



The voice of transport users

Review of ticket office closures on the London Underground – the passenger perspective

November 2016



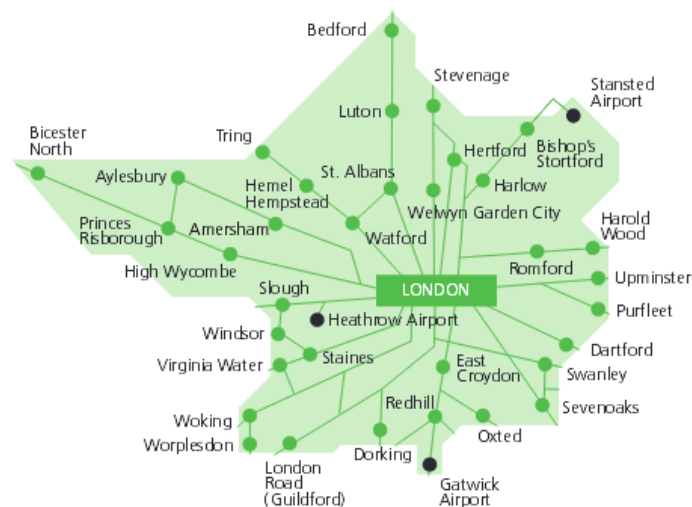
London TravelWatch is the independent, multi-modal body set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public. This includes users of rail services in and around London, all Transport for London (TfL) services (bus, Tube, DLR, trams, taxis) and motorists, cyclists and pedestrians using London's strategic road network. We are funded by and accountable to the London Assembly.

Our approach

- We commission and carry out research, and evaluate and interpret the research carried out by others, to ensure that our work is based on the best possible evidence
- We investigate complaints that people have been unable to resolve with service providers – we get more than 6,000 enquiries a year from transport users and in 2014-15 we took up more than 850 cases with the operator because the original response the complainant had received was unsatisfactory
- We monitor trends in service quality as part of our intelligence-led approach
- We regularly meet with and seek to influence the relevant parts of the transport industry on all issues which affect the travelling public
- We work with a wide range of public interest organisations, user groups and research bodies to ensure we keep up to date with passenger experiences and concerns
- We speak for the travelling public in discussions with opinion formers and decision makers at all levels, including the Mayor of London, the London Assembly, the Government, Parliament and local councils.

Our experience of using London's extensive public transport network, paying for our own travel, and seeing for ourselves what transport users go through, helps ensure we remain connected and up to date.

Our aim is to press in all that we do for a better travel experience for all those living, working or visiting London and its surrounding region.



(Crossrail Elizabeth Line only – Reading to Shenfield)

Foreword

Around 4 million journeys are made on the London Underground every day and demand is growing year on year. It is fundamental that the Underground adapts to meet this demand both for Londoners and visitors alike.



London TravelWatch is the independent watchdog for passengers in London, and as such, this report focuses on the passenger experience in London Underground stations. The findings are based on a range of research including passenger surveys, focus groups and mystery shopping. During this research, passengers were asked about their experiences at London Underground stations in relation to ticketing, availability of assistance, safety and information.

As the entry point to the London Underground network, Tube stations are of vital importance to passengers. People's experiences in stations form part of the basis of their opinions on not just the transport network, but London as a whole.

London Underground has changed how they provide customer service on the Tube through the closure of ticket offices and moving staff into the ticket halls to be more visible and available to help passengers. This review of the impact of ticket office closures was commissioned by Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, to assess whether London Underground is properly meeting passengers' needs now that ticket offices have been closed on most of the network. The review builds on our research of 2014, where we asked passengers for their views on the proposed ticket office closures and changes to ticketing.

London TravelWatch believes there is a potential benefit to passengers in staff on the London Underground being available in ticket halls carrying out a range of customer service and operational tasks rather than solely in a ticket office. We are therefore not opposed to the principle of ticket office closures, subject to the recommendations we make in this report being adopted. We strongly feel that a number of issues need to be addressed before the system can work to meet the needs of passengers. These issues form the basis for our recommendations.

Passengers who participated in our research broadly concur with our view that London Underground stations do not necessarily need a ticket office in order to operate effectively, noting that they are generally able to obtain the tickets and assistance they need. They did however frequently highlight the inconsistencies on the network, and Londoners participating in our research expressed particular concern for tourists visiting the capital.

In order for the system to function effectively, these inconsistencies need to be removed to ensure passengers receive the same level of service whether they are using a large station in central London with multiple lines running through it at peak time, or a small station in outer London at the weekend.

As demand continues to grow, it remains critically important that passengers can use transport services safely. Crucially, our research showed that a significant number of passengers now feel less safe on the London Underground than they did prior to the ticket office closures. This is something that must be addressed by TfL as a matter of urgency.

Accessibility was also a concern for passengers. TfL needs to continue to invest in its accessibility programme, prioritising key locations on the network (such as Euston and Bank) to ensure the network is accessible to all.

It should be noted that this research concerns the 260 stations where London Underground has closed ticket offices. It therefore does not cover London Underground stations that are operated by National Rail train operators or the London Underground stations that continue to operate with ticket offices. These are listed in Appendix AA.

Stephen Locke, Chair
November 2016

Contents

	Foreword.....	3
1	Executive summary	7
1.1	Key findings.....	8
1.2	Summary of recommendations	11
2	Research methods.....	12
2.1	Surveys	12
2.2	Focus groups and passenger interviews	12
2.3	TfL data.....	13
2.4	Mystery shopping and assisted mystery shopping	13
2.5	Consultation with other stakeholders	13
3	Research evidence	14
3.1	Survey findings.....	14
3.2	Focus group and passenger findings	17
3.3	TfL data.....	19
3.4	London TravelWatch mystery shopping and assisted mystery shopping	20
3.5	Summary of correspondence and feedback from stakeholders	23
4	General findings.....	25
4.1	Staffing levels.....	25
4.2	Reopening ticket offices	25
4.3	Gateline and lift unavailability and station closures	26
4.4	General commuters making regular journeys.....	26
5	Our Assessment	27
5.1	Lack of visible staff.....	27
5.2	Safety and Security	28
5.3	Visibility of staff uniforms.....	29
5.4	Lack of focal point	29
5.5	Passengers requiring additional assistance	30
5.6	Avoid grouping of staff where possible.....	31
5.7	Staff local knowledge	31
5.8	Ticket machines	31
5.9	Tasks previously carried out at ticket offices	33

5.10	Availability of annual season tickets on ticket machines	34
5.11	Removal of 48 hour restriction on Oyster refunds.....	35
5.12	Help points	35
5.13	Hearing loops.....	36
5.14	Visitor Centres	36
6	Conclusions	37
7	Glossary	38
8	List of appendices.....	39

Appendices (included as a separate document)

- A. Research summary
- B. Talk London Panel survey summary
- C. Focus group and passenger intercept summary
- D. List of stakeholders contacted regarding the review
- E. Customer Impact Review
- F. Supporting table of information
- G. Stakeholder and customer engagement summary
- H. Evidence datasets
- I. Staff presence data
- J. Lift availability data
- K. Pay as you go and contactless data
- L. King's Cross case study
- M. Improving London Underground leaflet
- N. Staff leaflet – changes to ticket halls
- O. Ticketing changes guide for iPads
- P. Stakeholder bulletin
- Q. Station closures arising from staff shortages
- R. Open gateline data
- S. Help point procedures
- T. Ticket machine availability data
- U. Weightings for ticket machine availability data
- V. RMT Submission 1
- W. RMT Submission 2
- X. TSSA Submission
- Y. Valuing People Group feedback
- Z. Sample letter sent to consultees
- AA. Stations excluded from this review
- BB. Terms of reference
- CC. Survey Monkey survey responses

1 Executive summary

This report gives the passenger perspective on the impact of the closure of London Underground ticket offices, and recommendations for changes that would make the system work better for passengers. The recommendations are set out in full on page 11.

