ORR

Rail delay compensation mystery shopping

Report of findings

September 2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In March 2016 the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) published the results of a mystery shopping survey it had commissioned ESA Retail to conduct on its behalf[1]. The findings from the research were intended to inform ORR's response to a super-complaint from *Which?*[2] regarding their concerns about the large percentage of rail passengers who were failing to claim the compensation they were entitled to from train operating companies (TOCs) following a delay. In particular, *Which?* identified problems relating to the information TOCs were providing to passengers about their delay compensation rights and suggested this was potentially one of the underlying causes of the low compensation claim rate.

ORR's objective for the research therefore was to establish if there was indeed issues around the quality of information that was being provided to passengers, and if this was the case then to understand how passengers' experiences of it varied depending on the train company they were travelling with.

Reflecting on the results from the 2016 research, it was ORR's view that the findings were somewhat disappointing with evidence suggesting that the TOCs could be doing more to inform passengers of their delay compensation rights. This was the case both in terms of providing more visual or written information on trains and in stations, and ensuring staff were sufficiently informed to give passengers full and accurate information when faced with a customer enquiry about it.

Following a period of engagement with the rail industry in spring 2016, ORR agreed individual work plans for each TOC with a view to improving their performance on the key measures investigated in the research. It was ORR's intention to then re-run the mystery shopping research again in February and March 2017 to understand how effective the TOCs' actions had been in this regard. This report outlines the findings from this follow up research.

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[1] The main research report published in March 2016 can be viewed here: http://www.orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/21105/rail-delay-compensation-mystery-shopping-findings-report.pdf
The results for individual train operating companies can be viewed here: http://www.orr.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/22111/rail-delay-compensation-mystery-shopping-toc-level-findings.pdf

[2] Which? super-complaint to the Office of Rail and Road: Compensation arrangements in the market for passenger rail services. Available here: http://www.staticwhich.co.uk/documents/pdf/super-complaint-to-the-office-of-rail-and-road-pdf-5-34mb-428633.pdf

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1.2   Research objectives

As in the 2016 survey, the prime objective for the mystery shopping was to understand how TOC staff responded to customer enquiries regarding delay compensation, in particular the information provided to passengers relating to the following aspects:

1. The delay length threshold for compensation;

2. The level of compensation payable;

3. Whether compensation was available in cash (or in vouchers which could be exchanged for cash);

4. How to make a claim.

In the 2017 exercise, to ensure direct comparability with the 2016 results, the survey methodology remained unchanged from that employed last year. Nevertheless, the overall sample size for the survey was increased to enable additional scrutiny of the TOC-level findings. Details of the methodology are set out in section 3 of this report. The individual TOC level scores on the headline performance metrics are located in the appendices.

2. Executive summary

Objectives & survey method

The 2017 mystery shopping exercise set out to repeat the approach used in 2016 to determine how TOC staff responded to customer enquiries regarding delay compensation, in particular the information provided to passengers relating to the following aspects:

1. The delay length threshold for compensation;

2. The level of compensation payable;

3. Whether compensation was available in cash (or in vouchers which could be exchanged for cash); and

4. How to make a claim.

The research survey involved members of ESA Retail's trained mystery shopper panel conducting visits to stations across Great Britain and supplemented with a small number of on-train journeys.

Where staff gave the mystery shopper information in relation to the delay length threshold and the level of compensation payable, these details were analysed in relation to the actual TOC compensation requirements for a single journey to determine whether the member of staff had provided accurate information.

In interpreting the response to the enquiry by members of staff, we have treated the provision of information in the form of a leaflet or a claim form as responding correctly to the mystery shopper's enquiry, provided it contained the information that was requested. If the mystery shopper requested information on details such as the minimum delay length required for compensation and the member of staff gave an inaccurate response, but then provided a leaflet or claim form later in the enquiry, the initial response to the enquiry would still be treated as incorrect. The written information would have had to have been provided in response to the specific aspect of the enquiry to be deemed a positive, or correct, response.

If the mystery shopper was referred by the member of staff to a Customer Services number or to a website for the information, this was treated as a negative response.

The mystery shopping took place between 20th February and 23rd March, 2017.

The 2017 sample size was increased from 2016 to provide increased robustness to the TOC-level findings. The 2017 sample included a total of 579 assessments, as overleaf:

Staffed station assessments	496
Un-staffed station assessments	42
On-train assessments	41
Total sample	579

The sample was designed to be robust and representative. All TOCs were included in the survey, but with individual quotas applied for the larger TOCs approximately in proportion to the number of stations they manage.

At un-staffed stations, mystery shoppers' sole task was to evaluate the availability of visual or written information provided regarding delay compensation, such as leaflets, posters, etc. At staffed stations and on trains, mystery shoppers also checked for the availability of visual or written information prior to undertaking their staff enquiry.

Mystery shoppers at stations were advised to make their enquiry at either the ticket office or at the gateline, with the majority instructed to do so at the ticket office. In 4% of cases the mystery shopper was re-directed to another staff member for assistance and the response from this second member of staff was used as the basis of the assessment.

82% of staff enquiries were ultimately handled at the ticket office, with 5% at the gateline, 3% at an information desk, 3% elsewhere in the station (including the station forecourt, concourse or on the platform), and 8% on the train.

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Visual or written delay compensation information available at stations and on trains

Visual or written information on delay compensation arrangements were seen at a greater proportion of stations than in 2016: 39% of staffed stations (up 9% on 2016), 29% of un-staffed stations (up 15% on 2016) and on 30% of trains (the same level as 2016).

Mystery shoppers were briefed to act as normal customers seeking this information, so may not have conducted a thorough search of all areas of the station (or train) when trying to locate it. This means that the results for the availability of information are likely to be lower than if a comprehensive station audit had been carried out.

Where this information was available, it was typically in the form of leaflets or posters, with the latter being more common in 2017 than in 2016. Where found, the overwhelming majority (95%) of this information was specific to a TOC.

Upon examination of the content of this written information, 86% of the mystery shoppers said that they believed the information available was sufficient to inform them as to when they would be entitled to claim, and 91% felt it was sufficient to inform them how to claim. This suggests that when the written information was available, it was normally considered to be useful to a potential claimant.

Minimum delay length threshold to be eligible for compensation

There was a small increase in the proportion of staff that provided the mystery shopper with accurate information regarding the minimum delay length required by their TOC for a compensation claim to be eligible, up to 76% from 74% in 2016. 11% provided the mystery shopper with inaccurate details on this point (8% in 2016), while 13% were unable to answer (down from 18% in 2016).

Results for individual TOCs on this aspect of the enquiry varied considerably, ranging from a high of 100%, achieved by three TOCs, to a low of 47% for those TOCs who do not manage any stations. The lowest score for a TOC that manages a network of stations was 53%.

Compensation level

The proportion of staff providing accurate information regarding the proportion of the ticket cost that would be paid as compensation was consistent – 51% - with that seen last year. 21% of staff provided inaccurate information on this matter, slightly more than in 2016 while 28% were unable to answer (33% in 2016).

The best performing TOC on this element of the enquiry provided correct information in 82% of cases, while the lowest score was 28%.

Cash compensation

67% of staff correctly advised the mystery shopper that compensation could be paid in cash or that they could receive vouchers that were exchangeable for cash. This was a jump from 45% in 2016 who accurately answered this question. 13% of staff wrongly advised the mystery shopper that cash compensation was not possible (or that vouchers could not be exchanged for cash), a considerable improvement from 28% last year. A further 21% of staff were unable to answer this aspect of the enquiry, which again was an improvement on the 27% who could not answer in 2016.

The best performing TOC was able to provide accurate information to mystery shoppers regarding cash compensation in 100% of instances, whilst in the worst case, only 39% of those who enquired of one TOC received accurate details. Both of these figures are an improvement on 2016's best and worst scores (88% and 8%, respectively).

How to claim

Performance on this measure was very similar to the 2016 study. 94% of mystery shoppers were correctly advised how to make a claim in 2017 versus 95% in 2016. This includes 72% who were spontaneously advised of this during their enquiry (73% in 2016) and a further 23% who were given this information after prompting the member of staff (22% in 2016). 6% of staff were unable to advise the shopper how to claim (5% in 2016).

Seven TOCs provided accurate advice on how to make a claim to all mystery shoppers they encountered, while the lowest result for an individual TOC on this aspect of the enquiry was 72% (81% in 2016).

Provision of a full explanation of the arrangements and conditions for claiming delay compensation

The overall key outcome of this research is the following.

Based on the responses received in relation to the above four elements of their **staff enquiry**, more than three in ten (34%) of the mystery shoppers received accurate information on all of these aspects of their enquiry and can therefore be deemed to have received a full explanation of the arrangements and conditions for claiming delay compensation. This is a 4% improvement from 2016. ORR considers these four elements to constitute the basic information that a passenger would need to take forward a claim and so, taken together, represent the primary indicator of TOC performance in this area.

