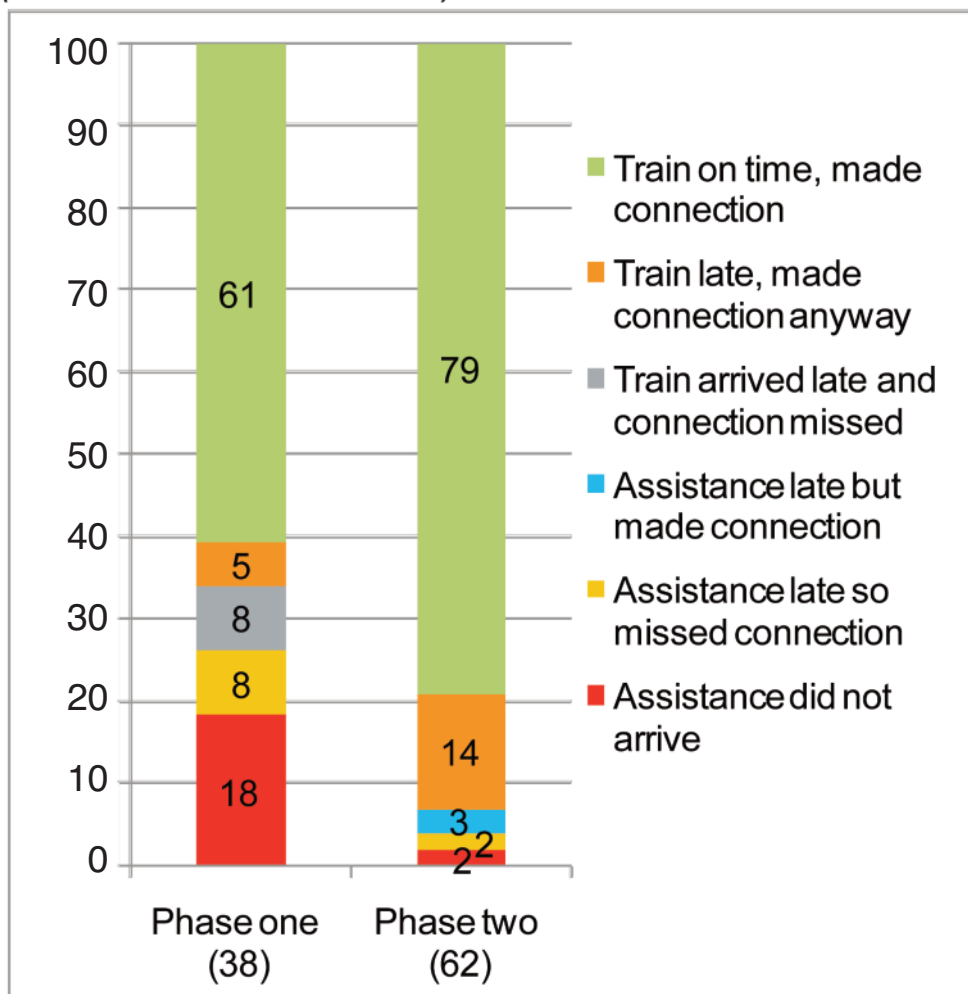
“I eventually had to phone my helper for assistance as there were no members of staff or help points visible to me.” (Visually impaired)

“No assistance arrived when my train came into the station. I waited 5-10 minutes then made my way to the lift which took me to the platform for the connection.” (Mobility impaired)

¹⁰ The wheelchair in question was of 'reference size' and should have been able to manoeuvre aboard the train without problems.

¹¹ This excludes visually-impaired shoppers.

Chart 8: What happened when changing trains?
(Base is shown in brackets)



6.3.8 Inaccessible stations

A significant number of stations are either wholly or partially inaccessible to mobility-impaired or wheelchair-using passengers. Passenger Focus specifically selected 15 journeys because they involved a selection of such stations:

- where all platforms could be reached only by stairs
- where at least one platform could only be reached by stairs
- where staff presence is needed (e.g. to use a barrow crossing) or
- where the lift was known to be out-of-order.

On six occasions, shoppers were provided with a taxi to/from the inaccessible station. On one occasion the shopper was advised to change trains en route and travel between accessible stations by tram; it is unclear whether APRS checked if the shopper had a valid ticket to travel by this mode.

APRS failed to advise shoppers on eight of these 15 occasions that one of the stations was inaccessible and did not book alternative transport for

them. Nonetheless, station staff on the day provided alternative transport to all shoppers who needed it.

One shopper who was offered alternative transport on the return leg of her journey was advised, for some reason, to get to the inaccessible station 20-30 minutes before the taxi's departure time. The taxi arrived 40 minutes after the shopper had been told to get to the station. It was a cold day in March; the waiting room was locked as the station was unstaffed at that time of day.

Once shoppers arrived at the accessible stations, staff were usually unaware of the assistance booked. Despite being unprepared for the arrival of the mystery shoppers, staff were found to be generally helpful.

"I spoke to a member of station staff about the assistance. They had no record and sent someone from security who didn't really know how to help or where to put me." (Mobility impaired)

"The taxi transfer was late, as they could not locate a taxi that could take a wheelchair so I missed the train and had to take the next train." (Wheelchair user)

6.3.9 Overall satisfaction with journey experience

There were a higher proportion of successful journeys where assistance was provided in phase two than phase one. In phase one, six out of 10 shoppers were satisfied with the assistance provided. This broke down to less than four out of 10 visually-impaired, half of mobility-impaired and eight out of 10 wheelchair-using shoppers.

Satisfaction was slightly higher in phase two with three out of four shoppers rating themselves as very/fairly satisfied with the assistance. Visually-impaired shoppers were most satisfied (78%) followed by wheelchair users (76%) and mobility-impaired shoppers (66%).

- half of all phase one shoppers felt that the assistance provided on the journey met their expectation based on their call to APRS
- in phase two, only four out of 10 shoppers said that the assistance provided met their expectations based on their call to APRS.

In phase two we asked shoppers who had used APRS before to compare their journey experience with previous experience. Around half stated that it was the same, but more than a quarter (29%) found it to be worse.

However, it was clear that staff on many occasions provided an excellent service and did their best to provide good-quality assistance.

“The journey gave me confidence to go to a shopping centre I didn’t know, on my own.” (Visually impaired)

It was a good journey, and made better by good and timely assistance.” (Visually impaired)

“All the staff that helped me today were very attentive and helpful.” (Mobility impaired)

“The preparation of the member of staff and the assistance they offered putting me on the train was perfect.” (Wheelchair user)

Comments from those who were dissatisfied:

“Due to delays and overcrowding I could only travel part way...Staff advised me of updates. The waiting room and platforms were very crowded. The assistance advised me to go back.” (Visually impaired)

“None of the arrangements or promises made were fulfilled.” (Wheelchair user)

“It was horrible. Almost enough to put me off mystery shopping. Definitely enough to never use the system for myself.” (Mobility impaired)

The results show that some shoppers have low expectations, and thus rated satisfaction relatively highly despite the difficulties they encountered with their assistance.

Comments from shoppers with low expectations who rated satisfaction as **“very or fairly satisfied”**:

“I waited until everyone else had gotten off. I couldn’t see anyone there to help. I managed with great difficulty to get off alone.” (Mobility impaired)

“The expectation that I could cope alone was wrong. They assessed my needs by my appearance without asking.” (Mobility impaired)

“My only issue was that they put me on the wrong train and I had to change. The ticket inspector told me I was on the wrong train, but got assistance for the changeover.” (Mobility impaired)

“The assistance at [Station D] did not return to help me when my train was about to depart.” (Visually impaired)

7. Conclusion

We undertook this research to determine if the service worked effectively and, if not, where failures occurred. The evidence from both phases of research showed frequent and repeated failures in three main areas:

1. Information to passengers

APRS, and to a lesser extent NRE, often failed to answer passengers' questions about train and station facilities. APRS frequently failed to make clear to shoppers those services 'booked' for their journeys, e.g. reserved seats, taxi provision or station assistance. On other occasions passengers were given incorrect information.

APRS staff cannot effectively book assistance or advise on accessibility without information on each station's status. This information therefore *must* be available to them. Their frequent refusal to pass this to passengers is of immense concern; either they have this information and chose not to pass it on or they have no access to it and are effectively sending passengers into the unknown.

Some shoppers were also misinformed on relevant fares and routes, including by station staff.

This calls into question the accuracy and integrity of the systems which the industry relies upon when booking assistance for disabled passengers. The recently revised Department for Transport's Code of Practice stresses the prime importance of accurate information so that passengers are fully aware before they set off on their journey

"The information train companies have on facilities for disabled travellers should be shared with other train companies. This journey today was one of the worst I have travelled because of a lack of information given."
(Wheelchair user)

"The telephone booking could be more professional." (Mobility impaired)

2. Communication

On frequent occasions, train and station staff were not aware of the assistance bookings made through APRS. Failure to pass this information to relevant staff undermines the point of booking in the first place and results in passengers not receiving the expected service.

"There needs to be more communication between the stations."
(Wheelchair user)

“Communication of this service between APRS and the station staff should be done properly and more efficiently.” (Mobility impaired)

“The main problem is communication between APRS staff and ground staff. Perhaps further training to make sure assistance theory works well in practice.” (Wheelchair user)

“I would like to make a suggestion to have some form of communication device to alert train staff to visually-impaired persons needing assistance.” (Visually impaired)

3. Training

Many members of staff failed to show the levels of training and knowledge to carry out the task efficiently and courteously.

“The manager at [station E] would benefit from some awareness training and customer relations skills updating.” (Visually impaired)

“The station staff need customer care training.” (Wheelchair user)

“I think the Customer Service Operators on the telephone should have some form of practical 'face-to-face' training with the public, and the members of staff who are doing the 'face-to-face' at the moment should look after the phones.” (Visually impaired)

“The assistant passed me over to a colleague on the station by pushing my chair in his direction and letting go. This is unnerving for a wheelchair user.” (Wheelchair user)

.....

The research shows that the current systems and procedures are so often prone to failure that passengers cannot rely upon them. As the system cannot adequately deal with the demands placed upon it, we fail to see how it will address the major additional burden of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Urgent action is needed to ensure a system is in place to cope with 2012. The urgency of addressing these failures was summed up by one despairing shopper as:

“I do not believe, unless the railway companies do something drastic, it will ever change.” (Visually impaired)

8. Recommendations

As a result of this research, Passenger Focus recommends that the industry address issues in a number of areas:

- **National Rail Enquiries**

- ✓ provide the appropriate TOC's number every time.

- **APRS Booking staff**

Our recommendations:

- ✓ provide a freephone number for passengers to book assistance
- ✓ have in place suitable systems and methods for providing accurate information and advising passengers on facilities at stations and trains*
- ✓ provide facilities to book assistance and receive confirmation online
- ✓ create a database for passenger details to accelerate future bookings
- ✓ provide relevant information at the level which each passenger needs: on reporting times at stations, 'reporting point' etc.
- ✓ provide a booking reference for booking retrieval and passenger confidence
- ✓ provide written confirmation of the booking via email, fax or post.
- ✓ reduce the time it takes to book assistance, e.g. take down passengers' contact details and then call them back to confirm.
- ✓ ensure booking details have been communicated to relevant staff*
- ✓ call back at least a percentage of passengers for feedback after the journey to address shortcomings.

- **Information provision**

Our recommendations:

- ✓ clear processes to monitor, update and share station/train facility information between train companies and Network Rail*
- ✓ improve communication between APRS and train/station staff
- ✓ explore the viability of a single APRS number for booking assistance
- ✓ ensure that passengers understand in which circumstances accommodation has been *reserved*
- ✓ ensure that passengers understand where assistance has been booked and who will provide it (station or on-train staff)

* Although these processes should be part of the standard APRS delivery procedure, their frequent failure suggests that particular attention needs to be addressed to these elements.

- ✓ send written confirmation of the assistance booking via email, fax or post
- ✓ create a handbook of “do’s and dont’s of assisted travel” booklet, the text of which could form part of the *Rail travel made easy* booklet, for reference during a journey, in the event of assistance failure or other emergency
- ✓ create a national helpline number for passengers to contact in case of emergency and in the absence of assistance
- ✓ refund the passenger’s (and any companion’s) fare in full in the case of assistance failure which disrupts their journey (in addition to any delay compensation under the Passenger’s Charter).

- **Staff assistance**

Our recommendations:

- ✓ ensure that all staffed stations have a clearly marked ‘reporting point’ with a recognisable logo, to be included in publicity
- ✓ ensure booking details have been communicated to relevant staff*
- ✓ telephone ahead to the alighting station with confirmation that the (named) passenger is travelling and his/her location aboard the relevant train
- ✓ staff must assist passengers to a point where they can board their onward train or continue their journey by other means*
- ✓ use ‘good practice’ to help in locating ‘missing’ passengers.