The report concludes that:

- If the recommendations are implemented, London Underground can effectively meet passenger needs without the need for a comprehensive network of ticket offices
- Passengers can benefit from the changes to how London Underground operates its stations, but only if the recommendations listed in this report are implemented
- The full programme of ticket office closures was carried out before all accompanying elements were in place, particularly the updating of ticket machines to provide the necessary functionality and to be reliable enough to cope with the extra demand
- If it is not possible to address the key issues outlined in this report, then it may be necessary to re-open some ticket offices.

There are positives to the new system through staff predominantly working in ticket halls. Primarily, when staff are available, they can deliver enhanced levels of customer service by being more proactive and able to help. Passengers value staff presence in and around the ticket hall, and welcome the extra interaction that the changes have allowed.

Throughout our research, it has become clear that most passengers feel that the most critical part of their journey experience relating to staff is their visibility and availability, as opposed to their location. The loss of ticket offices has created challenges, particularly the loss of a focal point where passengers could reliably get assistance. Our research has shown some change in passengers' perceptions of safety since the closures, with passengers stating that their feelings of safety are strongly related to staff presence. 45% (1,715 respondents) of the London TravelWatch survey, and 17% (150 respondents) of the survey conducted by the GLA's Talk London Panel¹ stated they feel less safe in ticket halls now than they did a year ago. The difference in these surveys is explained in Appendix A. If the recommendations are implemented, passengers will retain the benefits of more proactive and accessible staff, while also gaining more of a sense of safety and security.

¹ The Talk London panel is made up of around 30,000 Londoners and is a forum to discuss proposed changes to a range of things in London, including transport.

The closure of ticket offices has added a degree of disorder and uncertainty to the journeys of many passengers that needs to be addressed if they are to feel confident in using the network. In particular, the deficiencies of the “turn up and go” process for people who require extra assistance need to be resolved as a matter of urgency.²

A further problem for passengers is that ticket machines are unable to perform all the transactions that were previously available at ticket offices. The range of transactions lost is considerable, and many ticket machines are unable to cope with increased demand. These problems should have been anticipated and addressed before implementing the changes.

A significant upgrade to both the functionality and reliability of ticket machines is therefore essential for the system to work, and if the ticket machines cannot be suitably improved, some locations may require alternative ticketing facilities.

1.1 Key findings

Staff visibility

Inconsistency in the visibility of staff is an issue that was brought up by passengers across all of this research. Passengers value visible staff highly, both in terms of being able to get assistance and also feeling safe. Part of the problem is the low visibility of staff uniforms. New uniforms that are predominantly navy blue were brought in to accompany the changes. Passengers therefore often find staff difficult to see in stations, meaning they may perceive there to be no staff.



Figure 1 Staff member assisting a passenger at ticket machines at London Bridge. It may not be immediately clear to passengers that the second person from the left is a member of London Underground staff.

² Turn up and Go allows passengers who require additional assistance to arrive at London Underground stations and receive assistance from staff without having to pre-book.

Safety and security

A number of factors have affected passengers' perceptions of safety and security. The biggest influencing factor is the number of staff visible on the network, but there is also a sense of increased confusion without a focal point at stations, leaving passengers unclear about how to get assistance when needed. Staff uniforms need to stand out more; the navy uniforms blend into a crowd, and should either be a more distinctive colour or supplemented with high visibility clothing.

Many stations have a single member of staff only, and this adds to a feeling that there is not enough supervision of the network, especially when the single member of staff is required to perform many duties, some away from the ticket hall/gateline area. At these times the gateline has to be left open, leading to a perception that the station is unstaffed altogether. Staff generally provide a high level of customer service, but are under considerable pressure to perform multiple tasks and help passengers at the same time.

Focal point at stations

One of the main concerns raised by passengers, especially those who require additional assistance, is that stations can feel chaotic, and have no defined place to go to find staff or ask for assistance. There are inconsistencies across the network, with passengers receiving different levels of customer service depending on the station they use and the time of day they travel. The challenge faced by passengers trying to find assistance, especially at stations with only one member of staff available, is significant. Many passengers previously viewed the ticket office as effectively the station control room and, without this defined place, it is not necessarily clear where passengers can get assistance.

We recommend that every London Underground station has a defined place where passengers can wait for a member of staff to assist them. This should usually be near the ticket machines or the information zone, but at smaller stations could be near the gateline. In every station, a visual and tactile strip should be installed from the main entrance to the focal point, complemented with traditional signage to the point. At the focal point there should be a hearing loop facility, as well as clear message about where to wait for staff if none are available instantly, and where the nearest help point can be found in an emergency.

Ticket machines

We recommend that London Underground ticket machines are either upgraded or replaced so they can:

- Cope with increased use and operate reliably without breaking down, failing to accept cash or giving change
- Sell annual season tickets with staff authorisation
- Refund Oyster deposits and unused credit (without the 48-hour delay from purchase currently in place)
- Sell extension tickets from boundary zones or other stations
- Sell tickets for travel on another day
- Top-up Oyster credit amounts with any amount that the passenger wishes
- Print out Oyster journey history for any Oyster card
- Sell an increased range of National Rail tickets
- Provide Railcard discounts on National Rail ticket purchases

Accessibility

Using the London Underground is a particular challenge to passengers who require extra assistance. With ticket offices, it was common practice that when a passenger who required assistance turned up at a station, the ticket office would ring the station(s) that the passenger was going to/through to confirm what time the assistance was required. Without ticket offices, the process is much more difficult for staff, and can break down. Station staff are now required to ring the line controller, who is often busy with operational matters, to ask them to ring the other station(s) to confirm arrangements. Without being able to phone a ticket office, it is harder to find the right person at the station, and passengers are reporting frequent issues where the promised assistance is not ready for them on their arrival at their destination.

1.2 Summary of recommendations

1. Staff should be available to assist passengers at all stations
2. Staff should stand out from the general public as their visual presence is of fundamental importance to passenger feelings of safety. To achieve this, staff uniforms should be made more visible through use of brighter colours
3. There should be a clear focal point in every station where passengers can find staff
4. Assistance for passengers with disabilities and those who are unfamiliar with the network should be consistently available
5. Staff should avoid grouping together, and should be proactive in looking for passengers who may require help or advice
6. Staff should have local knowledge of stations at which they work, using their iPads to assist passengers with onward journeys where necessary
7. Signage on ticket machines should be updated so that passengers are clear about the different functions available at the different machine types
8. More broadly, TfL should consider how they can make passengers more aware of what products and services are available to them at ticket machines
9. Ticket machines should be updated to provide a wider range of functionality
10. Annual season tickets should be available to purchase on ticket machines
11. The 48 hour restriction on Oyster card refunds should be removed
12. Help point routing procedures should be revised to ensure that calls made by passengers are always answered
13. Hearing loops should be available and clearly signposted at every station
14. Visitor Centre messaging, branding and opening hours should be adjusted to make their purpose, location and availability clear to all passengers

Full details of these recommendations can be found in section five.

