

**Date:** 13 July 2017

**Item:** London Underground Station Action Plan

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**This paper will be considered in public**

**1 Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Panel on the delivery of our Action Plan following London TravelWatch's review of ticket office closures.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the paper.**

**3 Background**

3.1 As part of our stations modernisation programme (Fit for the Future – Stations) all London Underground ticket offices (except a small number of stations regulated by the Department for Transport) were closed. The Mayor made a commitment in his manifesto to conduct an independent review of the programme. London TravelWatch completed this review on behalf of the Mayor and published its report on 1 December 2016.

3.2 The review recommended improvements in the following three areas:

- (a) staff availability and visibility;
- (b) assistance for disabled and older customers; and
- (c) assisting customers in being able to buy the right ticket.

3.3 While not in scope for the London TravelWatch review, staffing levels (and distribution) also have a part to play in addressing these concerns. As part of efforts to address London TravelWatch's concerns, we have also reviewed this area.

3.4 An action plan was developed to address London TravelWatch's recommendations and the Panel received an update on progress in March 2017. This paper provides an update on our progress since then.

## **4 Staff Visibility and Availability**

### **Recruitment**

- 4.1 As updated in March 2017, we have completed our review of the station staffing model. As a result, we committed to recruit 325 additional members of staff to our stations. At least 200 of these will be full-time roles and they will include more than 100 supervisor positions. We will have recruited 125 additional staff by the end of Period 3. Providing more staff within our stations and control rooms will also prevent the circumstance of lone-working. More recruits will join each month and will be placed at stations in accordance with the priorities identified in the station by station review.
- 4.2 Many of these people will be rostered at our smaller “Metro” and “Local” stations, which should improve staff visibility at these locations.
- 4.3 The 32 stations with the lowest visibility scores across the network have implemented local action plans to improve the visibility of their station staff. The plans include measures such as local roster adjustments and ticket machine functionality refreshers. These plans are having a positive impact, with staff presence scores at the worst 30 performing stations increasing from a low of 58 in Period 9 to 71 in Period 2 (latest results).

### **Focal Point Trials**

- 4.4 The London TravelWatch review also noted that some stations lack a clear focal point for customers seeking assistance. We have trialled a range of interventions to improve how easy it is for customers to get the help they need on our stations.
- 4.5 Trials were carried out at: King’s Cross St Pancras, Brixton, Euston, South Kensington, Amersham, Westminster, Tower Hill, Russell Square, Green Park Paddington and Chorleywood.
- 4.6 Independent research was carried out to assess the effectiveness of interventions to inform a second phase of trials commencing at the end of August 2017.
- 4.7 Customer Service Assistants were provided with red high visibility vests (figure 1) to wear in the ticket hall to increase their prominence to customers. The dark red vests had “Here to help’ written on the back with and ‘i’ symbol for information. Customers responded very positively to the improved visibility. Phase 2 of the trial will test a brighter red version of the vest, coloured to match the red in the uniform, at five further stations.
- 4.8 Information zones at a number of stations were enhanced, using eye-catching wall and floor vinyls (figure 2). Research found visibility of the information zones was improved by enhancing the surrounding wall, but little benefit from the installation of floor vinyls. Customers indicated that high level signage to some information zones would be beneficial.

4.9 For the trial period, a member of staff was located at the information zones (figure 3). From a customer perspective, this provided a clear focal point on the station for customers to get the help they needed. However, at some stations, staffing the information zone throughout the day presents an operational challenge.

4.10 We also tested ways to improve the visibility of customer help points (figure 4). While an improvement, customer research suggests still more needs to be done to highlight the location and function of help points. Many customers see the help points as a passenger alarm only, and not an option for obtaining general assistance.



**Figure 1: Red High Visibility Vest**



**Figure 2: Enhanced information zone**



**Figure 3: Staffed information zone**



**Figure 4: High visibility help point**

4.11 While valuable insight was obtained from the trials, we need to develop concepts further before we can be confident of the best solutions to roll out to meet the variety of station environments across the network. Phase 2 of the trial will test further enhancements and combinations of interventions, including:

- (a) testing of red high visibility vests, with various help symbols and phrases, across more areas of the station;

- (b) highlighting the availability of customer assistance at gatelines;
- (c) more improvements to information zones – including high level signage; and
- (d) further enhancements to help points and the testing of a Wi-Fi enabled help point.