The remaining 66% were either not provided with a response or were given inaccurate details in relation to one or more of the elements of their enquiry. In other words, a partial or complete information failure. This compares to 70% who were not provided with a response or were given inaccurate details in 2016

The most successful TOC was able to provide a full explanation to 65% of mystery shoppers (best in 2016 was 69%). No TOCs failed to provide a full explanation to any of the mystery shoppers they encountered, although the worst performing TOC scored just 6%. In 2016, three TOCs failed to provide a full explanation to any of the mystery shoppers they encountered.

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3. Methodology

3.1 Survey method

Since a key objective of the survey was to provide results that were directly comparable with the 2016 exercise, the survey methodology remained unchanged from that used in the previous year. Only in respect of the sample size were any significant differences in approach introduced for 2017.

The exercise involved members of ESA Retail's trained mystery shopper panel conducting visits to stations and on-train journeys to assess all TOCs in Great Britain[3]. The mystery shoppers were briefed in detail on the specific aspects they were required to evaluate and were provided with a scenario to follow (see below) to ensure a consistent approach when seeking information from TOC staff.

On completion of their assessment, the mystery shoppers submitted their results for checking and data processing.

The mystery shopping took place between 20th February and 23rd March, 2017.

3.2 Mystery shopping approach

The mystery shopping approach employed for each of the assessment categories were as follows:

TOC managed stations (Staffed)

Mystery shoppers entered the station concourse / ticket hall and initially looked around the station for any information (posters, notices, leaflets, etc.) regarding delays and compensation arrangements. They were instructed to look for these details as if they were a normal customer looking for information, so they were not required to conduct a detailed audit of the station for the information.

They then approached a member of staff, at the ticket office or gateline, to make their scenario enquiry. The majority of mystery shoppers were instructed to make their initial enquiry at the ticket office, with a smaller proportion advised to initially enquire with a

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[3] The mystery shopping covered 22 out of the 23 TOCs operating in Great Britain. Serco Caledonian Sleeper was not included in the mystery shop sample due to the unique nature of their service which presented practical barriers to evaluating their service in a manner that was consistent and comparable with other TOCs. Also they do not manage any stations.
Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) is one of the 22 TOCs covered by the mystery shopping. Their four 'brands' were sampled separately.

member of staff at the gateline. If the first member of staff was unable to answer and referred the mystery shopper to another member of staff at the station, the mystery shopper would follow this advice and make their enquiry with the second member of staff whose responses would then be used as the basis for the assessment. If however, the first member of staff was unable to answer but did not advise the mystery shopper to speak to someone else, the mystery shopper was not required to re-direct their enquiry to a further staff member and the assessment would be recorded as a fail.

The mystery shopper was instructed to make their enquiry in relation to the TOC managing that station.

TOC managed stations (Un-staffed)

At managed stations that were un-staffed, mystery shoppers undertook just the initial stage of the enquiry, looking around the station for information (posters, notices, leaflets, etc.) regarding delays and compensation arrangements.

The un-staffed station sample included two types of assessment:

(a) Where the station was known to be un-staffed, mystery shoppers were instructed to look for the information as if they were a normal customer, but if unsuccessful, to then have a further more detailed look around the station for this information. They were not specifically advised to assess all platforms, but would have looked at the areas where this information could have been expected to be found, such as information boards, areas adjacent to the ticket vending machines, etc.

(b) In cases where the mystery shopper visited a staffed station at a time when the station should have been staffed according to advertised staffing hours, but were unable to locate a member of staff, then these visits were also, for the purpose of the analysis, treated as un-staffed stations. In these instances, mystery shoppers were instructed to look for the information as if they were a normal customer, but were not advised to make a second, more detailed scrutiny of the station, as was the case when visiting stations known to be un-staffed.

Non-TOC managed stations (stations managed by Network Rail)

The sample included a number of assessments conducted at stations not managed by a TOC i.e. those managed by Network Rail. In these cases, the visits were conducted in the same manner as the staffed, TOC-managed stations, but the mystery shopper was advised to make their enquiry in relation to one of the TOCs operating at that station and, where possible, instructed to seek out a member of staff employed by that TOC.

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This approach was also used in the case of sampling those TOCs who do not manage their own stations – Cross Country, Gatwick Express, Heathrow Express, Hull Trains and Grand Central. For these TOCs, mystery shopping was conducted at the main stations through which these TOCs operate; some of these were Network Rail stations and others were managed by other TOCs.

<u>On-train assessments</u>

In the case of the on-train assessments, mystery shoppers were instructed to firstly check if they were able to find visual information (posters, notices, leaflets, etc.) regarding delays and compensation arrangements on the train. They were instructed to look for the information as if they were a normal customer looking for these details, so they were not required to conduct a detailed audit of the train for the information.

They were then asked, if they came into contact with a member of TOC staff on the train, to make a staff enquiry. They were advised to wait for a member of staff (train manager, conductor or ticket inspector, but not a member of catering or cleaning staff) to pass through the train, but if after approximately half of their journey they had not seen a member of staff they were asked to walk through the train looking for someone they could ask.

In cases where mystery shoppers were unable to locate a member of staff on the train for the purposes of making an enquiry, they were instructed to make a staff enquiry at their arrival station. The results of these station staff interactions have been included within the station results.

3.3 The staff enquiry scenario

On approaching the member of staff, the mystery shopper enquired on behalf of a relative, who was travelling with a given TOC, asking whether the relative would be eligible for compensation for a delay.

If asked, the mystery shopper would say that their relative's journey was a single journey, undertaken about a week ago, but that they do not know the specific details or how long the delay was.

The mystery shopper aimed to gain answers to the following:

1. Does the length of delay affect compensation?
2. How long does the train have to be delayed for their relative to be eligible for compensation?
3. The level of compensation their relative might receive?

4. Whether the compensation can be paid in cash, or if in vouchers, whether these could be exchanged for cash?

5. How a compensation claim could be made?

If the above information was not offered spontaneously in response to the initial enquiry, the mystery shopper was instructed to prompt on each point as follows:

1. "Does it matter how long they were delayed for?"

2. "What's the minimum time they would have had to be delayed to be eligible for compensation, e.g. 15 minutes, one hour?"

3. "How much compensation could they get?"

4. "They don't travel much by train, do they have to get the compensation in vouchers, or is there another way?"
   (If vouchers only were mentioned, they would follow-up with: "Can the vouchers be exchanged for cash?")

5. "How do they make a claim?"

3.4 Conducting fieldwork

In undertaking fieldwork in line with the above mentioned approach, a number of mystery shops resulted in the result being incorporated in an alternative visit category for analysis purposes:

1. In 23 cases, at stations that should have been staffed when the mystery shopper visited, they were unable to locate a member of staff, so were unable to make their staff enquiry and instead focussed on looking for written information. As detailed above, these visits were treated as un-staffed assessments for the purpose of the analysis.

2. On nine on-train assessments, mystery shoppers did not see a member of staff on the train as had been anticipated, hence were unable to make their staff enquiry.
   In these cases, the mystery shopper instead conducted a station enquiry and these were included amongst the staffed station sample for analysis purposes.

Staff answering in relation to another TOC

In a small number of cases, the mystery shopper was unable to locate a member of staff from the TOC they were seeking to make their enquiry with. This meant in some instances they had to ask a member of staff employed by another TOC operating at the station. This occurred in 12 instances in total in 2017 (around 2% of all staff enquiries) and these results were attributed to the TOC about whom the mystery shopper's enquiry was targeted at.

In the large majority of these instances (10 out of the 12) in the 2017 survey, the enquiry related to one of the non-station managing TOCs.

The approach that was taken to this was identical to that used in the 2016 research.

3.5   Results analysis

Where staff gave the mystery shoppers information in relation to the individual aspects of their enquiry, these details were recorded in full on the questionnaire for that assessment. These details were then analysed in relation to the actual TOC compensation requirements for a single journey, to determine whether the member of staff had provided accurate information.

Please note that in interpreting the results of the mystery shopping exercise, we have treated the provision of information in the form of a leaflet or a claim form by the member of staff as responding correctly to the mystery shopper's enquiry. For example, during their enquiry, when the mystery shopper asked for information on the amount of compensation their relative might receive, if the member of staff responded by giving a leaflet or claim form containing this information, we have regarded this as providing an accurate response to this aspect of the enquiry.

If however, the mystery shopper requested information on details such as the minimum delay length required for compensation and the member of staff gave an inaccurate response, but then provided a leaflet or claim form later in the enquiry which included this information, the response to the earlier aspect would still be treated as incorrect. The written information would have had to have been provided in response to the specific aspect of the enquiry to be deemed a correct response.

If the mystery shopper was referred by the member of staff to a Customer Services number or to a website for the information, this was treated as a negative response.

This is identical to the approach taken to results analysis in 2016.

3.6   Sample

The 2017 sampling approach had the same objective as for the 2016 survey, that is, the sample was selected on the basis of achieving a robust and representative overall sample. However, in 2017, the overall survey sample was increased in order to provide as representative a result as possible. Nonetheless, the samples by individual TOC are still not sufficiently large as to facilitate statistically robust analysis at TOC level. TOC level results are provided in the appendix for completeness.

