



London Underground Ticket Offices

Review of closure programme

Submission to London TravelWatch

1. Overview

The Rail Maritime & Transport Workers Union represents around two thirds of station staff working on London Underground.

This submission to the London TravelWatch report into the London Underground (LU) Ticket Office Closure Programme has been prepared from information provided by our local and Stations Functional representatives

The report will demonstrate that the ticket office closure programme and the associated *Fit for the Future* staffing model has had a detrimental effect on passengers in regard to the three areas that the report is focussing on; the ability of passengers to travel safely; the ability of passengers to purchase the right ticket easily and the provision of help and support to allow passengers to get around London.

This submission will, in particular, highlight members' concerns regarding:

- 873 job cuts¹ on stations that have left stations dangerously understaffed.
- Increased fatigue resulting from an increase in unsociable working as a result of job cuts.
- De-staffing of Station Control rooms leaving stations without a communication hub and leaving safety critical systems unmonitored.
- Introduction of a new grade of station assistant that is not trained in operational procedures and leaves stations without sufficient staff resources to deal with emergencies.
- Closure of all ticket offices which has made ticket issuing more awkward and time consuming for passengers and takes station assistants away from other roles in order to issue tickets on self-service machines.

¹ *Note on statistical method*

Job numbers are calculated by comparing LU's establishment utilisation report for period 1, 2016 (*Fit for the Future* rosters) with staff numbers for April 2014, provided to the trade unions in Company Council Sub-Group. The data for 2014 shows rostered positions with rest day/ sickness/ Annual Leave cover provided by a separate reserve of staff. In some cases the reserve does not cover an equivalent area to the areas in the *Fit for the Future* staffing model and so numbers cannot be directly compared. Reserves provided an additional 0.37 of rostered staffing. Where areas do not match between the two models, a figure of 1.37 has been multiplied by rostered positions to give a total staffing figure that can be compared to current *Fit for the Future* rosters, which have cover incorporated into the roster.

2. Travel safely on the Tube network

RMT contends that the safe running of London Underground (LU) stations has been compromised by the ticket office closure plan and associated *Fit for the Future* staffing model.

A key element of the ticket office closure plan has been the imposition, by LU, of its *Fit for the Future* staffing model. This model was opposed by the trade unions and has never been agreed by RMT Health & Safety or Industrial Relations representatives

Contrary to claims that *Fit for the Future* has provided more visible staff on LU stations, the real situation is that there are 873 fewer station staff on LU today than was the case in April 2014. Furthermore, LU has introduced a new grade of stations assistant (CSA2) that is not trained in operational procedures such as assisting a person ill on a train, stopping or reversing the direction of an escalator and many other similar tasks. However, the CSA2 is counted towards minimum staffing numbers as required under legislation. As a result, a station can meet minimum numbers but not have qualified staff to control an evacuation or other emergency situation.

London Underground has conducted a Local Investigation into an incident at Canning Town where an evacuation, resulting from a passenger falling between the platform and a Jubilee line train, went out of control. The Canning Town incident occurred on 26 May 2016 and the report is attached to this submission as appendix 1. The report is explicit that *Fit for the Future* staffing model caused the evacuation to go out of control.

The report states:

- *As part of the development of Fit for the Future Stations staffing arrangements, consideration was given to the strategic aim of having more staff present in customer facing areas in larger stations. On this basis, it was felt that there were more customer facing and effective ways of providing the function than by a member of staff permanently situated in the control room.*
- *With the Control Room at Canning Town being unstaffed there was no central base for communications to flow in and out of.*
- *Station classification lead to low numbers of staff being present to manage an emergency.*
- *The current operating model did not match customer demand or resourcing levels.*

The report makes a number of observations that demonstrate that *Fit for the Future* has impacted negatively on station safety. It says:

- *The lack of organised incident management ultimately played a more significant role in this incident than the customer's leg becoming trapped between the train and platform.*

Whilst Incident Management is clearly defined within Rule Book 2, observations from the CCTV and conversations with those involved highlight deficiencies in the following areas:

