# Great Western Rail Customer & Communities Improvement Fund 2016-17 Days Out by Train in the West of England Final Project Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Days Out by Train in the West of England had two interrelated objectives: 1. To improve our understanding of barriers to rail travel for low-income communities living in the West of England and neighbouring areas, and 2. To make days out by train more affordable by providing complimentary tickets to groups of people in socio-economic disadvantage.

The project, funded by a grant from Great Western Railways under the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund and delivered by Dr Miriam Ricci (UWE Bristol) in collaboration with the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, engaged with over 120 organisations working with low income communities and delivered 134 days out by train in the period July 2016 to end of February 2017.

Over 2,000 people took advantage of the initiative, including groups of refugees, asylum seekers, people with mental and physical disabilities (15% of participants) and families on the breadline. The scheme had a very diverse user profile, with 48% of participants from non-white British backgrounds and other nationalities, and only 18% in employment. The schemed successfully reached out to infrequent and first-time rail users.

A survey of participants' opinions shows that affordability of fares was the biggest perceived barrier to rail travel, followed by not knowing how to travel by train and about available train services. Additional deep-rooted issues such as social isolation, lack of confidence in using the railways and lack of support from others can also prevent people from travelling by train. This makes the Days Out scheme particularly helpful because it allowed groups to travel together as opposed to funding free travel for individuals travelling on their own.

Qualitative feedback provided by participants indicate that the following aspects are important to achieve positive user experience:

- Accessibility of routes to and from stations, accessibility of stations (presence of ramps, lifts etc.) and availability of user-friendly information on the above;
- Provision of clean toilets at stations and on board;
- Ability to seat together if part of a group, especially if this include vulnerable people who need assistance;
- Managing overcrowding at peak times;
- Availability of friendly and helpful staff at stations and on board;
- Integration with public transport, i.e. buses;
- Provision of wi-fi and plugs on board.

Beneficial impacts of the Days Out scheme include:

- Enabling charities and other organisations to better deliver their mission and enhance their service offer, by covering the transport cost of day trips to the seaside and other places of interest.
- Enabling low-income people from different ages, gender and ethnic backgrounds to have their first experience of a train ride and improving their confidence to travel by train.
- Providing a unique learning opportunity to those who were less familiar with the railways, e.g. navigating stations, reading maps and timetables, and finding platforms.
- Enabling participants to enjoy their time while travelling e.g. by playing games, discovering names of stations.
- Providing respite and comfort to those who were in situations of hardship, e.g. refugees and asylum seekers, people in temporary accommodation, economically deprived families, and people with mental health problems and other impairments or disabilities.

# PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Days Out by Train in the West of England (and beyond!) (website: http://www.severnside-rail.org.uk/daysout.php) had two interrelated objectives: 1. To improve our understanding of barriers to rail travel for low-income communities living in the West of England and neighbouring areas, and 2. To make days out by train more affordable by providing complimentary tickets to groups of people in socio-economic disadvantage.

Eligible organisations supporting socially and economically disadvantaged communities, living in the West of England and neighbouring areas including South Wales, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset, could apply for the free group tickets to organise a day out in a variety of destination within the scheme's network area, showed in the map below (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Days Out by Train Network Map**

The project was designed and delivered by Dr Miriam Ricci of the Centre for Transport & Society, UWE Bristol, in collaboration with the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, a charitable organisation that supports local stations along the Severn Beach line and promotes public engagement with the local rail network.

Great Western Rail funded the Days Out scheme with a grant under the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) 2016/17, which was launched in 2015 and helped fund over 40 schemes across the areas served by GWR. The aim of the fund is to support and facilitate access to rail for disadvantaged and

low-income communities. The call for proposals issued by GWR in 2015 was seeking projects able "to bring improvements and benefits for customers in lower income groups and communities of social need, e.g. introducing non-rail users to the rail network for the first time, making it easier for people to access the rail network by improving access routes to and from a station, ideas to encourage people to visit the facilities or a community served by a station, improvements in services etc."

The Days Out scheme builds on past research carried by Dr Miriam Ricci at the Centre for Transport & Society (Ricci, 2016) into the links between social exclusion and transport in Bristol. The findings indicated that socially disadvantaged communities found that the cost of travel, combined with lack of public transport connections and access to private transport, were significant barriers to travel, leading to a lack of physical activity, increased social isolation and inability for many families to take children on leisure trips to local attractions.

Social isolation and loneliness, in particular, are complex issues that can negatively affect people's health and well-being at any age and, according to a report by the Future Cities Catapult (Griffiths, 2017), have been under-researched until more recently. Lack of access to transport and poor quality infrastructure, such as pavements and transport connections, can contribute to increased social isolation and social exclusion of individuals and communities that are already facing hardship for a variety of personal and structural reasons.

Efficient, affordable and accessible public transport is therefore crucial for people who do not have access to private transport because of financial constraints or other issues (age, ill health, disabilities etc.). It also key to help shift travel behaviours away from the use of the private car as the dominant means of transport to more sustainable modes. Rail is an important component of the public transport offer – figures from the Department for Transport (DfT, 2016) show that about 8% of distance travelled in the UK in 2015 was by rail. Of all public transport trips, national rail accounted for 20% of passenger journeys and 61% of passenger km. However, National Travel Survey 2014 data for England (quoted in DfT, 2015, pp.11-12) shows that the rail network is disproportionately used by wealthier passengers. Those on higher incomes travel more by rail than those on lower incomes in terms of both the average number of trips and the average distance travelled per person per year (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Averages for all households are 21 trips per person per year, and 596 miles per person per year respectively.
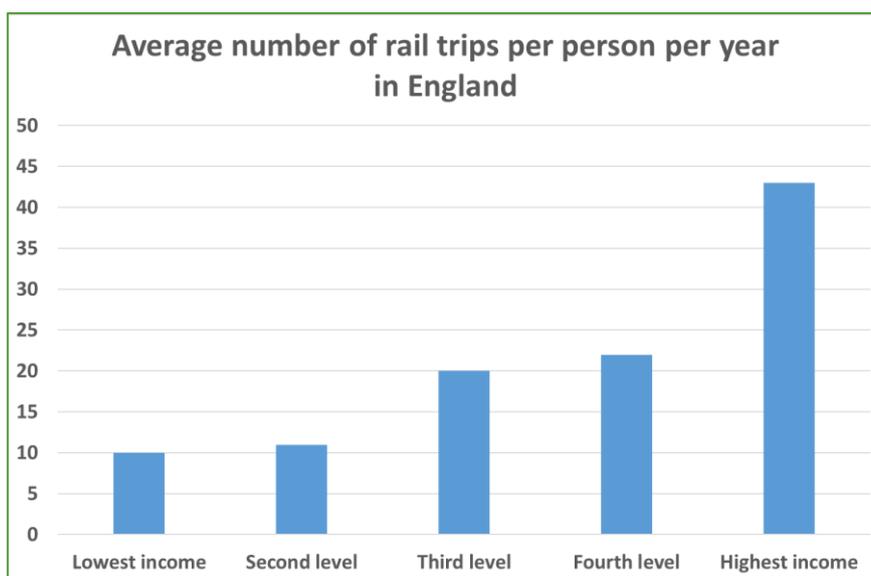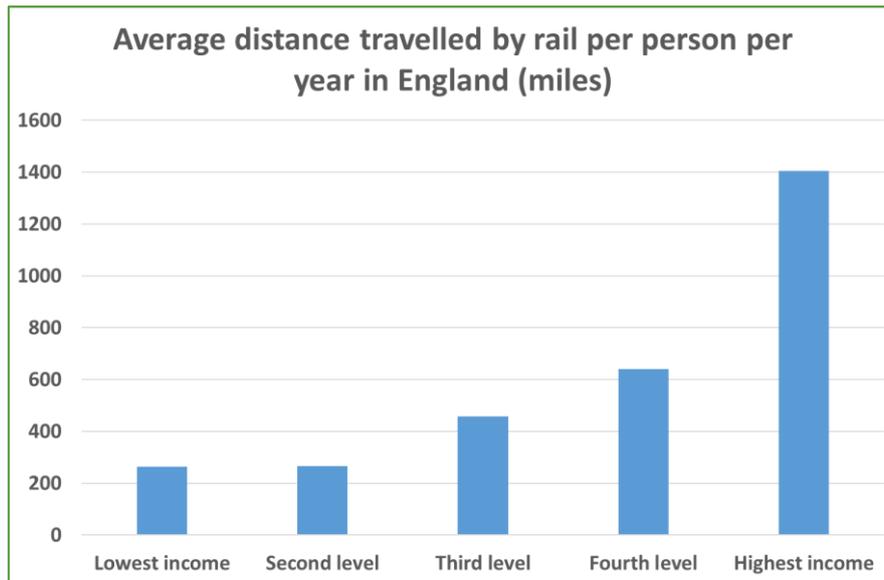


