

# **Logged out – Why digital exclusion is still leaving Londoners behind**

**Report annex**

## Aims and objectives

Based on its [2023 research findings](#), London TravelWatch wanted to evaluate and assess the progress transport operators have made to reduce digital exclusion and disadvantage for people travelling. This was evaluated by auditing London's transport operators and assessing various modes of transport.

## Methodology

To facilitate these audits, research agency Lacuna was tasked with creating a detailed plan for reviewing London's public transport network, with all audits conducted by London TravelWatch staff and Board members. The scope comprised:

- National Rail services across Train Operating Companies (TOCs) operating in London
- Transport for London (TfL) services:
  - Docklands Light Railway (DLR)
  - Elizabeth line
  - London Overground
  - London Underground
  - Bus stations and stops
  - Trams stops
  - Santander Cycles and docking stations

**Table 1: Audit plan showing the allocation of audits by transport operator and mode**

Transport operating company	Ticket booth Number of interactions	Manned – no ticket office Number of interactions	Unmanned / driver only – no ticket office Number of interactions	Total on-site visits
Chiltern Railways	6	n/a	3	9
Southeastern	5	2	2	9
Govia Thameslink Railways (Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern, Gatwick Express)	6 (1x Thameslink, 1x Southern, 1x Great Northern, 3x Gatwick Express)	3 (1x Thameslink, 1x Southern, 1x Great Northern)	3 (1x Thameslink, 1x Southern, 1x Great Northern)	12
Southwestern Railway	4	n/a	4	8
Great Western Railway	3	n/a	2	5
Greater Anglia	4	3	1	8
Network Rail - London Waterloo - London Paddington - London Liverpool Street - London Euston - St Pancras International	5	n/a	n/a	5
C2C	6	n/a	n/a	6
London Northwestern (/West Midlands Trains)	5	n/a	n/a	5
Elizabeth Line	6	3	n/a	9
Heathrow Express	2	n/a	n/a	2
London Overground	3	6	n/a	9
London Underground	N/A	9	N/A	9
Docklands Light Railway	n/a	n/a	9	9
Buses	3	n/a	12	15
London Trams	3	3	3	9
Santander Cycles	n/a	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>132</b>

When scoring performance of operators, we used the following benchmarks:

- Good: >66 percent
- Moderate: 33 percent-66 percent
- Underperforming: <33 percent

## Pre-audit tasks

Auditors were given specific activities to complete before starting their field audits.

This included evaluating TfL and TOC websites for information relevant to their journey and using non-digital services to help plan their trip. While some people won't have access to the internet or digital options at all (or might not want to use them), others may have access but only at certain places, such as at home before they make their journey. Therefore, auditors looked at available tools such as the operator's website or phone helpline to assess responsiveness and ability to provide clear and accurate journey-related information.

London Overground, Underground, DLR, the Elizabeth line, buses, Trams and Santander Cycles all fall under TfL, meaning that all these pre-audit tasks were directed towards TfL's website and customer service team. TOC specific pre-tasks were conducted on the relevant TOC website and redirected to the relevant customer service team, many of which fell under National Rail Enquiries.

## Website accessibility

Digital exclusion and disadvantage can be created because of inaccessible design, for example a website not being screen reader compatible. According to government accessibility requirements<sup>1</sup>, websites must meet level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), work with commonly used assistive technologies, include Disabled people in user research and provide an accessibility statement.

It is also recommended that websites should include a "site accessibility" page. These are usually linked in the footer of the website, detailing their adherence to these standards, such as this example from the TfL website:

[Data sources](#) [Privacy & cookies](#) [Terms & conditions](#) [Digital accessibility](#)

As such, auditors were asked to consider website accessibility features, including font size, colour contrast and readability. However, as our auditors are not accessibility experts, and the sample size was small, more dedicated research should be undertaken to properly assess this with organisations with lived and learned experience.

For example, in 2022 the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) commissioned the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RiDC) to conduct an accessibility review

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<sup>1</sup> [Making your service accessible: an introduction](#), gov.uk

of 24 TOC websites<sup>2</sup>. It found that while performance had significantly improved since the first review in 2020, there was still room for improvement. An updated report would help determine if progress has continued, and areas where more needs to be done.

