Policy Briefing

8 December 2021

TfL data show passengers worried about safety as London Underground prepare to cut 600 jobs it knows are vital to passenger confidence

Station staff job cuts

London Underground has announced that it intends to cut up to 600 station staff jobs from the Tube. RMT has condemned this as 'the opening shot in a programme of jobs carnage that will target safety critical station grades.'

TfL and London Underground say 'The devastating impact of the pandemic on our finances has made a programme of change urgently necessary...We remain completely committed to retaining our customer service offer, with stations staffed at all times while trains are operating. The safety and security of customers and colleagues is still our top priority, and we will ensure in all circumstances our staff will continue to be visible and available to help customers at all times'.

Yet in reality, TfL and London Underground know that this is a reckless and risky gamble with passenger and staff safety.

TfL data on customer safety show rising rates of crime and ASB

TfL data show that the rate of crime and anti-social behaviour on TfL services has risen in recent months and that passengers are increasingly anxious about travelling on the Tube, buses and rail in London.

- The rate of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour is up across all modes of TfL transport by 40% from 8.4 per million passenger journeys to 11.8 per million passenger journeys.

- TfL Customer information reveals that 1/3rd of passengers felt worried on public transport in the last 3 months and 9% of Londoners were completely or temporarily deterred from using public transport due to a worrying incident.

- The level of hate crime on the Underground has nearly returned to Pre-Pandemic levels even though passenger numbers are still down. Around 20% of hate crimes are against London Underground staff.

- Police data for the first six months of 2021/22, show there were 743 sexual offences reported on TfL's public transport networks.[1]

This reinforces information from RMT surveys of TfL and London Underground staff, which show that:

- 78% were aware of passengers being sexually harassed in the last five years, with two-thirds of all respondents being aware of multiple instances.
- 52% had prevented passengers being sexually harassed in the last year, with over a third of all respondents preventing multiple instances.
- Three quarters agree/strongly agree that sexual harassment on public transport is becoming a bigger problem.
- Of those who think it is becoming a bigger problem, 87% think it is because of a lack of BTP presence and 80% think it is because of cuts to staffing.
- 60% of staff responding to a separate survey said they believed that violence on public transport had got worse since the pandemic with the biggest reasons given being the reduced presence of British Transport Police, the failure to take action against perpetrators, the responsibility to enforce Covid guidelines and cuts to station staffing.

RMT data show rising violence and sexual harassment of staff

In addition, staff report that violence and sexual harassment against them, which TfL's data does not cover, has increased since the pandemic.

76% of staff in public facing roles on London's Underground and TfL rail networks have been subjected to violence at work since the pandemic began. More than half of staff reported being threatened with physical violence, 28% reported being racially harassed, 14% reported being spat at or targeted with bodily fluids and 7% had been sexually assaulted.[2]

62% of all women respondents have experienced sexual harassment by members of the public in the last five years, with half of all women respondents saying they had experienced sexual harassment on multiple occasions.[3]

TfL know staff are vital to safety and confidence

Customer feedback from TfL has consistently highlighted that in the wake of the pandemic customers want to travel on a network that is safe, clean and orderly.

In December last year, TfL's board noted a report from its Customer Service and

1 Part-1-Item17-Finance-and-Policy-Committee-Report-230113 (tfl.gov.uk); (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Customer Service and Operational Performance Panel, 07/12/2021 10:00 (tfl.gov.uk)
2 https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/3-in-4-tube-staff-subjected-to-violence/
3 Based on analysis of London Underground members' reports from this survey: https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/publications/sexual-harassment-policy-briefing-251121/sexual-harassment-on-public-transport-25.11.21.pdf

Operational Performance panel meeting on 18 November, at which a report based on research into customer attitudes post-pandemic indicated that

- Covid safety, cleanliness and orderliness are top of mind
- Crowding is a source of stress for people
- On the Tube and Rail, the top 5 measures that would encourage people back to using it are:

1. enforcement of face coverings;
2. stations and trains cleaned every night;
3. limits on the number of people allowed into stations at any point;
4. staff enforcing social distancing on stations;
5. hand sanitisers.

The Panel heard that TfL's recovery plan has to include 'ensuring and promoting cleanliness, better station and crowd management, as well as lots of emphasis on the visibility of staff.'[4]

In its papers for the 7th December meeting of the CSOPP, as part of its work to improve the safety of women and girls, TfL reports that it has developed a programme based on 'a clean, well maintained and managed transport environment, good lighting, CCTV, passenger alarms and help points, crime prevention advice and the presence of capable guardians i.e. visible, trained and engaged frontline transport staff and police.'

The presence and visibility of staff, therefore, is known to be vital to customer confidence and safety.

This reinforces Transport Focus data which shows that passengers also want more staff in stations and on trains. As *Transport Focus* say, 'There is a strong sense that the ideal response to the pandemic would be to see more staff on trains and at the station, rather than less'.[5]

London Underground's announcement that it is looking to cut up to 600 station staff jobs will make passengers less safe and secure, will make them feel less confident using public transport and is very dangerous and damaging for staff as it will increase lone working and make staff more vulnerable.

4 https://content.tfl.gov.uk/csopp-20201118-draft-public-pack-update-for-web.pdf
5 https://www.rmt.org.uk/news/publications/rebuilding-passenger-confidence/