**Figure 2**

**Figure 3**

The Days Out scheme had the ambition to offer to at least 2,000 disadvantaged people the experience of a day out by train as part of a group, rather than on their own, precisely to provide a low cost opportunity for social interaction, both on the train and at the chosen destination. The objective was to provide not only a boost to participants' own well-being but for families and individuals to develop confidence on how to use the railways, as well as to open up new engagement opportunities for charities and organisations already working with disadvantaged groups.

## PROJECT DELIVERY

The project relied on partner organisations, e.g. charities, schools, council services, NHS services, community associations etc., to apply for free travel on behalf of groups of disadvantaged people they worked with and/or helped.

The project officially started on 1st April 2016 and provided free rail travel for journeys within the destinations outlined in the map, from June 2016 to February 2017 included. The outreach campaign that took place between June-July 2016 targeted all the most deprived neighbourhoods in the West of England and the organisations (public, not-for-profit and/or voluntary) working in those areas.

Although the West of England is one of the most prosperous economies in the UK, there are pockets of socio-economic deprivation which the project specifically sought to target. According to the latest statistical release on levels of deprivation in the UK (DCLG, 2015), 7.7% of all neighbourhoods in the WoE Local Enterprise Partnership are in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation as indicator.

In September 2016 the scheme network area was further enlarged to include neighbouring communities in South Wales, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. This allowed more organisations to take part and enabled groups to travel further afield.

Over 150 organisations across the West of England and neighbouring areas working with the most vulnerable/deprived communities made enquiries about the project and how to take part. About 120

organisations applied for a group ticket to organise a total of 134 trips– this enabled 2,063 people to travel for free.

The following disadvantaged social groups were involved in the project:

- Children and young people living in areas of socio-economic deprivation
- People with physical and/or mental disabilities/impairments
- Older people with mobility issues and at risk of social isolation
- Asylum seekers and refugees, adults and children
- International migrants/communities at risk of social isolation
- Survivors of domestic abuse/violence and their children
- Families living on or under the breadline and in receipt of benefits (identified by the Council and/or NHS health visitors)
- People and families living in council/social housing at risk of social isolation

The Days Out scheme was delivered as follows:

1. A promotional campaign targeted a wide variety of organisations in the project area by drawing on the project manager's network of professional and personal contacts. Social media, e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, were also used to promote the initiative.
2. Organisations interested in using the scheme were invited to visit the project website, hosted by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, http://www.severnside-rail.org.uk/daysout.php, to check destinations and possible activities to do (the website signposted visitors to other websites, e.g. promoting local places of interests and providing information and maps of walks near rail stations).
3. Applicants completed the online booking form with details about the organisation, size of group travelling (the free pass covered a maximum of 20 people including accompanying persons) and desired destination and date of travel.
4. Each booking was processed by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership and a complimentary pass was produced by GWR for the date and service specified in the application form. Each pass was sent by post to the applicant. The processing of each booking required at least 10 working days to allow the necessary authorisations to be completed.

The project received positive feedback from the participating organisations and groups, especially in relation to the benefits accrued to those who took part, e.g. allowing people to experience rail travel for the first time, enabling various organisations to achieve health/well-being/social inclusion outcomes for the communities they worked with etc. However, critical and problematic issues were also identified by participants, which are fully reported here so that promoters of similar schemes can learn from the experience of the Days Out project.

## MONITORING & EVALUATION APPROACH

The project was monitored throughout its duration by using three main data collection tools:

1. A booking log was developed with the details of all bookings received and processed by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership. Details include: name of organisation and contact details of group lead, size of group, date of the trip, stations of origin and destination.

2. A monitoring form was e-mailed to all applicants, who were invited to complete it on the return leg of the journey. The form asked the leader of group to collect some basic information about the number, gender, age, professional status and ethnic background of the participants. Also included in the monitoring form were questions on the travel behaviour of participants and their perceptions of barriers to rail travel. A box for open comments and feedback on the journey by train was provided, to evaluate the user experience. Match-funding information was also sought, in terms of the financial resources invested by each organisation to use the scheme, e.g. staff costs and expenses incurred as a result of taking part. A copy of the monitoring form is presented in appendix 2.