- *Unclear as to who is performing what role*
- *Lack of familiarity with local incident management process*
- *No liaison between stakeholders as defined within the Control and Congestion Emergency Plan (CCEP).*
- *Canning Town operates with a zero numbers staffing level (as does West Ham)*
- *Communications from NSCC where impaired due to the noise*
- *No instruction was given to stop the DLR dispatching passengers at Canning Town*
- *Staff unavailable to attend the RVP to meet with the Emergency Services.*

The investigating team believe that although the above would not have stopped the customer's leg becoming trapped between the platform and the train, they would have led to a

co-ordinated and structured incident management between the LU Senior Operating Officer, Neasden Service Control Centre and Canning Town Station staff.

The report was made available to Jubilee Line management on 22 July 2016. In spite of the report's findings, the continuing lack of staff available as a result of *Fit for the Future*, led directly to a further incident at Canning Town. On 18 Sept 2016 Canning Town was left open with no control room staff and no station supervisor. The only member of staff on duty was a Customer Service Assistant who is not trained in the control of the station fire panel or other safety critical control room equipment. This is an arrangement that London Underground calls "babysitting".

While the station was being babysat, a mobility impaired customer attempted to call for assistance using an information point. They were unable to communicate with station staff as the information point can only be answered from the unstaffed control room. The passenger then activated a fire call point in an effort to summon assistance. There was no supervisor or manager on site to deal with the fire panel going into evacuation mode.

These two incidents at Canning Town demonstrate the potential consequences of the cuts in staff made by London Underground under *Fit for the Future*. The uncontrolled evacuation that occurred on 26 May was not the result of particular characteristics of Canning Town, but was the result of an unstaffed control room and inadequate staffing level overall. This situation pertains to the new staffing model across London Underground.

RMT asks TravelWatch to consider the following concerns of our Health & Safety representatives regarding the impact of *Fit for the Future* stations on LU:

- Station control rooms have been de-staffed with no replacement of the functions and equipment held in them.
- Dramatically reduced staffing across the whole network leading to inability to safely run stations.
- Incorrect downgrading of dozens of stations in relation to needs of staffing and operational response leading to complete lack of resource and equipment, sometimes to carry out even basic tasks.
- Ability to react to emergencies and major incidents has been significantly reduced.
- Regular non-staffing of stations to divert resource to bigger stations.
- Stations being run (know as babysitting) by unqualified staff.
- Lifts, escalators and other equipment being left in service without staff available to deal with emergencies involving these assets.
- Staff with no experience of areas or role being made to run stations with little or no training.
- Inadequate training of staff for new roles. No consultation with staff safety representatives prior to the introduction of new programmes of safety critical training.
- Downgrading of training standards.
- Staff fatigue. LUL have removed 873 staff but the workload has increased. This has left the existing staff doing sometimes two or three jobs at once.
- Rosters with less people, but the same amount of duties to fill - meaning an increase of weekend working, nights and extreme duties (starts before 07:00 or finishes after 23:00).
- Inadequate cover staffing is causing individuals to be given fragmented working hours when on cover weeks. Sometimes an individual is given nights, earlies and lates in the same five day working week.
- Massive increase in overtime and increase in staff sickness with conditions linked to fatigue and stress. Management have removed an overtime limit of 30% of contracted working hours from the stations framework for staff deployment.

3. Purchase the right ticket easily

London Underground (LU) and the previous Mayor claimed that the ticket office closure plan would lead to an increase in staff available to help with ticket purchases. However, London Underground's own data shows that 873 jobs have been cut from Tube stations.

Only Heathrow, among the largest 'Gateway' stations, has seen any increase in staff numbers. Euston stands still. But Kings Cross (-21), Liverpool St (-3), Paddington (-5) and Victoria (-15) all lose staff.

Other large central London 'destination' stations also lose out. Bank, Oxford Circus, Westminster and Waterloo all now have less staff than before the ticket office closure programme

Less busy 'Metro' stations in Central London see severe cuts. Earl's Court and Fulham Broadway area loses 47; Stratford loses 23; Brixton loses 12 while Ladbrooke Grove loses 27.