The sampling process therefore set out to achieve the following:

- A minimum sample of approximately 14 assessments per TOC for all TOCs managing stations;
- An increased sample size for larger TOCs, approximately in proportion to the number of stations operated by that TOC, but with a maximum sample set at the number of stations managed by the TOC;
- A smaller sample per TOC for those TOCs not managing stations;
- A small number of un-staffed station assessments for TOCs managing un-staffed stations;
- Two on-train assessments per TOC.

Final 2017 survey sample by TOC

A total of 579 assessments were completed in 2017, split by assessment category and TOC as follows:

TOC	2016				2017			
	Staffed stations	Un-staffed stations	On train	Total sample	Staffed stations	Un-staffed stations	On train	Total sample
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	4	0	20	19	2	2	23
Arriva Trains Wales	22	4	2	28	38	3	1	42
c2c	12	0	0	12	18	0	0	18
Chiltern Railways	11	5	0	16	17	3	2	22
CrossCountry *	3	0	0	3	4	0	2	6
East Midlands Trains	10	1	0	11	14	3	2	19
FTPE	9	3	1	13	14	3	2	19
Grand Central *	3	0	0	3	5	0	2	7
Great Western Railway	23	4	2	29	39	2	2	43
GTR Gatwick Express *	4	0	0	4	5	0	2	7
GTR Great Northern	10	2	1	13	15	1	2	18
GTR Southern	16	5	0	21	21	4	2	27
GTR Thameslink	12	0	0	12	16	2	2	20
Heathrow Express *	4	0	0	4	3	0	2	5
Hull Trains *	2	0	0	2	5	0	2	7
London Midland	15	2	1	18	25	4	1	30
London Overground	14	0	0	14	18	0		18
Merseyrail	12	2	0	14	25	1	2	28
Northern Rail	31	5	0	36	52	5		57
Abellio ScotRail	27	7	3	37	45	2	2	49

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South West Trains	17	3	0	20	36	3	2	41
Southeastern	16	5	0	21	25	2	2	29
TfL Rail	11	0	0	11	9	0	1	10
Virgin East Coast	17	0	0	17	12	2	2	16
Virgin West Coast	13	0	0	13	16	0	2	18
Total Sample	**330**	**52**	**10**	**392**	**496**	**42**	**41**	**579**

* There are five TOCs which do not manage stations therefore their sample is lower.

4. Detailed findings

4.1 Visual and written information available at stations and on trains

4.1.1 Was information available at stations and on trains?

Mystery shoppers were instructed to look around the station or on the train for any visual or written information, in the form of posters, signs, notices or leaflets, regarding delays and the compensation arrangements in the case of delays.
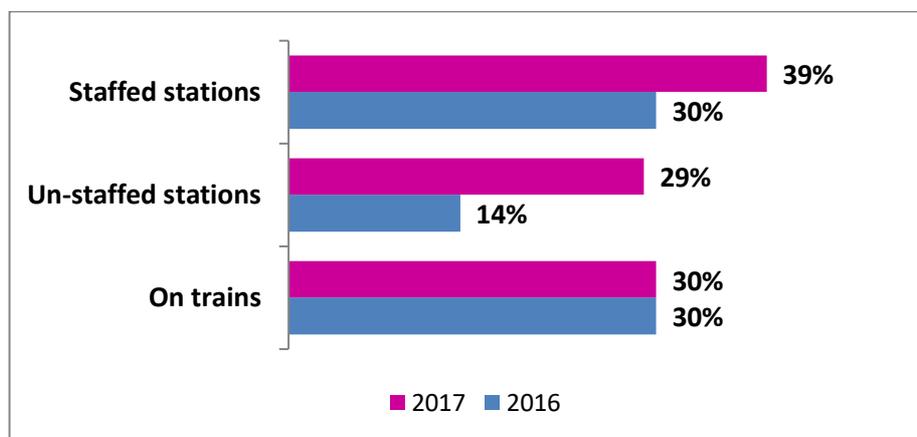
Figure 1 – Visual or written delay compensation information available at stations and on trains

(2017 Base: Total sample: staffed stations = 487, un-staffed stations = 42, on-train = 50
2016 Base: Total sample: staffed stations = 330, un-staffed stations = 52, on-train = 10))

In the 2017 survey, visual or written information on delay compensation arrangements were seen at 39% of staffed stations, 29% of un-staffed stations and on 30% of trains.

In the case of both staffed and un-staffed stations, this represents an improvement on the 2016 result, while the proportions of trains with the information available remained unchanged.

Please note that in most cases, the mystery shoppers were acting as normal customers seeking this information, so would not have conducted a thorough search for the details, so the results for the availability of information are likely to be lower than had comprehensive station audits been carried out.

Where this information was available, it was typically in the form of either leaflets or posters, with the latter more common in 2017 than last year.

Where found, the overwhelming majority (95%) of this information was specific to a TOC.

4.1.2 Was the information sufficient to enable you to make a claim?

Mystery shoppers were asked to review the visual or written information they found at stations and on trains and to determine whether, based on the details provided, they would have had sufficient information to know how to proceed with a claim.
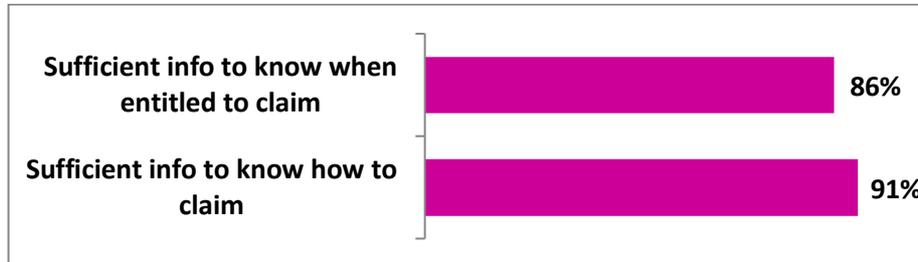
Figure 2 – When available, was the information sufficient for you to know when entitled & how to claim? (2017)
(Base: Visual Information Available = 217)

When it was available, the large majority of mystery shoppers found the information was sufficient for them to determine both when they would be entitled to claim (86% found this to be the case), and how they should go about making a claim (91%).

4.2 Staff response to compensation enquiry

4.2.1 Ability to make staff enquiry on the train

In order to maximise the possibility of making on-train enquiries, mystery shoppers were instructed to actively seek out a member of staff if they were not approached within the first half of their journey.

Of the 50 on-train assessments undertaken, in nine cases the mystery shopper did not see a member of staff on the train and so was unable to make an on-train enquiry. In these cases, the mystery shopper undertook their enquiry with a member of TOC staff at their arrival station, and these results were included within the station results.

Those who did see a member of staff on the train were asked whether the member of staff came to them, for example, while passing through the train checking tickets, or whether the mystery shopper had to proactively seek out them out.
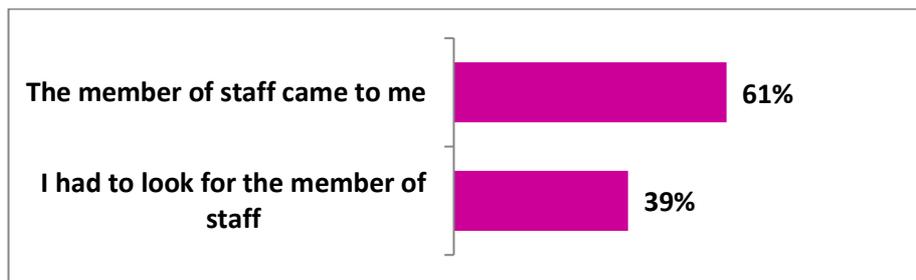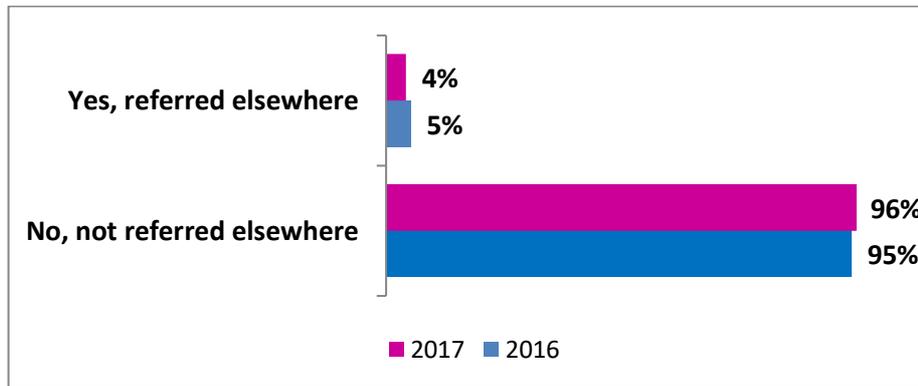

Figure 3 – When making your enquiry on-train, did the member of staff come to you? (2017)
(Base: on-train staff enquiries = 41)

More than half (61%) of the on-train enquiries were made by the mystery shopper without them having to seek out the member of staff.