3. Further qualitative feedback was sought by e-mail from all participating organisations.

## RESULTS: HOW THE SCHEME WAS USED AND BY WHOM

Analysis of the booking log reveals that:

- The scheme was used to organise 134 days out by train, from July 2016 to the end of February 2017.
- The total number of socially disadvantaged people taking part was 2,063 (participants).
- August was by far the most popular month for organising days out especially to the seaside (the scheme was launched in July, hence the low number of bookings received for July), followed by December, when people took the opportunity to visit Cardiff and Bath for the Christmas market. Other popular periods were the October and February half-term school holidays (Figure 4).
- Given the large number of Bristol-based organisations, the most popular departure station was Bristol Temple Meads, followed by Lawrence Hill (located in an area with significant pockets of deprivation), and stations in the north of Bristol (Figure 5).
- Weston-super-Mare was the most popular destination, followed by Bath Spa and Cardiff Central (Figure 6).
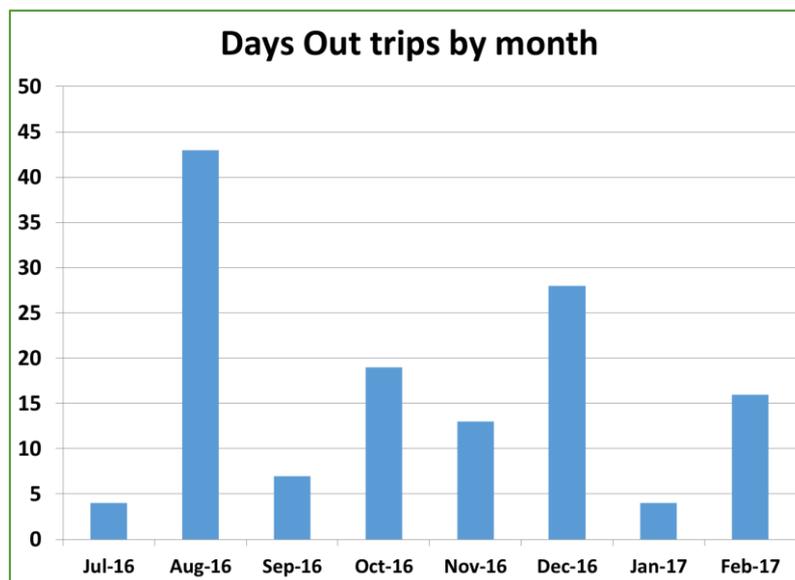


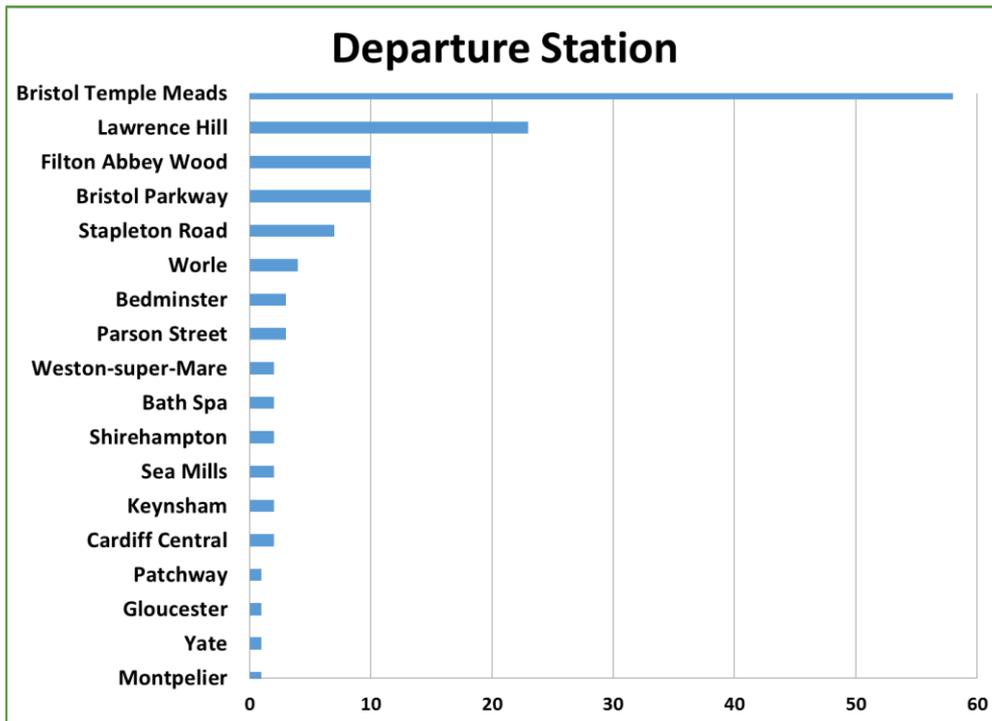**Figure 4: Days Out by Train trips by month**

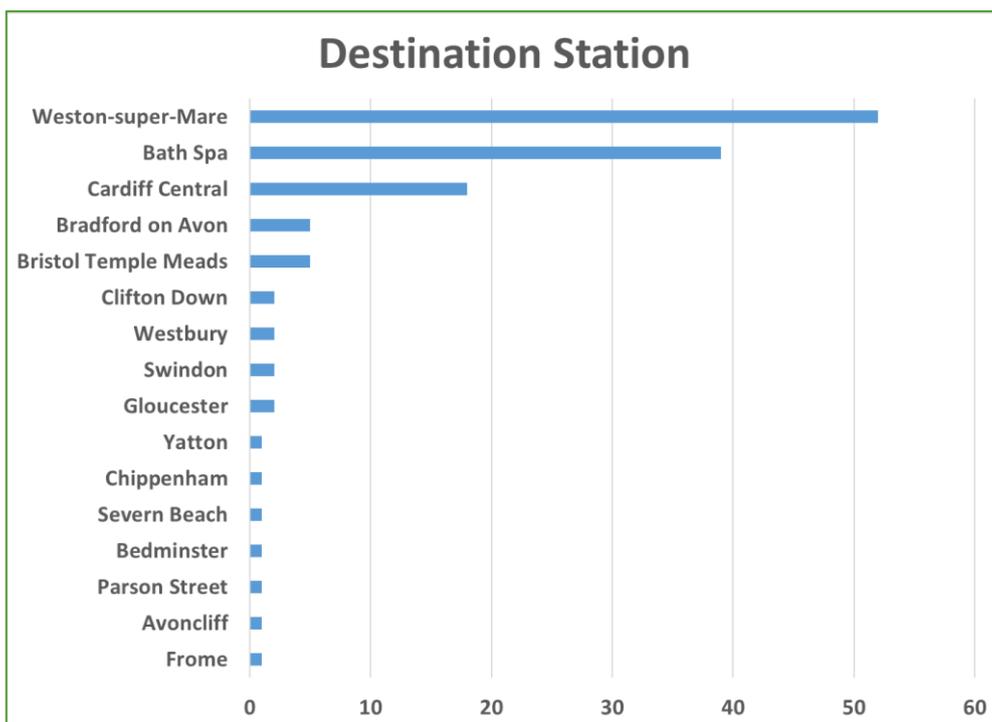**Figure 5: Departure stations**



**Figure 6: Destination stations**

Of the 134 monitoring forms that were sent out, 60 were returned (response rate = 45%). These accounted for 773 participants, equivalent to 37% of the total population. Analysis of the completed monitoring forms reveals the following findings:

- On average, each group comprised 13 people. The maximum number of people allowed to travel in each group was 20, as groups of larger sizes would be difficult to manage (e.g. getting on the train, finding seats in the same carriage etc.)
- Children aged 4 years and under made up 13% of the sample. Participants aged 5 years and over had a gender split of 57% females and 43% males. Gender split was similar in all age groups except for the 26-59 years group, which had twice as many women than men.