It should be noted that accessibility in this respect is different from “assisted digital support”, which is about helping people with lower digital skills or limited access to the internet to access services. Providing this support is another way of reducing digital exclusion and disadvantage.

## Pre-audit tasks – trains and stations

### Information on mentoring services

Auditors noted gaps in the availability and clarity of online information regarding mentoring services for travellers. In 38 percent of audits on TOC websites, they were unable to find any details about support or mentoring services. In an additional 26 percent, they found the information provided to be confusing or unclear.

While some of this will be due to difficulty locating the information, it is also in part because these important services aren't offered in the first place. Looking at mentoring services specifically, when further reviewing what transport operators offer, it seems that just a few offer this service:

- Great Western Railway (GWR), South Western Railway (SWR) and GTR (including Southern, Thameslink and Great Northern) offer a “try a train” event
- TfL offers a free travel mentoring service

TOC performance (average scores):

- Good: London Overground, London Underground and DLR stood out for providing clear information on the website
- Moderate: GWR, SWR and GTR noted mentoring events on their websites, though information was not always easy to find
- Underperforming: All remaining TOC websites fell into this category, with poor availability and clarity of information on mentoring schemes

### Information on accessibility

73 percent of auditors found the accessibility information clear on the webpages, although perceptions varied. While all operators provided information on Passenger Assist, there were significant differences in the other accessibility information and schemes mentioned.

TOC performance (average scores):

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<sup>2</sup> [Accessibility review of train operating companies' \(TOCs\) websites - Summary report by the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers \(RIDC\)](#), 2022, Office of Rail and Road

- Good: Chiltern Railways, Southeastern, Greater Anglia, London Northwestern Railway, Thameslink, London Underground and London Overground. Examples of good practice included the webpages for Greater Anglia, London Northwestern Railway and Thameslink, which provided information on accessibility both in their stations and on their trains. Greater Anglia also offers virtual tours of its trains and busiest stations.
- Moderate: Southern, GWR, c2c, Elizabeth line, DLR
- Underperforming: All remaining TOCs

### **Accessing timetables**

In 36 percent of our audits there were challenges accessing timetables or booking tickets online.

TOC performance (average scores):

- Good: Chiltern Railways, Thameslink, Southern, Greater Anglia, Great Northern, London Northwestern Railway, Avanti West Coast, London Overground and Southeastern
- Moderate: c2c, SWR, Elizabeth line, London Underground
- Underperforming: GWR, DLR

### **Website clarity and accessibility features**

49 percent of audits found TOC website information somewhat easy to understand, highlighting a need for improved clarity to make them more user friendly, though no website was rated completely unclear.

TOC performance (average scores):

- Good: Greater Anglia, Southeastern, c2c and London Underground
- Moderate: Elizabeth line, London Overground, Thameslink, London Northwestern Railway
- Underperforming: All remaining TOCs and DLR

37 percent of audits rated TOC websites as only somewhat accessible, with issues like font size and colour contrast noted. It is worth mentioning that perceptions varied amongst auditors as experience was subjective.

### **Payment information**

While auditors were generally able to find fares for their journey via the relevant TOC company helpline or website, it became clear that there was often a financial penalty for being digitally excluded or disadvantaged. There were two key areas where this price discrepancy was highlighted:

1. **On TfL services, the difference between paying for a journey by paper ticket versus Pay As You Go (PAYG).** People are charged a flat fare of £7 for a paper ticket for Zones 1-6, which people may buy if they don't have

access to a contactless card/device or Oyster card (or if they are unaware of the premium they must pay for these tickets). In contrast, the fare when using PAYG to travel is generally lower.

**Table 2: 2025 Pay As You Go (PAYG) and paper ticket fares comparison for TfL services in selected fare zones**

Zones	Pay As You Go single fares		Paper ticket single fares	Percentage extra charged for a paper ticket fare compared to a Pay As You Go fare (=worst)	
	Peak	Off-peak	At any time	Peak	Off-peak
1 only	£2.90	£2.80	£7.00	141%	150%
Single fare zone only (2,3,4,5,6 or 7)	£2.10	£2.00	£7.00	233%	250%
1-2	£3.50	£2.90	£7.00	100%	141%
1-3	£3.80	£3.10	£7.00	84%	126%
1-4	£4.60	£3.40	£7.00	52%	106%
1-5	£5.20	£3.60	£7.00	35%	94%
1-6	£5.80	£3.80	£7.00	21%	84%
2-3	£2.30	£2.10	£7.00	204%	233%
2-6	£3.60	£2.40	£7.00	94%	192%
3-6	£3.20	£2.30	£7.00	119%	204%
4-6	£3.00	£2.20	£7.00	133%	218%
5-6	£2.30	£2.10	£7.00	204%	233%

Source: Fares taken from TfL's single fare finder webpage.