- **Training**

Our recommendations:

- ✓ train staff in how to provide appropriate assistance, how to spot ‘invisible disabilities’ and how to use relevant equipment.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Our recommendations:

- ✓ Have in place an auditing system to monitor the quality of assistance provided and highlight shortcomings.

Passenger Focus has drawn up ‘best practice guidelines’ which are available separately summarising the above. Details of this can be found on our website at www.passengerfocus.org.uk.

* Although these processes should be part of the standard APRS delivery procedure, their frequent failure suggests that particular attention needs to be addressed to these elements.

9. Contact us

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Appendix A

Phase one journeys

| Ref | Start station | Destination station | Changing at | Single or return |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 001a | London Charing Cross | Ashford International | | S |
| 001b | Ashford International | London Victoria | | S |
| 002 | Ilford | Colchester | Shenfield | R |
| 003 | London Fenchurch Street | Southend Central | | R |
| 004 | Enfield | Shenfield | Liverpool Street | R |
| 005 | London Victoria | Gatwick Airport | | R |
| 006 | London Victoria | Gatwick Airport | | R |
| 007 | Harrow & Wealdstone | Milton Keynes | Watford Junction | R |
| 008 | London Paddington | Heathrow Airport | | R |
| 009 | Surbiton | Sutton | Wimbledon | R |
| 010 | London St Pancras | Bedford | | R |
| 011 | London St Pancras | Bedford | | R |
| 012 | London Kings Cross | Peterborough | | R |
| 013 | London Kings Cross | Biggleswade | | R |
| 014 | London Waterloo | Windsor & Eton Riverside | | R |
| 015 | London Waterloo | Windsor & Eton Riverside | | R |
| 016 | London Waterloo | Windsor & Eton Riverside | | R |
| 017 | London Kings Cross Thameslink | St. Albans City | | R |
| 018 | London Kings Cross Thameslink | St. Albans City | | R |
| 019 | Brockley | Watford Junction | East Croydon | R |
| 020 | New Eltham | Harpenden | London Bridge | R |
| 021 | London Euston | Watford Junction | | R |
| 022 | London Euston | Watford Junction | | R |
| 023 | London Marylebone | Aylesbury | | R |
| 024 | London Marylebone | Beaconsfield | | R |
| 025 | Eltham | Gillingham Kent | Dartford | R |
| 026 | Eltham | Gillingham Kent | Dartford | R |
| 027 | Forest Hill | Guildford | Clapham Junction | R |
| 028 | Putney | Stansted Airport | Vauxhall and Tottenham Hale | R |
| 029 | London Cannon Street | Sutton | London Bridge | R |
| 030 | Lewisham | Chelmsford | Stratford | R |
| 031 | Lewisham | Chelmsford | Stratford | R |
| 032 | Mill Hill Broadway | Wellingborough | Luton Airport Parkway | R |
| 033 | Stratford | Braintree Freeport | | R |
| 034 | West Ham | Southend Central | | R |
| 035 | Barking | Westcliff | | R |
| 036 | Surbiton | Woking | | R |

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|---|
| 037 | Putney | Staines | | R |
| 038 | Willesden Junction | Norbury | Clapham Junction | R |
| 039 | London Waterloo | Basingstoke | | R |
| 040 | Stratford | Colchester Town | Colchester | R |
| 041 | Greenford | Slough | Ealing Broadway | R |

Phase two journeys

| Ref | Start station | Destination station | Changing at | Single or Return |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|--|------------------|
| 001 | Shrewsbury | Llandrindod | | R |
| 002 | Shrewsbury | Aberystwyth | | R |
| 003 | Shrewsbury | Melton Mowbray | Birmingham New Street | R |
| 004 | Shrewsbury | Walsall | Birmingham New Street | R |
| 005 | Shrewsbury | Worcester Shrub Hill | Hereford | R |
| 006 | Shrewsbury | Runcorn | Crewe | R |
| 007 | Chippenham | Weston-super-Mare | Bristol Temple Meads | R |
| 008 | Chippenham | Taunton | Bristol Temple Meads | R |
| 009 | Chippenham | Gloucester | Swindon | R |
| 010 | Chippenham | Bradford-on-Avon | Bath | R |
| 011 | Newcastle Central | Inverness | Edinburgh Waverley | R |
| 012 | Newcastle Central | Carlisle | | R |
| 013 | Newcastle Central | Darlington | | R |
| 014 | Edinburgh Waverley | Perth | | R |
| 015 | Edinburgh Waverley | Falkirk | | R |
| 016 | Edinburgh Waverley | Helensburgh Central | Glasgow Queen Street | R |
| 017 | Altrincham | Port Sunlight | Chester | R |
| 018 | Manchester Piccadilly | Stoke-on-Trent | | R |
| 019 | Manchester Piccadilly | Derby | Stoke-on-Trent | R |
| 020 | Cardiff Bay | Gloucester | Cardiff Central and Cardiff Queen Street | R |
| 021 | Cardiff Central | Abergavenny | | R |
| 022 | Brunstane | Carlisle | Edinburgh Waverley | R |
| 023 | Brunstane | Berwick on Tweed | Edinburgh Waverley | R |
| 024 | Brunstane | Pitlochry | Edinburgh Waverley | R |
| 025 | Brunstane | Glasgow Queen Street | Edinburgh Waverley | R |
| 026 | Newcastle Central | Middlesbrough | | R |

| | | | | |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 027a | Sunderland | Northallerton | | S |
| 027b | Northallerton | Newcastle Central | | S |
| 028 | Newcastle Central | Leeds | | R |
| 029 | Newcastle Central | Doncaster | | R |
| 030 | Chesterfield | Manchester Piccadilly | Sheffield | R |
| 031 | Chesterfield | Leicester | | R |
| 032 | Chesterfield | Loughborough | Derby | R |
| 033 | Edinburgh Waverley | Aberdeen | | R |
| 034 | Edinburgh Waverley | Durham | | R |
| 035 | Sheffield | Burton on Trent | Derby | R |
| 036 | Sheffield | Ilkley | Leeds | R |
| 037a | Sheffield | Hull | | S |
| 037b | Hull | Grantham | | S |
| 037c | Grantham | Sheffield | Doncaster | S |
| | | | Manchester Piccadilly | R |
| 038 | Bolton | Stoke-on-Trent | | R |
| 039 | Bolton | Oxenholme | Preston | R |
| 040 | Bolton | Blackpool North | | R |
| 041 | Paignton | Plymouth | Newton Abbot | R |
| 042 | Paignton | Taunton | Newton Abbot | R |
| 043 | Paignton | Barnstaple | Exeter St David's | R |
| 044 | Ayr | Carlisle | | R |
| 045 | Ayr | Stranraer | | R |
| | | | Manchester Victoria and Piccadilly | R |
| 046 | Rochdale | Manchester Airport | | R |
| 047 | Rochdale | York | Leeds | R |
| 048 | Crosshill | Penrith | Glasgow Central | R |
| 049 | Crosshill | Motherwell | Glasgow Central | R |

Appendix B

Train companies on which shoppers' journeys were made:

Arriva Trains Wales
c2c
Chiltern Railway
CrossCountry Trains
East Midlands Trains
First Capital Connect
First Great Western
First ScotRail
First TransPennine Express
Gatwick Express
Grand Central Railway
Heathrow Express
Hull Trains
London Midland
Merseyrail
Midland Mainline
National Express East Coast
Northern Rail
one
Silverlink
South West Trains
Southeastern Railway
Southern Railway
Virgin Trains

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Assisted Passenger Reservation Service

Best practice guidelines – a check list



Passenger Focus has created the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service best practice guidelines using the advice and experience of passengers who have travelled on the National Rail network using the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS).

Passenger Focus will be working with train operators across Great Britain to make certain they make every effort to deliver APRS based on the best practice identified by passengers with disabilities.

1 Booking the journey

Passengers need:

- a freephone number to book assistance
- alternative online methods of booking their journeys
- National Rail Enquiries to give correct APRS contact details every time to book assistance
- staff who are fully trained and familiar with the National Rail network to take their APRS booking
- a person at the other end of the phone – passengers do not want to waste time waiting on an automated system
- to be asked what level of information they require. Experienced rail users don't want to hear the same explanation every time whereas new passengers will require comprehensive detail
- staff to take details of their

requirements and call them back if there are delays in making booking arrangements – passengers don't want to be held up on the phone while staff sort out system issues

- a central database to hold their details for future reference, including their name and contact details; type of disability and assistance required; details of any regular journeys made
- to be informed on the facilities, including staff assistance, available at the stations and on the trains they are using
- to be told if the station they want to use isn't accessible (temporarily or permanently) and whether this will mean they will be travelling by road
- a booking reference to simplify cancellations, changes of plan or complain, as well as for staff to check booking details quickly and simply

- written confirmation sent via their chosen delivery method (email, fax or post) subject to booking timings. This should include journey details, the APRS booking reference, specific details of the assistance and on-train accommodation booked, and an explanation of what to do on the day
- to be aware of what to do if the assistance is not delivered as expected.

2 Arriving at the station and boarding the train

Passengers need:

- to know if there will be staff on hand for assistance
- to be informed of where they will meet the staff who will assist them. There should be a clearly marked reporting point at each staffed station
- to know before they arrive ➔



- ➔ at the station that staff are ready for their arrival and know their booking details
- to be told if there is a problem, its extent and be kept informed
 - their booked assistance to be delivered smoothly and problem free – they don't want staff (however kind and helpful) having to respond at the last minute and sort out problems because the booking has not been communicated
 - station and train staff to check with each individual what level of assistance they require
 - safety to be paramount. Ramps should be fit-for-purpose and installed correctly
 - help with luggage.

3 On the train

Passengers need:

- to be escorted to their seat or where this is not possible, advised on how to find their seat

- to be seated with their travelling companions
- on-train staff to identify themselves and ask if they can offer any immediate help
- to be told what facilities are available on the train
- refreshments brought to them if they are unable to reach onboard facilities
- help with luggage.

4 The end of the journey

Passengers need:

- assistance getting off the train as booked
- staff to escort them to a suitable exit at the station or to their connecting train
- advice on their onward journey

- such as details on taxi facilities, local bus stops or station meeting points
- contact from the company which booked the APRS to enable passengers to provide feedback
- to be reimbursed their fare if the APRS is not delivered in a satisfactory manner
- all aspects of the APRS to be regularly monitored and audited by the industry.

For further information on APRS and Passenger Focus's research findings visit www.passengerfocus.org.uk



Passenger Focus report to Cheshire
County Council on access requirements for
Chester Station

January 2007

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Executive summary

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the case for improvements to the accessibility of Chester Railway Station. Passenger Focus is committed to listening to passengers, and representing their views to providers and funders of transport services. This report not only includes the recommendations of a team of experts in accessibility issues, but also includes the views of some well travelled rail passengers who encounter accessibility problems most times they travel. For any other organisations considering undertaking accessibility audits of transport services and facilities, we strongly recommend that the audit takes on board the experiences and suggestions of those passengers that the improvements are targeted at.

Background

Chester's historic General Station is one of only twenty two Grade I and Grade II* listed railway stations in the whole of England and one of only three in the northwest region. The building is of outstanding national and regional significance and is one of the principle nineteenth century monuments in the city.

Chester City Council Officers have been working as part of the multi agency Station Gateway Partnership to plan and initiate the regeneration of Chester Railway Station. The Partnership includes representatives from a range of stakeholders including Chester City Council, Cheshire County Council, Network Rail, The Rail Heritage Trust and several Transport Operators. The project aims to regenerate the station buildings and square and provide a catalyst for an urban renaissance in this part of Chester by helping to improve the area as a transport interchange whilst increasing the volume of retail trade, the value of commercial property rentals and the number of visitors. It will also help by directly and indirectly bringing forward the development of high quality commercial space encouraging new enterprises in this disadvantaged area.

The Station Gateway Partnership recognises that accessibility is a top priority for consideration in all alterations and upgrades planned for the station and asked Passenger Focus to commission an independent audit of the station and its approach. The audit highlights where the station is currently lacking in DDA compliance or has areas relating to accessibility that could be improved. The audit was jointly funded by Cheshire County Council and Arriva Trains Wales with additional resources contributed by Passenger Focus.

What we did

Passenger Focus believes that it is important for users of rail services and facilities to have a say in how those facilities are operated. We therefore believed it essential that a group of passengers with disabilities should undertake a site visit and give their views in addition to the audit.

We commissioned an independent consultancy company – JMU Access Partnership (JMU is a pan disability, not-for-profit, Access Consultancy, part of the RNIB. We identified several passengers with disabilities and a carer who volunteered to take part in a site visit. Two of the passengers are wheelchair users and one is blind.

JMU undertook the audit on 8 – 9 January and the passengers undertook the site visit and participated in a focus group on 16 January. The following report identifies the findings from both

events and provides ideas and recommendations for improvements to accessibility which we hope will be taken on board and implemented as a priority in the upgrading work that is planned.

Both the audit and site visit took the form of a journey sequence that would be made by any passenger, starting with arrival/drop off at the station and proceeding to the furthest point on the station.