**Figure 7: Age and gender of participants**
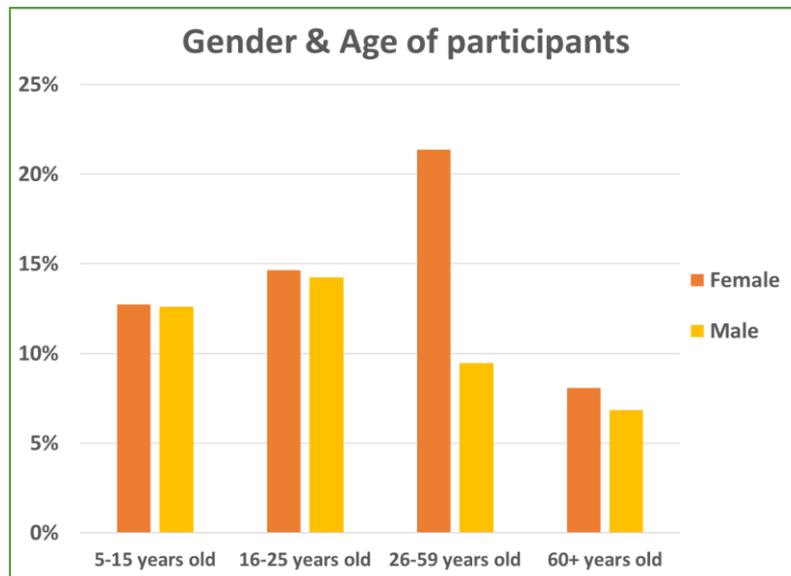
- 15% of participants considered themselves disabled.
- Participants from non-white British backgrounds and other nationalities made up almost half of the sample.
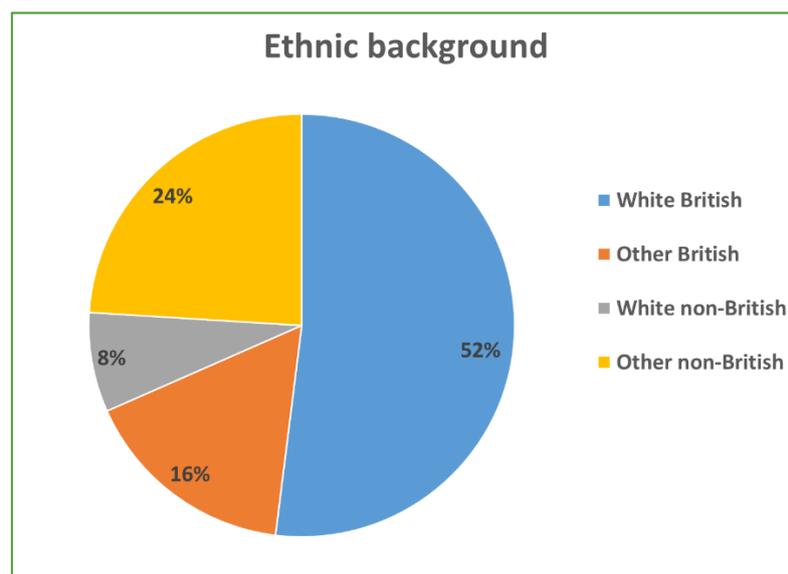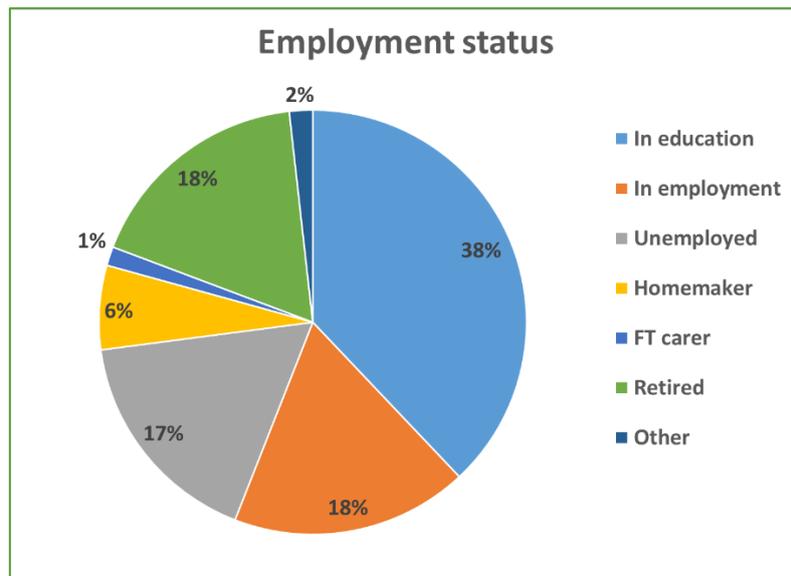


**Figure 8: Ethnic background**

- In terms of employment circumstances, the largest group (38%) was engaged in education. This reflects, in part, the number of children and young people who used the scheme. However, a

number of 16+ were also in education. 17% people were unemployed and a further 6% were homemakers. 1% cared full time for a family member.

**Employment status**

Figure 9: Employment status of participants

- As several organisations used the scheme more than once, in a few cases there were repeat participants (6% of the sample).
- Only a small minority (13% of participants) had travelled by train in the previous month or week. This means that the scheme successfully benefitted people who were either first-time train users (28%) or occasional/infrequent users (Figure 10).

**When did you last travel by train?**
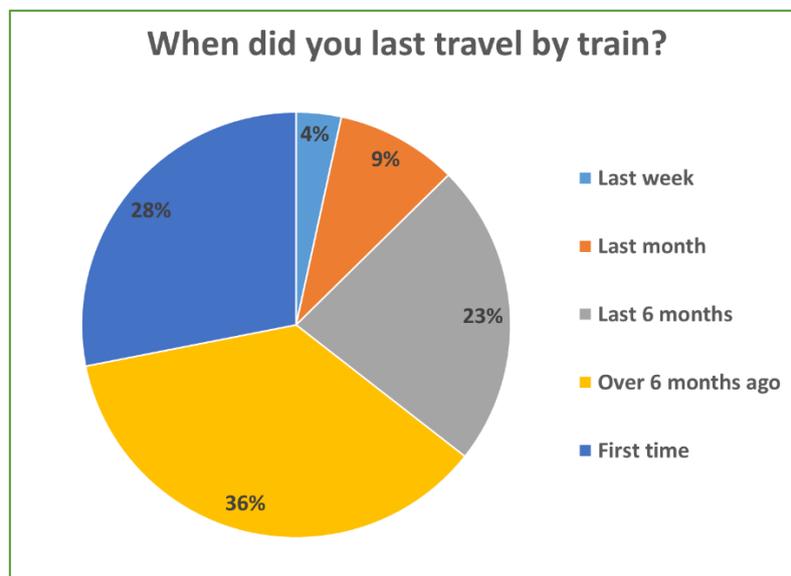


Figure 10: Frequency of using the train

- Affordability was by far the biggest perceived barrier to rail travel, with 58% of participants mentioning the cost of fares (Table 1). Other significant barriers included not knowing how to travel by train (23%) and about available train services (18%), which can be explained by the significant

proportion of participants whose first language was not English, some of them refugees and asylum seekers (more on this is provided in the discussion of qualitative feedback).

