



Train Ticket Office Closure Consultation

Learning Disability England members met in July to talk about the proposed closure of train ticket offices.

Members are very frustrated and angry at the idea of closing ticket offices. They also have found the consultation process to be difficult in having to go to a range of companies' consultations rather than just one. As Learning Disability England works across the country, we have not spoken about the specific proposals from different train companies instead we have focused on the broader issues. This is a summary of members thoughts.

Transport is an issue that many people with learning disabilities and the people who support them are concerned about. It can help people be active citizens and live a good life but also stop them from being able to do this. Accessible and reliable transport means people can travel to work and health appointments and visit family and friends. Good public transport disabled people to live a good life.

People with learning disabilities told us how important the ticket office is to them.

In terms of buying a ticket, a ticket office is many peoples preferred option. People find it easier to explain to staff what they need than using a ticket machine. Staff can get people routes and tickets that work for them at a better price than at the machine.

Many people with learning disabilities plan their journeys carefully and travel with pre-planned information to help them travel independently. When things go wrong speaking with someone makes it much easier to solve the problem. Knowing exactly where to go and who to get information from makes stressful situations much easier.

People are concerned that a 'journey maker' on the platform will not offer the same support at a ticket office. That especially at unfamiliar stations people will not know where to find them or how many will be present. People also worried that this role could be removed in future leaving people with no support at the station at all.

Feeling safe was very important to the members we spoke to. Some train stations are part of community 'safe space' programmes where people with learning disabilities can go for support. There is a worry that train stations will no longer be safe spaces if there are no staff there. People have experienced harassment or hate crime when travelling, having staff at the station reassures people.

Many disabled people told us that ticket machines are difficult to use. They don't give information in the many accessible formats of ways disabled people need and don't always react to touch causing frustration and confusion. Due to a range of issues around banking, many people with learning disabilities use cash. Ticket machines accepting card only, means people cannot use them. It isn't possible to book assistance through a ticket machine so people have to find staff after buying their ticket anyway.

People also wondered what would happen if the machine was broken and there was no ticket office. Booking tickets online or by phone can be very difficult for people with learning disabilities. Many people with learning disabilities are digitally excluded, not owning smart phones or having the skills to book online.

Booking assistance for your journey is another big issue. There are already barriers to travel for many disabled passengers who have to book assisted travel in advance. Taking away staffed ticket offices adds to this. Members shared how closing ticket offices will mean they would have to travel with someone to assist them when previously they have done this alone. The closure of ticket offices will impact on peoples independence.

Members also spoke about the need for reliable and accessible public transport when thinking about tackling climate change. We know that disabled people will be impacted more by climate change and that many members campaign around the issue.

For members there are many things that could change to make travelling by train more accessible and reliable, there are things that ticket office staff could do differently to help disabled people have better experiences whilst travelling. But closing ticket offices isn't one of them.