In outer London the cuts have been drastic. The Harrow-on-the-Hill group loses 22; West Ham loses 18; Morden group loses 35 while Northern Edgware group is slashed by 51. Many suburban stations have been reduced to one person operation. Whenever that member of staff is dealing with operational issues, from lost property to major track or signal failures, there is no member of staff available to assist passengers purchase tickets.

In the vast majority of stations, including the busiest Central London stations, the ticket offices have been shut, but there are no additional staff in the ticket hall to help passengers use the self-service machines.

London Underground's fare and ticketing structure is complex. There are as many as four different fares for an adult single or return ticket depending on time of day and method of payment. There are then various discounts available. Many discounts have their own varied terms and conditions attached. Ticket purchases can often require more than five screens to be negotiated on a self-service machine.

During consultation LU made unsubstantiated claims that tickets could be issued faster on a self-service machine than at a ticket office window. RMT disputes this and believes that ticket issue is far quicker at a ticket office window, where a qualified ticket issuer is familiar with their equipment and where a broader range of tickets can be issued.

The Oyster card system has not removed the need for ticket offices. The issuing of an *Oyster* card is also much quicker at a ticket window than on a self-service machine. Uncompleted journeys and other irregularities can also be resolved easily at a ticket office. The London Evening Standard reported, in August 2016, that £225 million in dormant *Oyster* balances remain on cards. The closure of ticket offices has made claiming a refund of *Oyster* balances far more difficult. Many tourists and occasional users are unable to obtain a refund easily and end up leaving money on their cards.

Data provided by LU shows that the number of more complicated transactions, involving the issuing of magnetic tickets or season tickets at LU stations, is increasing. From period 5 2015 to period 5 2016 these type of transactions, across all LU stations (data is aggregated across ticket office windows and self-service machines), increased by 2.7%. On average, across 257 stations, there are over 300 season tickets and magnetic tickets issued every day at each station. The evidence indicates that demand for ticket issuing facilities remains strong across the Tube network, yet facilities have been greatly reduced as a result of the ticket office closure programme. This is causing longer queues for self-service machines.

The ticket office closure programme has created an inefficient new staffing model. Customer Service Assistants now have to spend extended periods of time assisting passengers to use self-service machines. When the ticket offices were open, a member of staff could serve passengers far more quickly at the ticket office window and the Customer Service Assistant was free to provide additional help to passengers. This inherent inefficiency has combined with a reduction in staff of 873 to the

detriment of passengers. Obtaining the correct ticket at a Tube station is now significantly more difficult and time-consuming than was the case before the ticket office closures.

4. Access the information and support they need to get around London

The reduction of staff on LU stations has impacted negatively on the support available to passengers.

Customer Service Assistants are now required to remain by self-service ticket machines as there is no ticket office available to passengers who find they are unable to use the self-service machines. This prevents staff from being available to mobility impaired or visually impaired passengers.

Many stations in outer zones have only one member of staff rostered throughout the day. As a result of staff cuts there are often no cover staff available for annual leave, training or sickness absences. As a result there are stations left with no staff at all on a daily basis. Plainly the support available to passengers when a station is unstaffed is very limited.

London Underground is relying on an unsustainable amount of overtime to keep stations open or staffed at all. Overtime is voluntary and any reduction in the amount of overtime staff feel able to work, will cause a further deterioration in the situation.

An additional problem for passengers requiring help is posed by a failure on the part of LU to properly train staff for new roles. Training in staff supervision was only started five months after staff took up new supervisory positions. Many staff working in ticket halls are yet to be trained in servicing self-service ticket machines.

5. Conclusion

The reduction of 873 jobs on London Underground stations has left stations without sufficient staff to respond to emergencies or to provide the level of assistance to passengers that has been provided in the past. The closure of ticket offices has compounded this. A smaller number of station staff have to use far less efficient self-service ticket issuing facilities and are unable to provide other assistance to a greater number of passengers.

London Underground staff organised by RMT believe that *Fit for the Future* must be urgently reviewed and that a staffing model should be implemented that is based on the following:

- Restoration of the 873 jobs lost on stations
- Re-open ticket offices
- Full training for all staff. All CSAs to be at CSA1 grade.