**Table 1: Perceived barriers to rail travel**

|  | N | % responses | % respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cost of train fares | 448 | 38% | 58% |
| Don't know how to travel by train | 181 | 15% | 23% |
| Don't know about train services available and where they go to | 139 | 12% | 18% |
| Lack of rail stations where I live | 124 | 11% | 16% |
| Lack of suitable transport to/from train station | 74 | 6% | 10% |
| Personal safety/security | 72 | 6% | 9% |
| Infrequent train services/very few destinations available | 42 | 4% | 5% |
| Problems with the rail station | 34 | 3% | 4% |
| Problems with the trains | 29 | 2% | 4% |
| Other | 28 | 2% | 4% |
| Total | 1171 | 100% |  |
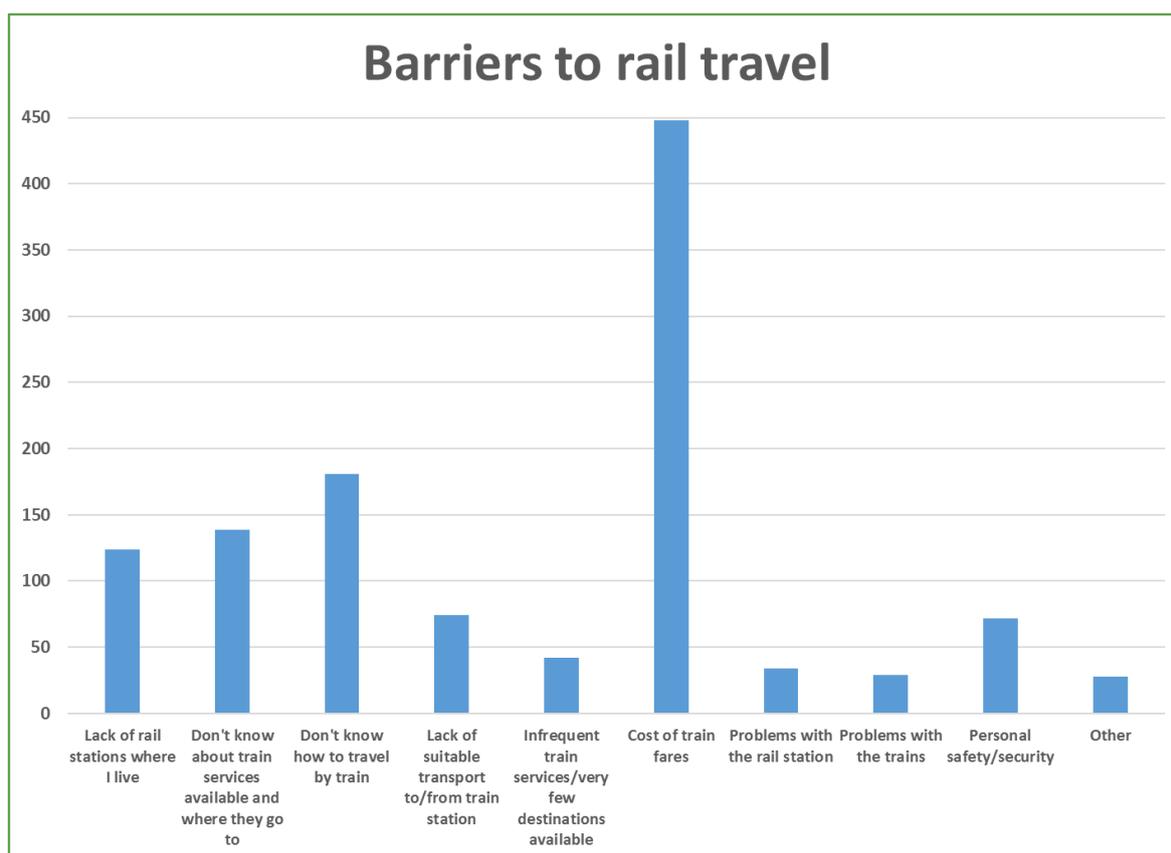


**Figure 11: Perceived barriers to rail travel**

- 'Other' barriers (reported in appendix 1) include deep-rooted issues such as lack of confidence, social isolation and lack of support to travel, with a few people mentioning that they did not usually travel *"far from home"*, and having *"nowhere to go, no one to visit, no one to support, to accompany"* them. Additional concerns were voiced by people with ill health or physical

impairments, who were worried about undertaking a journey on their own. Concerns about the safety of children *("would children fall on the tracks")*, finding a seat on the train, lack of space, possible delays and unreliability were also mentioned among the barriers to rail use.

- Walking was the most prevalent mode of transport used to travel to and from the departure station (72% of all Days Out trips), followed by bus and private car. More than one mode could be selected for each trip as different members of the group might use different means of transport if travelling to the departure station independently. Because of the way the monitoring form was designed to be completed, it is not possible to estimate distances travelled by each mode and how many participants travelled by each mode.

**Table 2: Mode of transport to/from departure station, as % of Days Out trips**

| Mode | % trips |
| --- | --- |
| Walking | 72% |
| Bus | 37% |
| Car (incl. lifts) | 28% |
| Minibus | 11% |
| Cycling | 4% |

- The monitoring form collected information about the resources organisations invested to use the scheme, in terms of staff and volunteer time, and any additional expenses incurred on the day out. Based on the data reported on the completed monitoring forms, a total of 131 members of staff and 41 volunteers engaged with the project (by taking a group on a day out). This was equivalent to 285 staff hours and 277 volunteer hours, which translate to 2.2 hours/person for staff and 6.8 hours/person for volunteers.

- Overall, participating organisations contributed to the scheme with £11,806, with the average cost per Days Out trip being £197 (Figure 12). Staff costs accounted for 80% of the resources invested in the scheme, for example in organising and leading the group on the day out. Additional resources were used to buy food for participants and cover their transport costs to and from the station.
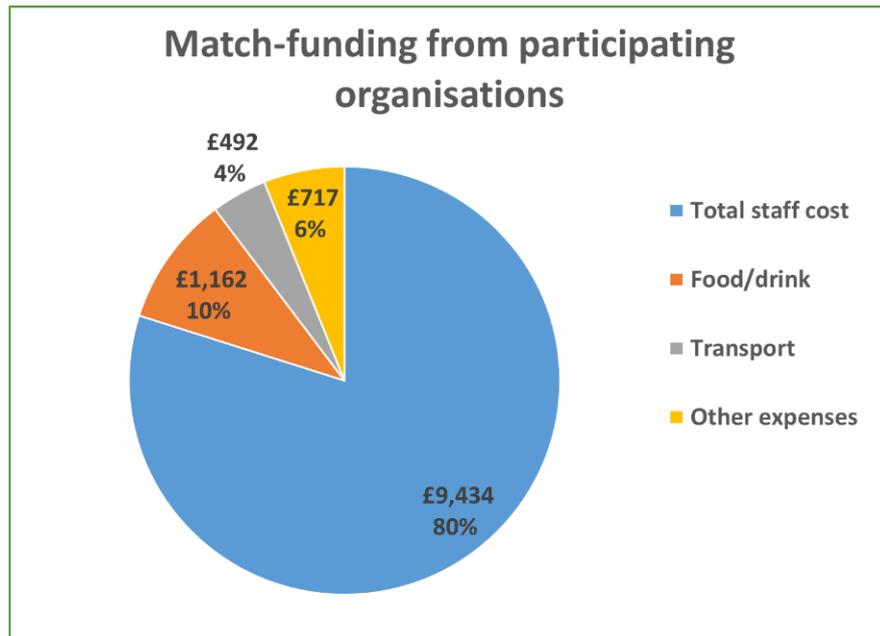
**Match-funding from participating organisations**