2 Research methods

The report combines evidence from the following areas:

- London TravelWatch passenger survey
- GLA Talk London Panel survey
- Focus groups carried out by 2CV
- A range of data on stations provided by TfL
- Mystery shops carried out by London TravelWatch staff
- Assisted mystery shops carried out with disabled passengers
- Written correspondence from members of the public
- Written correspondence from key stakeholders (including Train Operating Companies and political stakeholders)
- Previous London TravelWatch research on other areas

A full summary of research used in this report is in the appendices.

2.1 Surveys

There were two surveys carried out as part of the research – one by London TravelWatch, and one by the Greater London Authority (GLA) Talk London panel. Appendices A and B summarise the key findings from the two surveys.

The London TravelWatch survey was open to all members of the public. The GLA Talk London survey was sent directly to approximately 30,000 panel members, who joined the community in order to discuss and provide opinions on issues facing London. Further information on the Talk London panel can be found at: <http://talklondon.london.gov.uk/>. Passengers responding to the two surveys expressed some different opinions about the ticket office closures, with respondents to the London TravelWatch survey generally having stronger feelings about the changes. Due to the different methods of data collection, statistics from the two surveys will be outlined separately below.

2.2 Focus groups and passenger interviews

Research company 2CV undertook a series of focus groups with a range of participants, including one staff group and one group with disabilities. London TravelWatch set the brief for the focus groups to investigate what passengers wanted from staff at London Underground stations, as well as how they buy their tickets, get information, and their feelings of safety on the network. 2CV also interviewed tourists as they passed through two central London stations. Once again, the brief for this was produced with input from London TravelWatch. A detailed summary of the findings from all 2CV research can be found in Appendix C.

The focus groups and interviews specifically targeted a broader range of passenger types than the surveys as they purposely recruited infrequent users (tourists) as well as retirees, passengers with families and passengers with disabilities, tailoring each focus group to the participants involved.

Discussions in the focus groups generally showed that passengers feel their needs are being met by London Underground, but that there are inconsistencies on the network which should be addressed by TfL.

2.3 TfL data

As part of the review, London TravelWatch requested a range of factual information from TfL, including data on staff presence, ticket machine reliability, gateline availability and station closures. The information from TfL can be found in Appendices E-U.

2.4 Mystery shopping and assisted mystery shopping

Mystery shops were carried out by members of London TravelWatch staff travelling alone, and assisted mystery shops were carried out by staff travelling with disabled passengers. All mystery shops were carried out from the passenger perspective, with participants spending no longer than 10 minutes at each station. Appendix A contains a full summary of both sets of mystery shopping.

2.5 Consultation with other stakeholders

London TravelWatch also consulted with the following stakeholders as part of the review:

- Train operating companies
- Trade Unions
- Accessibility campaign groups
- Metropolitan Police Service
- The British Transport Police

3 Research evidence

This section outlines the findings from the research and information compiled which have been used as a basis for the recommendations found on page 11.

3.1 Survey findings

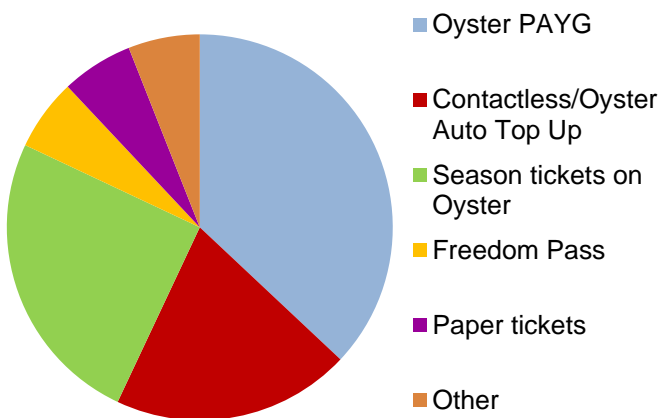
Journey types

Of the London TravelWatch survey respondents, 72% use the Underground primarily for travel to work, 26% travel for leisure activities and 2% travel for education. 52% of people who filled in the GLA Panel survey stated they use the Underground primarily for travel to work, 45% travel for leisure, and 2% travel for education. The percentages of passengers using the Underground four or more times a week was 68% of London TravelWatch responses and 43% of GLA Panel responses. When examined together, it is reasonable to assume that a significant proportion of respondents are therefore familiar users of the tube who make regular commuter journeys.

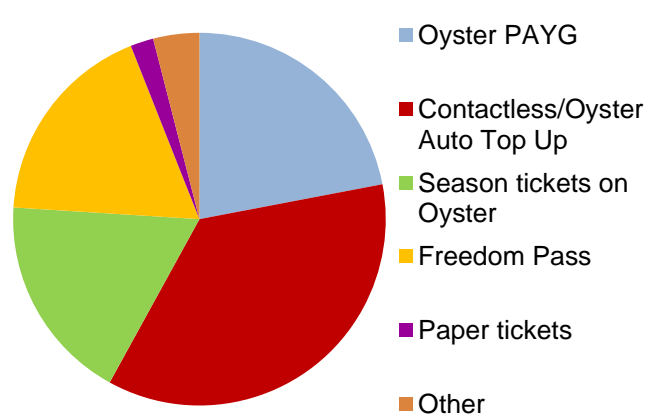
Paying for travel

The charts below show the payment methods used by respondents to the London TravelWatch and GLA Panel surveys. From this, we can see that Oyster Pay As You Go (PAYG) was the most popular payment method amongst London TravelWatch respondents, while Contactless and Oyster auto top up was the most used method amongst GLA Panel members.

London TravelWatch survey - payment types



GLA Panel Survey - payment types



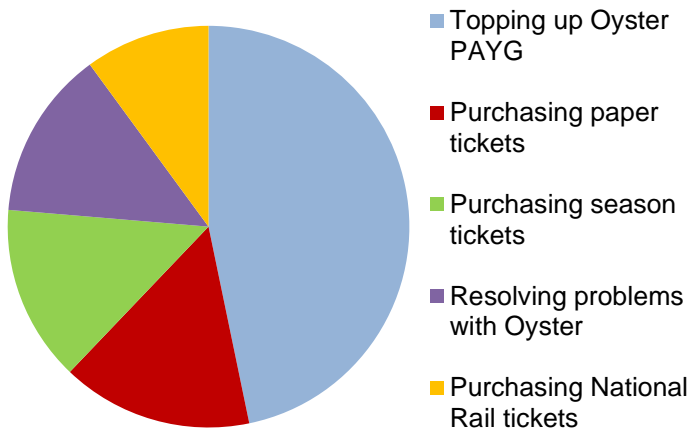
Ticket machines

Of the London TravelWatch survey respondents, 27% stated that they do not use ticket machines on the London Underground. This was higher amongst GLA Panel respondents at 46%.