This price premium is also present for daily travelcards. However, the penalty decreases as the duration of the ticket increases. The PAYG Monday to Sunday cap is the same as the price of a 7-day Travelcard (which can begin any day) but monthly and annual PAYG capping is not an option. You can still buy monthly and annual travelcards.

**Table 3: 2025 PAYG caps and Travelcard ticket prices comparison for TfL services in selected fare zones**

Zone	Pay As You Go caps			Travelcards		
	Daily peak	Daily off-peak	Monday to Sunday	Day anytime	Day off-peak	7 Day
1 only	£8.90	£8.90	£44.70	£16.60	£16.60	£44.70
1-2	£8.90	£8.90	£44.70	£16.60	£16.60	£44.70
1-3	£10.50	£10.50	£52.50	£16.60	£16.60	£52.50
1-4	£12.80	£12.80	£64.20	£16.60	£16.60	£64.20
1-5	£15.30	£15.30	£76.40	£23.60	£16.60	£76.40
1-6	£16.30	£16.30	£81.60	£23.60	£16.60	£81.60

**2. The often higher prices for buying a ticket for rail services instead of using PAYG.** Often tickets sold by TOCs to travel on their services are more expensive than simply “tapping in” and “tapping out”. However, this was not always highlighted to passengers when buying tickets online or at a ticket machine. While ticket office staff may be able to direct passengers to the cheapest option, they are not universally present.

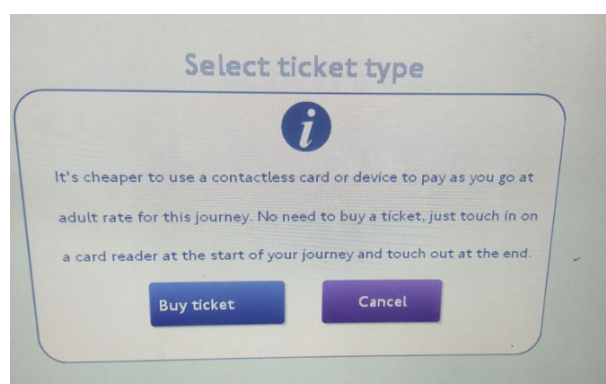
Some examples include:

**Table 4: 2025 Ticket prices comparison for sample National Rail journeys in the contactless area**

Journey	Ticket type, time of travel and cost of single journey		Percentage extra charged for a paper ticket vs PAYG (=worst)
	Contactless	Paper ticket	
St. Albans to London Bridge	£13.50 peak	£15.90 peak	18%
	£10.00 off peak	£15.90 off peak	59%
Welwyn Garden City to Moorgate	£11.60 peak	£15.20 peak	31%
	£8.40 off peak	£15.20 off peak	81%
Maidenhead to Paddington (GWR)	£14.80 peak	£16.40 peak	11%
	£8.30 off peak	£16.40 off peak	98%
Grays to Barking	£5.80 peak	£5.80 peak	0%
	£4.90 off peak	£4.90 off peak	0%
Staines to Waterloo	£10.90 peak	£10.90 peak	0%
	£7.40 off peak	£7.40 off peak	0%
Hayes to New Cross	£4.80 peak	£5.80 peak	21%
	£3.70 off peak	£5.80 off peak	57%
Waltham Cross to Liverpool Street	£6.70 peak	£9.50 peak	42%
	£4.90 off peak	£9.50 off peak	94%
Cheam to Victoria	£6.60 peak	£8.50 peak	29%
	£4.40 off peak	£8.50 off peak	93%

**Sources:** Contactless fares are taken from TfL’s single fare finder webpage. Paper ticket fares are taken from the respective TOC websites.

