



LONDON

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After-hours staffing at Tube ticket barriers 'inadequate'

Transport for London has not kept its promise of a visible staff presence at barriers in Tube stations after ticket office hours, a watchdog has said.

The London TravelWatch study found staffing at barriers was "inadequate" and 34% of information screens either did not work or give full information.

Researchers went to 57 stations for 130 surveys during October and November.

TfL said its own research showed London Underground "staff are present in ticket halls in 98% of visits".

The "mystery shopper" survey by the Railway Consultancy for the passenger watchdog comes after TfL reduced ticket office opening hours at Tube stations from February 2011.

Researchers carried out 130 surveys at 57 of the 270 stations served by TfL.

'Very unpopular' decision

The study found stations were clean, staff polite and all stations had at least one working ticket vending machine.

But in 48% instances ticket barriers were either not staffed consistently or frequently deserted and at times unstaffed without an open gate, which, the watchdog said, could cause problems for passengers with faulty tickets or Oyster cards.

Researchers found it difficult to locate where to buy tickets in 32% of the cases and in 34% stations indicator boards on platforms either did not work or provide full information.

Sharon Grant, chairperson of London TravelWatch, said the decision to close ticket-offices was "very unpopular" with passengers.

"However the promise of a highly visible, customer friendly, uniformed staff presence at gatelines was held out as an attractive alternative.

"It is therefore very disappointing to find that in a proportion of cases, this commitment is not being fulfilled.

"There is a need for consistency in ensuring that gatelines are safe in the event of emergency, but also that fare evasion is not encouraged or achieved."

Nigel Holness, London Underground's network services director, said: "LU does not recognise the picture painted by this report and we commission our own regular comprehensive surveys showing highest ever recorded satisfaction scores.

"Our independent research shows LU staff are present in ticket halls in 98 per cent of visits, visible and available to assist our customers, and score highly for politeness and helpfulness."

TfL added that it made "no sense" to keep ticket offices open when very few people used tickets and its staff are instead deployed in ticket halls, on gatelines and platforms.

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