



2023

# YOUNG PEOPLE - THE CHAMPIONS OF RAIL

1,000 IDEAS TO FUTUREPROOF THE RAIL INDUSTRY

**STARTUP  
SHERPAS.**

**LNER** LONDON  
NORTH  
EASTERN  
RAILWAY

# CONTENTS

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>MEET THE SUPERSQUAD</b>                   | <b>PAGE 3</b>  |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                     | <b>PAGE 4</b>  |
| <b>LNER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                | <b>PAGE 7</b>  |
| <b>HOW THE SQUAD WORKS</b>                   | <b>PAGE 9</b>  |
| Our asynchronous e-doing innovation platform | Page 9         |
| The power of Squad sourcing                  | Page 10        |
| Diversity and inclusion are our strength     | Page 11        |
| <b>THE FOUR WINNING IDEAS</b>                | <b>PAGE 12</b> |
| Office on Rails                              | Page 13        |
| Safe Spaces for All                          | Page 19        |
| Wifi: A New Price Tiering                    | Page 26        |
| Gamified Loyalty                             | Page 31        |
| <b>WHAT NEXT?</b>                            | <b>PAGE 37</b> |
| <b>THE IDEA CATALOGUE</b>                    | <b>PAGE 38</b> |
| <b>WHO WE ARE - THE FOUNDING SHERPAS</b>     | <b>PAGE 50</b> |
| <b>WHAT WE DO - OUR CAPABILITIES</b>         | <b>PAGE 51</b> |
| <b>THANK YOU</b>                             | <b>PAGE 52</b> |

# MEET THE SQUAD

## EMILY, 15

Emily is from Armadale, near Edinburgh, and this Squad was her first programme with Startup Sherpas. First time and came away with the winning idea!! Emily enjoys playing netball, going to musicals, eating out (particularly Italian!), going for walks in the countryside and crocheting. Emily was invited to talk at the LNER FutureLabs event and confidently pitched her idea to the audience from the rail industry. What an achievement for a first time Sherpee.



## GEORGE, 14

George was born in Ireland but moved to South East London when he was 3. He has a strong entrepreneurial mindset and has set up an "odd job" business with his friends, supporting the community with any jobs people need doing. Outside of school and running his business, he enjoys sports, in particular rugby. George also pitched his idea at the LNER FutureLabs event and was keen to network with everyone there, most probably searching out the next idea for a business!



## AHMED-TAHA RADI, 15

Ahmed-taha is Moroccan, but born and bred in East London. He can speak three languages: French, English and Arabic. He loves baking, cooking, reading and playing badminton. Ahmed-taha was a Squad Leader on the LNER Squad, supporting 10 of his peers to complete the missions. Ahmed-taha brings energy and fun to every group he works with.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BY HUGO, CO-FOUNDER, STARTUP SHERPAS

Welcome to our report in collaboration with LNER: Young people: the champions of rail. In it, we showcase teenage creativity and demonstrate that they can tackle hard business challenges and come up with innovative new models to get young people on to trains and make the industry fit for the future.

Gen Z and Gen Alpha are the newest and next generation of passengers. They are living in a world that's very unlike any previous generation and assuming we know how they think or what they want would be a mistake. Who better to help prepare the industry for the future than future customers themselves?

We created a SuperSquad of 150 teenagers aged 13 to 18 (the youngest members of Gen Z) living in locations close to LNER lines, and challenged them to tell us how they would be the champions of rail. They excelled, showing us what matters to them and coming up with a final database of 1,000+ ideas for a train service that would attract and excite them.

Gen Z was born between 1996 and 2010 (some say 2012) and their identity is shaped by the pandemic, lockdowns, the digital world, climate anxiety and economic crises. Some of the things they care about are mental health, finances, individualism, sustainability, diversity, racial justice, inclusivity, gender identity, equity, experiences and choosing brands with purpose.



HUGO



Gen Alpha was born in or after 2010, so the oldest turn 13 this year. They care about helping people, looking after the planet, family health and equal treatment. They're already money conscious, more socially aware at this age than any previous generation and become consumers more quickly.