The key areas for concern are identified as category A in the audit and need to be addressed as a matter of high priority i.e. the car parks, toilets, stairs, ticket office, and tactile pavings

Acknowledgements

We thank Cheshire County Council and Arriva Trains Wales for inviting us to commission this work on behalf of the Chester Gateway Partnership. We are extremely grateful to Sue and Dave Hobbs, Richard West and Alison Barrett, the passengers involved in the site visit and Focus Group. Thanks also to Steve Hill from JMU for the professional manner in which he undertook this commission. Our thanks also go to Arriva Trains Wales and Virgin Trains for providing complimentary travel and support for the passengers involved in the project and Chester Station staff for looking after us so effectively during our site visits.

**Passenger Focus
Chester Station**

Access Audit

23 January 2007
Job Number 14097

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JMU Access Partnership

JMU Access Partnership is a pan disability, not-for-profit, Access Consultancy, part of the RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind).

Our aim is to help enable people with serious sight loss and other disabilities lead full and independent lives through improved access to the built environment. This is achieved through our consultancy, training, publications, research and policy activities.

Training and consultancy is delivered through our team of Access Consultants based in London and Leeds,. Our consultants are drawn from the construction, design and research related professions. We understand the practical and technical constraints as well as the aesthetic aspirations of building designers and owners. This means that we can bring a fresh approach to each project, tailoring the solutions to our clients' needs and avoiding prescriptive or generic solutions wherever possible.

This report is available on disc, in large print format, Braille or tape upon request. Please contact JMU Access Partnership for further information.

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1.0 Introduction

This report follows a survey of Chester Railway Station, undertaken on 8 January 2007 and conducted by Steve Hill, Access Consultant with JMU Access Partnership.

The audit was conducted on a drizzly day with dull light conditions.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Fact Sheets which are bound in a separate volume.

1.1 Client Brief

JMU Access Partnership have been asked to undertake an access audit of the existing passenger facilities at Chester Station and to co-ordinate a consultation exercise involving a group of disabled people. The results of the consultation exercise are included in a separate report.

1.2 Description of site, buildings and functions

Chester Railway Station is currently operated by Arriva Trains.

The Station comprises seven platforms plus ancillary facilities which include two pay and display car parks, a customer assistance office, a ticket office, two main flights of steps, a bridge which crosses the railway lines, two lifts, two sets of toilets, a meeting room and a number of retail outlets (e.g. cafes and shops).

1.3 Legislative Context

1.3.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The DDA (Disability Discrimination Act 1995) has brought in new laws and measures aimed at ending the discrimination that many disabled people face.

Arriva Trains will have duties under Parts II and III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The auditor was asked to consider those areas of the station site to which the public have access and the employment areas were specifically excluded from the scope of this audit.

Part II of the DDA – Employment

Since October 1st 2004, it has been against the law for an employer of any size (apart from the armed forces) to discriminate against people on the basis of disability.

You cannot discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the recruitment process
- in their terms and conditions of employment
- in chances for promotion, transfer, training or other benefits
- by dismissing them unfairly

- by treating them less fairly than other workers
- by subjecting them to harassment

Part III of the DDA – Goods Services and Facilities

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), service providers (under Part III) are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people are not discriminated against and can use their services easily and in comfort. Reasonable adjustments may involve changing policies, procedures and practices or providing auxiliary aids and services such as information in alternative formats. This may include providing information on request on tape, in large print or Braille.

The requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act to make physical changes to premises to provide access came into force in October 2004.

1.3.3 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 will place a new disability equality duty on all public sector authorities from December 2006. This duty will have a significant impact on the way in which all public services are run and on improving the lives of disabled people. It is part of a new type of equalities legislation that aims to ensure that public bodies build disability equality into the way in which they carry out their business - tackling institutional discrimination before it can impact on individuals.

This new legislation means that public sector bodies will have a duty to promote disability equality in all aspects of their work. From the police to health services, schools, local authorities, NHS trusts, central government, the entire public sector will have a duty to promote the equalisation of opportunities for disabled people.

The 2005 Act also changed the law to bring in larger private clubs, which had been exempt, and housing. From 5 December 2005, the definition of disability has changed - to include people with HIV, Cancer and Multiple Sclerosis from the point of diagnosis and to remove a key barrier to justice: that people with mental impairments must prove not just the impact of their condition (as those with a physical impairment must) but that it is "clinically well-recognised".

Transport was originally exempt from the DDA. Separate arrangements have put in place processes to ensure that vehicles become more accessible over time. However, the parts of the DDA that are about using services and getting reasonable adjustments in services have applied to transport since December 2006.

1.4 The Access Audit

An access audit is an assessment of the accessibility of a building and/or service. The audit identifies features that will affect disabled people, as recognised by the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005. The issues considered in this report will affect the convenience of the building for all users not only those with identifiable disabilities.

The report follows a “Journey Sequence” through the building from car park, or public transport drop-off point through to the most extreme facility within the building, suggesting practical solutions to barriers to access or hazards in each section of the sequence.

We have categorised the report’s recommendations as follows:

| Category | Definition |
|----------|---|
| A | An item which gives immediate concern for the health and safety of disabled people, or others, and which should be dealt with immediately |
| B | An item which may be dealt with immediately as part of a management procedure or routine maintenance programme |
| C | An item which may be part of planned works and does not require significant design or construction work |
| D | An item which may require considerable design, structural and/or construction work |

1.5 The Criteria for Assessment

The criteria for assessment are based upon:

- The need to optimise access to, and use of the building and/or service.
- The practical knowledge of JMU Access Partnership and RNIB in using and operating a wide variety of premises used by people with reduced mobility and sensory impairments, and extensive experience of providing an advisory design service to professionals.
- Provisions of the Building Regulations, related British Standards and legislation.
- Currently published good practice in design and detailing which meets the requirements of disabled people.
- The need for a “real world” solution based on practical and financial considerations when recommending improvements to access.

Dimensional criteria used within the report are based on guidance given in:

- SRA Train and Station Services for Disabled Passengers - A Code of Practice
- Inclusive Mobility – A guide to best practice on access to the pedestrian environment and transport infrastructure: DfT (Department for Transport)
- Approved Document M (2004 edition) of the Building Regulations: ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)
- BS8300: 2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice: British Standards Institute
- Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces: DfT
- Building Sight: RNIB
- The Sign Design Guide: JMU Access Partnership and the Sign Design Society
- A design guide for the use colour and contrast to improve the built environment for visually impaired people: Dulux, the University of Reading and JMU Access Partnership

While we have tried to make the recommendations within the report as clear as possible, in order to ensure they are implemented effectively we recommend Property Management staff have training in the design requirements of disabled people. JMU provides a range of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) accredited training packages on access related topics.

1.6 How to use this report

The report is available in CD and paper format. The data is entered on a separate MS Excel spreadsheet. A building summary highlights the main findings from the audit.

This report should be used as a basis for developing a plan to improve physical accessibility. This plan should be linked to resource allocation procedures and should consist of a rolling programme of works subject to a regular monitoring and evaluation process. It is recommended that a working group be formed to oversee the development and implementation of this access improvement plan. The working group should include representatives of management, staff and users of the building. JMU consultants are available to offer advice on the plan.

Undertaking an access audit and developing an access strategy based on its findings will not in itself guarantee you or your organisation will meet the requirements of the DDA or any other legislation, but it will give a clear indication of the intention of the building owner/manager and organisation to improve accessibility for disabled people.

1.7 Egress in an Emergency

Emergency egress has not formally been reviewed as part of this report, but it is recommended that a review be carried out. Where access features dealt within the report impinge upon egress arrangements reference is made to this, but this should not be taken as a review of emergency egress.

It is strongly recommended that a specific report on means of escape, including the fire alarm system and management procedures for the safe evacuation of disabled people, be commissioned from a recognised specialist.

A truly accessible environment is one which people not only enter and use conveniently and safely, but also one which in the event of an emergency they can also leave safely. Safe access is dependent on safe egress, and safe egress is reliant upon the planned evacuation process put in place by management. Generally two separate strategies are required for visitors and staff.

Staff working in the premises are known quantities and their individual needs can be assessed and agreed with them. Personal emergency egress plans (PEEPs) can be devised for all members of staff who require assistance and should be developed in consultation with the member of staff and the local fire officer.

The needs of visitors are often unknown, and their knowledge of the environment may be limited to the route by which they entered the environment. It is not feasible to implement personal evacuation plans for visitors so an overall strategy is needed to enable visitors to escape from the building. Specific measures to meet the needs of disabled people may include the training of staff to provide assistance, audible and visual alarm systems and the clear indication of refuge areas.

1.8 Glossary of Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| Ambulant disabled People | People with a reduced level of mobility but who do not use a wheelchair i.e. those who use sticks, crutches or walking frames. This category also includes blind or partially sighted people who are liable to trip on incidental obstacles or uneven surfaces. |
| Blind people | For the purpose of this audit the term 'blind people' has been used to describe people who have no remaining vision. |
| Partially sighted people | For the purpose of this audit the term 'partially sighted people' has been used to describe people who have some remaining vision. |
| People who are deaf or hard of hearing | For the purpose of this audit the term 'people who are deaf or hard of hearing' has been used to describe people with all degrees of deafness, from mild to profound. |
| People with learning difficulties | For the purpose of this audit the term 'people with learning difficulties' has been used to describe people who may not learn things as quickly as other people and they may need more help and support to learn. |
| People with a of reduced level manual dexterity | For the purpose of this audit the term 'People with a reduced level of manual dexterity' has been used to describe people who may find it difficult to grip or control small items such as door knobs and taps that are required to be turned. This includes people with arthritis. |
| AD M | Approved Document M, Access to and use of buildings, 2004, The Building Regulations 2000, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. |
| BS 8300 | British standard BS8300: 2001 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice, British Standards Institute. |
| Manifestations | Clear markings fixed to a glazed surface to highlight the location of the glazing. |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Step nosing | Strip edge along the step, i.e. where horizontal surface meets the vertical surface of the step. |
| Corduroy surface | Tactile warning surface of a ribbed design, laid at right angles to the direction of travel. |
| Blister surface | Tactile warning surface of a domed design, generally laid to highlight the junction between the footpath and the highway when a dropped kerb has been installed. |
| Dropped kerb | Kerb line is flush between the pedestrian area and the highway. |
| Controlled crossing | A pedestrian crossing point where pedestrians are able to establish priority over oncoming traffic. For example at a pelican crossing. |
| Uncontrolled Crossing | A pedestrian crossing point where pedestrians do not have priority over oncoming traffic. |
| Accessible parking bays | Disabled persons parking bays. |
| Accessible Toilet | Disabled persons toilet |
| Tactile text | Text consists of embossed/raised fonts. |
| Sans serif fonts | Fonts/script like Arial (this font) or <i>Comic Sans</i> without tails or curls like <i>Brush Script</i> , or Times New Roman |
| mm | Millimetres |
| N | Newton's, which are the unit of measurement used in this report for door opening force. |
| Vision panel | Viewing panel in a door, usually formed from transparent material. |
| Kickplate | Flat plate fixed to the bottom of the door to avoid the door being damaged by wheelchair footplates. |
| Access to work | If you are thinking about recruiting a disabled person, you will know they have the skills and potential to do the work, but there may still be practical problems to overcome. Access to Work (AtW) is available to help overcome the problems resulting from disability. It offers practical advice and help in a flexible way that can be tailored to suit the needs of an individual in a particular job. |

2.0 Access Audit Summary

This is a review of the major recommendations and should only be read in conjunction with the attached full list of recommendations, and the accompanying fact sheets.

Approach

There are no designated crossing points in the vicinity of the station approach to assist people negotiate the crossing of City Road and Station Road. It is recommended that controlled crossing points should be introduced.

Most of the bus services do not drop off or pick up people immediately outside the station entrance. It is recommended that all bus services drop off and pick up people immediately outside the station.

There are no designated dropping-off points immediately outside the station entrance for people arriving by car. It is recommended that a dropping-off point is provided adjacent to the station entrance.

None of the existing parking provision allows blue-badge holders to park closer than approximately 100 metres from the main concourse area. It is recommended that existing accessible parking bays should be relocated to an area within 50 metres of the main concourse area and ticket office.

There is currently no lighting provision along the route between the west car park and the main concourse area. This is a health and safety issue. It is recommended that lighting is installed to ensure an even distribution of adequate light levels along this route.

Horizontal Circulation

A number of areas around the station were wet on the day of audit and on the day on which the subsequent consultation exercise was undertaken. The accumulation of surface water on platforms, outside the lifts and in the main concourse, is likely to be a significant health and safety issue. It is recommended that a refurbishment programme is implemented as a matter of priority to repair and maintain the station roof in order to eliminate the ingress of water.

Vertical Circulation

Steps

There is no tactile warning surface at the bottom of the steps inside the station to alert blind and partially sighted people to the presence of the steps. It is recommended that the tactile warning surface should be installed at the bottom of both flights of stairs.