## 5 Customer Assistance

### Hearing loops

- 5.1 Following an initial trial of portal hearing loops in January 2017, we conducted a further test of the neck-loop variant of the device utilising staff iPads in May (figure 5). The device worked well and allowed the conversation to move to quieter areas of the station with less interference.



**Figure 5: Neck loop design hearing loop**

- 5.2 However, the hearing aid users taking part in the trial recommended using “voice to text” functionality on the iPads as an alternative method of communication with hearing impaired customers. Some new hearing aids do not support hearing loop functionality and the customers taking part in the trial preferred “voice to text” as a form of assistance.
- 5.3 We will continue to research the use of neck loops with a wider group of hearing aid users, whilst additionally providing station staff with some guidance on using “voice to text” to communicate with hearing impaired customer using their handheld devices.

### Training

- 5.4 We have reviewed our staff training, with key sections modified to emphasise the importance of actively offering help to customers, especially those displaying characteristics suggesting that they may require extra help or that they might be unfamiliar with travelling on the network.
- 5.5 Our trainers are undertaking an enhanced training module on customer focus and helping disabled customers. This will improve the customer focus of training delivered to new and existing staff. The LU induction material has also been revamped with a much greater focus on customer service.

## Turn Up and Go

- 5.6 We have committed to improving our “turn up and go” (TUAG) service for disabled and older customers. As a first step, we carried out a survey of customer and staff experience with the current process. Feedback from 70 disabled customers and a number of station staff was collected to understand where we can improve.

'Turn up and go' Issue	Improvement planned
Customers are not always met at interchange or destination station as planned	Developing an app to support the TUAG process to reduce the likelihood of not being met. As a quick-win, we are changing the process to ensure staff radio ahead with a customer's destination and requirements
Trains may terminate early or be re-routed	Build communication with Service Control and Train Operators into the process improvement plan for TUAG
Some staff are reluctant to provide assistance or they think they cannot leave the gateline	Staff communications and myth busting briefing
Customers cannot find a member of staff to help	We plan to trial a new help-point at East Acton that connects to staff iPads, enabling customers to get the help they need when they arrive at stations

## 6 Purchasing Tickets for Travel

- 6.1 Since 21 May 2017, both boundary extension tickets for customers in possession of non-Zone 1 Travelcards and discounted National Rail through tickets are available from all station ticket machines. Since launching there has been relatively low use. We will communicate the enhanced functionality to customers to improve awareness.
- 6.2 Improved signage schemes have been developed for all stations which have a Visitor Centre. New signage will be installed at all Visitor Centre stations by the end of July 2017.



Figure 6: Examples of new signage

6.3 We have trialled extended opening hours at some of our Visitor Centres to determine the extent and nature of demand outside of current hours. These trials demonstrated a sufficient demand at King's Cross St Pancras and Victoria to warrant opening these centres for an additional hour on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Usage will be monitored over the summer and we will reassess opening hours again in September 2017.

6.4 In March 2017, we reported the start of a customer pilot of the TfL Oyster and Contactless app. The app allows customers to:

- (a) check their pay as you go balance;
- (b) see their season tickets;
- (c) top up pay as you go credit;
- (d) buy season tickets; and
- (e) get notifications if their pay as you go balance falls below £10 or season ticket is about to expire.

The app is working well and will launch to all customers in late summer 2017.

6.5 From 5 July 2017, when customers buy a season ticket or purchase PAYG credit online, they will be able to collect it 30 minutes later at any station when they touch their card on a yellow card reader as part of a journey. Other features, such as the ability to manage contactless payment cards used for travel, will be introduced throughout the rest of 2017.

6.6 Information to warn customers of the 48 hour refund rule was added to ticket machines in May 2017. Work continues to determine how this functionality can be improved, whilst still providing adequate protection against fraudulent use. Work to reduce the duration when a refund is not available to 24 hours is underway and should be ready early in the New Year.

## **7 Next Steps**

7.1 We continue to collaborate with London TravelWatch on delivery of the action plan. The London TravelWatch Board received an update in May 2017 and their Officers will be involved on a regular basis.

7.2 The next update to the Panel will be at the next Panel meeting of 1 November 2017.

### **List of appendices to this report:**

None

### **Background papers:**

London Underground Ticket Office Review: 15 December 2016 Board

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