£492
4%

£717
6%

£1,162
10%

£9,434
80%

- Total staff cost
- Food/drink
- Transport
- Other expenses

**Figure 12: Match-funding from participating organisations**

## RESULTS: PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THE JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

A section of the monitoring form included a box for comments and feedback on the train journey, from the point of view of all participants, including staff and volunteers. Overall, most comments were very positive about the day out by train, even when people experienced delays or crowded services. A few groups mentioned that they enjoyed the train ride and thought it was a new way of travelling, and better than the bus or the coach, *"because of the tables and leg room"*. Some thought it was a *"safe way of travel"*. The groups used the free tickets to go to the seaside (with Weston-super-Mare the most popular destination in the summer months), to enjoy walks along the river Avon (for example, from Bradford-on-Avon and Avoncliff stations), to visit community farms and other popular local attractions and destinations, such as Cardiff and Bath. Constructive criticism was provided on several aspects of the train journey experience, which are summarised in the following points (direct quotations are in *italics*):

- **Physical barriers**, which affect the accessibility of rail stations, are particularly challenging for those who have mobility impairments/disabilities or need to carry luggage and other large items, e.g. prams. Examples include the gap between platform and train and the lack of ramps or lifts (e.g. at Parsons Street and Lawrence Hill stations in Bristol). Lifting luggage and prams on the train was an issue for some of the families. However, the group nature of the trip meant that people could support each other:

*"Parents with children in pushchairs found it difficult to get down the stairs at Lawrence Hill station but everyone supported and helped each other out."*

*"It was very helpful having children centre staff as the steps were very steep at Parsons St to get my buggy up and down."*

- Groups with wheelchair users indicated that clear and user-friendly information and maps on **accessible routes to/from stations** should be provided.

  *"At Bradford-upon-Avon it would have been helpful to be advised on the route for disabled over the bridge before going into the station approach (perhaps at chip shop)."*

- All groups but particularly those including small children welcomed the **provision of clean toilets at stations and on trains**, as well as *"clean and tidy"* carriages.

- Participants stressed the importance of having **seats** for the whole group to sit together, especially when the group included vulnerable passengers, e.g. disabled, people needing assistance, older people and young children.

  *"I was really disappointed we did not have reserved seats. I assumed as a group activity we would be able to sit together. Some of my group - all aged over 60 and some with disabilities - were left to sit by themselves and next to strangers for the whole trip with no one to talk to."*

- **Over-crowding** of services was experienced by several groups travelling to the seaside during the summer and to Bath in the run up to Christmas. In such cases, it was challenging to accommodate parents with buggies as these were full of *"lots of bags with picnics and beach equipment"*.

  *"It was hard, we had to fold up all the buggies, full of stuff, where are we supposed to put it when holding a buggy and a child too?!"*

- Having *"**polite, friendly and helpful staff**"* at stations and on board was considered a key positive aspect of the experience, especially when groups needed assistance with prams and wheelchairs, information about platforms and services, and dealing with inevitable misadventures (e.g. leaving luggage on board).

  *"The staff on the train were brilliant. Very accommodating to a group of children with disability."*

  *"We really enjoyed our train journey. All of the staff were friendly and helpful as well as respecting the learners as individuals and people as opposed to seeing them as just their disability."*

  *"The group were very impressed with GWR because one parent left their backpack on the train but the message was conveyed very quickly between GWR staff and it was sent back on the next train, so she was reunited with it within half an hour."*

- **Changing trains** was *"stressful"* for a few large groups, for example in one case where the group expected the service to be direct. Other concerns included worrying that children would fall on the tracks. Such concerns were more pronounced in groups who had never been on a train before. However, being in a group meant that less confident participants could be supported by others as well as by rail officers.

  *"A few of our group said they would have panicked about finding the right platform at change over if they weren't with more confident members of the group, but there were some really helpful staff waiting on the platforms to direct anyone who needed it."*

- Having **different train operators** can be *"confusing"* when using a ticket valid only on certain services. This is especially relevant for people who are less experienced with using the railways. One group, for

example, did not realise they had boarded a Cross Country train, but fortunately the officer on board *"did not make any fuss"* and let them travel to their destination.

- The **provision of wi-fi and plugs** for charging phones are highly valued especially by young people, as the two contrasting comments below illustrate:

*"Plugs for phones and free wi-fi was great! Much nicer than the bus."*

*"The train ride was boring, nothing to do on the train, no internet access, no wi-fi, no drinks available, nowhere to charge our phones on train"*

- **Transport to and from stations** was a challenge in a few cases, especially when there is no integration with bus timetables and services.

*"Our train came in 5 minutes after the bus departed so we had to walk back 45 minutes or would have had to wait an hour for the bus"*

In a few occasions, tickets did not get to groups on time, but a solution was found in all cases so that participants were not charged for their day out.

## RESULTS: POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Analysis of the qualitative feedback provided on the monitoring forms and through e-mail communications reveals that the free days out by train were beneficial to the participants in a variety of ways:

- Just under 30% of participants had never travelled on a train before. The scheme allowed these people, including children, young people and their families, to have their **first experience of a train ride**. All groups of children reported very positive feedback on the train journey and loved going on the train. In some cases the train journey itself was the highlight, rather than the destination.

*"We could not have offered this trip to all our families that we work with without the scheme to help with transport. This was one of the families' first holidays they had been on, the children and adults have never been on the train and the children had not visited the beach before! They loved their first holiday."*

*"It was lovely to see the students so excited about catching the train. They were far more interested in the train journey than the visit to Bath and were impatient to do the return journey."*

- Especially when allowed to seat together, participants reported having used the **time spent on the train** to play games, talk to each other, discover names of stations etc.