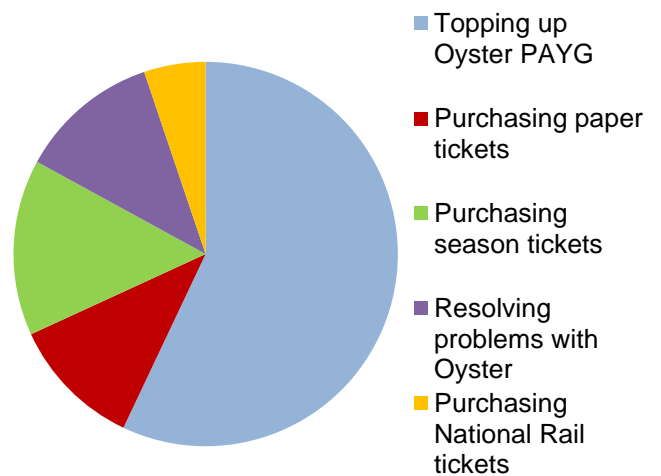
Of those who do purchase tickets in stations, 35% of London TravelWatch respondents indicated that they do so at least weekly. By contrast, 12% of GLA Panel respondents purchase tickets in stations at least weekly. Passengers paying for travel monthly or less than monthly made up 41% of London TravelWatch responses and 69% of GLA Panel responses. Finally, 24% of London TravelWatch participants and 19% of GLA Panel participants stated that they never purchase tickets in stations.

The charts below show the reasons why passengers who responded to the two surveys use ticket machines in stations. From this, we can see that the main reason that the overwhelming majority of respondents use ticket machines is to top up their Oyster cards.

London TravelWatch survey - reasons for ticket machine use



GLA Panel survey - reasons for ticket machine use



In addition, 31% of London TravelWatch responses and 33% of GLA Panel responses indicated that London Underground ticket machines are easy to use. 39% of London TravelWatch responses and 55% of GLA Panel responses stated they are usually easy to use, for example if all functionality is available. Finally, 30% of the London TravelWatch responses indicated that machines are not easy to use. This contrasts with the 11% of the GLA Panel respondents who indicated that machines are not easy to use. Passengers who responded 'usually' or 'not' cited the

unreliability of machines, the inability to carry out some transactions which had previously been available at a ticket office, and the confusing range of products available.

The survey responses showed passengers' frustration at their inability to obtain all products on ticket machines that could previously have been obtained at a ticket office. These products include, but are not limited to: annual season tickets; tickets for future travel; National Rail extensions; and getting refunds of over £10.

Obtaining information

Passengers were asked to list all the ways in which they obtain information in London Underground stations. A significant number of passengers (71% of the London TravelWatch survey and 57% of the GLA Panel survey) said they would seek travel advice and information from staff in stations, which shows the importance of having a staff presence, even for those who are familiar with the network. 49% of London TravelWatch respondents stated that they use signage to obtain information in stations. Signage was the most used method of obtaining information (70%) amongst GLA respondents.

6% of the London TravelWatch survey respondents and 4% of GLA Panel responses cited Visitor Centres as a place they would go to get information. Though the survey does not show why, it is likely that this is because there is generally a low level of awareness of Visitor Centres and the services they provide, as demonstrated in the other research areas (e.g. by passengers at the focus groups.)

Staff presence/visibility

23% of London TravelWatch survey respondents and 25% of GLA Panel respondents stated that they always see staff when in London Underground stations. 61% of London TravelWatch respondents and 66% of GLA Panel respondents indicated that they often or sometimes see staff with a further 14% of London TravelWatch respondents and 9% of GLA Panel respondents stating they rarely see staff in stations. The remaining 1-2% of both surveys said they never see staff. This demonstrates an inconsistency in staffing levels across the network.

Safety and security

There were some differences in the responses received from the two surveys relating to safety. This is likely due to the self-selecting nature of the participants in the London TravelWatch survey, as outlined above. The survey showed that 47% of London TravelWatch respondents feel roughly as safe in London Underground stations since the changes as they did when the ticket offices were still open. A

much higher proportion (73%) of GLA Panel respondents feel as safe now as before the changes.

6% of people responding to the London TravelWatch survey and 8% of the GLA Panel survey indicated that they feel safer in London Underground stations than they did previously. 45% of London TravelWatch survey respondents indicated that they now feel less safe in Underground stations. This contrasts with only 17% of GLA Panel responses. The remainder of participants in both surveys stated that they were unsure about how safe they feel.

London TravelWatch survey respondents frequently referenced staff presence as the factor which increases their feelings of safety when in stations. Many respondents noted that although the closure of the ticket offices was supposed to bring more staff out into ticket halls, they do not feel this has been the case at all stations.

3.2 Focus group and passenger findings

Ticketing and ticket offices

Focus groups were centred on what passengers want from London Underground stations. Passengers' primary concerns were not about the loss of the ticket offices, but rather other issues including staff availability and ticketing.

Passengers stated that ticket machines are generally easy to use when carrying out the same/similar transactions. They

noted that when staff are near the machines, they are generally very helpful, but that they are not always there to provide assistance.

There was a low level of awareness of the different ticket machine types available on London Underground, and passengers noted that queue times can be lengthened by people who are unsure of which machine to use. When shown the three machine types, passengers highlighted that they had not previously noted the signage above the machines that shows which payment methods can be used at each machine. The participants were generally drawn towards using the Multi-Fare Machines (MFMs), particularly when carrying out an unfamiliar transaction, as they expect them to have the widest range of functionality.



Figure 2 The three different ticket machine types on London Underground

Unreliability of machines was also referenced by passengers at focus groups, as well as the belief that there are not enough machines at some central London locations.

Staffing

Many focus group participants said that stations now feel more disorganised as there is not a focal point where passengers can find staff. Participants tended not to reference the need for a ticket office, but thought that staff should be deployed at clear focal points to be visible to passengers at all times.

Participants noted an inconsistency in availability of staff on stations, stating that outer London locations were less likely to have visible staff than inner ones.

The staff focus group highlighted concerns that they were not always available to assist customers, particularly when working alone at stations, due to the range of tasks they carry out (for example station checks, loading ticket machines and assisting passengers onto trains).

Visitor Centres

There was a low level of awareness of Visitor Centres and the services available at them, even amongst visitors, who are the target audience of the centres.

Part of the focus groups involved informing passengers of the purpose of the Visitor Centres. Passengers felt positively about the idea of a Visitor Centre, but were unsure how and why the stations and the locations within the station of the centres was chosen. This is in part because, of the eight Visitor Centres, seven are attached to London Underground stations; four of these are in the London Underground station itself and the remaining three are on the National Rail concourse. The eighth Visitor Centre is located at Gatwick Airport.

The general feeling was that all stations with high numbers of tourists would benefit from a Visitor Centre.



Figure 3 King's Cross Visitor Centre

Safety

Focus group participants noted that they generally felt safe when travelling on the London Underground. Staff presence was a key factor in feelings of safety and security for passengers. There were therefore concerns around safety expressed by passengers, particularly those who travel at Local stations.

3.3 TfL data

Ticket machine availability

TfL data showed a decline in ticket machine availability across London Underground stations since the ticket office closures. On average, machine availability for a four-week period since the closures is lower than for a four-week period prior to the closures. This is based on TfL's 'Passenger Operated Machine availability index', which measures machine availability on a station by station basis, with different faults and different machine types carrying different weightings. See Appendices T and U for details of this.

Staff presence, helpfulness and attention to passengers

Appendices F and G summarise the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey and Mystery Shopping Survey run by TfL to assess staff presence, staff helpfulness, staff attention to passengers and the overall passenger satisfaction. Since the changes to ticket offices, TfL's overall satisfaction score has remained steady at 85 with staff attention to passengers and staff helpfulness higher than before the changes at 96 and 95 respectively. There has however been a drop in staff presence score from 98 to 96.

It is possible that these scores are in part a result of the methodology of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Mystery Shopping Surveys. Mystery shoppers tend to spend up to 30 minutes in stations, meaning they are not experiencing the station as a passenger would. It is therefore possible that passengers see staff and receive assistance less frequently than is noted by TfL. However only five minutes of the time taken to complete the mystery shop is spent in the ticket hall, and staff presence scores are based on this rather than whether staff are seen in the station as a whole.

