Reliability of help points at stations

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: To provide assurance that a help point will be working when a passenger needs it, all station operators should review their approach to monitoring the availability of their help points. We will ask operators to demonstrate to us that their approach is fit for purpose.

Recommendation 2: To provide assurance that mobile coverage is available at unstaffed stations on the network, station operators should carry out a risk assessment of the unstaffed stations on their network that rely on mobile coverage for help point or freephone communication connectivity and implement mitigations where necessary. This recommendation does not apply to staffed stations or to unstaffed stations that use internet connectivity.

Recommendation 3: To ensure continuity of services for passengers, station operators should complete timely delivery of their plans for the PSTN switch-off ahead of 2027 if they have not already done so.

Recommendation 4: To provide assurance on the quality of help point services for passengers, station operators should ensure they are conducting proportionate monitoring of call volumes and service levels, and reasons for the call, which includes data collection. This monitoring should be used to ensure that calls are responded to in a reasonable time, and people answering calls have the right skills and knowledge, and to help identify weaknesses in information provision that can be addressed via other communication channels.

Recommendation 5: To improve the quality of communication about the purpose of help points and how to use them station operators should review the information on or near the help point and at the station to see if it is fit for purpose. This should also include reviewing the information on help points provided for passengers in Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) documents and passenger

leaflets.

Recommendation 6: To ensure station operators are joined up on the core areas of help point provision, operators should work together to identify good practice on how help points can add value to the experience and safety of passengers and consider applying these to develop an industry guidance document for help points.

Next steps

- We will follow up directly with station operators on the first two recommendations in early 2025 to understand the actions they are taking to address these areas.
- Northern Trains and TfW Rail are both developing strategies to improve their help point provision. As our review highlights, they are the two station operators who operate unstaffed and partially staffed stations without help points where they rely instead on freephone numbers, which may be impacted by insufficient mobile coverage in some remote locations. Northern Trains do monitor the performance of their help points, but that data suggests that the time to fix is particular issue. TfW Rail were not able to provide us with monitoring data, which is a concern in itself. We will follow up with Northern Trains and TfW Rail to understand the progress being made with their strategies.
- We will monitor the implementation of all the recommendations through our existing participation with the Rail Delivery Group's Customer Information Group.
- When we next review the ATP Guidance, we will consider the findings from this review.

- ← Previous Findings