

YOUNG PEOPLE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

REPORT

January 2015

Background

In February 2013, as part of 11 Million Takeover Day (Now Children's Commissioner Takeover Day) members of Rotherham Youth Cabinet presented their findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board following their research into issues highlighted by young people around experiences incurred whilst using public transport.

In December 2014, Councillor Read, the Chair of Improving Places Select Commission, requested an update on current issues experienced by young people to ascertain if anything has changed over the last two years.

Consultation

To gain a current insight into what it's like being a young person using public transport, in particular Rotherham Interchange, four different groups were consulted in early January 2015. They were:

- Rotherham Youth Cabinet
- Looked After Children's Council
- Rush House
- LGBT Group

Young people were asked:

1. What experiences are young people having in Rotherham Interchange – positive and negative
2. How can young people can be involved in influencing decisions concerning transport.
3. How can safety be improved for young people waiting at passenger interchanges, especially late in the evening.

Responses

Young people said things that were positive in the Interchange were:

- Some young people felt there was more security (guards)
- It's a good place to meet friends
- Customer Services and staff are very helpful and polite
- Good information available
- A young person did work experience at Interchange and feels more confident since doing this as he knows how the security works and where to go for help.

When asked for negative experiences of using the Interchange, responses included:

Toilets

All four groups highlighted having to pay for toilets as an issue and some felt this could create further antisocial behaviour by encouraging people to urinate in the street or other public place. Comments included:

- Having to pay for the toilets, this is extortionate and should be free.
- Tax monies have already paid for them, why should we pay twice?
- Also 20p is too much and could cause negative repercussions i.e. people urinating in the street. If you have two or more children the cost can be prohibitive.
- When a young woman with her nephew in a pram asked for the key she was questioned why she needed it?
- Have seen people urinating into the river so they didn't have to pay

Behaviour

Again all four groups gave examples of antisocial behaviour they had witnessed within the Interchange and discussed how this made them feel. Some of the group did state that they felt the threats from people were perceived rather than experienced, but behaviour of others using the Interchange does impact on how safe they feel when using it. Some examples from young people were:

- People drinking beer and nobody stops them
- People don't listen to loud speaker about drinking or smoking
- Kids on bikes don't listen when they are told to come off them
- Behaviour eg smoking
- Weirdos looking at you / smack heads

- People approach you, make you feel uncomfortable
- Drunks ask for money and cigarettes – two regular ones always there
- Happens any time of day – day and night
- Been asked for money
- Been told by someone they need to raise £5 to get to Salvation Army (more than once by same person)
- Young person says she just puts her head down and walks quickly and tries to shut it out.
- ‘Shady’ groups of adults and young people make young people feel unsafe and they will walk around the interchange rather than through it to avoid them

Staff

Although there were some positive comments about staff, some young people also identified some negatives. Responses from these young people were:

- May not be enough staff at night
- Don't see security guards
- The staff who acts as security are slow to react, look really unfit
- Not much visual signs of workers present
- Had a bad experience of a rude member of staff when asked for help

Services

Although the main focus of the discussions were around experiences within the Interchange and Town Centre, some young people gave examples of experiences on public transport. Two of these highlighted were:

- Buses are late and don't always stop (on bus routes) this makes us feel more vulnerable while waiting.
- People arguing on buses – makes young people feel uncomfortable and the driver didn't do anything to stop this.

Young people also said that they don't know how to complain if things go wrong or they are unhappy with a situation.

Interchange Building

When young people discussed the Interchange Building itself, some stated that it was a very cold place but realise there is not much that can be done with this.

During 11 Million Takeover Day Youth Cabinet members recommended that seats were turned round to face oncoming people as they felt this would make people feel

safer. They were told that this would be done, but young people say that it didn't happen.

Young people said that as the Interchange gets very crowded and there are signs about pickpockets, it makes them worried it will happen to them, although some young people would rather have it crowded than quiet as they feel safer.

Many young people said that they had not noticed any changes or improvements over the last year.

Suggestions

When young people were asked for ideas of how they could have a more positive experience and feel safer when using public transport, in particular Rotherham Interchange, young people suggested the following:

Information

- Information points – add an interactive board
- Have electronic timetable at every bus stop
- Have clearer notices about Wi-Fi - not clear about prices

Safety and Security

- More guards – one coming up and one coming down through the Interchange
- Update Cameras
- Some police presence at night. Just to walk about every hour.
- Promote positive behaviour via posters
- More staff at night.
- CCTV monitored panic buttons which make very loud noise.
- Have bus conductors on buses which will make people feel safer – especially school buses
- Cardboard cut-outs of Police like they have in shops
- Keep drunks away from the Interchange and regular drunks to be banned from area,
- A complaints procedure via internet
- Buses come on time as waiting longer makes people feel more unsafe, especially in rural areas

The majority of young people consulted felt that things hadn't improved when using public transport or Rotherham Interchange.

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