*"On the way we were first on the train so managed to get a section to all sit together, this meant we could talk and play games like sharades. Overall it was lots of fun and a new and different way to travel."*

- The scheme offered a **unique learning opportunity** to those who were less familiar with the railways, to navigate stations, read maps and timetables, and find platforms. In some cases the whole experience had been designed to be led by the children and young people so they could learn how to travel by train, from planning the trip to getting to the station etc. Young people used both print and online maps accessed by their smart phones. In the words of a group leader, *"young people felt adventurous"*.

*"Students liked being able to read the train station signs to know where they were going and they liked finding information on the station's timetable displays to find the platforms."*

*"Young people had from the start been involved in deciding the destination, train times, both there and back, alongside what they needed to bring with them, being responsible and how to stay safe, an all-round excellent learning process for this group of young people."*

- Being able to travel out of Bristol (or other places) for free enabled organisations **to better deliver their mission and enhance their service offer**, by organising day trips to the seaside and other places of interest.

*"Without the free ticket we would not have been able to run our successful trip to Weston-super-Mare. Some of our clients had never been on a train and so this was a real adventure. Because we had the train fare covered our organisation decided to pay for the participant's lunch and treat them to a fish and chip lunch by the sea. The day was a real chance for us to relax, let our hair down and bond. We help our customers with lots of activities such as CV writing and job hunting as well as tenancy sustainment so this was a real chance to just enjoy each other's company and find out about each other. This informal time was rewarding for the Tenancy Support officers who came and were able to let their clients see a different side to them and also find out some info about our clients hopes and aspirations in a relaxed way."*

- The scheme proved not only useful for rail familiarisation purposes but also to provide **respite and comfort** to those who were in situation of severe hardship (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers, people in temporary accommodation, economically deprived families).

*"We only have a small budget for this so without free train travel a day trip of this nature would not have been affordable for our organisation. Our organisation runs a weekly drop in Welcome Centre for asylum seekers and refugees, in particular from Sudan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, Somali, and Afghanistan. Trips like this one provide a vital break and respite for people seeking sanctuary: One of our members said that 'Trips are very important for our spirit, we are still thinking about our problems e.g. accommodation, but we need the trip to make our mind calm. Maybe just a short trip and then I can come back to tackle my problems.'"*

*"Dear Dr Ricci, and GWR Rail, I just wanted to write to say thank you so, so much for the Days Out by Train project, we took our small group to Bath today, and everyone had a wonderful time, including one who had never travelled by train before, and one who until recently had not felt up to leaving her home, and who walked around the city beaming and thanking us for taking her away."*

- The scheme helped organisations supporting people with **mental health problems** and other impairments or **disabilities**.

*"The day was really valuable in lots of different ways. For our customers living with mental health problems, even getting out of the house or bed can seem like an impossible task, so to be able to offer them something fun and show them things they would not otherwise have accessed feels really special, thanks for enabling us to do this."*

- Taking part in the project gave **confidence** to people who had never travelled on a train before.

*"When we arrived at the station the parents seemed to become agitated. I asked if they were ok. They said it is their first time at a train station and didn't know what to expect. They were negative about the station saying it was too busy and it didn't feel safe. They said the children could fall onto the track. On the way back, the parents knew what to look for on the times and knew what platform they had to go to. The train was less crowded and they had places to sit without putting the pushchairs down. I asked what they thought of the trip, they said they didn't realise how easy and how quick it was to Weston. I asked would they do this again, they said they would depending on how much it cost."*

*"One student was very nervous about going through the Severn Tunnel on the way out but we timed the length of the journey and she was fine on the way back and told her mum she wanted to go on the train again!"*

*"20 of our members (services-users) went to Bath and thoroughly enjoyed the day. Those who came said afterwards that they felt more confident speaking English, had learnt something new and felt inspired. One person expressed how the trip 'was very important for discovery, it helped us have a new experience.'"*

## ADDITIONAL QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK ON TRANSPORT BARRIERS

A few organisations provided more general comments on the impact of transport provision on their activities, in the monitoring form or by personal e-mail communication. The following factors were identified as having a negative impact on social inclusion:

- affordability, availability and accessibility of public transport;
- the location of services and the residential location of the people who need them the most;
- availability of transport information that can be understood by all users.

Direct quotations are reported below.

*"For my work transport provision impacts on the types of trips that I can organise for the families I work with, both in a practical sense (where we go, timings of trips, which days we can travel on) and also in a financial sense, i.e. can we afford to make that trip once the additional costs of transport are added on?" (Family support worker)*

*"Transport costs are prohibitive for voluntary organisations. This often restricts the opportunities we are able to offer the young people we support and in my case the volunteers who support them. My project was probably not able to make full use of the pilot but if this was an existing scheme I feel I would be able to find ways to include it in the work the volunteers do. This was a scheme which would have allowed young people to explore their local area and enabled them to access opportunities outside of their normal sphere of influence. I would say this was invaluable and I was disappointed my own project was not at a stage to exploit this opportunity at the time." (Youth support worker)*

*"Transport provision within South Gloucestershire largely has a negative effect on our group's ability to be flexible and mobile. We service the whole of South Gloucestershire which is a largely rural authority. Due to having such poor transport links and lacking a definite centre, we often have to use taxis to ferry young people about to our meetings and events. Issues with transport for looked-after children are recognised by the local authority and met with a commitment that transport should*

*never be an issue or barrier to engaging in activities, which is fabulous, but does result in having to use taxis all the time, especially for young people living in areas such as Severn beach and Pilning who attend our meetings in Yate (they travel over 30 miles for a 1.5 hour meet up). Better transport links would allow our young people and group more flexibility, freedom and independence. When we used the scheme last year to travel to Weston-super-Mare over half of the young people had never been on a train." (Youth support worker)*

*"Transport is probably the main barrier to learning for us. Our young parents live across the city and most will have to catch two buses and walk around 30 minutes each way. This is particularly difficult with a baby/toddler. Often the early morning buses are full and there is no room for a buggy which means the student will have to wait for the next bus with available space. We provide a travel pass for our students during term time. However, this leaves them without transport throughout the holidays, a time when they could really benefit from getting out and about with their child but the cost is prohibitive and has just gone up. Often our young mums get charged an adult fare because the driver assumes that because they have a child they are an adult! It puts the young women in a very awkward, embarrassing and uncomfortable position and not wanting to hold the bus up and make a scene pay the adult fare. Going back to train journeys, the students rarely use them due to cost. This is a real shame as train travel opens up so many opportunities for them and their children, as they found out from taking part in this scheme." (Teenage mums support worker)*

*"Our group are asylum seekers and refugees. Cost of transport is one of the main barriers for our members, some of whom are destitute with no recourse to public funds. Some are housed in areas without nearby train stations i.e. Kingswood. Many of our members find it very difficult to read and understand maps and timetables. English is not their first language and therefore leaflets translated into other languages and websites with other language options are very helpful." (Charity supporting refugees & asylum seekers)*

## CONCLUSIONS

The results and feedback collected over the duration of the project indicate that the Days Out scheme proved to be an extremely valuable initiative to those who took part in it. The scheme contributed to deliver social inclusion to disadvantaged communities through providing free access to the local rail network for a day out.