4.2.2 Location of station enquiry

Mystery shoppers at stations were advised to initially make their enquiry either at the ticket office or at the gateline, with the majority instructed to do so at the ticket office. They noted whether, on making their enquiry with this first member of staff, if they were referred to another staff member at the station.


Figure 4 – When making your enquiry at the station did the member of staff refer you elsewhere?
(2017 Base: station enquiries = 496
2016 Base: station enquiries = 330)

Only in 4% of cases, a similar proportion to the 2016 survey, was the mystery shopper referred to another staff member. Please note however that, as will be illustrated in the following results, in a large number of cases the original staff member was unable to answer, but did not refer the mystery shopper elsewhere.

In the majority (64%) of cases where the mystery shopper was referred elsewhere, the original enquiry was made at the gateline, and in all but one of these cases, they were directed to the ticket office to seek advice.

The following chart shows the location of the staff member who ultimately took responsibility for responding to the mystery shopper's enquiry.
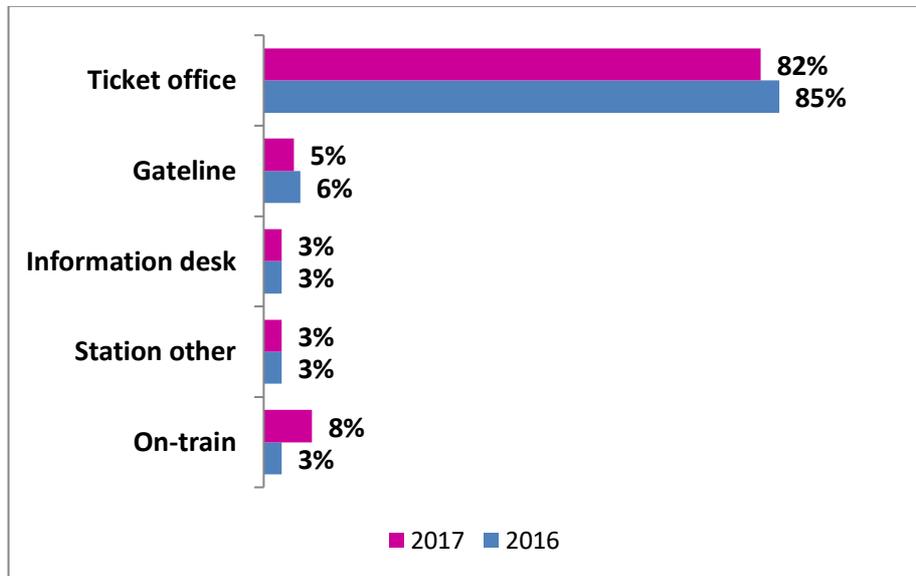
Figure 5 – Location of member of staff who took responsibility for responding to your enquiry
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

Overall, 82% of 2017 enquiries were ultimately handled at the ticket office, with 5% at the gateline, 3% at an information desk, 3% elsewhere in the station, and 8% on the train. The main change from the 2016 survey was that a higher number of on-train assessments were completed, resulting in this group of staff accounting for a higher proportion of the sample.

Staff who were located elsewhere in the station when answering the enquiry in 2017 included those found in the station forecourt, the concourse or on the platform.

4.2.3   Does delay length affect compensation?

Initially, mystery shoppers sought to determine whether the length of their relative's delay affects whether compensation would be payable.

In 2017, 35% of staff responded spontaneously on this issue, a further 45% answered after being prompted, while 21% were unable to answer, even after a prompt.

The staff responses to this initial element of the enquiry are shown in the following chart.
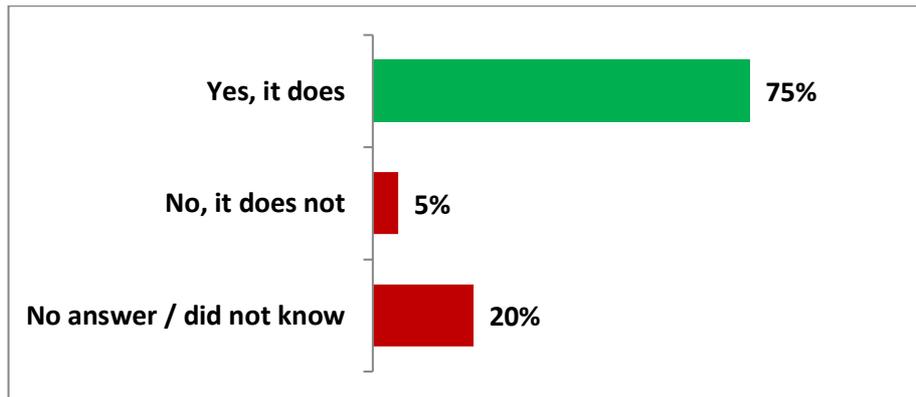
Figure 6 – Did the member of staff say that delay length affects compensation? (2017)
(Base: All Staff Enquiries = 537)

Three quarters of staff in 2017 correctly advised the mystery shopper that yes, the delay length does affect whether compensation is payable. 5% of staff however, answered that the length of delay was not a factor.

As illustrated below, the proportion of staff providing the correct advice on this point, fell slightly in 2017 compared with last year's survey.
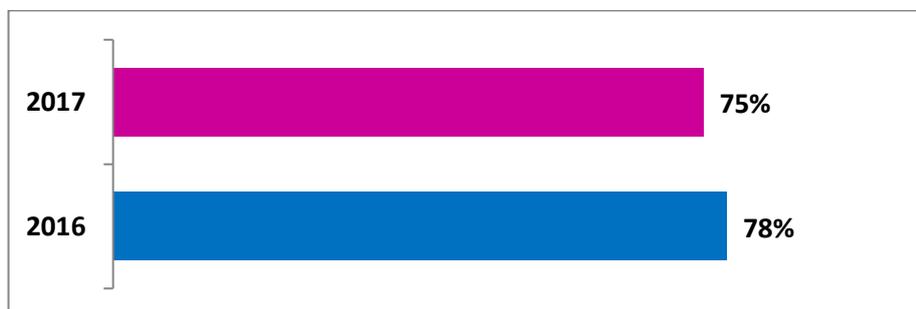

Figure 7 – % of staff correctly advising that delay length does affect compensation
(2017 Base: All Staff Enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

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4.2.4 Minimum delay length to be eligible for compensation?

42% of staff responded spontaneously in 2017 regarding the minimum length of delay that was required before compensation would be payable, whereas a slightly higher proportion (46%) did so after being prompted by the mystery shopper. More than a tenth (13%) of staff were unable to provide an answer to this aspect of the enquiry.

The following chart shows how staff responded to this aspect of the enquiry.
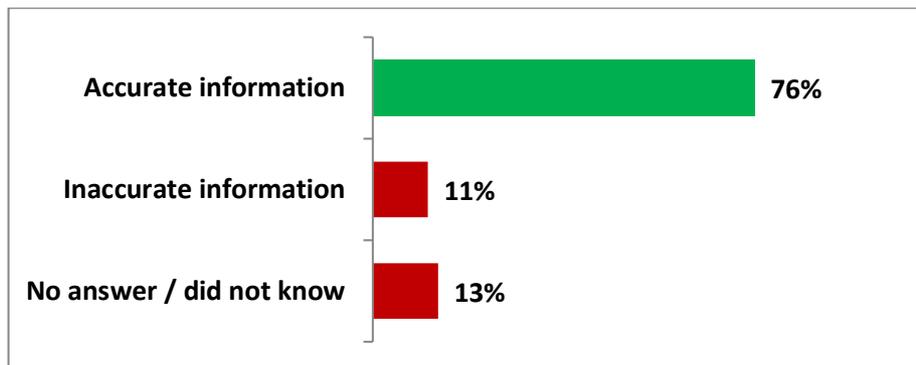
Figure 8 – Did the member of staff provide accurate information regarding how long a delay would need to be in order to be eligible for compensation? (2017)
(Base: All Staff Enquiries = 537)

Just over three quarters (76%) of staff provided the mystery shopper with accurate information regarding the minimum delay length required by their TOC for a compensation claim to be eligible. 11% provided the mystery shopper with inaccurate details on this point, while 13% were unable to answer.

As illustrated below, the proportion of staff providing an accurate response to this aspect of the enquiry increased a little, rising 2% compared with last year's survey.
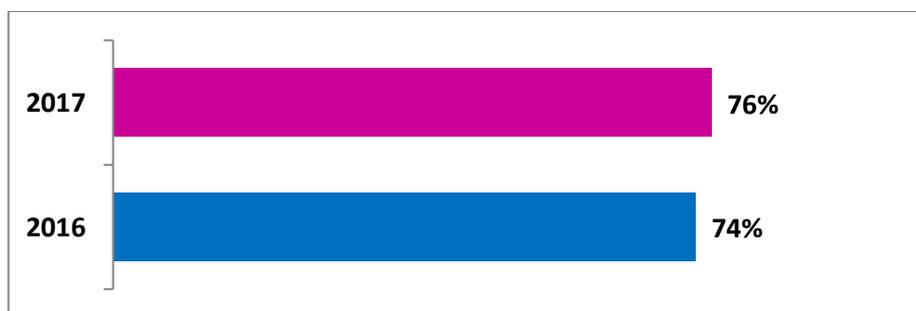
Figure 9 – % of staff providing accurate information regarding how long a delay would need to be in order to be eligible for compensation
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

The 76% who provided an accurate response to this aspect of their enquiry in 2017 included 12% (versus 7% in 2016) who were deemed to have provided accurate information through the act of providing the mystery shopper with a leaflet or claim form containing this information.