The step nosings on the main flight of steps inside the station have been highlighted but the paint has become worn away in many places and this is likely to make it more difficult for partially sighted people to negotiate the steps. The steps between the east car park and the disused platform do not have highlighted nosings at all. It is recommended that the step nosings on all steps should be highlighted using colour and tonal contrast.

The handrails on these steps do not meet best practice guidelines and this is likely to make it more difficult for blind and partially sighted people and people with a reduced level of mobility to negotiate the steps. It is recommended that the handrails are upgraded to meet best practice guidelines.

Platforms

The tactile warning surface has not been installed on all platforms to alert people to the presence of the platform edge. This is likely to constitute a significant health and safety issue. It is recommended that the tactile warning surface is installed on all platforms in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Toilets

Standard

There is no provision in the standard toilet facilities for people who are ambulant disabled. It is recommended that a cubicle suitable for ambulant disabled people is provided in each single-sex standard toilet facility.

Accessible

People are required to obtain and use a Radar key to access the accessible toilet facilities. Best practice guidelines recommend that these facilities should be available on the same basis as standard toilet facilities. It is recommended that the requirement for a Radar key to access these facilities is removed.

There is no accessible toilet facility on the far side of the station (away from the entrance) and the provision of accessible facilities is not therefore commensurate with the standard provision. It is recommended that an accessible toilet facility is provided on the opposite side of the station to the entrance.

Specific Areas

Meeting Room

There is no hearing enhancement system provided in this facility to assist people using hearing aids. It is recommended that an induction loop system is fitted in this facility.

All of the seats have armrests in this room and this is likely to make it more difficult for some people (e.g. wheelchair users) to use the seats. Provide a range of seating; some with armrests and some without armrests, in order to provide people with a choice.

Ticket Office

None of the ticket sales points are height-adjustable or are provided with a lower section of counter to accommodate wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. It is recommended that either lower-level sections of counter are provided or that adjustable-height counters are introduced.

WH Smith / Trekkers Cafes / Customer Assistance Office

The use of double doors at the entrances to these facilities is likely to make it more difficult for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs to enter the facilities. It is recommended that these access points are widened either by keeping both doors open during business hours, by installing automatic doors or by installing leaf-and-a-half door configurations.

None of these facilities have dual-height counters to accommodate wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. It is recommended that dual-height counters are installed.

None of these facilities have hearing enhancement systems at the counters to assist people using hearing aids. It is recommended that induction loops are installed at these counters.

Signage

Much of the existing signage is adequate; the use of upper and lower case text and the good colour contrast between the text and sign boards is likely to assist partially sighted people in particular navigate around the different areas of the station. However, there is a lack of signage relating to certain facilities (principally the car parks and the lifts) and most of the existing signage comprises high-level signs which are unlikely to assist many blind and partially sighted visitors to the station. It is therefore recommended that a separate signage audit of the station is undertaken in order to highlight shortcomings in the existing signage system and to ensure a consistent approach is adopted in upgrading the provision of signs in and around the station complex.

Real-Time Information

There is a lack of adequate visual and audible information around the station and some of the existing information is unlikely to be accessible to blind and partially sighted people, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and some wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. It is recommended that a review should be undertaken of the existing provision of real-time information.

Emergency Egress

Visual fire alarms have not been provided in potential sole-occupancy areas (principally the toilets) to alert people unable to hear the audible alarms in the event of an emergency. It is recommended that visual alarms should be installed in potential sole-occupancy parts of the station.

3.0 Access Audit Spreadsheet

The following recommendations should be read in conjunction with the fact sheets, which are bound in a separate volume The fact sheets provide further dimensional criteria which can be applied to the recommendations.

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|--------------------------|----------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 | City Road / Station Road | Approach | There are no designated crossing points on the approach to the station from City Road and Station Road to assist people cross these roads. There are dropped kerbs in the area currently occupied by taxis but these are not available for use due to the location of the taxis and, in any case, these would not assist people at the junction of City Road and Station Road. | Liaise with the local authority to install controlled crossings at this junction. | D | 4 | |
| 2 | City Road / Station Road | Approach | There is a bus service that stops immediately outside the station entrance and which provides level access for wheelchair users directly on to the footway outside the station. This is a feature of good practice. However, this service is limited (it only runs between a local shop and the station) and the main bus service currently delivers people to, and picks them up from, bus stops approximately 50m from the station entrance and on the other side of Station Road. | Liaise with the local authority to install bus stops immediately outside the station entrance in order to accommodate all bus services to and from the station. | D | SRA Code of Practice | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|--------------------------|----------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 3 | City Road / Station Road | Approach | There do not appear to be any dropping-off points for cars immediately outside the station. The area immediately in front of the station is currently reserved for a local bus service only. | Liaise with the local authority to provide a designated dropping-off point for cars outside the main entrance to the station. | D | 2 | |
| 4 | City Road / Station Road | Signage | There is no signage at the front of the station directing people to the two car parks. | Provide directional signage on the approach to the station in relation to the car parks. | C | 23 | |
| 5 | East Car Park | Signage | The signage at the entrance to this car park and the signage immediately inside the entrance incorporates good colour contrasting characteristics which is likely to make it easier to read for partially sighted people and it also employs upper and lower case text which is also likely to make it easier to read for partially sighted people and people with learning difficulties. However, the signage does not provide any information relating to accessible parking bays (i.e. whether there are any bays provided and whether parking for blue-badge holders is free). | Provide information relating to the accessible parking bays at the entrance to the car park. | C | 23 | 1 |
| 6 | East Car Park | Approach | The car park has between 70-80 car parking spaces and there are 5 accessible parking spaces provided. This provision meets best practice guidelines. | N/A | | | 2 |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 7 | East Car Park | Approach | Each accessible bay measures 4,800mm in length x 3m width plus a 1,200mm wide transfer zone. These dimensions meet best practice guidelines and the bays are also correctly marked with the international accessible sign on the surface of the bay and have drivers' eye level signage installed at the end of the bays. | N/A | | | 2 |
| 8 | West Car Park | Signage | The signage at the entrance to this car park incorporates good colour contrasting characteristics which is likely to make it easier to read for partially sighted people and it employs upper and lower case text which is also likely to make it easier to read for partially sighted people and people with learning difficulties. However, the signage does not provide any information relating to accessible parking bays (i.e. whether there are any bays provided and whether parking for blue-badge holders is free). | Provide information relating to the accessible parking bays at the entrance to the car park. | C | 23 | |
| 9 | East Car Park | Approach | The pay and display machines in this car park have controls located between 1,000-1,300mm above ground level. 1,300mm is slightly above the height recommended in best practice guidelines but these controls are likely to be accessible to most wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 10 | East Car Park | Signage | The signage located next to the pay and display machines confirms that blue-badge holders do have to pay to park in this area. However, this information is located on a sign over 2m high and this is likely to be more difficult to read for partially sighted people and people of shorter stature. | Provide information at a more convenient height between 1,400-1,700mm above ground level. | C | 23 | |
| 11 | East Car Park | Approach | The steps that lead up from this car park and onto the platform do not have colour contrasting nosings to assist partially sighted people identify individual steps. | Highlight step nosings using colour and tonal contrast. | A | 11,25 | 3 |
| 12 | East Car Park | Approach | These steps are provided with handrails on both sides which is good practice as it is likely to make the steps easier to negotiate for blind and partially sighted people and people with a reduced level of mobility. However, the handrails do not extend horizontally beyond the bottom step to provide guidance and support at this point. | Extend handrails at the bottom of this flight. | A | 13 | 3 |
| 13 | East Car Park | Approach | The metal handrails are cold to the touch which is likely to make them more difficult to use for people with sensitive hands. | Provide handrails that are warm to the touch. | A | 13 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 14 | East Car Park | Approach | A ramp is provided adjacent to the steps to assist wheelchair users and other people with a reduced level of mobility reach the platform. The ramp comprises two 8m sections with an intermediate landing. The ramp is over 2,500mm in width and the large landing area provides ample manoeuvring space. The ramp has a very gentle gradient and at the steepest section is only 1:18. These features meet best practice guidance. | N/A | | | 4 |
| 15 | East Car Park | Approach | The ramp is fitted with handrails on both sides. These metal handrails are cold to the touch and this is likely to make them more difficult to use for people with sensitive hands. | Provide handrails that are warm to the touch. | A | 13 | 4 |
| 16 | East Car Park | Approach | The distance from the accessible parking bays to the ticket office is approximately 250m. This is likely to make it more difficult for people with a reduced level of mobility to negotiate the journey from the car park to the ticket office. Best practice guidelines recommend a maximum distance of 50m in this respect. | Review existing parking arrangements with a view to providing accessible parking closer to the ticket office. | B | 2 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 17 | East Car Park | Signage | Signage is provided adjacent to the steps and the ramp and on the platform to direct visitors to the main concourse and the ticket office. This signage employs upper and lower case text and the text colour contrasts strongly with the sign board. However, all of this signage is located above 2m from ground level and there is no signage at a more accessible height. This is likely to make it more difficult for partially sighted people to navigate between the car park and the ticket office. | Provide information at a more convenient height between 1,400-1,700mm above ground level. | C | 23 | |
| 18 | East Car Park | Approach | A help point is provided adjacent to the accessible parking bays. This is a feature of good practice as it is likely to be easier to use for people with a reduced level of mobility. The control button for this device is located at 700mm and the intercom speaker is located at a height of 1m above ground level. 700mm is slightly below the recommended height for controls but the button is still likely to be accessible to people unable to bend easily. The signage relating to this device is located at a height of approximately 1,700mm. This is also a feature of good practice. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 19 | West Car Park | Approach | The help point and pay and display machine are both located at the entrance to the car park but are positioned next to the exit lane and would therefore be difficult to access for people with a reduced level of mobility coming into the car park. There is also no help point or pay and display machine at the end of the car park where the accessible parking bays are located. This is likely to make it more difficult for blind and partially sighted people and people with a reduced level of mobility to use these facilities. | Install a help point and ticket machine adjacent to the accessible parking bays. | C | 2 | |
| 20 | West Car Park | Signage | The signage immediately inside the car park is also located next to the exit lane and is therefore several metres away from people entering the car park and not within the immediate eye line of the driver. The signage is also located between 2-3m above ground level. These features are likely to make the sign more difficult to read especially for partially sighted people. | Either relocate the existing sign in order that it can be read more easily upon entering the car park or provide additional signage adjacent to the entrance lane. | C | 23 | |
| 21 | West Car Park | Signage | Beyond the entrance to the car park there is no signage at all to indicate the existence or location of accessible parking spaces. | Provide directional signage relating to the accessible parking bays. | C | 23 | |
| 22 | West Car Park | Approach | There are in excess of 60 car parking spaces in this car park and there are 5 accessible parking bays. This provision meets best practice guidelines. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 23 | West Car Park | Signage | The accessible parking bays are provided with the international accessible sign on the surface of the bay but there is no vertical signage at drivers' eye level to confirm the location of these spaces. This is likely to make it more difficult for people to identify the accessible parking bays. | Install vertical signage at drivers' eye level. | C | 2,23 | |
| 24 | West Car Park | Approach | The diagonally configured accessible parking bays are approximately 4.5m in length x 3.3m in width and have a 1,600mm transfer zone. These dimensions do not correspond exactly with best practice recommendations (4.8m length, 2.4m width, 1,200mm transfer) but the existing configuration is likely to accommodate the loading and unloading of wheelchairs and people with other forms of mobility aids. | N/A | | | |
| 25 | West Car Park | Signage | There is no signage adjacent to the accessible parking bays to indicate the direction of the platform and the ticket office. | Install directional signage using accessible formats adjacent to the accessible parking bays. | C | 23 | |
| 26 | West Car Park | Approach | These parking bays are approximately 100m from the ticket office and this is likely to make it more difficult for people with a reduced level of mobility to negotiate the journey between the car park and the ticket office and main concourse. Between this pay and display car park and the ticket office there is a car park designated for use by employees of Network Rail. | Relocate the existing accessible parking bays to the 'Network Rail' car park in order that these bays are less than 50m from the ticket office. | C | 2 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|--|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 27 | West Car Park | Approach | There is no artificial lighting provision along the footpath that links the accessible parking bays and the ticket office. This is a general health and safety issue as well as being likely to make it more difficult for partially sighted people to negotiate this route. | Install lighting along this route. | A | 24 | |
| 28 | Main Entrance | Signage | The main sign outside the station entrance is above head height suspended from the canopy at this point. The sign incorporates good colour contrasting characteristics and employs upper and lowercase text which are features of good practice. However there is no lower level signage in accessible formats to assist people who are blind and partially sighted. | Provide signage in accessible formats. | C | 23 | |
| 29 | Main Entrance | Entrance | On the day of audit there were no doors at the entrance to the station although there are indications that there would normally be automatic glazed doors at this point. The areas of glazing to each side of the entrance are fitted with manifestations which is good practice as this is likely to alert partially sighted people to the presence of glazing. | Ensure that when new doors are fitted colour contrasting manifestations are applied. (If the doors malfunction they would constitute a collision hazard for partially sighted people). | A | 5,25 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 30 | Main Entrance | Entrance | On the day of audit loose fitting mats were located immediately inside the entrance and these are likely to constitute a potential tripping hazard for blind and partially sighted people. (These mats may well be a temporary measure due to the absence of doors to keep the wet weather out). | Ensure that whilst these temporary mats are in place they do not constitute a significant tripping hazard. This could be achieved by highlighting the mats using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 7,25 | |
| 31 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | Circulation space within this area is ample and there are no obvious collision or tripping hazards in the direct lines of travel. The free-standing information boards in the middle of the lobby area colour contrast strongly with the floor and can also be detected by long cane users at ground level. | N/A | | | 5 |
| 32 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | All of the seating provided in this area has armrests and this is likely to make it more difficult to use for people, such as wheelchair users, who find the armrests an obstacle to sitting down and rising from a seated position. | Provide a range of seating some with armrests and some without armrests. | C | 15 | 6 |
| 33 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | There are two ticket machines located in the concourse area. These are located beyond the direct lines of travel through the concourse and the various controls and slots for money are positioned between heights of 900mm and 1,200mm. The keypad and the touch screen are located at approximately 1,100mm from floor level. These are features of good practice. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 34 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | There are four payphones located in this area. These have coin slots located at a height of 1,400mm above floor level and keypads and handsets located at approximately 1,100mm. These features are likely to be too high for some wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Provide at least one telephone with controls located between 750-1,040mm above floor level. | C | 9 | |
| 35 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | People queuing on the concourse to use the ticket office are controlled by tape barriers. The tape is located at a height of 900mm above floor level and there is nothing to detect at ground level for long-cane users. The uprights for this barrier are highly reflective and do not colour contrast strongly with the floor on which they are standing. These tapes and uprights constitute potential tripping hazards for blind and partially sighted people. | Replace the tape barriers with rigid colour-contrasting barriers that can be detected at floor level. | A | 1 | 7 |
| 36 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | The real-time information screens in this area are located at a height of approximately 3m above floor level. They incorporate upper and lowercase text and colour contrast is strong between the white text and the black background. These are features of good practice. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|--|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 37 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | Other information provided in this area, such as timetable information, is located between 1,100mm and 2,000mm above floor level and this is likely to be easier to read for many people (including partially sighted people and wheelchair users). However, some of this information, such as the station names in the main timetables, is provided in uppercase text only which is likely to be more difficult to read for partially sighted people and for people with learning difficulties. | Provide information in accessible formats. | C | 23 | |
| 38 | Main Concourse | Specific Areas | Some areas of the floor in this part of the station are highly polished and are therefore reflective. This is likely to be confusing to some partially sighted people. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that a matt finish is provided when the floor is cleaned. | B | 22,28 | |
| 39 | Ticket Office | Specific Areas | There are four sales points all of which appear to be provided with induction loops to assist people using hearing aids. This is good practice. | N/A | | | |
| 40 | Ticket Office | Specific Areas | None of the sales points has a lower level section of counter to assist wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. Because of the sloping nature of this site the counters vary in height from 900mm above floor level to 1,200mm above floor level. This also affects the height of the chip and pin devices located on the counters. | Provide either dual-height counters or adjustable height counters. | C | 8 | 7 |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 41 | Ticket Office | Specific Areas | The sales points are fitted with glazing but there are no obstructions between the counter staff and visitors. This is a feature of good practice as it is more likely to allow people to communicate using lip reading techniques. | N/A | | | |
| 42 | Ticket Barriers | Horizontal Circulation | The ticket barriers do not colour contrast strongly with adjacent surfaces and are therefore likely to be more difficult to identify for partially sighted people. | Highlight ticket barriers using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | 8 |
| 43 | Ticket Barriers | Horizontal Circulation | A manually operated, wider access point controlled by staff is located immediately adjacent to the standard barriers. This provides a clear opening width of 900mm and is likely to make it easier for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs to negotiate the barriers. | N/A | | | 9 |
| 44 | W H Smith | Specific Areas | Access to this shop is by means of a pair of double doors although only one leaf was open on the day of audit. This leaf provided a clear opening width of only 620mm. This is unlikely to be sufficient for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. | Widen the access point to this shop. (This could be achieved most easily by keeping both doors open during business hours). | B | 5,28 | |