Raising awareness of these differences may help people who have the option to use contactless payment methods. For example, TfL has added a pop-up message to its ticket machines letting people know if the journey they are buying a ticket for is cheaper using contactless. Similarly, the National Rail Enquiries website recently changed to show contactless as the cheapest option, where applicable. However, this is not standard across all TOCs.



While more communication by transport operators to alert people to the different fares may help passengers to an extent, it does nothing for those who have no other choice but to buy paper tickets.

## Pre-audit tasks – bus and tram

### Information on mentoring services

As noted above, TfL offers free travel mentoring, including the option to have “specially trained and dedicated travel mentors” accompany someone on a journey to help them travel more confidently and independently. This is signposted on TfL’s “Using buses in London” webpage but alongside lots of other text, so it’s not immediately obvious.

### Accessing timetables

Although both buses and trams are operated by TfL, auditors found timetable access easier for buses than trams.

- Bus audits: 93 percent of audits reported no issues accessing timetables, though 40 percent found the information only somewhat clear. Challenges included having to click through the website to find information on fares and having difficulty understanding the route and fare information without knowing the exact route and direction required for the journey.

*“It took quite a few clicks to find the bus fares and when you plan a journey it doesn’t give you the cost.”*

- Tram audits: Tram timetables were more difficult to access, with auditors noting the absence of a direct link to Tram timetables on the dedicated Trams part of TfL’s website.

### Payment information

Overall, most audits found clear information on the TfL website regarding payment methods, including using Oyster cards (83 percent) and bank cards (88 percent). 83 percent of audits also located information about where and how to purchase an Oyster card. Only one auditor reported being unable to find any relevant information.

However, while information on Oyster and bank cards was generally available, it was not immediately clear for those wanting to pay with cash that they would have to get an Oyster card or buy a Bus and Tram pass, for example from an Oyster Ticket Stop.

### Website clarity and accessibility

- Bus audits: 60 percent of audits found the information provided on the bus section of TfL’s website easy to understand, with the remaining 40 percent finding it only somewhat easy to understand. No audits deemed the website completely inaccessible, though a third said it was only somewhat accessible.



- Tram audits: All audits deemed the information provided on the Tram section of the TfL website only somewhat easy to understand, though again none thought it was not at all accessible.

## **Pre-audit tasks – Santander Cycles**

### **Information on mentoring services**

While TfL offers travel mentoring services, our auditors did not see a clear link to this scheme on the TfL Santander Cycles webpage. However, there was a link to a webpage explaining how to use them, including how to use the docking stations and return a bike.

### **Payment information**

Auditors were able to find payment information, including prices for different options such as a single ride, day pass and longer-term subscriptions. There was also information about different ways to pay, though it was thought it could have been clearer on the “What you pay” webpage that cash is not accepted at terminals.

## TfL and TOC performance

### Support and accessibility information

89 percent of audits found no information about mentoring services at train stations. 28 percent observed no accessibility information and 29 percent were unsure of its availability.

Good examples: Stations such as New Barnet (Great Northern) and Gatwick Airport (Southern) stood out for providing clear accessibility information

Underperforming (little accessibility information): London Underground stations, such as High Barnet



### Ticket office operations

90 percent of stations audited had ticket vending machines (TVMs), while 55 percent had physical ticket offices, with 93 percent of those operating as advertised.



Ticket offices that were closed, but were meant to be open according to the advertised times, were:

- GWR– Castle Bar Park
- London Northwestern Railway – Hemel Hempstead
- SWR – Motspur Park

Among auditors who spoke to ticket office staff, 90 percent found them readily available, and 94 percent rated them as extremely (71 percent) or somewhat (23 percent) helpful.

### Ticket vending machines (TVMs)

77 percent of audits found TVMs somewhat accessible and/or user-friendly, with at least one functioning machine at every station. However, the absence of help buttons was noted at most machines.

Additionally, while most of our auditors could use the TVMs, none of the machines would be accessible to everyone. For example, all TVMs had touchscreens, which are inaccessible to many visually impaired and blind people, creating a barrier to

travel. Other issues include screens and payment options at heights not accessible to all wheelchair users, screens that are hard to read due to glare from lights, obstructions around the TVMs and locations that leave passengers exposed to the elements when using them.

Cash was not an option at all TVMs, with just 76 percent of audits confirming cash payment options were functional.