Despite providing a correct response for the purpose of this analysis, by not providing this information directly in the first instance members of staff were in effect placing the burden on the mystery shopper to determine the information required.

As in 2016, those staff who responded to this question at locations other than the ticket office were no less likely to provide an accurate answer. 76% of ticket office staff responded correctly on this aspect of the enquiry in 2017, as did the same proportion of staff at both the gateline and at information/help desks. Equally, 76% of the on-train staff enquiries resulted in a correct answer to this query.

Where mystery shoppers were referred to a second member of staff for an answer, there is no indication that this had any impact on the likelihood of obtaining accurate information. 77% of those referred elsewhere in 2017 received correct information, versus 76% for the overall sample.

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4.2.5 Compensation level

Only a quarter (25%) of staff spontaneously advised the mystery shopper what level of compensation they might expect to receive in 2017. 48% were able to answer the shopper after a prompt, while over a quarter (28%) of staff were unable to answer.

The following chart shows how staff responded in the current survey regarding the compensation that might be paid.
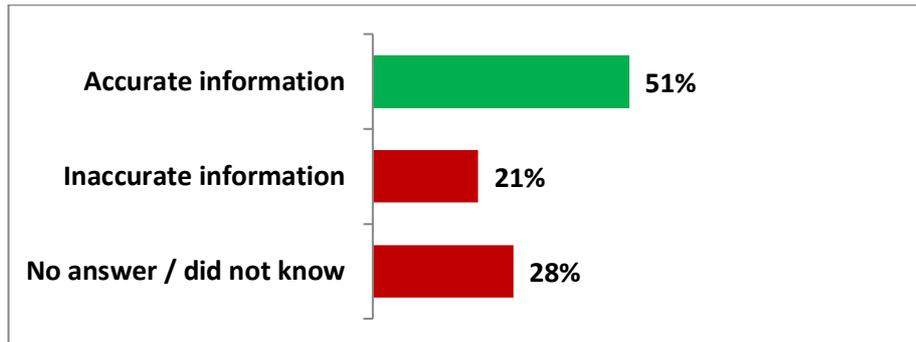
Figure 10 – Did the member of staff provide accurate information regarding the proportion of the ticket cost that might be paid as compensation? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

Approximately half (51%) of staff provided accurate information regarding the proportion of the ticket cost that the mystery shopper's relative might receive as compensation. 21% of staff provided inaccurate information and 28% gave no answer or did not know, meaning almost half (49%) of mystery shoppers went away without accurate information on the amount their relative might be able to claim.

As the chart below illustrates, the proportion of staff providing accurate information regarding the amount that could be claimed remained unchanged from the 2017 survey.
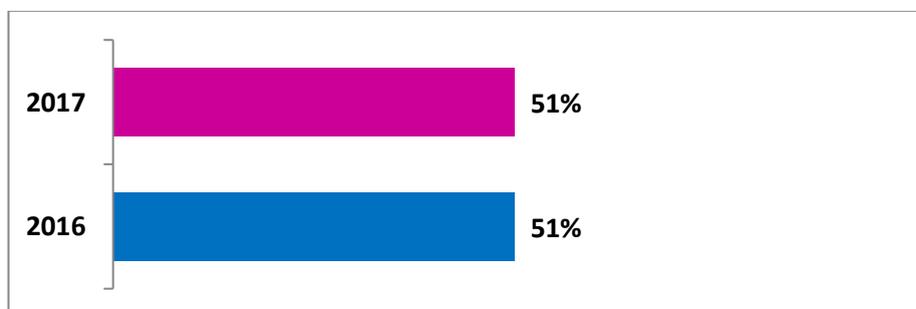
Figure 11 – % of staff providing accurate information regarding the proportion of the ticket cost that might be paid as compensation
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

Although just over half of staff were deemed to have provided the mystery shopper with an accurate response, this figure was boosted by 21% (the same proportion as in 2016) through the inclusion of those staff who responded simply by providing a leaflet or claim form containing the information. Again, despite this being recorded as a correct response for the purpose of this analysis, by not providing this information directly in the first instance members of staff were in effect placing the burden on the mystery shopper to determine the information required.

While staff at ticket offices were somewhat more likely to provide an accurate response to this aspect of the enquiry in 2017, the uplift in results seen at this location was not significant. Ticket office staff gave accurate information in 54% of occasions, compared with 48% of those at the gateline, and 47% at the information or help desk. On-train staff were the least likely to provide correct details, doing so in just 29% of instances. It is possible that this apparent difference in staff performance is due to on train staff not having leaflets on hand to provide to the mystery shopper in response to their enquiry.

In cases where 2017 mystery shoppers were referred to another staff member for an answer to their query, they were slightly more likely to receive accurate information. 59% of those referred elsewhere received an accurate response regarding the compensation that might be paid, versus 51% for the overall sample.

4.2.6 Cash compensation

On the issue of whether compensation could be paid in cash, or if in vouchers, whether these were exchangeable for cash, 22% of staff mentioned this spontaneously, while a further 64% answered this after the mystery shopper had prompted.

As in 2016, the principle that was applied to the analysis was that in accordance with the provisions of the National Rail Condition of Carriage (NRCoC)[4]; passengers are entitled to cash compensation if they request it. In a scenario where a TOC staff member told a mystery shopper this was not possible then it was classed as a negative answer and categorised accordingly. This is because ORR considers this to be an inaccurate representation of the passenger's rights. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis the staff member was considered to have given incorrect information to the mystery shopper.

The response from staff to this aspect of the enquiry this year is illustrated in the chart below.
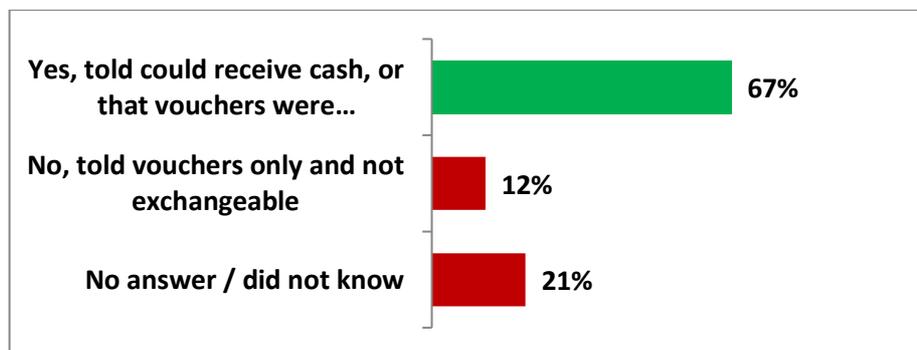
Figure 12 – Did the member of staff advise that you could receive compensation in cash, as opposed to vouchers? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

67% of staff correctly advised the mystery shopper in 2017 that their relative could receive the compensation in the form of cash or that they could receive vouchers that were exchangeable for cash. 13% of staff wrongly advised the mystery shopper that cash payment was not possible (or that vouchers could not be exchanged for cash), while a further 21% of staff were unable to answer this aspect of the enquiry.

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[4] Note that from the 1st October 2016 this changed to the National Rail Conditions of Travel: http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/46427.aspx

As shown in the following chart, the proportion of staff correctly advising that compensation could be paid in cash (or that vouchers could be exchanged for cash) increased significantly in 2017.
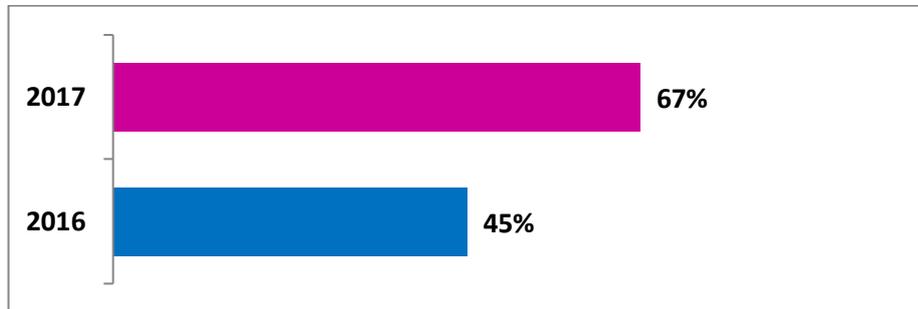
Figure 13 – % of staff correctly advising that you could receive compensation in cash, or could exchange vouchers for cash
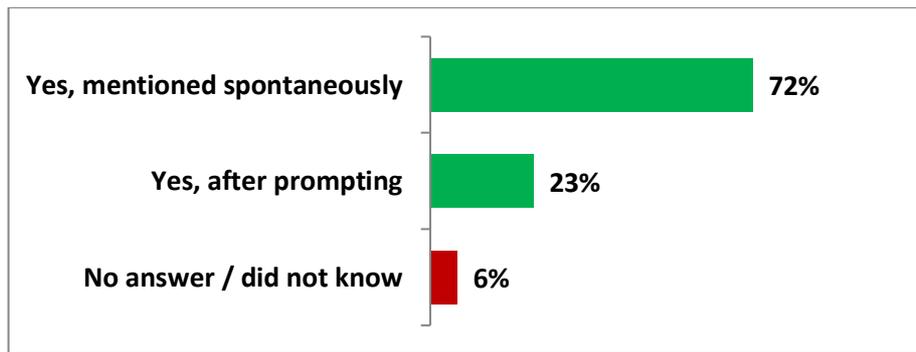*(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537*
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

Where mystery shoppers were referred to a second member of staff for help with their enquiry in 2017 this had no impact on their likelihood of obtaining a correct response on this question. 68% of those referred elsewhere received correct information, versus 67% for the overall sample.