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|-----|-----------------------|----------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 45 | W H Smith | Specific Areas | Circulation space within the shop itself is limited and at some points only 700mm clear width is available which is unlikely to be sufficient for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. The main cause of this lack of circulation space is the storage of items (e.g. newspapers) on the floor in between display cases. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that adequate circulation space is maintained. | B | 10,28 | |
| 46 | W H Smith | Specific Areas | A number of items such as cans of drink and magazines are located above head height which is likely to make them more difficult to reach for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that items are located at a more accessible height. (Many wheelchair users are likely to find it uncomfortable to reach for items located more than 1,000mm above their shoulder level). | B | 28 | |
| 47 | W H Smith | Specific Areas | The counter in this shop is located at a height just over 900mm from floor level. This is likely to be too high for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Provide a dual height counter including a lower section of counter at a height of 760mm above floor level. | C | 8 | |
| 48 | W H Smith | Specific Areas | There is no hearing-enhancement system provided at the counter in this facility to assist people who use hearing aids. | Install an induction loop. | C | 27 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 49 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | This café is accessed by means of a pair of glazed doors. Both leaves could be opened on the day of audit and each leaf provided a clear opening width of 650mm. However, it is likely to be difficult for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs to open both doors to provide the required space to enter the facility. | Widen the access point to this shop. (This could be achieved most easily by keeping both doors open during business hours). | B | 5,28 | |
| 50 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | The glazed doors are slightly opaque but could still be confusing for some partially sighted people. A number of items applied to the upper part of these doors provide warning of the presence of glazing but there are no manifestations under a height of 1,200mm which could be confusing for partially sighted people and people of shorter stature. | Apply colour contrasting manifestations between heights of 850-1,000mm above floor level. | A | 5,25 | |
| 51 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | The metal handles on these doors do not colour contrast strongly with the doors themselves and are likely to be more difficult to identify for partially sighted people | Highlight handles using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |
| 52 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | These doors open outwards but there are no kickplates fitted to the inside of the doors to protect them from wheelchair footplates. | Install kickplates to the inside of the doors. | C | 5 | |
| 53 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | Although the entrance doors open outwards they are fitted with handles on the inside rather than pushplates. This could be confusing especially for partially sighted people. | Replace existing handles on the inside of these doors with pushplates. | C | 5 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 54 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | The height of the main counter is approximately 1,000mm above floor level which is likely to be too high for some wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. However, there is a lower level of counter immediately in front of the main counter which is 300mm deep and is approximately 700mm above floor level. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that this section of counter is kept clear of merchandise in order that it can be used by people unable to reach the main counter. | B | 28 | |
| 55 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | All of the seating provided inside and outside this café has armrests which is likely to make the seating more difficult to use for people, such as wheelchair users, who find the armrests an obstacle to sitting down and rising from a seated position. | Provide a range of seating some with armrests and some without armrests. | C | 15 | |
| 56 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | The tables provided by the café are highly reflective and do not colour contrast strongly with adjacent surfaces that they are viewed against. This is likely to make them more difficult for partially sighted people to identify. | Highlight tables using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | 10 |
| 57 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | There is no hearing-enhancement system provided at the counter in this facility to assist people who use hearing aids. | Install an induction loop. | C | 27 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
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| 58 | Trekkers Express Café | Specific Areas | The real-time information screen located inside this café is located at a height of approximately 2m above floor level. The screen employs upper and lowercase text and good colour contrast exists between the text and the background. The information is refreshed and not scrolled. These are features of good practice that are likely to make the information easier to read for partially sighted people and people with learning difficulties. | N/A | | | |
| 59 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | The entrance to this facility provides just over 700mm clear opening width. This is unlikely to be sufficient for people using mobility aids or people with assistance dogs. | Widen door to provide at least 750mm clear opening width. | C | 5 | |
| 60 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | There is a lack of strong colour contrast in this facility between items such as the wash basins and the walls on which they are mounted, and the cubicle doors and adjacent pilasters. There is also a lack of contrast between the hand-drying machines and the walls on which they are mounted. The floor and the walls also do not colour contrast strongly. This lack of colour contrast is likely to make the facility more difficult to use for partially sighted people. | Highlight critical surfaces and fixtures and fittings using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | 11 |
| 61 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | The wash basins in this facility are fitted with twist-action taps which are likely to be more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of manual dexterity. | Replace existing taps with single lever-action mixer taps. | C | 20 | 12 |

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|-----|---|------------------|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 62 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | The toilets in the cubicles are flushed by means of chains suspended from the cisterns. These are likely to be more difficult to use for people of shorter stature and people with a reduced level of manual dexterity. | Consider lowering the cisterns and providing flush handles on these cisterns. | C | 19,20 | |
| 63 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | The D-shaped handle on the inside of the door to this facility does not colour contrast strongly with the door itself and this is likely to make it more difficult to locate for partially sighted people. | Highlight handle using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |
| 64 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Emergency Egress | There is no visual fire alarm provided inside this facility to alert people unable to hear audible alarms. | Install a visual fire alarm. | A | 26 | |
| 65 | Male Toilet Facility (adjacent concourse area) | Toilets | There is no provision for people who are ambulant disabled and who need more space and support than is normally provided in standard toilet cubicles. | Install a cubicle for people who are ambulant disabled. | C | 31 | |
| 66 | Female Toilet Facility | Toilets | This facility was very busy on the day of audit and could not be appraised. | Review existing provision in the context of comments and recommendations made in relation to the male facilities. | B | 28 | |
| 67 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | This facility can only be accessed by means of a Radar key. The facility should be available on the same basis as the standard toilet facilities. | Replace the existing lock to remove the need to use a Radar key. | C | 19 | |
| 68 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | A Radar key is available in the Customer Assistance Office although this is not indicated outside the accessible toilet facility. | Prior to redeveloping the door, to dispense with the need for a Radar key, signage should be provided informing people where they can acquire the Radar key. | C | 23 | |

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| 69 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | The location of these two facilities in one room does not meet best practice guidelines and is likely to compromise the effectiveness of both functions. The space within this facility has an irregular, tapering shape and measures 1,300mm deep at the narrowest point to 2m depth at the widest point. The width of the facility is 2,700mm. This does not meet the configuration or dimensions recommended in best practice guidelines and is likely to be more difficult to use for wheelchair users. | Relocate the baby change facilities. Consideration should be given to incorporating baby-change facilities in a separate facility. Redevelop this facility to meet best practice guidelines. (The relocation of the baby-change facilities will accommodate the redevelopment of this area). | D | 19,20 | 13 |
| 70 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | | | D | 19,20 | 13 |
| 71 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | Colour contrast between the floor and the walls is not strong but contrast between the grab rails and the walls on which they are mounted is better though this contrast is reduced somewhat by the use of two lines of dark green tiles which do not contrast with the black grab rails. These features are likely to make it more difficult for partially sighted people to orientate themselves within the facility (because the walls and floor are a similar colour and tone) although they are more likely to be able to identify the fixtures and fittings. | Highlight the floor and walls using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | 14 |
| 72 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | The toilet is flushed by using a chain suspended from a high-level cistern. This is likely to be more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of manual dexterity and people of shorter stature. | Lower the cistern and provide flush handles on the cistern. | C | 19,20 | |

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|-----|---|------------------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 73 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Emergency Egress | There is no visual fire alarm provided inside this facility to alert people unable to hear audible alarms. | Install a visual fire alarm. | A | 26 | |
| 74 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | The wash basin is fitted with a lever-action tap which is a feature of good practice. However on the day of audit there was no water coming from this tap. | Institute remedial work to ensure that water is available in this facility. | B | 28 | |
| 75 | Accessible Toilet Facility and Baby-Change Facility | Toilets | The door to this facility provides 900mm clear opening width. This meets best practice guidelines. | N/A | | | |
| 76 | Customer Assistance Office | Specific Areas | This room is accessed via a pair of double doors of which only one leaf was open on the day of audit. This leaf provides just over 500mm clear opening width which is unlikely to be sufficient for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. | Widen the access to this office. This could be achieved by installing a leaf-and-a-half door configuration especially as leaving both doors open is probably not an option given the noise that emanates from the concourse area. | C | 5 | |
| 77 | Customer Assistance Office | Specific Areas | The counter in this room is located at a height of 900mm above floor level and, given that people (e.g. contractors) are required to sign-in, this counter is likely to be too high for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. There is also no area under the counter top to accommodate wheelchair users. | Install a dual height counter that meets best practice guidelines. | C | 8 | |
| 78 | Customer Assistance Office | Specific Areas | There is no hearing-enhancement system provided in this room to assist people who use hearing aids. | Install an induction loop. | C | 27 | |
| 79 | Meeting Room | Signage | There is no signage on the door to this room to indicate its present usage. | Install appropriate signage in accessible formats. | C | 23 | |