Good examples: Greater Anglia (such as London Liverpool Street), London Northwestern (such as Watford Junction), Avanti West Coast (London Euston)

Underperforming: SWR (for example, Queenstown Road Battersea), London Northwestern Railway (or example, Hemel Hempstead).



## Platform navigation and signage

### Signage clarity

31 percent of audits found platform directions unclear, and 36 percent reported no staff available to assist. Notable challenges with unclear directions were observed at Chiltern Railways stations such as Sudbury Hill Harrow and Sudbury & Harrow Road.

### Maps and wayfinding

42 percent of audits reported missing or hard-to-read maps, with New Barnet, Harringay and Bayford (Great Northern), and St Albans City (Thameslink) listed as some of the worst examples.

Clearer signage, improved map accessibility, and more staff presence are needed to better assist passengers who need support navigating the station.

### Information provision

Information screens were noted across all TOCs for providing accurate, real-time updates, enhancing traveller confidence and journey planning.

Audio announcements, particularly electronic and pre-recorded human announcements, were judged to be easy to hear in just over two-thirds of audits. Live announcements were also beneficial though they did not rate quite as well, with 57 percent of audits judging them easy to hear.



Timetable availability was fairly widespread, with timetables in stations in 74 percent of audits. However, they were not found at the Southeastern and SWR stations audited. Instead, posters at these stations directed passengers to find more information online or through staff. An option to have a timetable printed at a ticket office was listed, though not all stations have ticket offices (or hours are restricted), so this was of limited use.

It should be noted that not all information channels are accessible to all passengers, and so it is important that high-quality information is provided in a range of formats, from visual displays and audio announcements to staff support.

## Good practice

### Exceptional staff performance

- Ticket office staff: Staff were frequently available and consistently praised for their assistance and helpfulness
- Platform staff: When present, staff provided excellent support with their assistance and helpfulness.

### Clear and effective information

- Information screens: Universally praised for their accuracy and reliability in delivering real-time updates.

## Areas for improvement and recommendations

### Availability of website content

- Increase availability and visibility of support services on TOC websites
- Add more and consistent accessibility features like adjustable fonts and high-contrast options
- Simplify website content for better user understanding.

### More station support and information

- Provide clear support information on walls, noticeboards and displays
- Make sure there are well-trained staff available at platforms and station entrances
- Improve signage and maps for easier navigation.

### Ticket vending machines (TVMs)

- Add and maintain help buttons on all TVMs
- Expand payment options for accessibility and ease of use.

### Price premium for paper ticket purchase

- Remove or significantly reduce the premium people pay for buying a paper ticket.

### Consistency across services and stations

- Where possible, make sure the same high-quality information is available at all services in multiple alternative formats, so that passengers can expect – and receive – the same support no matter where their journey takes them.

## Bus audits

Upon arriving at their audit locations, auditors split their focus between bus stops with shelters and those with just poles, while a few of them audited bus stations.

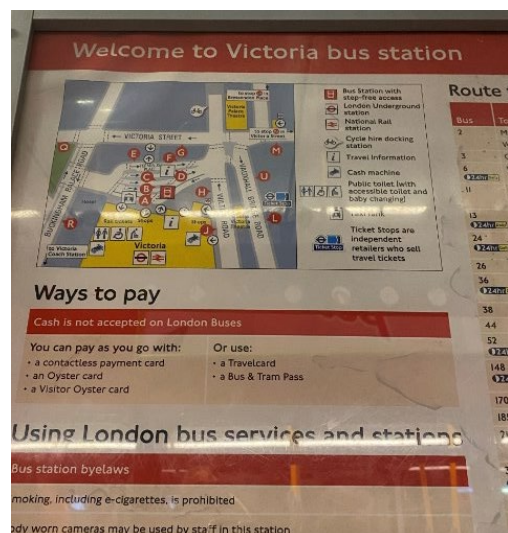
Their tasks involved thoroughly observing the environment and identifying features that could either facilitate or hinder the travel experience. Key elements evaluated included the availability of printed timetables, electronic bus departure screens, ticket vending machines, and the presence of staff to assist passengers.

These observations aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the facilities available and their impact on the ease and accessibility of the journey.