Data (in Appendix I) shows that Local stations have the highest proportion of instances with no staff presence, which matches the stations that had no staff present during our mystery shopping.

Station closures

Data from TfL shows that since the ticket office closures, there has been a one percentage point increase in station closures. Station closures occur when there are insufficient staff members to either open or continue operating the station. The one percentage point increase represents an average of 21 closures lasting for an average of 30 minutes each every 28 days.

Gateline open times

We analysed the data on times when gatelines (also known as ticket barriers) were left open on Underground stations. This data shows an average of 1 percentage point increase in gatelines being left open, with an increase at Local stations of 3 percentage points. This data backs up the above data showing that the most instances of no staff presence are at Local stations, as staff are required to leave the gateline open when they are not near the ticket barriers.

Lift availability

Lifts on the London Underground are, on average, available for passenger use 98% of the time, with no stations regularly having lifts out of service. Lift availability was assessed as part of the review due to a slight decline in lift availability in April 2016. This decline appears to have now been resolved.³

Contactless payment data

Contactless payment use is increasing. Appendix K shows the use of contactless on rail services operated by TfL having approximately doubled in the last 12 months. This amounts to 31% of pay as you go journeys at Gateway and Destination stations and 23% of pay as you go journeys at Metro and Local stations, as noted in Appendix F.

3.4 London TravelWatch mystery shopping and assisted mystery shopping

Staff presence and assistance

Staff presence was inconsistent on the Underground, with 17% of both assisted and non-assisted mystery shops having no staff visible at one or more stations surveyed. At all stations without visible staff, staff had left the gatelines open to allow passengers to pass through. All instances of no staff visibly present occurred at

³ TfL also publish full data on lift availability across all modes (London Overground, DLR, TfL Rail) on their website

Local stations. See Appendix A for a list of the stations where no staff were visibly present.

When visible, the highest proportion of staff (46%) were stationed on the gateline, with 20% being near ticket machines to assist customers with transactions on the machines. The remaining 34% were elsewhere on the station, including in station passageways and on platforms.

Staff were seen assisting passengers at just over half of mystery shops (55%). In 26% of cases, staff were seen proactively approaching passengers to ask if they needed assistance. Passengers on the assisted mystery shops explained the importance of staff approaching passengers, particularly those with hidden disabilities (such as learning difficulties).

All mystery shoppers indicated that staff are not always easy to see when they are present, particularly at busy stations. This was a particular concern for those with visual impairments.

Ticketing

Mystery shops showed that in the majority of cases, queues at ticket machines contained fewer than five passengers and lasted for under two minutes. The three instances of queues of over ten people were in central London at either Gateway or Destination stations which have high footfall, particularly of unfamiliar passengers.

There were several instances noted of ticket machines out of service during mystery shops, with some machines partially out of service (either no change given, or some other functionality missing) and some completely out of service.

All assisted mystery shop participants were freedom pass holders so did not tend to use ticket machines on the network. They expressed concern for passengers that do use machines, particularly those with disabilities, as they felt machines are not necessarily intuitive and that staff are not always on hand to assist.

Information and signage

Mystery shops showed a good level of signage and information in stations (outlined in Appendix A), with both fixed signage and temporary posters present in all mystery shop locations.

Assisted mystery shop participants generally felt that signage in stations was not easily accessible for passengers with disabilities – especially those with visual impairments. They felt that signage was often in too small a font, and sometimes used too many words to convey information.

Help points

Help points were noted in the ticket halls at 83% of mystery shop stations. TfL state in Appendix F that 99% of Underground stations are now fitted with help points in the ticket hall alone. The fact that 16% were not noticed by mystery shop participants suggests either that the help points were hidden from view by other passengers, or that in some locations, help points are not immediately visible to passengers. See Appendix A for a list of locations where help points were not noted.

Though none of the passengers on assisted mystery shops used help points themselves, they were concerned about whether help point calls were always answered by staff now that there are not ticket offices on the Underground.

Visitor Centres

Five of the stations assessed by mystery shopping had a Visitor Centre. Signage indicating their location was mixed: two of the five were difficult to locate due to poor signage.

All five Visitor Centres were open during the mystery shops. Queue times were generally less than two minutes, with one instance of a queue of ten people, with passengers waiting around five minutes to be served.

Assisted mystery shop participants indicated that they were unaware of Visitor Centres, but felt positively about the idea of them. They felt that there should be more publicity of the centres to increase use.

Safety

Only half of assisted mystery shop participants were comfortable using the London Underground on their own. All stated that staff presence was key to their feelings of safety when travelling on the Underground, and many referenced the need for a focal point in stations where passengers can easily find staff.

Passengers were particularly concerned that staff should be visible at all times, particularly to assist those passengers with mobility and visual impairments. Without staff assistance, they felt the Underground to be unsafe for some passengers with disabilities.

3.5 Summary of correspondence and feedback from stakeholders

Feedback from disability campaigners

London TravelWatch consulted with Transport for All, who campaign for better travel for disabled and older people in London. They expressed concerns about staff being available to help disabled passengers, and the loss of a focal point in the form of a ticket office causing difficulty for disabled users of the network. Transport for All also reiterated the concerns of passengers at the focus groups and in survey responses around an insufficient number of London Underground stations being step-free.

TfL's Valuing People Group, a group set up to assist TfL in making transport more accessible for disabled passengers, also submitted feedback as part of the review. This is available in Appendix Y.

Their key point is that although ticket office closures are a good thing in practice as they bring staff out in front of the passenger, in reality there are not enough staff available to provide assistance.

They also noted that staff are not visible enough, especially in busy stations where they may be surrounded by other passengers. This is of particular concern for passengers with visual impairments.

Trade Union feedback

London TravelWatch received two submissions from the Rail and Maritime Transport Workers Union (RMT) and one submission from the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) regarding the closure of the ticket offices and accompanying changes made as part of the programme. These submissions are available in Appendices V, W and X. A meeting was also held between London TravelWatch and the RMT at which the RMT expressed their views on the changes. The unions' primary concern expressed to us is the safety of staff and passengers following the ticket office closures due to lower staffing levels and increased instances of lone working. They expressed concern that passengers are unable to carry out all the ticketing transactions on ticket machines that had been available at ticket offices and also that passengers are unable to obtain information easily on stations due to the changes.

Train operating companies' feedback

Feedback from train operating companies that have interfaces with London Underground (e.g. London Midland at Euston) has shown that they have generally felt little impact on their services since the closure of the London Underground ticket offices. For example, although Govia Thameslink Railway has noted an increased

number of enquiries about Oyster at Victoria National Rail station, it has had no negative impact on queue times at the ticket office there.

However, Virgin Trains West Coast noted that there were some issues with London Underground queries at Euston. In particular, they informed us that passengers who come to Euston to use the Visitor Centre outside opening hours use Virgin Trains' information point as an alternative way of getting information about the Underground.

Chiltern Railways have also noted an increase in ticketless travel, especially by freedom pass holders beyond Amersham. Passengers have stated when challenged that this is because they have been unable to purchase the right ticket or extension at London Underground stations.

Metropolitan Police Service feedback

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) took a sample of reported offences within 100m of London Underground stations to determine whether there had been an increase in reported offences since the ticket office closures.

They found that offences in the area around stations were “almost exclusively” unrelated to London Underground ticket office closures.