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|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 80 | Meeting Room | Specific Areas | The door to the room provides only 650mm clear opening width which is unlikely to be sufficient for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. There appears to be scope to widen this door considerably. | Widen the door to provide at least 800mm, preferably 900mm clear opening width. | C | 5 | 15 |
| 81 | Meeting Room | Specific Areas | None of the seating in this room has armrests and this is likely to make the seating more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of mobility and blind and partially sighted people who require the support and guidance that armrests provide. | Provide a range of seating some with armrests and some without armrests. | C | 15 | |
| 82 | Meeting Room | Specific Areas | The seating does not contrast strongly with the floor surface and this is likely to make it more difficult to locate for partially sighted people. | Highlight seating using colour and tonal contrast. | C | 25 | |
| 83 | Meeting Room | Specific Areas | There is no hearing-enhancement system provided in this room to assist people who use hearing aids. | Install an induction loop. | C | 27 | |
| 84 | Meeting Room | Specific Areas | Lighting levels are good in this area and this is likely to make it easier for partially sighted people to move around the room and identify features within it. | N/A | | | |
| 85 | Stairs | Vertical Circulation | There is no tactile warning surface provided at the bottom of the steps to alert blind and partially sighted people to the presence of the steps. | Provide the tactile warning surface at the bottom of the two flights of steps. | A | 4 | 16 |

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| 86 | Stairs | Vertical Circulation | The steps that provide access to platforms 4 to 7 from the main concourse area do have highlighted nosings which is a feature of good practice. However, the highlighting is extremely worn in places and this is likely to make the steps more difficult to use for partially sighted people. | Refresh the step nosings in order that a strong contrast is provided between the steps and the step nosings. | A | 11,25 | 16 |
| 87 | Stairs | Vertical Circulation | The steps are provided with handrails but the handrails do not extend horizontally at the bottom of the flight to provide support for people with a reduced level of mobility or guidance for blind and partially sighted people. | Extend the handrails at the bottom of this flight in accordance with best practice guidelines. | A | 13 | 16 |
| 88 | Stairs | Vertical Circulation | The handrails are metal and are cold to the touch. This is likely to make them more difficult to use for people with sensitive hands. | Provide handrails that are warm to the touch. | C | 13 | |
| 89 | Bridge to Platforms 4-7 | Vertical Circulation | This bridge linking platforms 1,2 and 3 to platforms 4, 5, 6 and 7 effectively creates two ramps approximately 14m long and with a gradient of 1:14. The bridge is also not fitted with any handrails to provide assistance for people with a reduced level of mobility. Lifts are provided as an alternative means of crossing the lines which is a feature of good practice but handrails would still be useful to people with a reduced level of mobility preferring to use the bridge to the lifts. | Install handrails that meet best practice guidelines. | C | 13 | |

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| 90 | Bridge to Platforms 4-7 | Vertical Circulation | The length of the slopes created by the bridge exceed the minimum ramp length recommended in best practice guidance. | Consider redeveloping the bridge to provide gentler gradients that meet best practice guidelines. | D | 12 | |
| 91 | Bridge to Platforms 4-7 | Horizontal Circulation | The lifts are linked by a horizontal walkway. This walkway was quite wet on the day of audit and puddles had formed along some sections of its length. This is likely to make it more difficult to use for people especially wheelchair users and people with a reduced level of mobility. The surface water is likely to be a significant hazard in freezing conditions. | Review the roof and surface of the walkway to ensure that a firm, dry surface is maintained at all times. | A | 3 | |
| 92 | Bridge to Platforms 4-7 | Horizontal Circulation | There is a barrier in between the walkway between the lifts and the bridge. This is necessary due to the difference in level between the ends of the bridge and the walkway. However, the gates in the middle of the barrier, which allow people to move between the walkway and the bridge, project into the line of travel on the walkway and are therefore a potential collision hazard for partially sighted people. | Review the purpose of these gates and consider removing them altogether or replacing them with sliding gates in order to remove the collision hazard. | B | 1,3 | |
| 93 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | This facility is accessed by means of a pair of double doors. Both doors could be opened on the day of audit and each leaf provides a clear opening width of 550mm. However, it is unlikely that people with a reduced level of mobility or people with assistance dogs would be able to easily open both doors at the same time. | Widen the access point to this facility. (This could be achieved most easily by keeping both doors open during business hours). | B | 5,28 | |

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|-----|-----------------------------------|------------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 94 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | There is a lack of strong colour contrast in this facility between features such as the wash basins and the hand dryer, and the walls on which these fittings are mounted. There is also a lack of contrast between the floor and the walls. These features are likely to make the facility more difficult to use for partially sighted people. | Highlight critical surfaces and fixtures and fittings using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |
| 95 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | The wash basins in this facility are fitted with twist-action taps which are likely to be more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of manual dexterity. | Replace existing taps with single lever-action mixer taps. | C | 19,20 | |
| 96 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | On the day of audit the floor of this facility was wet and slippery and this is likely to make the facility more difficult to use especially for people with a reduced level of mobility. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that the floor of this facility is kept dry. | B | 22,28 | |
| 97 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Emergency Egress | This facility is not fitted with a visual fire alarm to alert people unable to hear audible alarms. | Install visual fire alarms. | A | 26 | |
| 98 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | These toilets are flushed by means of a chain suspended from a high level cistern. | Consider lowering the cisterns and providing flush handles on these cisterns. | C | 19,20 | |
| 99 | Male Toilet Facility (Platform 4) | Toilets | There is no provision for people who are ambulant disabled and who need more space and support than is normally provided in standard toilet cubicles. | Install a cubicle for people who are ambulant disabled. | C | 31 | |
| 100 | Female Toilet Facility Platform 7 | Toilets | This facility has similar general characteristics to the male facility. | See comments and recommendations for male toilet facility on platform 4. | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
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| 101 | General | Toilets | There is no accessible toilet facility between platforms 4 and 7. The only accessible toilet facility is the one adjacent to the station entrance lobby. Accessible toilet facilities should be available where standard toilet facilities are available. | Provide accessible toilet facilities in this part of the station (i.e. between platforms 4 and 7). | D | 19,20 | |
| 102 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | This café can be accessed from either platform 4 or platform 7 via pairs of double doors. Each leaf of these doors provides a clear opening width of 650mm. This is unlikely to be sufficient for wheelchair users, people with mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. | Widen access to this facility. (This could be achieved by installing automatic doors or by installing a leaf-and-a-half door configuration. Leaving both doors open during poor weather conditions would not be an option). | C | 5 | |
| 103 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | These entrance doors are fitted with kick-plates which is a feature of good practice as they protect the doors from the foot-plates of wheelchairs. However the kick-plate on the outside of the door on platform 7 was missing on the day of audit. | Replace missing kick-plate. | B | 5 | |
| 104 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | None of the seating provided inside and outside this café has armrests and this is likely to make the seats more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of mobility and blind and partially sighted people who require armrests for support and guidance when sitting down or rising from a seated position. | Provide a range of seating some with armrests and some without armrests. | C | 15 | 17 |

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| 105 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | Tables provided by the café do not contrast strongly with the floor surface against which they are likely to be viewed. This is likely to make them more difficult to identify for partially sighted people. | Highlight tables using colour and tonal contrast. | C | 25 | 17 |
| 106 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | The counter in this facility is located at a height of 950mm which is likely to be too high for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Install a lower section of counter at a height of 760mm above floor level with clear space 700mm high underneath the counter to provide leg room for wheelchair users. | C | 8 | |
| 107 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | Light levels appeared low on the day of audit. Lux readings recorded on the day indicated levels lower than 100 lux in all areas of the café. This is likely to make the facility more difficult to use for partially sighted people. | Provide an even distribution of adequate light levels. | C | 24 | |
| 108 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | The real-time information screen in this facility is located at approximately 2m above floor level. It employs upper and lowercase text and colour contrast between the green text and the black background is strong. These are features of good practice and are likely to make the information easier to read for partially sighted people. | N/A | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|---|----------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 109 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | There is a section of counter located adjacent to the display of condiments and cutlery. This counter projects 300mm into the line of travel at a height of approximately 900mm above floor level. This constitutes a potential collision hazard for blind and partially sighted people as it cannot be detected at ground level. | Provide a tapping rail near floor level. | C | 1 | |
| 110 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | There are a number of items at the counter, such as chocolate bars, that are located above head height and are likely to be more difficult to reach for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Institute a management procedure to ensure that items are located at more accessible heights around the counter area and throughout the café. | B | 28 | |
| 111 | Trekkers Express Café (Between Platforms 4 and 7) | Specific Areas | There is no hearing enhancement system provided at the counter in this facility to assist people who use hearing aids. | Install an induction loop. | C | 27 | |
| 112 | Unused Platform | Platforms | There is an unused platform opposite platform 1. This platform provides the route between the east car park and the ticket office but there is no tactile warning surface in place to alert blind and partially sighted people to the proximity of the drop on to the railway line. | Install the tactile warning surface in accordance with best practice guidelines. | A | 4 | 18 |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|--|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 113 | Platform 1 | Platforms | There is a line of vertical columns located along platform 1. These columns appear to contrast strongly with adjacent surfaces against which they are viewed and there are adequate circulation routes on both sides of the columns. The columns do not seem likely therefore to constitute a significant collision hazard. | N/A | | | |
| 114 | Platform 1 | Platforms | The platform edge has a 150mm contrasting white strip. The tactile warning surface is also in place along the length of the platform to a depth of 400mm and 750mm away from the platform edge. These are features of good practice and are likely to alert blind and partially sighted people to the location of the edge of the platform and the drop onto the railway line. | N/A | | | |
| 115 | Platform 1 | Platforms | None of the seating provided in between platform 1 and platform 3 has armrests to assist blind and partially sighted people and people with a reduced level of mobility. | Provide a range of seating some with armrests and some without armrests. | C | 15 | |
| 116 | Platform 1 | Platforms | The seating between platform 1 and platform 3 does not colour contrast strongly with the surface of the platform and this is likely to make it more difficult to identify for partially sighted people. | Highlight seating using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 117 | Platform 2 | Platforms | This platform does have a white edging but it does not have the correctly specified tactile warning surface to alert blind and partially sighted people to the presence of the railway line. | Install the tactile warning surface in accordance with best practice guidelines. | A | 4 | |
| 118 | Platform 3 | Platforms | This platform has similar characteristics to platform 1. | See comments and recommendations for platform 1. | | | |
| 119 | Platform 4 | Platforms | The tactile warning surface on this platform is located 900mm from the platform edge and is laid to a depth of 400mm. This meets best practice guidelines. | N/A | | | |
| 120 | Platform 4 | Platforms | The seating provided on this platform offers a choice of seats; some with armrests and some without armrests. This is a feature of good practice as it is likely to accommodate people with differing seating requirements. However, the seats do not colour contrast strongly with the platform surface or adjacent walls and this is likely to make them more difficult to locate for partially sighted people. | Highlight seating using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|--|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 121 | Platform 4 | Signage | The traditional red telephone box located on this platform is likely to be more difficult to use for wheelchair users, people of shorter stature and people with a reduced level of manual dexterity given the height and design of the door handle. The handle is located between 1,200-1,300mm from floor level. The box is also mounted on a 100mm plinth. A more accessible telephone box is available on the next platform a few metres away. | Provide signage adjacent to this telephone box to inform people of the location of the alternative provision. | C | 23 | |
| 122 | Platform 4 | Platforms | The door of the telephone box is extremely stiff to open and this is likely to make it more difficult to use for people with a reduced level of mobility. | Adjust the door opening mechanism in order that the door is easier to open. | B | 5 | |
| 123 | Platform 5 | Platforms | This has the same installation of the tactile warning surface as platform 4. | N/A | | | |
| 124 | Platform 6 | Platforms | This has the same installation of the tactile warning surface as platform 1. | N/A | | | |
| 125 | Platform 7 | Platforms | This platform does not have the tactile warning surface in place to alert blind and partially sighted people to the close proximity of the platform edge. | Install the tactile warning surface in accordance with best practice guidelines. | A | 4 | |
| 126 | Lift | Signage | There is a lack of directional signage in the entrance and main concourse areas relating to the lift facility. | Provide signage in accessible formats confirming the presence and location of the lift. | C | 23 | |
| 127 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The doors to the lift do not colour contrast strongly with the adjacent surfaces and this is likely to make it more difficult for people, especially partially sighted people, to locate the facility. | Highlight lift doors using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 128 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The lift doors provide over 1,200mm clear opening width which meets best practice guidelines. | N/A | | | |
| 129 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The lift car measures 1,500mm wide x 2,300mm deep. Best practice guidelines recommend a minimum width of 1,950mm and depth of 1,400mm (preferably 1,500mm). | When the lift is redeveloped or replaced ensure that it meets best practice guidelines. | D | SRA Code of Practice | |
| 130 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The lift is fitted with audible announcements. This is a feature of good practice as it is likely to make it easier for blind and partially sighted people to use the facility. | N/A | | | |
| 131 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | There is a lack of colour contrast in the lift car between the floor, the walls and the doors. This is likely to make it more difficult for partially sighted people to orientate themselves within the facility. | Highlight critical surfaces using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |
| 132 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The rectangular shaped handrails provided in the lift do not meet best practice guidelines in terms of their profile and are likely to be more difficult to grip for people with a reduced level of mobility requiring their support. | Replace existing handrails with handrails that meet best practice guidelines. | C | 13 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|----------------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 133 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The controls for the lift are located between heights of 1,000-1,300mm above the floor of the lift and there is an additional emergency alarm button located at a height of 450mm from the lift floor to assist people in a prone position. The higher controls (above 1,100mm) are likely to be too high for some wheelchair users and people of shorter stature. | Lower controls to meet best practice guidelines. | C | 14 | |
| 134 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | The control buttons do not strongly contrast with the wall on which they are mounted although they do illuminate when operated. The lack of colour contrast is likely to make the buttons more difficult to locate and identify for partially sighted people. The emergency buttons do colour contrast strongly with the walls which is a feature of good practice. | Highlight the control buttons for the different levels using colour and tonal contrast. | B | 25 | |
| 135 | Lift | Vertical Circulation | On the day of audit a puddle had formed immediately outside the lift on platform 4. This is likely to be inconvenient for users and could create a slipping hazard especially for people with a reduced level of mobility. | Review the drainage of this area to ensure a firm, dry surface is provided. | A | 3 | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------------|---|---|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 136 | General | Horizontal Circulation | With the exception of the main concourse area and areas immediately adjacent to the main concourse, lighting levels around the station appeared low both on the first afternoon of the audit and on the following morning. This situation is likely to make the station more difficult to navigate around for partially sighted people in particular and is also likely to constitute a more general hazard and safety issue. | Undertake a review of lighting in all areas beyond the main concourse (i.e. platforms, steps, lift, bridge, and toilets). | A | 24 | |
| 137 | General | Horizontal Circulation | There is too little visual and audible real-time information provided around the station. Some of the announcements were not clear on the day of audit and this is likely to make them more difficult to understand for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some of the screens employ text that does not colour contrast strongly with the screen background and this is likely to make the information more difficult to read for partially sighted people. | Commission a review of the provision of real-time information around the station. | | | |