4.2.7 Making a claim

Mystery shoppers were asked whether, during the course of their enquiry, they were provided with information on how to go about making a claim and whether they were provided with a claim form.

94% of mystery shoppers were advised how to make a claim in 2017, including 72% who were spontaneously advised this during their enquiry and a further 23% who were given this information after prompting the member of staff. 6% of staff were unable to advise the shopper how to claim.

Figure 14 – Did the member of staff provide information on how to make a claim? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

As illustrated below, the proportion of staff who provided information to the mystery shopper on how to make a claim fell slightly from 2016, but remains at a high level.
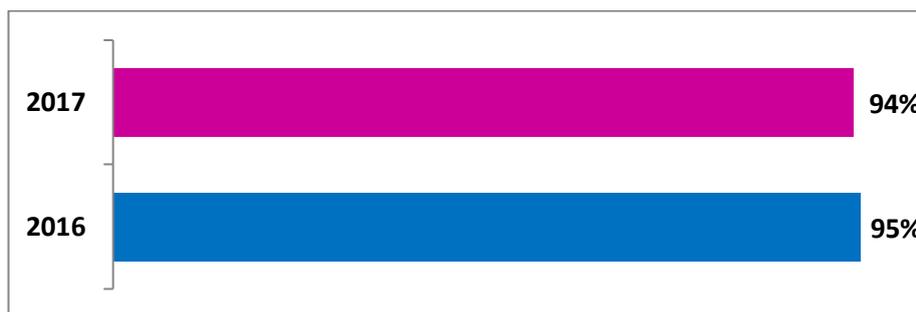
Figure 15 – % of staff providing information on how to make a claim
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

In 2017, 71% of mystery shoppers were given a claim form at some point during the course of their enquiry; this is lower than the corresponding figure in the 2016 survey, when 76% received a form.
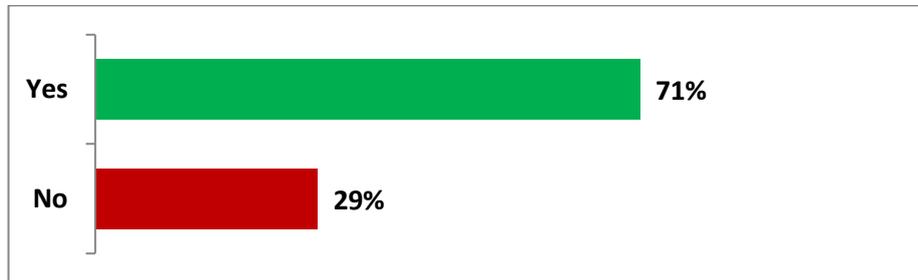
Figure 16 – Were you given a claim form? (2017)
(Base: All Staff Enquiries = 537)

Figure 17 – % of staff providing a claim form
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537
2016 Base: all staff enquiries = 340)

4.2.8 Full explanation provided of the conditions for claiming compensation

Staff who provided the mystery shopper with all of the following four key pieces of information could be deemed to have provided a full explanation of the conditions for claiming delay compensation:

1. An accurate answer regarding the minimum delay required to be eligible to claim compensation;
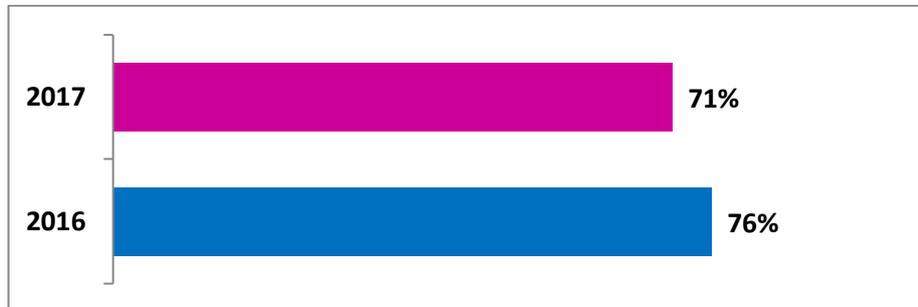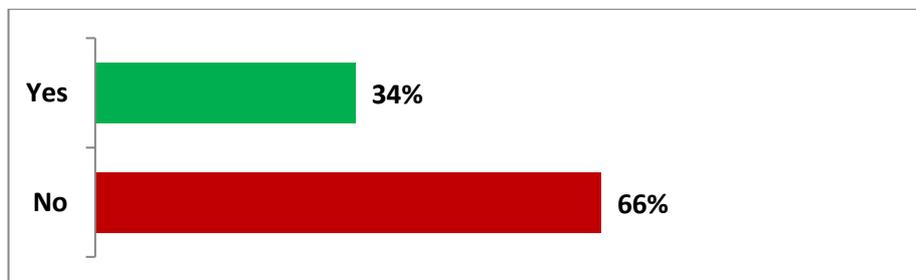2. An accurate response for the proportion of the ticket cost the passenger could be eligible for;
3. Advising that compensation can be paid in cash, or that vouchers could be exchanged for cash;
4. Details of how to make a claim.

Overall, 34% of 2017 mystery shoppers came away with a response to their enquiry which included all four of the above pieces of information.

Figure 18 – Did the member of staff provide a full explanation, including (1) how long a delay needs to be to claim compensation, (2) the proportion of ticket costs the passenger might receive, (3) that compensation can be paid in cash or that vouchers can be exchanged for cash, and (4) how to make a claim? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

As the chart below illustrates, the proportion of staff providing a full explanation of the conditions for claiming compensation increased from 30% in 2016 to 34% this year. Given the sample sizes, this change is not large enough to be considered statistically significant.
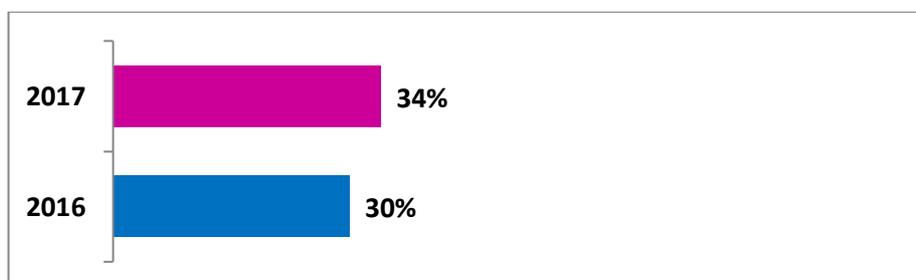
Figure 19 – % of staff providing a full explanation of the conditions for claiming compensation
(2017 Base: all staff enquiries = 537

In terms of providing a full explanation of the conditions for claiming compensation, staff at information/help desks (41%) and at ticket offices (36%) were more likely to do so than those at the gateline (20%) and those encountered on board trains (24%).

In cases where mystery shoppers were referred to another staff member for assistance, this slightly improved the likelihood of their receiving a full answer to their compensation enquiry. 41% of mystery shoppers referred to another staff member received a full explanation, versus 34% for the sample as a whole.

4.2.9 General comments on the staff enquiry

Mystery shoppers were asked to rate the ease of obtaining and understanding information about claiming compensation for delays.