In terms of the results, the scheme was well used by participants who were most at risk of social isolation and had never, or seldom, used the rail network. This was achieved by liaising with partner organisations such as schools, children centres, NHS services, Council services and charities of many kinds, which made sure the scheme benefitted in particular those who were most in need. Participating organisations contributed to the scheme with their own resources, in terms of staff and volunteer time and by covering additional costs for participants, for example transport to and from stations and food. Most organisations stressed that they would not have been able to fund a day out by train without the scheme.

A survey of participants' opinions indicated that affordability of fares was the biggest perceived barrier to rail travel, followed by not knowing how to travel by train and about available train services. Additional deep-rooted issues such as ongoing conditions of social isolation, lack of confidence and support from others were also identified as factors that can prevent people from travelling, by train or other modes. In this respect, the Days Out scheme offered a way to overcome these barriers by providing the opportunity for people to travel together in a group rather than by themselves, and to be accompanied by group leader (e.g. a volunteer or member of staff from the participating organisation), who could assist with organising the day out and helping out during the trip.

Qualitative feedback provided by participants indicated that the following aspects are important to achieve positive user experience:

- Accessibility of routes to and from stations, accessibility of stations (presence of ramps, lifts etc.) and availability of user-friendly information on the above;

- Provision of clean toilets at stations and on board;

- Ability to seat together if part of a group, especially if this include vulnerable people who need assistance;

- Managing overcrowding at peak times;

- Availability of friendly and helpful staff at stations and on board;

- Integration with public transport, i.e. buses;

- Provision of wi-fi and plugs on board (particularly from the perspective of younger generations).

Beneficial impacts of the Days Out scheme include:

- Enabling charities and other organisations to better deliver their mission and enhance their service offer, by covering the transport cost of day trips to the seaside and other places of interest.

- Enabling low-income communities including children, young people and their families, to have their first experience of a train ride and improving their confidence to travel by train.

- Providing a unique learning opportunity to those who were less familiar with the railways, e.g. navigating stations, reading maps and timetables, and finding platforms.

- Enabling participants to enjoy their time while travelling e.g. by playing games, discovering names of stations.

- Providing respite and comfort to those who were in situations of severe hardship, e.g. refugees and asylum seekers, people in temporary accommodation, economically deprived families, and people with mental health problems and other impairments or disabilities.

From an operational point of view, the scheme would be easy to replicate and implement again by a rail operator with minimal effort, especially if some of the administrative tasks, e.g. the booking process, were automated and the tickets were either electronic (thus portable on mobile devices) or printable at the station.

Socio-economically disadvantaged communities can be identified by partnering with public sector bodies (for example the NHS and Council departments) and not-for-profit organisations/charities already supporting various types of communities that are at risk of social isolation.

It is important that a monitoring and evaluation framework is developed at the beginning of the project by the partners involved, to ensure that all the relevant research and evaluation questions are effectively addressed.

# REFERENCES

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**Other barriers mentioned on the monitoring form:**

"Confidence"

"I don't go out for days that often. Due to lack of confidence and a bad back"

"I don't travel far from home"

"Nowhere to go; no one to visit; no one to support, to accompany me"

"Visually impaired, I need assistance"

"Don't know how much train fares are; not much room for the pushchairs; worried that children would fall on the track"

"My mum won't let me go alone. I haven't got any money. I was scared but I want to go on the train again with mum now"

"Worried about not going to get a seat"

"Lack of space on train"

"Delays and unreliability"

"My mother lives at Severn Beach, this is a different line to mine at Parkaway so it isn't convenient for us all to travel easily together"

**Days Out by Train GWR Monitoring Form**

*This form should be printed and completed by the GROUP LEADER on the **return train journey**.*

Completed by (name and organisation): _____

Date of travel: _____

**Hands up survey**

*Please ask all the following questions to the group you are accompanying on the day trip (excluding any other accompanying persons & staff). Participants (excluding small children) can answer by putting their hands up, so answers can be recorded by counting the hands.*

How many participants have been on a trip using the **Days Out by Train scheme** before? _____

Excluding today, when did you (the participants) **last** travel by train? *(please count No of responses for each option)*

    **a.** In the past week _____               **d.** Over 6 months ago _____

    **b.** In the past month _____            **e.** This is the first time I travel by train_

    **c.** In the past 6 months ___

What are the **MAIN barriers** preventing you from using the train more? *(please count No of responses for each option)*

    **a.** Lack of rail stations near where I live _____

    **b.** Don't know about train services available and where they go to____

    **c.** Don't know how to travel by train (choosing/buying ticket, boarding/changing train etc.) _____

    **d.** Lack of suitable transport to/from train station _____

    **e.** Infrequent train services and/or very few destinations available _____

    **f.** Cost of train fares _____

    **g.** Problems with the rail station (accessibility, cleanliness, available facilities etc.) ___

    **h.** Problems with the trains (accessibility, cleanliness, comfort etc.) _____

    **i.** Personal safety/security _____

    **j.** Other (please specify):_____

**About the group travelling today**

How many **children** are aged 4 and under? _____

| How many **females** are aged | 5-15____ | 16-25___ | 26-59___ | 60+___ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| How many **males** are aged | 5-15____ | 16-25___ | 26-59___ | 60+___ |

**Occupation:** How many people (16+) in the group belong to each of the following categories?

      In education/training (including apprenticeships): ___     In employment: ___     Unemployed: ___

      Homemaker: ___     Full-time carer (for family member): ___     Retired: ___     Other: ___

How many people in the group consider themselves **disabled**? ____

**Ethnic groups:**    White British: ___  Other British: ____  White non-British: ___  Other non-British: ___

### Feedback on the train journey

What are your overall impressions on the train journeys (to your destination and back) experienced today?    *Please*

<br>

*record participants' and staff's views below*

### About your day trip by train

Rail station of departure (A): _____

Rail station of arrival (B): _____

How did you travel:

    **TO** the rail station (A)? _____

    **FROM** the rail station (A) on your return? _____

Number of people in the group covered by the free ticket (excluding accompanying persons): ____

Number of accompanying persons: Staff: _____          Others/volunteers: _____

### Match funding information

*Great Western Rail would like to know about the additional resources utilised by organisations taking part in this project. Please can you estimate how much of your own resources (i.e. not the participants') you used today for this outing and complete the following section. Many thanks!*

Staff time (hours): _____ Cost of staff time (£/per hour): _____

Others/Volunteers (hours): _____

Food/drinks (£): _____

Transport (£): _____

Other expenses/resources used (£): _____

**Participants' photos**



Photo 1: ConfiDance group



Photo 2: ConfiDance group

**Photo 3: Ashley Community Housing**



**Photo 4: Ashley Community Housing**

**Photo 5: City of Bristol College**



**Photo 6: Youth Education Service**

**Photo 7: Wellspring Healthy Living Centre**



**Photo 8: St. James Church Mums & Toddlers group**

*Note: the above groups gave their permission to use their photos for dissemination purposes*