| Ref | Room / Room Reference | Element | Existing Situation | Recommendations | Category | Fact Sheet Reference | Photo Ref |
|-----|-----------------------|---------|---|--|----------|----------------------|-----------|
| 138 | General | Signage | The existing signage is of an adequate specification in terms of the use of upper and lowercase text and the colour contrast between black text and white background. However, the overall signage system is insufficient in providing directional and location information for some specific facilities, such as the lift, and there is a lack of signage at eye level to assist blind and partially sighted people navigate around the station. (The majority of existing signs are suspended signs well above head height and therefore inaccessible to blind and partially sighted people). | Commission a separate signage audit of the entire station. | C | 23 | |

4.0 Photographs



Figure 1 – Car park signage.

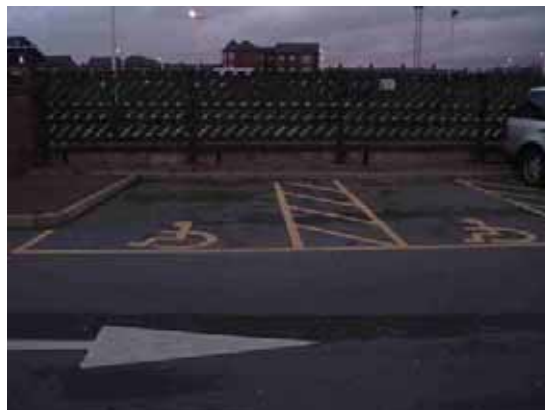


Figure 2 – Accessible parking bays.



Figure 3 – Steps from car park.



Figure 4 – Ramp from car park.



Figure 5 – Main concourse area.



Figure 6 – Main concourse seating.



Figure 7 – Ticket office area.



Figure 8 – Ticket barriers.



Figure 9 – Accessible barrier.



Figure 10 – Café table.



Figure 11 – Toilet cubicle.



Figure 12 – Wash basin.



Figure 13 – Accessible toilet and baby change facility.



Figure 14 – Accessible toilet.



Figure 15 – Meeting room door.

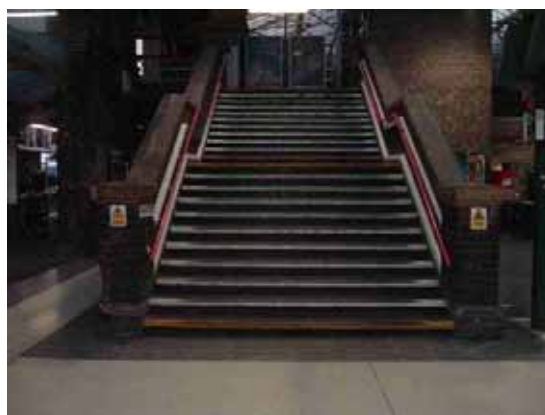


Figure 16 – Main stairs.

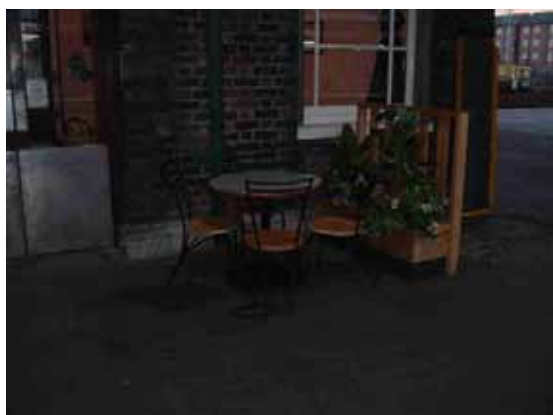


Figure 17 – Café seats.



Figure 18 – Disused platform.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 JMU audit report statement on door opening force

Guidance on the maximum force required to open a door (opening force) has been updated to take into account fire safety requirements and practical considerations. Fire resistant doors need to stay closed in order to stop the spread of fire and external doors need to resist external conditions, such as wind and rain. Therefore, the opening force of a door, when measured at the leading edge, should not be more than 30 Newtons from 0° (door in closed position) to 30° open, and not more than 22.5 Newtons from 30° to 60° of the opening cycle.

When observations in this report state that the door opening force is satisfactory, it will fall within the above values (with possible variations of 2 or 3 Newtons depending on the quality of the measuring instrument).

Appendix 2 JMU audit report statement on lighting

Although lighting levels can be measured, the lighting levels measured in one particular location can vary greatly based on the time of day/year and the location that the light meter is placed in within the environment being measured.

JMU Access Partnership assess lighting conditions by using the following factors –

- levels of illumination
- the position, direction intensity and nature of light sources
- the influence of natural light
- potential sources of reflection and glare
- shadows or strong pools of dark and light

Appendix 3 JMU audit report statement on colour and tonal contrast

Blind or partially sighted people benefit from visual contrast between adjacent surfaces and between fixtures and fittings and the backgrounds they are viewed against.

Light reflectance values can be used to measure the difference in visual contrast between two surfaces. This can be measured using a spectrophotometer or hand held colorimeter. A spectrophotometer is not appropriate for use on site and would be used mainly in laboratory conditions. Hand held colorimeters can be used to measure light reflectance values on site, but measurements cannot be taken on curved surfaces or gloss finishes.

When undertaking access audits, JMU Access Partnership undertake observational assessments of the degree of visual contrast between adjacent surfaces.

**Passenger Focus
Chester Station
Consultation Exercise Report**

January 2007
Job Number 14097

JMU Access Partnership
105 Judd St, London, WC1H 9NE
Phone: 020 7391 2002, Fax: 020 7387 7109

JMU Access Partnership

JMU Access Partnership is a pan disability, not-for-profit, Access Consultancy, part of the RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind).

Our aim is to help enable people with serious sight loss and other disabilities lead full and independent lives through improved access to the built environment. This is achieved through our consultancy, training, publications, research and policy activities.

Training and consultancy is delivered through our team of Access Consultants based in London and Leeds. Our consultants are drawn from the construction, design and research related professions. We understand the practical and technical constraints as well as the aesthetic aspirations of building designers and owners. This means that we can bring a fresh approach to each project, tailoring the solutions to our clients' needs and avoiding prescriptive or generic solutions wherever possible.

This report is available on disc, in large print format, Braille or tape upon request. Please contact JMU Access Partnership for further information.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Participant Comments

3.0 Recommendations

1.0 Introduction

This report follows a consultation exercise undertaken on 16th January 2007 at Chester Station and conducted by Steve Hill, Access Consultant with JMU Access Partnership, with assistance from Julie Warburton and Simon Pickering of Passenger Focus.

Methodology

The consultation exercise was undertaken to augment the findings of the access audit undertaken by JMU Access Partnership on 8th and 9th January 2007. The consultation on the 16th consisted of a walk-and-talk exercise involving four participants with a range of disabilities.

Participants were briefed at the beginning of the exercise on the background to the audit and consultation process. The JMU consultant and representatives of Passenger Focus then conducted a journey through the station, noting comments and recommendations from the participants. The day closed with a final feedback and consolidation session.

Participants

- Two wheelchair users plus one carer
- One blind, long-cane user

2.0 Participant comments

Approach

City Road / Station Road

- Most of the buses bringing people to the station do not have 'drop-downs' to assist people with a reduced level of mobility. (The exception is the 'Marks and Spencer' service which runs between this store and the railway station).
- Most of the buses do not park immediately outside the station which requires people to negotiate the crossing of City Road and Station Road. (The exception is the 'Marks and Spencer' service which runs between this store and the railway station and which drops people immediately outside the station).
- The only dropped kerbs in the vicinity of the station are in the area currently occupied by the taxis. These are inaccessible because of the taxis. Therefore there are no designated crossing points for pedestrians or for people using the buses that stop at the bus stops in City Road.

Car Parks

- There are gates between the east car park and the platform which provides the shortest and most direct route to the main concourse and ticket office. If these gates are locked during the evening then this would create a significant problem for wheelchair users, other people with a reduced level of mobility, and blind and partially sighted people wishing to use this route.
- There was a significant build-up of surface water on the routes between both car parks and the main concourse area. This is likely to create health and safety issues as well as being generally inconvenient.
- There is no cover over the route between the west car park and the main concourse area. This is also likely to create health and safety issues as well as being generally inconvenient.
- There is no lighting along the route between the west car park and the main concourse area. "It does not feel like a safe route".
- The pay and display machine in the west car park is located at the furthest point away from the accessible parking bays. This is likely to make it more difficult for people with a reduced level of mobility to purchase tickets.
- The pay and display machines in the car parks only take cash. For some people (e.g. people with a reduced level of manual dexterity) it is easier to use credit / debit cards than cash.
- There is a lack of space to manoeuvre vehicles adjacent to the accessible parking bays in the west car park. The only reason this was not a problem on the day of the consultation exercise was that only one of these bays was occupied. This is a health and safety issue.

Outside the Entrance

- The footway immediately outside the entrance to the station has a sloping surface which is likely to make it more difficult for wheelchair users and other people with a reduced level of mobility in particular to approach the station entrance.

- The structural uprights outside the station entrance are a potential collision hazard for blind and partially sighted people.

Entrance

- The entrance is not apparent to blind and partially sighted people.
- There is a lack of real-time information at the entrance to inform people of imminent departures as soon as they arrive.
- Some of the timetable information in the entrance lobby is too high for some wheelchair users especially those using glasses with varifocal lenses for whom the glare reflecting off the display is a problem. Some station information, including the key to symbols used in the timetable, is located too high for wheelchair users and partially sighted people.
- The print size is small and this compounds the problem.

Horizontal Circulation

- The positioning of buckets to catch water leaking through the roof of the station creates a tripping hazard and reduces manoeuvring space.
- The buckets may have contributed to the young girl slipping over in the main concourse area (see comment under 'Ticket Office').

Vertical Circulation

- On the day of the consultation exercise staff alerted participants that the lift was not working. However, no measures had been taken to alert other visitors to the station of this situation and in fact, over two hours later, staff on the far side of the station were still unaware of this situation. This is likely to be confusing for passengers and is also likely to cause some people to miss trains as wheelchair users are required to notify staff in advance that they need assistance to cross the lines to opposite sides of the station. Clearly, this is something they would be unable to do if they were not themselves given advance notice of the situation relating to the lift.
- The lift car was "smelly".
- There is no tactile warning surface at the bottom of the steps (both sides of the station) to alert blind and partially sighted people to the presence of the platform edge.
- Handrails on stairs do not continue at the top of the flight to provide guidance to blind and partially sighted people.