The MPS did however specify that they do not code specifically for instances of crime related to ticket office closures or changes to ticket halls and that the area looked at around stations may be somewhat arbitrary due to London's dense geography. They therefore noted that data would be somewhat subjective and cannot be generalised.

British Transport Police feedback

London TravelWatch contacted the British Transport Police for feedback on the changes, in particular regarding help point calls since the ticket office closures.

However, due to time constraints of the review, no comprehensive feedback was received.

4 General findings

4.1 Staffing levels

Passengers value visible staff highly, and the quality of customer service provided by the majority of London Underground staff is excellent. Subject to being able to access all the information and tickets that they need, passengers generally would like to see staff in the ticket hall area rather than exclusively in ticket offices. When staff are more visible and proactively helping passengers, passengers feel safe, secure and satisfied.

“Once you find the person [staff member], I cannot say thanks enough to those guys, because I think most of them are very passionate in helping you and I think that’s been an amazing change.” [Passenger with accessibility needs]

There is a need for enough staff to be able to provide this level of service consistently, and when this happens, passenger satisfaction scores are high. Since ticket office closures on London Underground stations, TfL’s overall satisfaction score has remained steady at 85, with staff attention to customers and staff helpfulness higher than before the changes at 96 and 95 respectively. There has however been a drop in staff presence from 98 to 96. Appendix F, Customer Impact Review has a full breakdown of scores from TfL’s Customer Satisfaction Survey and Mystery Shopping Survey.

Any alterations to staffing levels and rostering arrangements will be based on a separate review that is due to take place between London Underground and the trade unions.

4.2 Reopening ticket offices

London TravelWatch feels that the closure of ticket offices may have been premature, in that the ticket machines currently at stations are neither flexible nor reliable enough to perform all the functions that ticket offices previously performed. Improvements to ticket machines should have been implemented before the ticket offices were closed, meaning it is now vital that machines are upgraded as soon as possible to allow passengers to benefit. We do not believe that there would be a passenger benefit in reopening ticket offices at this time, subject to implementation of changes recommended in this report, as the new system can meet passenger needs. There is a clear benefit to passengers in staff being proactive and visible in the ticket halls, and subject to them being able to help passengers purchase any ticket they reasonably require from the machines, there would be less need for ticket offices. We also note there is a shift taking place in transactions on the London

Underground, with payment methods that do not require ticket offices/machines increasing – e.g. contactless payment.

However, a focal point in stations where passengers can get assistance and enough staff to perform their duties consistently is crucial for stations to work for passengers. Our view that there is not a need to reopen ticket offices is therefore based on the assumption that recommended changes would be implemented. Issues such as reliability and functionality of machines were highlighted as needing improvement prior to the ticket offices being closed.

Our research ‘Passengers’ ticket purchasing and journey experiences’ published in 2013 showed that passengers would prefer to see staff out in ticket halls subject to them being able to go behind a ticket office window to sell tickets. However, although it is clear that the most efficient way of selling tickets is at a ticket office, staff on the London Underground are most beneficial to passengers out in ticket halls in a multi-functional capacity. We therefore feel that the current system can work subject to our recommendations being implemented.

4.3 Gateline and lift unavailability and station closures

There does not appear to be a widespread problem related to station closures (instances where there are not enough staff available to have the station open and therefore the station has to close) or gatelines and lifts which are frequently out of service. However, some stations have higher frequencies of gatelines being left open than others. This is outlined in Appendix R. There has been a 1 percentage point increase in station closures since the changes were brought in, but this represents an average of 21 closures lasting for 30 minutes each over a four week period. This is something for TfL to monitor going forward. Attention should be paid to minimise the amount of time these facilities are not in use, but we are not making any specific recommendation based on this.

4.4 General commuters making regular journeys

For many passengers who make the same journey regularly (i.e. for commuting), there is little need for any interaction with ticket purchasing facilities. These passengers tend to only look for staff assistance in the event of service disruption or a problem with their Oyster/contactless payment. They have therefore felt little or no impact from the changes made. However, focus groups have shown that annual season ticket holders feel aggrieved by the inability to purchase their season tickets at ticket machines.

“I use automatic top up, you set it up online then it comes off your credit card. I don’t need to talk to anyone really.” [Commuter, inner London]

5 Our Assessment

5.1 Lack of visible staff

Many stations presently operate with just one member of staff for some or all of the day. Passengers are experiencing a number of challenges at these stations, in particular passengers who require extra assistance. When the member of staff is required to perform any action that takes them away from the ticket hall, such as assisting mobility impaired passengers to the platform, the gateline is left open, there is no assistance for any other passenger, and the station is effectively unstaffed during that period.

Gatelines being left open causes problems for passengers as they may be unsure whether they need to touch in to the system, or if they are allowed through the gateline if they have been unable to purchase the right ticket from the machines. This can lead to them being overcharged for their journey when exiting the Underground.

“Outer stations is [sic] where the greatest problem is. There’s not enough staff anywhere... you’re really relying on other passengers, other customers to help you.”
[Passenger with accessibility needs]

Staff are required to perform a large number of duties in the course of a shift, and some of these are of vital importance to passengers. During a shift, staff can be required to answer help point calls, assist passengers, help at ticket machines, monitor the gateline and carry out other tasks where necessary. As a result, there are occasions where staff have become stressed and have consequently not provided the level of customer service that they would have wished to. This means that in some cases, passengers are not receiving the high level of customer service that they expect.

The lack of visible staff has implications for passenger feelings of safety. Across our research, passengers cited being able to see staff as fundamental to their feelings of safety when using the Underground.

Staff should be deployed on stations so that they are visible to passengers, and therefore able to assist passengers where necessary.



Figure 4 - Gateline left open at Buckhurst Hill, 26th October 2016

5.2 Safety and Security

A number of passengers (45% of London TravelWatch survey and 17% of Talk London survey respondents) informed us that they feel less safe in stations than they did when there was a ticket office. A number of factors influence this, including the lack of a focal point in the station where passengers can find staff, the frequency with which passengers do not see staff in stations, and a feel of confusion and chaos in stations, particularly those with high footfall and high numbers of tourists. At these locations, passengers note that staff are sometimes surrounded by groups of people requiring assistance, adding to the sense of chaos. Lack of visible staff is the most common reason for passengers feeling less safe when in stations, especially at night, with 63% of London TravelWatch survey respondents specifically referring to staff presence as increasing their feelings of safety.

“I feel vulnerable if it’s late at night and there’s no-one around. When the ticket office was open you could actually see them. You knew there was always somebody there.” [Passenger with accessibility needs]

In addition, passengers are not necessarily aware where stations are controlled from. Some believe that control was carried out from a ticket office, and therefore feel that stations lost the function dedicated to control with the closure of the ticket offices. This adds to their feelings of stations as chaotic and disordered.

To increase passenger feelings of safety in stations, staff should be located so as to be visible and approachable. Staff should also look to proactively offer assistance to passengers where possible.

5.3 Visibility of staff uniforms

Compounding the challenge for passengers to work out where to get their assistance at stations, the uniforms worn by staff are a dark blue colour and do not stand out, meaning it is often difficult to spot staff in busier stations. For visually impaired passengers needing assistance, this is a critical problem.

Staff should be clearly visible in the ticket hall, enabling passengers to receive assistance from them, and also increasing passenger feelings of safety. This could be by a change to the current uniform, with staff wearing brighter colours that are easily identifiable by passengers and at some of the busiest locations, passengers would benefit from staff wearing high visibility jackets.