Organisations that do the work to understand who our young people are and what they care about will have the advantage. We also have to talk directly and specifically to them, in ways they relate to; they'll quickly see through it if it's not authentic.

In this report we showcase the SuperSquad's top four ideas, as voted for by them. They are:

- Office on Rails. Designated office carriages to work, study and revise. [Page 13]
- Safe Spaces for All. Teenager-only carriages, to travel in safety. [Page 19]
- Wifi - A New Price Tiering. Three types of tickets - a new tiering for rail travel. [Page 26]
- Rail Rewards. A gamified loyalty scheme with discounts and partnerships. [Page 31]

For each idea, we look at why it matters to young people; why it matters to LNER; why it matters to the industry; responses from LNER directors; and suggested next steps for the organisation to take. There is much to be positive about when it comes to attracting teens to trains.

The romance of train travel is alive in young people; they have an untarnished view of rail. Our Squad sees trains as a safe mode of transport, second only to

walking. Sustainability is one of the issues Gen Z cares about the most and they know that trains have far lower emissions than travelling by plane or car.

The signs are also encouraging for LNER. Journey numbers are now higher than pre-pandemic. In the first quarter of 2023 and the year to 31st March 2023, these were 11% and 10% higher respectively than the same periods pre-pandemic - one of only four operators who have achieved this.

The network as a whole, including the long distance sector, can't say the same. The sector recorded 119 million passenger journeys in the year to 31st March 2023, which is 86% of the 139 million in the year prior to the pandemic.

Across the network no metrics have recovered to pre-pandemic levels. For the year to 31st March 2023, annual passenger numbers were 83%, at 1.4 billion journeys compared with 1.7 billion. Total passenger revenue was only 72% (when adjusted for inflation) and passenger kilometres per journey were 80%.

So, while the need and the appetite for long-distance travel have returned somewhat over the past two years, there is a lot more to do to fill a hole of 0.3 billion journeys. It's imperative to go full steam ahead to encourage more people back on to trains, and more often. In the biggest change to the industry for 25 years, the government is proposing a new public body, Great British Railways, that would bring the network under a single, national leadership. The proposal, set out in The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, identifies three of the key problems with the current network as:

- The rail sector too often loses sight of its customers.
- It is missing opportunities to meet the needs of the communities it serves.
- It struggles to innovate.

Our young people's four initiatives address all of these points.

First, they all put a defined customer group, young people, front and centre. Office on rails can attract business travellers as well as students. Tiered wifi tickets give all customers a choice, personal to their usage.

Second, each idea fulfils an opportunity to serve a customer group's very specific needs, such as secure and inclusive carriages that encourage independent travel and build young people's confidence, or using gamification and discounts – both very important to teenagers – to make the train more affordable, attract them on board and lock in loyalty from a young age.

Third, they tick the innovation box, showing that LNER is committed to pioneering solutions to these network problems. They would show the industry that innovation is possible when the customer is placed at the heart of it, the newest and next customers in particular, and that – as you will see in the report – not all innovation needs to be lengthy and costly.

We have been delighted to partner with LNER, a forward-thinking organisation which shares our view that, whatever the next steps are from this, young people must be part of it.

If you want to innovate, you need the truth about what customers really want, and that's what you get with young people. They give their ideas without preconceptions about what is and isn't possible or a 'yes, but we tried that before' attitude.

Honesty is the foundation for successful innovation, and this is often the innovation you cannot do immediately. This report supports that – with ideas that can be tested relatively easily, as well as long-term, industry-wide innovation on train design and pricing.

I invite you to read this report with a beginner's mindset of curiosity; no 'yes, but...!' It's the closest thing we could create to a time machine into the future. Hop on board!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugo Pickford Wardle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# INDUSTRY VIEW

**BY DAVID HORNE,  
MANAGING DIRECTOR,  
LNER**

I am really proud of LNER's collaboration with Startup Sherpas. It's fantastic that we've been able to gather insight from young people, representing Generation Z and Generation Alpha, as they will be our future customers and employees.