Platforms

- There is a lack of tactile warning surface on the unused platform which provides the route from the east car park and the main concourse area to alert blind and partially sighted people to the edge of the platform.
- The application of tactile warning surface is inconsistent (i.e. some platforms have tactile warning surface whilst others do not) which is possibly more hazardous for blind and partially sighted people than if none of the platforms had tactile warning surface.
- There is a manhole cover between the ticket barriers and platform 3 which could be mistaken by blind and partially sighted people for tactile warning surface.

Toilets

- The entrance door to the toilet facilities is heavy and also opens outwards onto the concourse. It is difficult to open for wheelchair users.
- The facility (in common with the standard toilets) was wet and dirty on the day of audit and the day on which the consultation exercise took place.
- There is only one accessible toilet facility on the station; there are two sets of standard toilets.
- "It is demeaning to have to ask for a key to gain access to this facility. Users of the standard toilet facilities do not have to ask for a key".
- Apparently there is only one key on the station; what happens if this gets lost?
- It is "wrong" to have the baby change facilities in this room. "The nappy bins smell".
- The accessible toilet does not have an automatic flush which is a good feature. Automatic flushes can be very inconvenient as they can be accidentally activated by people moving on the toilet seat.
- The provision of an emergency button is a feature of good practice as it allows people to summon assistance.
- There is an adjustable heater in the facility which is a feature of good practice.
- The facility is unisex and this is a good feature as it allows partners / carers to assist regardless of gender.
- The water provided in the wash basin is warm (not too hot or cold) and this is a good feature.
- The mirror is too high for wheelchair users despite being adjustable. The wheelchair users expressed contrary views on this point. The taller person did not have a problem using the mirror.

Specific Areas

Main Concourse

- The screens on the self-service ticket machines were reflecting light on the day of the consultation exercise and this was making it difficult for wheelchair users viewing the screen from their eye level. This was not a bright sunny day. The screens on the cash machines also create glare when viewed from the eye level of wheelchair users. This was compounded on the day of the consultation exercise by dirt on the screen.
- "These machines are not accessible to blind people".
- The public payphones (specifically the coin slots) in this area are likely to be too high for some wheelchair users.
- "The noise levels in the main concourse area make it more difficult to use the public payphones".
- One participant in a wheelchair commented that she would feel vulnerable getting cash from her bag to use the payphone.
- The use of different colours for flooring would be useful to delineate between different areas (e.g. concourse and café)

Customer Assistance Office

- The doors to this office are too narrow for wheelchair users to enter the room and approach the counter - one leaf is not wide enough and the second leaf was locked on the day of audit and the day on which the consultation exercise took place.
- Despite that a participant in a wheelchair requested information from a position at these doors, staff did not offer to open the locked door-leaf to permit them entry into the office itself.
- The counter does not have a low-level section to accommodate wheelchair users.

Ticket Office

- The ticket sales points are immediately adjacent to the main concourse area and the ticket barriers. The resulting noise levels make communication at the sales points more difficult.
- There is too little illumination on the faces of staff behind the counters to assist people trying to lip read.
- More than one member of staff observed during the consultation exercise placed their hands in front of their mouths whilst conversing with people buying tickets. This is also likely to make it more difficult for people trying to lip read.
- There is no low-level counter to accommodate wheelchair users.
- The position of the chip and pin machines denies wheelchair users security when using the device as they have to tilt it to read it; this makes it visible to people standing behind the wheelchair users.
- The floor slopes in front of the ticket sales points which is likely to make it more difficult for wheelchair users to steady themselves in this area.
- The slope also increases the hazard caused by the slippery floor surface adjacent to the ticket office area. (On the day of the consultation exercise a young, apparently able-bodied, girl slipped and fell over on this part of the concourse).

WH Smith

- Only one of the entrance doors was open and the open leaf did not provide sufficient width for wheelchair users. Staff opened the locked door when a wheelchair user attempted to enter the shop.
- There is a lack of circulation space inside the shop which means wheelchair users are likely to have to back-up a lot when other people are already standing in the aisles and blocking their route.
- Some items (magazines, drinks bottles) are located too high for wheelchair users. Instructions for the hot-drinks vending machine are also too high for wheelchair users to read.
- There was no induction loop facility at the counter to assist people using hearing aids.

Trekkers Express Café

- One table at the café adjacent to the main concourse had been positioned outside the café's designated area and this created a potential collision hazard for blind and partially sighted people.
- There was no induction loop facility at the counter to assist people using hearing aids.

Signage

- There is no directional signage on the junction of City Road and Station Road relating to the two car parks that are available for people using the station.
- There is no signage at the entrance to both car parks indicating that accessible parking bays are available.
- The text on signage is too small to read especially for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature.
- There is no signage between the west car park and the main concourse area and there is insufficient signage between the east car park and the main concourse area; i.e. it does not occur frequently along the route and is not illuminated to make it easier to locate and read.
- There is a lack of signage around the entrance and main concourse areas relating to the customer assistance office.
- Too much prominence is given to the photography booth (especially as so little signage is accorded to essential facilities such as the lifts and the customer assistance office).
- There is no signage in the entrance and main concourse areas to indicate the presence or location of the lift facility.
- There is no signage on Platform 4b relating to the lift facility and the signage on Platform 2 is too small.
- There is no signage on the bridge to direct wheelchair users between the two lift facilities and to clarify that the sloping section of the bridge leads to the steps on the other side of the station.
- There is no sign indicating where the radar key for the accessible toilet facility can be obtained.

Real-Time Information

- The audible announcements were poor; indistinct, had too much background noise and delivered too quickly on occasions.
- There did not seem to be many audible announcements on the day on which the consultation exercise was undertaken. This would make it more difficult for blind and partially sighted people in particular to obtain travel information.
- There is a lack of visual real-time information screens around the station which is likely to make it more difficult for all users of the station to obtain travel information.
- The visual real-time information that is provided is difficult to read because the font is too small, the displays are not bright enough, and the screens are too high above the ground.
- The audible and visual information systems were not synchronised at times on the day of the consultation exercise.

General

- There is no waiting room in the station. A room located on the far side of the station has a 'waiting room' sign outside it but this room was closed on the day of the consultation exercise and is located, in any case, on the far side of the station from the majority of facilities available at the station. There is nowhere warm and sheltered for people to wait for trains in what is a largely exposed environment.
- It would be useful for blind and partially sighted people to have a tactile map of the station available.

3.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based purely on the comments made by participants during the consultation exercise, undertaken on 16th January 2007 and are not necessarily endorsed by JMU Access Partnership.

Approach

City Road / Station Road

- Ensure that all bus services are able to drop / pick up people from points immediately in front of the station entrance.
- Install controlled crossings to accommodate people approaching the station on foot who need to cross City Road and Station Road.
- Install dropped kerbs to provide access to the footway at the front of the station entrance and ensure that sections of footway that are provided with dropped kerbs are not blocked by taxis or other vehicles.

Outside the Entrance

- Redevelop the footway immediately outside the station entrance to provide a level surface at this point.
- Remove the need for vertical structural supports in the area immediately outside the station entrance.

Car Parks

- Ensure that the gates located at the top of the steps and the ramp are not locked during business hours.
- Repair and maintain the canopy over the unused platform (between the east car park and the main concourse area) and maintain the platform surface to ensure that surface water does not collect to form puddles / ice sheets.
- Install a canopy over the route between the west car park and the entrance to the station adjacent to the photography booth.
- Install lighting along the route between the west car park and the station entrance adjacent to the photography booth.
- Provide a pay and display machine adjacent to the accessible parking bays in the west car park.
- Provide pay and display machines that accept credit / debit cards in addition to cash.
- Provide space at the end of the west car park, adjacent to the accessible parking bays, to allow people to manoeuvre their vehicles.

Entrance

- Provide a tactile surface outside the entrance doors to highlight its location.
- Provide audible and visual real-time information at the station entrance.
- Display timetable information at a more accessible height and using larger text.

Horizontal Circulation

- Repair the roof of the station in order to remove the hazards of puddles and of buckets placed in the direct line of travel to catch dripping water.

Vertical Circulation

Lift

- Institute a management procedure to ensure that when the lift is out of action people (passengers and staff) are alerted to the situation at the earliest opportunity. This could be achieved through staff informing people as they enter the station, by audible announcements on the loudspeaker system, through a visual sign being placed at the entrances to the station, and by improving communication procedures between members of staff on opposite sides of the station.
- Institute a management procedure to ensure that the lift is cleaned frequently and not allowed to become dirty / smelly.

Stairs

- Install the tactile warning surface at the bottom of both flights of stairs (i.e. on the two sides of the station).
- Provide handrails that extend 300mm beyond the top of the stairs.

Platforms

- Install the tactile warning surface to all platforms in accordance with best practice guidelines.

Toilets

- Adjust the door closer mechanism on the door to the toilet facilities in order that the door is easier to open.
- Institute a management procedure to ensure that the toilets are frequently cleaned.
- Provide accessible toilet facilities on both sides of the station.
- Ensure that the accessible toilet facilities are available on the same basis as the standard toilet facilities.
- Ensure that more than one key for the accessible toilet is available.
- Provide separate facilities for accessible toilets and baby-changing rooms. ("In the US family toilets are provided in order that parents can take babies with them when they use the toilets").
- Install a mirror that is more likely to be accessible to wheelchair users and people of shorter stature.

Specific Areas

Main Concourse

- Undertake measures to eliminate the glare that reflects off the ticket machines and the cash machines located in this area. This could be achieved by installing shields around the screens.
- Investigate the introduction of ticket machines that can be used by blind people.
- Provide at least one payphone at a lower height so that it is accessible to wheelchair users.
- Undertake measures to reduce the noise levels around the public payphones. This could be achieved by installing shields around the telephones or improving the acoustics in this area.

- Consider providing a public payphone in a supervised area (e.g. the customer assistance office) for passengers feeling vulnerable using the facilities on the main concourse.

Customer Assistance Office

- Widen the access to this office. This could be achieved by installing automatic doors (this would provide the width but would keep noise out when the doors are not in use) or by providing a leaf-and-a-half door configuration where the wider leaf provides the required width for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs.
- Ensure that staff are aware that, at present, some people are unable to access the office through these doors unaided. A management procedure should be instituted to ensure staff offer assistance when it is required.
- Provide a dual-height counter in this office to assist wheelchair users and people of shorter stature.

Ticket Office

- Consider relocating or enclosing the sales points in order that they are not subject to the noise levels prevalent in the main concourse.
- Ensure staff do not cover their mouths when speaking to passengers in order that passengers are able to lip read.
- Improve the lighting on both sides of the counters in order that the faces of people on both sides are illuminated and lip reading is easier.
- Install a low-level ticket counter or provide adjustable-height counters to assist wheelchair users and people of shorter stature purchase tickets. Lower-level counters are also likely to improve privacy for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature when using the chip and pin machines located on the counters.
- Redevelop the floor surface immediately adjacent to the ticket sales points in order to provide a level surface.

WH Smith

- Institute a management procedure to ensure both entrance doors are left open to provide adequate width for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs. Consideration should be given to installing automatic doors or a leaf-and-a-half door configuration in order to provide the required width without people having to manually open two doors.
- Institute a management procedure to ensure that adequate circulation space is maintained inside the shop to assist wheelchair users, people using mobility aids and people with assistance dogs.
- Institute a management procedure to ensure that items are not located too high for wheelchair users and people of shorter stature.
- Install an induction loop system at the counter to assist people who use hearing aids.

Trekkers Express Café

- Institute a management procedure to ensure that tables are not located outside the café area and in the main circulation space in the main concourse.

- Install an induction loop system at the counter to assist people who use hearing aids.

Signage

- Provide directional signage on the approach to the station to confirm the location of car parks and the availability of accessible parking bays.
- Provide directional signage at the entrance to the station car parks to confirm the location of accessible parking bays.
- Ensure that signage is provided at accessible heights and incorporates text that is likely to be easier to read by wheelchair users and partially sighted people.
- Increase and improve the provision of signage between the car parks and the main concourse area.
- Increase and improve the provision of signage relating to the customer assistance office.
- Introduce a hierarchy in the signage system (e.g. more prominence should be accorded to signs relating to essential facilities such as the customer assistance office and lift and less prominence should be accorded to the photography booth).
- Provide signage on the bridge directing people between the two lift facilities.
- Whilst a radar key is required to gain access to the accessible toilets signage should be provided adjacent to the door to this facility indicating where the key can be obtained.

Real-Time Information

- Improve the quality and increase the quantity of the audible announcements.
- Improve the quality and increase the quantity of visual information systems. ("There are good examples at Cardiff station")
- Institute a management procedure to ensure that the audible and visual information systems are synchronised.

General

- Provide waiting rooms on both sides of the station in order that people are able to wait for trains in safe and comfortable areas. ("In the US waiting rooms are only available to people with tickets in order to avoid abuse of the facilities. People requiring assistance are picked up from the waiting areas and escorted to their trains").
- Provide tactile maps of the station to assist blind and partially sighted people.



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