

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title	Disabled Londoners Olympic & Paralympic travel research		
Objective	To understand the travel experiences of disabled customers during the Games		
Date	October 2012	Agency:	SPA Future Thinking
Methodology	Auto-ethnographic feedback from a selected sample of 20 disabled Londoners who use public transport		

Abstract

A sample of disabled customers provided feedback on their experiences travelling on public transport during the Olympic and Paralympic Games period. Prior to the Games, several customers expressed concern due to the potential for over-crowding however, in most cases journeys were undertaken smoothly with little Games related impact. Several issues which impacted on the disabled customers were identified on journeys, however these were generally factors that are experienced during normal travel times.

Key findings

Prior to the Games, several of the disabled customers included in the research reported that they had a number of concerns about travelling in London during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The main underlying concerns were around the expectation of crowding and the implications to their journeys (such as lack of seats, obstacles, missed announcements and diversions).

In most cases, disabled customers reported better than expected experiences of public transport during the Games. This was due to a number of factors including the perception that much of the network was not as crowded as expected, the increased information provided by TfL and others and the presence and attitude of staff, volunteers and other customers.

There were a number of 'hot spots' across the network where crowding was an issue for the disabled customers in the panel. Where a customer travelled through a hotspot they did report some problems however, these tended to be issues that would be experienced under normal conditions rather than something specific to the Games.

It was clear during the research that while disabled customers recognise the efforts made by TfL and other bodies with regards infrastructure and information, that there is still more that can be done to make their journey planning, way finding and overall experience easier and more comfortable.

Specific areas identified during the research included the need for:

- greater flexibility and individualisation of journey planning tools to provide the best journey option for their particular requirements – for example, an option to identify routes which do not require use of escalators
- more information about the likely comfort of route options – for example, which routes would have the greatest availability of seats
- further infrastructure improvements in some areas of the network, for example hand rails and tactile paving
- consistency in staff interaction to avoid incorrect messages being provided to customers (particularly bus drivers and Tube station staff)
- empowerment of staff to address the needs of disabled customers during special events – for example allowing customers to take short cuts through barriers or avoid one way systems