## Information about Oyster cards

London buses are cashless, so passengers need an Oyster card, Travelcard or contactless payment card or device. However, 60 percent of bus stop audits found no information about Oyster cards or how passengers could purchase one. Stops that auditors found didn't have any details included Browning Avenue, Southwark Street and High Road South Woodford.

Stops that did provide some information such as payment via Oyster cards included Victoria bus station but they lacked details of where to purchase an Oyster card. Cecil Avenue provided a link to the TfL website, while locations such as Ladywell Station and Vauxhall bus station had posters with limited information on how to use an Oyster card. This meant that those digitally excluded or disadvantaged would still have to access the internet to obtain more information about Oyster cards.



*“Mentioned on poster of ways to pay, and that you can top up at a ticket stop, but couldn't find directions or a map to one.” - Vauxhall bus station*

*“Info about ways to pay, Oyster is listed but not much detail.”  
- Victoria bus station*



## Countdown screens

Half of the bus stops did not have an electronic Countdown (bus departures) screen. This included Browning Avenue, Hop Exchange and High Road South Woodford. Of the 50 percent of bus stops which did have Countdown screens, 30 percent were fully operational with clear information (including Fenchurch Street, Richmond station and Kew Bridge station), while 20 percent weren't working (including Standen Road and Cecil Avenue).

Additionally, 86 percent of audits found it hard to determine bus arrival times without electronic boards.

Kew Bridge bus stop, pictured here, has a shelter, printed timetables, Countdown screen and a spider map showing local bus stops and routes (although there is some graffiti partly obscuring the information).



## Printed timetables

83 percent of audited bus stops had printed timetables and most were clear, such as at the Browning Avenue, Southwark Street and Richmond station stops. However, some printed timetables were unclear, for example because they were old or damaged (e.g. Hop Exchange and Cecil Avenue).

Auditors found that many stops have printed timetables, which were useful in generally providing first and last bus times and average frequency (for example, buses "every 9-11 minutes", with no precise timings to allow for traffic or other delays). However, auditors also noted that having access to real time information would have been more helpful.

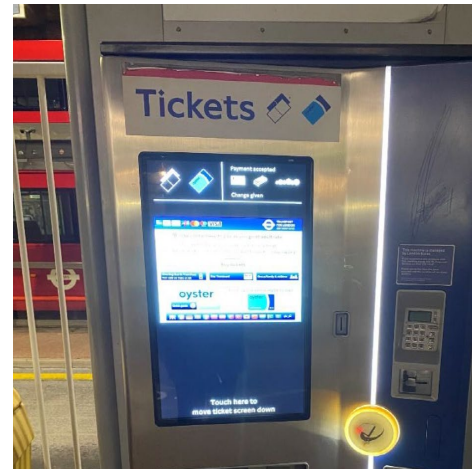
## Ticket vending machines (TVMs)

\*It is important to note that ticket vending machines (TVMs) are only available at TfL bus stations, and only three bus stations were included in the audit.

Two of the three audits found TVMs difficult to access. At Victoria bus station, the TVM was not clearly signposted and required crossing bus lanes to reach it, though it had step-free access and a limited shelter. At Vauxhall bus station, the machine was outside in an open area and not well signposted

All TVMs were operational, but none had a help button.

Additionally, the machines had payment functions that were not easily accessible to everyone, including not accepting cash payments. Other accessibility issues included the use of touchscreen, which is inaccessible to many visually impaired and blind people,



## Staff presence and driver willingness to help

Two of the three audits of bus stations, those at Stratford and Vauxhall, found no staff. When staff were present, one auditor noted that while they were friendly and helpful, their fixed location limited their ability to be proactive and poor signage meant it wasn't immediately clear where to go.

For those bus audits where the only staff encountered were bus drivers, 83 percent of drivers were either extremely (33 percent) or generally (50 percent) willing to assist passengers. However, this varied depending on the circumstances. For example during rush hour they often appeared rushed or distracted due to the high volume of people trying to board, providing brief responses.

While they did answer questions, their focus was often – and perhaps understandably – on managing passenger boarding rather than on providing detailed assistance. However, it is important to make sure necessary information is still provided (such as letting visually impaired people waiting at bus stops know the route number of the bus).

## Good practice

### Printed timetables

- Found at 83 percent of bus stops, with generally clear and useful information.