Ease of finding someone who could answer your enquiry

Notwithstanding the relatively high proportion of staff who were unable to provide a full answer to the mystery shopper's enquiry, the large majority said they found it very or quite easy to find someone who could assist with their enquiry.
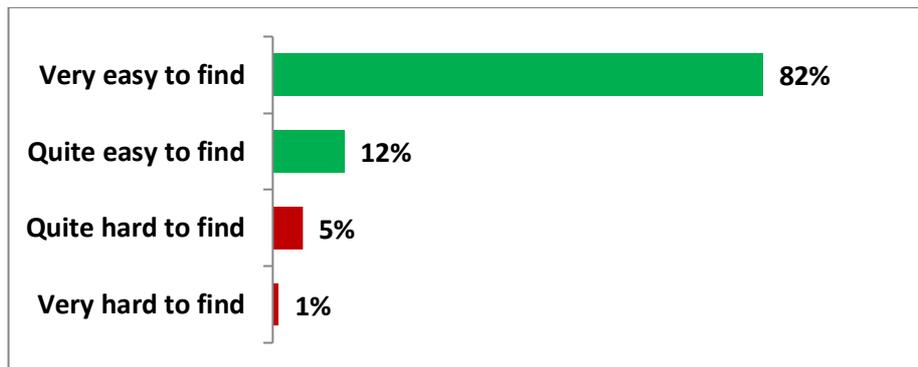
Figure 20 – How easy was it to find someone to answer your enquiry? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

Ease of getting the information you needed

As expected, based on the earlier results, a smaller proportion of mystery shoppers found it easy to obtain the information required than found it easy to find someone who could help.
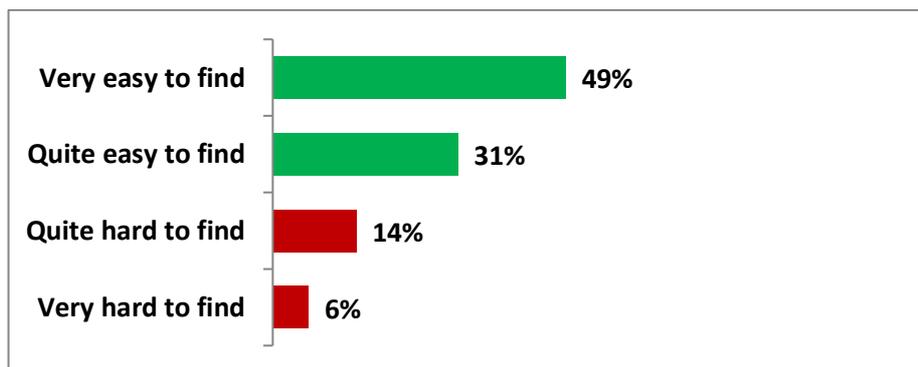
Figure 21 – How easy was it to get the information you needed? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

Opinions of staff knowledge were mixed, with only a quarter (26%) of mystery shoppers finding staff to be very knowledgeable. Almost a third (30%) considered staff to be not very or not at all knowledgeable.
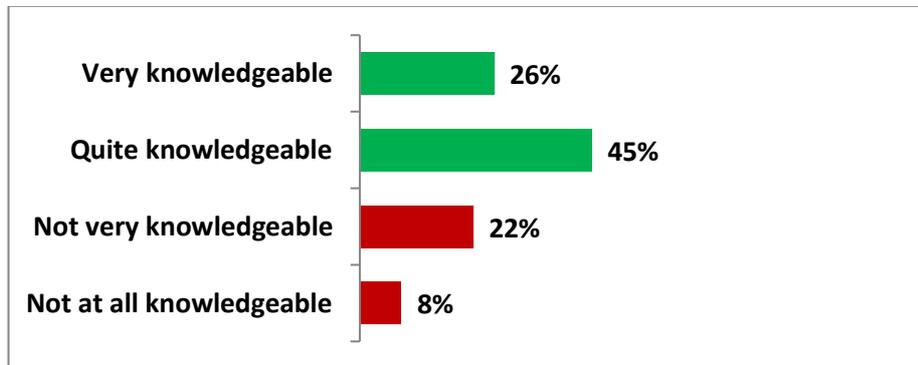
Figure 22 – How knowledgeable about the subject did the member of staff appear to be? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

Ease of understanding the information given

Once information was received, the large majority (89%) of mystery shoppers felt it was very or quite easy to understand the information.
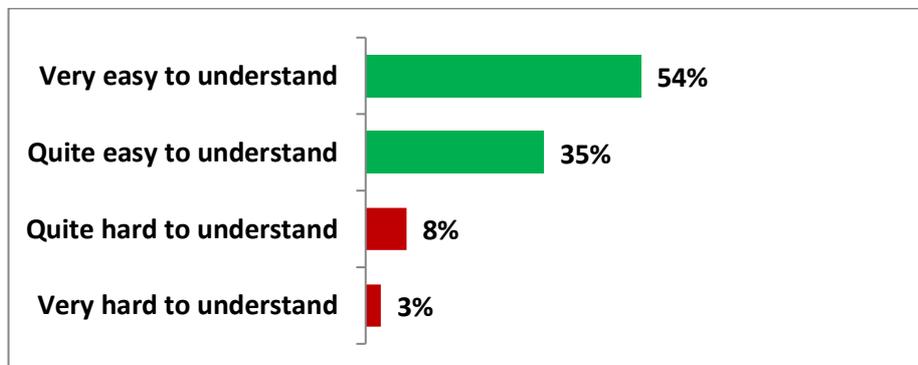
Figure 23 – How easy did you find it to understand the information you had been given? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

4.2.10 Was the information provided by staff sufficient to enable you to make a claim?

Mystery shoppers were asked to state whether, based on the information they were given by the member of staff, they felt they would now have enough information to know how to proceed with a claim.
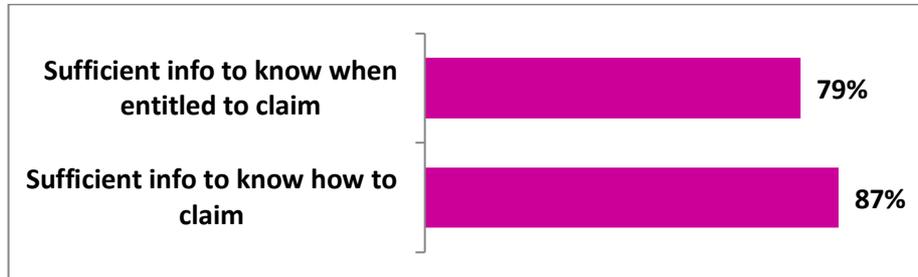
Figure 24 – Was the information sufficient for you to know when entitled & how to claim? (2017)
(Base: all staff enquiries = 537)

Almost four fifths (79%) of mystery shoppers felt they would now know when they would be entitled to claim, and slightly more (87%) stated that they had enough information to know how to go about making a claim. 77% of shoppers said yes to both of these questions, compared to 74% in 2016.

Appendix – TOC level results

1 Accurate information regarding the minimum delay length required to be eligible for compensation

As the following table illustrates, in 2017 individual TOC level results for the provision of accurate information regarding the minimum delay length required to claim varied considerably. Performance ranged from 100%, achieved by three TOCs (First TransPennine Express, East Midlands Trains and TfL Rail), to a low of 53% for South West Trains. The average 2017 result for the group of five non-station managing TOCs was 47%.

Whereas two TOCs scored well below 50% on this aspect in 2016, the lowest individual TOC score was considerably higher, at 53% this year.

Accurate information provided regarding the minimum delay required to be eligible for compensation	2016 base	2016 yes %	2017 base	2017 yes %	Variance
First TransPennine Express	10	50%	16	100%	50%
East Midland Trains	10	80%	16	100%	20%
TfL Rail	11	64%	10	100%	36%
Virgin Trains East Coast	17	94%	14	93%	-1%
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	88%	21	90%	2%
Great Western Railway	25	60%	41	85%	25%
Southeastern	16	88%	27	85%	-3%
Abellio ScotRail	30	70%	47	85%	15%
Northern Rail	31	65%	52	85%	20%
London Midland	16	94%	26	81%	-13%
GTR Thameslink	12	75%	18	78%	3%
GTR Great Northern	11	100%	17	76%	-24%
GTR Southern #	16	81%	23	74%	-7%
Virgin Trains West Coast	13	92%	18	72%	-20%
Arriva Trains Wales	24	83%	39	72%	-11%
London Overground #	14	36%	18	67%	31%
Chiltern Railways	11	73%	19	63%	-10%
Merseyrail	12	33%	27	63%	30%
c2c	12	100%	18	61%	-39%
South West Trains	17	59%	38	53%	-6%
All non-station managing TOCs *#	16	69%	32	47%	-22%
Total	**340**	**74%**	**537**	**76%**	**2%**

*includes GTR Gatwick Express, CrossCountry, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Heathrow Express

the following TOCs' 2017 results include some answers given on their behalf by staff of other TOCs: GTR Southern (1 answer), London Overground (1), All non-station managing TOCs (10).

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Compared with their 2016 results, the most improved TOCs on this part of the enquiry, both of whom scored 100% this year, were First Transpennine Express (+50%) and TfL Rail (+36%). In contrast, c2c (-39%), GTR Great Northern (-24%) and Virgin Trains West Coast (-20%) saw large downturns in their results.

The following provides a breakdown of the failures for the poorest performing TOC on this issue in 2017:

South West Trains (18 out of 38 inaccurate):	10 didn't know / unsure
	2 referred to website
	2 referred to form/leaflet
	4 gave an incorrect minimum delay

2 Accurate information regarding the proportion of ticket cost payable

In respect of the provision of accurate information regarding the proportion of the ticket cost the passenger might be eligible for, GTR Southern (82%) achieved the best 2017 result, while GTR Thameslink (78%) and Abellio Greater Anglia (76%) also performed relatively well.

London Overground (28%) and Merseyrail (30%) were the lowest performing TOCs on this aspect of the enquiry.