Any adjustments made to staff uniforms should include pockets which are sufficiently large to hold the iPads that have been issued to all station staff. This will prevent staff from having to hold their iPads, which can make passengers feel uncomfortable in approaching them as they feel staff are busy.

5.4 Lack of focal point

Passengers inform us that there is confusion about where to find staff in stations. At many stations, especially smaller ones, passengers viewed the ticket office as the control point for the station, and would go to the ticket office for any assistance. With the new operating system, passengers are more unsure of where to go to get the information or assistance they need, stations can feel chaotic without an organised queuing system, staff members are not always in the same place each day and if not immediately visible, stations can appear unstaffed.

“We need the person [staff] to be in a consistent place in every station so you know where to go for help.” [Commuter with family, outer London]

*“When the ticket office was there, it always gave people a point of focus. It might not always have been they wanted to buy a ticket...but they’d come up to the window.”
[Staff member]*

For some passengers, inconsistency in the locations of staff within stations can cause problems. Passengers expressed that some stations have a chaotic or disorderly look, and that this appearance of disorganisation has left them feeling less secure when travelling, and less confident about getting assistance when using the network.

Passengers need staff to be available to assist them, and the ticket machines are a key point in any station where assistance is required. With the current ticket

machines not able to provide a full range of tickets for passengers, staff are especially needed to provide additional functionality or advice.

In small stations, one member of staff to monitor both gateline and ticket machines may be appropriate, but where more staff are available, both areas need to be covered separately. Generally, ticket machines are near the station entrance, and could be used to provide the necessary focal point where passengers can always go to find their initial assistance.

All stations should have a focal point where staff should be located to enable passengers to find them when assistance is needed.



Figure 5 - Passengers queuing to use machines at King's Cross St. Pancras

5.5 Passengers requiring additional assistance

The turn up and go procedure for passengers who require additional assistance is now more difficult.⁴ With ticket offices, it was common practice that when a passenger who required assistance turned up at a station, the ticket office would ring the station(s) that the passenger was going to/through to confirm what time the assistance was required. Without ticket offices, the process is much more difficult for staff, and can break down. Station staff are now required to ring the line controller, who is often busy with operational matters, to ask them to ring the other station(s) to confirm arrangements. Without being able to phone a ticket office, it is harder to find the right person at the station, and passengers are reporting frequent issues where their assistance is not ready for them on their arrival at their destination.

Passengers who require assistance at an interchange, such as between the two separate Hammersmith stations, have reported that station staff are not always able

⁴ This is the procedure by which passengers requiring assistance can arrive in a London Underground station and be helped with their journey (e.g. onto a train) without pre-booking assistance.

to assist them, and either advise as to the best walking route, or leave the assistance to members of the public.

Assistance should be consistently available, with staff helping passengers have smooth interchanges (for example at stations which interface with National Rail).

5.6 Avoid grouping of staff where possible

When passengers require assistance, our research has shown they can be put off by a cluster of staff standing together. It is obviously reasonable for staff to communicate, and when not assisting passengers they should not be restricted from talking to each other.

Staff should always be proactively looking for passengers who may require assistance, and make sure they are as approachable as possible to passengers.

5.7 Staff local knowledge

Staff now work at more locations than was previously the case, and can be rostered to work at some stations very infrequently. This has led to a loss in local knowledge, particularly in relation to advising passengers about local amenities or onward journey advice at interchanges.

“We’ve all been moved from our home stations to stations we don’t really know and we’ve all had to learn again, and that’s had an effect on the customers as well.”
[Staff member]

Staff should be required to work at as few locations as possible to allow them to develop local knowledge.

Staff should use their handheld devices, where appropriate, to provide customers with information about their onward journeys.

5.8 Ticket machines

Passengers prefer to use the larger machines, which can take cash and perform a number of functions that the smaller machines cannot. There is a widespread understanding that these machines are the ones to use for anything other than basic Oyster top-ups, and passengers wait for them to be available. This adds to confusion

when queuing, and staff should proactively advise passengers in the queue as to which machine to use for their transaction and payment type.

Survey responses, mystery shopping and information from TfL showed that ticket machines on the London Underground break down too often, either fully or partially, and repairs take a long time to action. There has been a small reduction in average machine availability since the closure of the ticket offices, in part due to the increased use of machines.

“The machines were there to supplement the ticket office. They’re now the main focus and they’re getting more heavily used than ever before.” [Staff member]

Multi-fare machines (MFMs), which accept notes, coins and cards, are the machines which are suffering from the most problems. When shown the different types of machine at focus groups, passengers said they would prefer to use the MFMs as they are the largest, most prominent, machines which have the biggest range of functionality.

It was clear from research carried out that many passengers are unaware of the services available and methods of payment accepted at different types of ticket machines.

With regards to using ticket machines, many passengers are unsure:

- if they have got the right ticket,
- which machine to use,
- where to get help,
- how stations are staffed, and
- what can or can’t be done online, at Visitor Centres or at stations

“People have difficulty because there is a multitude of choices in terms of the type of tickets and concessions that are available, the times of day to travel, the zones that you’ve got to go in now. There’s a serious amount of information that they [passengers] don’t know about fully.” [Staff member]

In some locations, staff have added to the existing signage on ticket machines to make the payment methods accepted at different machine types clearer to passengers.



Figure 6 - Signage added to machines at King's Cross St. Pancras

Improvements which should be made to ticket machines to make them easier to use include:

- **clearer graphics above ticket machines (indicating payment methods accepted at each machine type)**
- **better signage detailing where to go for assistance at stations,**
- **posters detailing alternative places to get tickets or information,**
- **clear areas for information or where staff will usually be situated and**
- **staff being deployed where passengers need them most**

TfL should make clear to passengers the different ticketing functionalities available to them on the different machines. In doing so, they would enable customers to self-serve more easily, thereby reducing queue times and enabling staff to assist passengers elsewhere.

These will all assist in meaning that stations operate more smoothly, with less delays and a better process for both staff and passengers.

5.9 Tasks previously carried out at ticket offices

There are a number of specific tasks that used to be performed within the ticket office, that are not performed as well without a ticket office. These include a number of ticket machine functions, such as:

- selling tickets to many National Rail destinations,
- buying extension tickets,
- buying tickets for travel on a later day,
- buying annual season tickets, and
- when and how much a refund on an Oyster card can be applied.

There are now some gaps in ticketing at London Underground stations. For example, passengers cannot always purchase tickets to National Rail stations, especially extension tickets from the boundary of a Travelcard or Freedom pass validity area. Staff in ticket offices used to be able to look up the correct fare and issue a ticket; this functionality is not possible with ticket machines. This loss in functionality means passengers are often required to buy more expensive tickets to make their journey, or go out of their way to use other means of purchasing tickets. National Rail operators have informed us that there has been an increase in ticketless travel along certain routes as passengers have been unable to be issued with the correct ticket at the start of their journey. **Extension tickets should therefore be available from ticket machines.**

Staff in London Underground ticket offices were able to issue tickets for travel on days later in the week. This is not possible with ticket machines and is therefore a problem for passengers who wish to buy their tickets in advance.

Passengers should be able to purchase tickets for future travel. This may help reduce queue times at machines, as passengers could purchase tickets at less busy times of the day.

Oyster top ups of any amount should be made available on machines to allow passengers to pay for the journey or journeys they will be making without putting excess money on their Oyster.