### Driver support

- Drivers were usually able to help passengers with basic information and questions (though more could be done to make sure they have the time and knowledge to provide more enhanced support where appropriate, particularly regarding accessibility requirements).

## Areas for improvement and recommendations

### Electronic displays

- Increase the availability of Countdown screens at bus stops and make sure they're in good working order.

### Printed timetables

- Enhance clarity and accessibility of printed timetables to make them more user-friendly.

### Passenger support

- Enhance staff presence and integrate help buttons on ticket vending machines (TVMs) to support passengers. Ensure all payment methods, including cash, card and Oyster, are readily available to provide a seamless experience for everyone.

### Oyster card information

- Provide clear and comprehensive information about Oyster card usage at bus stops to aid passengers, as well as how to get and top-up an Oyster card.



## Tram audits

### Electronic boards

All tram stops had fully operational electronic display boards with clear information. In 89 percent of audits, the electronic boards were found to be very helpful. It was noted that they showed the timing of the next three trams, their destinations and arrival times, along with a digital clock. This let passengers know in real time when to expect the next tram as staff weren't present to ask and without requiring a device and internet to search for live times.

### Card tapping and journey experience

89 percent of audits found it clear how to tap their card before boarding, though visibility was an issue at busy stops like East Croydon, where the low placement of the machines made them hard to see.

No staff were present at the nine tram stops visited, which is expected as tram stops are not routinely staffed. Most auditors managed their journeys without assistance, though we know staff presence can support those who are digitally excluded or disadvantaged. For example, separate to these audits, we are aware that there are staff in the morning at Addington Village Interchange to help passengers (including school children) with their journeys.



### Good practice

#### Online accessibility

- Clear guidance provided for payment methods (Oyster and bank cards), and information about where and how to purchase an Oyster card.

#### Tram stop features

- Electronic boards at Tram stops were fully operational
- Clear instructions on card tapping before boarding.

## Santander Cycles audits

### Docking station instruction clarity

Auditors reported mixed experiences with the instructions at Santander Cycle docking stations. Clear instructions were available at Bankside (Lavington Street) and Waterloo, with the instructions supported by visuals on the display screens. However, while instructions were visible at Canada Water, they were placed on the back of the docking station, so they were not immediately obvious to users and could easily be missed.

### Terminal screen experience

All three audited locations featured terminal screens to facilitate the bike rental process. However, the ease of use varied. At Waterloo and Canada Water, auditors rated the experience as somewhat easy. While the interface was intuitive, with clear images and text, the touchscreens lacked responsiveness, requiring repeated presses to register input. At Bankside, the experience was rated as neither easy nor difficult. Similarly, the unresponsive touchscreen made the process frustrating, as the auditor had to press it firmly and repeatedly.

### Staff presence and payment options

#### Staff presence

At Bankside and Canada Water, no staff were present at the docking stations, aligning with advertised expectations. However, at Waterloo, where there is a staffed docking station at certain times, staff were absent despite being expected, indicating a lapse in service which could be confusing for passengers who need extra assistance.

#### Payment options

All three locations supported credit/debit card payments, and the option for membership key access at Bankside and Waterloo. While auditors were somewhat satisfied with these options, the lack of a cash payment option was noted as a barrier to those digitally excluded or disadvantaged.

### Good practice

#### Pricing consistency

- Rental pricing was consistently accurate across both the helpline and website, ensuring clarity for users.

#### Clear instructions at some locations

- Docking stations at Bankside and Canada Water provided clear guidance, supported by visuals that enhanced user understanding.

### **Terminal availability**

- All audited locations had operational terminal screens, aiding the rental process for users.

## **Areas for improvement and recommendations**

### **Helpline availability**

- Enhance helpline staff availability to provide consistent support for users before reaching the docking station.

### **Instruction clarity and terminal responsiveness**

- Standardise and enhance the clarity of instructions at all docking stations, addressing gaps such as those at Canada Water. Additionally, improve touchscreen responsiveness at terminals to make interactions smoother and reduce user frustration.

### **Staff presence**

- Guarantee staff presence at locations where it is expected, addressing service gaps like those at Waterloo.

### **Payment options**

- Consider adding cash payment options for more inclusive alternatives.