Accurate information provided regarding the proportion of ticket cost the passenger might be eligible for					
	2016 base	2016 yes %	2017 base	2017 yes %	Variance
GTR Great Northern	11	73%	17	82%	9%
GTR Thameslink	12	50%	18	78%	28%
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	75%	21	76%	1%
Southeastern	16	88%	27	70%	-18%
Abellio ScotRail	30	43%	47	66%	23%
London Midland	16	56%	26	65%	9%
Virgin Trains East Coast	17	65%	14	64%	-1%
Northern Rail	31	19%	52	63%	44%
First TransPennine Express	10	50%	16	63%	13%
c2c	12	67%	18	56%	-11%
TfL Rail	11	9%	10	50%	41%
East Midland Trains	10	60%	16	44%	-16%
Arriva Trains Wales	24	54%	39	41%	-13%
Great Western Railway	25	60%	41	39%	-21%
GTR Southern [#]	16	50%	23	35%	-15%
Virgin Trains West Coast	13	77%	18	33%	-44%
South West Trains	17	35%	38	32%	-3%
Chiltern Railways	11	82%	19	32%	-50%
Merseyrail	12	8%	27	30%	22%
London Overground [#]	14	21%	18	28%	7%
All non-station managing TOCs *[#]	16	50%	32	31%	-19%
Total	**340**	**51%**	**537**	**51%**	**0%**

includes GTR Gatwick Express, CrossCountry, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Heathrow Express

[#] *the following TOCs' 2017 results include some answers given on their behalf by staff of other TOCs: GTR Southern (1 answer), London Overground (1), All non-station managing TOCs (10).*

TOCs whose results improved the most in comparison with 2016 were Northern Rail (+44%) and TfL Rail (+41%). Merseyrail improved by 22% on their 2016 result, but remained one of the poorest performers.

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The TOCs whose result fell most on this aspect of the enquiry compared with 2016 were Chiltern Railways (-50%) and Virgin Trains West Coast (-44%).

The following are the main reasons for failure amongst the two poorest performing TOCs on this issue in 2017:

Merseyrail
(19 out of 27 inaccurate):

8 didn't know / unsure
3 referred to leaflet/form
2 referred to customer services
1 referred to website
5 wrong information given

London Overground
(13 out of 18 inaccurate):

3 didn't know / unsure
2 referred to website
8 wrong information given

3 Correctly advised that compensation could be paid in cash, or that vouchers could be exchanged for cash

In respect of advising that passengers could receive compensation in cash or vouchers that were exchangeable for cash, the best performing TOC in 2017 was Virgin Trains East Coast, achieving a 100% score. Other TOCs that performed well on this aspect of the enquiry included East Midland Trains (88%) and Arriva Trains Wales (87%).

A number of TOCs saw their results for this part of the enquiry improve greatly in 2017, including TfL Rail (+51%), Northern Rail (+50%), Abellio ScotRail (+40%) and Merseyrail (+40%).

Correctly advised that the passenger could receive compensation in cash instead of vouchers, or that vouchers could be exchanged for cash					
	2016 base	2016 yes %	2017 base	2017 yes %	Variance
Virgin Trains East Coast	17	76%	14	100%	24%
East Midland Trains	10	60%	16	88%	28%
Arriva Trains Wales	24	54%	39	87%	33%
Abellio ScotRail	30	43%	47	83%	40%
GTR Southern #	16	50%	23	83%	33%
GTR Great Northern	11	73%	17	82%	9%
London Midland	16	56%	26	81%	25%
GTR Thameslink	12	50%	18	78%	28%
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	75%	21	71%	-4%
Northern Rail	31	19%	52	69%	50%
First TransPennine Express	10	50%	16	69%	19%
Southeastern	16	88%	27	67%	-21%
TfL Rail	11	9%	10	60%	51%
Great Western Railway	25	60%	41	54%	-6%
Virgin Trains West Coast	13	77%	18	50%	-27%
London Overground #	14	21%	18	50%	29%
Merseyrail	12	8%	27	48%	40%
South West Trains	17	35%	38	45%	10%
Chiltern Railways	11	82%	19	42%	-40%
c2c	12	67%	18	39%	-28%
All non-station managing TOCs *#	16	50%	32	59%	9%
Total	**340**	**45%**	**537**	**67%**	**22%**

includes GTR Gatwick Express, CrossCountry, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Heathrow Express

 # the following TOCs' 2017 results include some answers given on their behalf by staff of other TOCs: GTR Southern (1 answer), London Overground (1), All non-station managing TOCs (10).

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The two TOCs whose results for this aspect of the enquiry were poorest in 2017, were also those whose performance declined the most. Chiltern Railways' score fell by 40% (from 82% to 42%) in 2017, whereas c2c's result dropped 28% (from 67% to 39%).

4   Correctly advised how to make a claim

Correctly advising how to make a claim continued to be the most successful element of the enquiry, although the number of TOCs achieving a 100% result on this aspect fell from twelve in 2016 to seven this year.

The three lowest scoring TOCs in 2017 all saw their results decline from 100% last year: GTR Thameslink (-28% to 72%), London Overground (-17% to 83%) and Southeastern (-15% to 85%).

Correctly advised how to make a claim					
	2016 base	**2016 yes %**	**2017 base**	**2017 yes %**	**Variance**
Virgin Trains East Coast	17	100%	14	100%	0%
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	100%	21	100%	0%
Abellio ScotRail	30	93%	47	100%	7%
East Midland Trains	10	90%	16	100%	10%
TfL Rail	11	100%	10	100%	0%
c2c	12	100%	18	100%	0%
Chiltern Railways	11	100%	19	100%	0%
Great Western Railway	25	100%	41	98%	-2%
South West Trains	17	82%	38	97%	15%
London Midland	16	100%	26	96%	-4%
Arriva Trains Wales	24	83%	39	95%	12%
GTR Great Northern	11	91%	17	94%	3%
Northern Rail	31	94%	52	94%	0%
Virgin Trains West Coast	13	100%	18	94%	-6%
GTR Southern #	16	81%	23	91%	10%
Merseyrail	12	100%	27	89%	-11%
First TransPennine Express	10	90%	16	88%	-2%
Southeastern	16	100%	27	85%	-15%
London Overground #	14	100%	18	83%	-17%
GTR Thameslink	12	100%	18	72%	-28%
All non-station managing TOCs *#	16	94%	32	97%	3%
Total	**340**	**95%**	**537**	**94%**	**-1%**

* includes GTR Gatwick Express, CrossCountry, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Heathrow Express

 # the following TOCs' 2017 results include some answers given on their behalf by staff of other TOCs: GTR Southern (1 answer), London Overground (1), All non-station managing TOCs (10).

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5 Full & accurate explanation provided of the arrangements and conditions for claiming compensation

In terms of providing a full and accurate explanation of the conditions and arrangements for claiming compensation, i.e. providing the mystery shopper with accurate information in respect of all four of the above pieces of information, GTR Great Northern came out on top, improving their result by 20% compared with last year, to 65% in 2017. Other TOCs providing a full explanation in at least half of mystery shopper enquiries were Virgin Trains East Coast (57%), GTR Thameslink (56%), London Midland (54%), Abellio Greater Anglia (52%) and Abellio ScotRail (51%).

Full & accurate explanation provided of conditions and arrangements for claiming compensation (i.e. all 4 elements correctly advised)					
	2016 Base	2016 Yes %	2017 Base	2017 Yes %	Variance
GTR Great Northern	11	45%	17	65%	20%
Virgin Trains East Coast	17	53%	14	57%	4%
GTR Thameslink	12	42%	18	56%	14%
London Midland	16	25%	26	54%	29%
Abellio Greater Anglia	16	56%	21	52%	-4%
Abellio ScotRail	30	27%	47	51%	24%
First TransPennine Express	10	20%	16	44%	24%
Northern Rail	31	6%	52	42%	36%
East Midland Trains	10	30%	16	38%	8%
Southeastern	16	69%	27	33%	-36%
GTR Southern #	16	38%	23	30%	-8%
TfL Rail	11	0%	10	30%	30%
Arriva Trains Wales	24	25%	39	26%	1%
c2c	12	58%	18	22%	-36%
Virgin Trains West Coast	13	62%	18	22%	-40%
Great Western Railway	25	20%	41	22%	2%
Merseyrail	12	0%	27	19%	19%
South West Trains	17	18%	38	16%	-2%
Chiltern Railways	11	55%	19	11%	-44%
London Overground #	14	0%	18	6%	6%
All non-station managing TOCs *#	16	19%	32	25%	6%
Total	**340**	**30%**	**537**	**34%**	**4%**

* includes GTR Gatwick Express, CrossCountry, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Heathrow Express

\# the following TOCs' 2017 results include some answers given on their behalf by staff of other TOCs: GTR Southern (1 answer), London Overground (1), All non-station managing TOCs (10).

London Overground, who failed to provide a full explanation to any shoppers in 2016, were again at the bottom of the TOC list, providing full and accurate information to just 6% of mystery shoppers.

Chiltern Railways, one of the better performing TOCs overall last year, saw their result decline by 44% to 11% in 2017.