Oyster journey history printouts should also be available on machines so that passengers who do not have access to online accounts to view journey history can have a paper record of their journeys, as was the case at a ticket office.

5.10 Availability of annual season tickets on ticket machines

Passengers who wish to purchase an annual season ticket used to do so at ticket offices. They are now only able to do this online, from a Visitor Centre or London Overground ticket office. Passengers who buy these tickets told us they are wary of spending a very large amount of money via a web based transaction, because of the fear of fraud and abuse of their credit or debit cards. At the focus groups, passengers buying such annual season tickets felt particularly inconvenienced by the closure of ticket offices, given the cost of their tickets.

Passengers should have the ability to purchase annual season tickets at stations. Ticket machines should be updated to sell annual season tickets and associated Gold cards with staff authorisation to reduce the risk of fraudulent use of credit or debit cards.

5.11 Removal of 48 hour restriction on Oyster refunds

Passengers currently have to wait 48 hours from purchasing an Oyster card before being able to get back their deposit and any remaining balance on the card. This does not represent good customer service especially for visitors to London who are only here for a short period of time.

It should be possible for customers to get a refund on their Oyster card whenever required.

5.12 Help points

At stations with fully staffed control rooms (around 35 stations), help point information calls should always be answered by staff in the station control rooms. At a further 52 stations help point information calls are routed to the TfL Contact Centre. However, at the remaining stations, calls from help points ring in the station office and are only answered if a staff member is present there. This represents a reduced level of customer service, as staff may be elsewhere on the station, meaning the likelihood of calls going unanswered has increased.

“It’s scary that they’re emergency points and then sometimes they [the staff] don’t pick up, and then you get a recording saying all staff are busy.” [Passenger with accessibility needs]



Figure 7 A London Underground help point

With the exception of the 52 stations where emergency calls direct to the London Underground Control Centre, help point emergency calls ring first in the control room or station office before being routed to the BTP if unanswered.

All help point calls should be routed to the TfL Contact Centre and all emergency calls should be routed to the British Transport Police. CCTV at help points should be live monitored by the TfL Contact Centre. This will enable passengers to receive assistance even if station staff are having to carry out activities elsewhere on the station.

5.13 Hearing loops

Ticket offices provided a hearing loop function. Without the ticket office, passengers who have difficulty hearing struggle with background noise when communicating with station staff.

Stations should have designated hearing loop points at focal points, information zones and at help points. These should be well signposted to allow passengers with hearing difficulties to locate them easily.

5.14 Visitor Centres

There is a low level of awareness of Visitor Centres amongst London Underground users. Passengers indicated they would be more likely to use the Visitor Centres if their purpose and the types of customer who can use them were clearer.

*“It’s not really clear. Is it for tourists or is it for anyone?”
[Commuter with family, outer London]*

Another issue arising relating to Visitor Centres was how easy they are to find in stations. Mystery shopping highlighted that Visitor Centres are not always well signposted within London Underground stations.

Although Visitor Centres are primarily aimed at tourists, many passengers living in London could also benefit from the services they offer.

TfL states that Visitor Centre core opening hours are from 8am-6pm. This means that passengers looking for assistance in the evenings are unable to get it from a Visitor Centre. Some train operators, including Virgin at Euston, have informed us that they have seen an increase in passengers asking for assistance relating to travel on the Underground outside Visitor Centre opening hours.

Levels of publicity relating to the Visitor Centres should be increased, informing passengers of their presence and the services available at them.

In order to make Visitor Centres as accessible as possible, there should be comprehensive signage indicating how to reach the Visitor Centre. This is particularly necessary at stations where the Visitor Centre is not located within the London Underground station.

TfL should reconsider the name ‘Visitor Centre’ to reflect the fact that a wider audience can use them to obtain information and tickets.

The opening hours of Visitor Centres should be extended, so that passengers arriving in London in the evenings can get assistance.

6 Conclusions

London TravelWatch feel there is potential for passengers to benefit from staff on the London Underground being available in ticket halls carrying out a range of customer service and operational tasks rather than solely in a ticket office. We are therefore not opposed to the principle of ticket office closures subject to our recommendations being adopted.

Passengers in this research have generally not called for ticket offices to be reopened, but have consistently referenced the need to have visible staff in stations to provide assistance and increase feelings of safety. At present, there are inconsistencies on the network, with passengers not always able to find staff when they need them. Our research has shown that this is in part due to staff not actually being in the ticket hall (potentially as they have been called away to deal with incidents elsewhere) and in part due to the difficulty passengers have in seeing staff in busy stations due to the darkly coloured uniforms.

Staff presence is also fundamental to passenger feelings of safety when travelling on the Underground. Even when they do not require assistance, passengers feel reassured when they can see staff in stations.

The primary way in which TfL can ensure staff are consistently visible on the Underground is by introducing a focal point in stations where staff can be located. This would be of particular benefit at busy stations, where passengers have referenced a feel of chaos or disorder due to high volumes of people and a lack of clear direction on where to get assistance. Focal points will have to be in different places at different locations, but it must be clear for passengers entering the station where to go to find the focal point.

Another key area for improvement is increasing the range of transactions that can be carried out on ticket machines. It is necessary for ticket machines to provide some of the products that were previously available at ticket offices, such as annual season tickets and tickets for future travel.

In addition, it is important that passengers are made aware of what they can and cannot do in stations, including payment methods available to them, and products or services available at ticket machines and Visitor Centres. In doing so, TfL can help passengers feel confident about using self-service facilities in stations, which may in turn help to reduce some of the pressure on staff which was highlighted during our research.

7 Glossary

BTP – British Transport Police

DLR – Docklands Light Railway

GLA – Greater London Authority

LU – London Underground

MFM – Multi-Fare Machine

MPS – Metropolitan Police Service

PAYG – Pay As You Go

RMT – Rail and Maritime Transport Workers Union

TfL – Transport for London

TSSA - Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

8 Appendices

Due to their size, the appendices to this report have been compiled into a separate volume. The table below lists the documents available in the appendices.

Letter	Appendix Title	Origin
A.	Research summary	London TravelWatch
B.	Talk London Panel survey summary	GLA
C.	Focus group and passenger intercept summary	2CV
D.	List of stakeholders contacted regarding the review	London TravelWatch
E.	Customer Impact Review	TfL
F.	Supporting table of information	TfL
G.	Stakeholder and customer engagement summary	TfL
H.	Evidence datasets	TfL
I.	Staff presence data	TfL
J.	Lift availability data	TfL
K.	Pay as you go and contactless data	TfL
L.	King's Cross case study	TfL
M.	Improving London Underground leaflet	TfL
N.	Staff leaflet – changes to ticket halls	TfL
O.	Ticketing changes guide for iPads	TfL
P.	Stakeholder bulletin	TfL
Q.	Station closures arising from staff shortages	TfL
R.	Open gateline data	TfL
S.	Help point procedures	TfL
T.	Ticket machine availability data	TfL
U.	Weightings for ticket machine availability data	TfL
V.	RMT Submission 1	RMT
W.	RMT Submission 2	RMT
X.	TSSA Submission	TSSA
Y.	Valuing People Group feedback	TfL Valuing People Group
Z.	Sample letter sent to consultees	London TravelWatch
AA.	Stations excluded from this review	London TravelWatch
BB.	Terms of Reference	London TravelWatch
CC.	Survey Monkey survey responses*	London TravelWatch

*Due to the size of Appendix CC, it has not been included in the appendices to this report. Please email info@londontravelwatch.org.uk if you wish to request a copy of this document.