**This project served as an invaluable opportunity to tap into their creativity and fresh perspectives.**

What's heartening is how quickly the participants identified the important role that rail travel will have in the future. Even though, for some of the participants, it was their first journey with LNER or indeed on any train, they quickly understood the unique part that rail travel can play in sustainable mobility and identified exciting innovations which will make a difference for our future passengers.

Equally, I'm proud that LNER contributed directly into the teenage economy through this initiative - indeed, this programme is unique in that it pays the students who take part. As well as being the right thing to do, it also helps to ensure the project has a far greater reach and diversity of applicants. In addition to



remunerating the teenagers, the project supported them in developing innovation and entrepreneurial skills. At LNER, we are committed to being a Responsible Business, focusing on three core pillars: Better for People, Better for Places, and Better for the Planet. Within these pillars, we aim to champion diversity and inclusion, provide training opportunities for young individuals, and promote rail as a sustainable mode of transportation.

Our collaborative project with Startup Sherpas, and the involvement of teenagers, aligns perfectly with these goals and helps us in our aim to engage young people with rail. An essential aspect of our industry's ongoing growth and transformation is to ensure that young people continue to choose trains over other modes of transport for years to come and consider a career in the rail industry - especially in roles where there are skills shortages.

One of the most thought-provoking aspects of this project is the wealth of insights it has provided us, regarding what matters most to young people in relation to rail travel, as well as their innovative ideas to make it even better.

Among the hundreds of ideas generated, the themes of safety, accessibility and sustainability stood out prominently. Safety remains our top priority at LNER and within the industry - and we take pride in our outstanding safety record.

Accessibility is another key focus as we endeavour to make rail travel more accessible for all and, as we know, travelling by train is the most environmentally friendly mode of motorised transit available.

**It's also interesting that young people place great importance on creating experiences - with interesting ideas for pop-up events and activities, or customisation both on and off the train. Travelling by train can play a big part in experiences and it has significant potential to do more.**

Gamification emerged as a recurring theme, highlighting its importance to young people. This is a concept we are eager to delve into further, and we're exploring the opportunity to assemble a dedicated SuperSquad to focus on this theme.

We're also investigating running a SuperSquad on talent and how to attract young people to a career in rail, as the UK sector will face a critical skills shortage by 2025 as detailed in [this article](#).

Our collaboration with Startup Sherpas has provided the invaluable opportunity to see the future of rail from the perspective of teenagers - our future customers and employees - and to understand their preferences and priorities. Some of their ideas are currently not possible for us to explore for practical reasons, but they can all be a catalyst for starting important cross-industry conversations about bigger themes. We can be instrumental in bringing the industry together to shape a future where rail travel remains not only relevant but also exciting and accessible to all.



QUANT RESEARCH.

PERSONA CREATION.

CHALLENGE IMMERSION.

BUILD CONFIDENCE.

MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN.

TEAM COLLABORATION.

CREATIVE THINKING.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS.

# HOW WE GOT 150 DIVERSE TEENAGERS INNOVATING

## OUR E-DOING INNOVATION PLATFORM – BITESIZE AND ASYNCHRONOUS

Our secret sauce is our unique innovation methodology called Step-by-Step. We use 25-minute time-boxed missions, each broken down into step-by-step instructions. All the work is uploaded back to the platform for analysis and tracking.

This approach provides a manageable workload for the young people, and the flexibility to fit in the work around their studies and extra-curricular activities.

**40% of the Squad completed the work purely on mobile - perhaps a preview into the future of work**

## 42 UNIQUE TOOLS

Innovation must itself innovate to ensure that we are supporting our innovators in the best way possible. We do this in many ways on the SuperSquad.

Our Step-by-Step methodology contains 42 tools that we invented as we codified the innovation process. We created specific tools to help young people understand Idea Mechanics: Octopus Ideas, Octo-my Ideas, and Idea Poems are just a few of those tools.

## UNIQUE GEN-TO-GEN CUSTOMER RESEARCH

Another unique technique that we use is gen-to-gen research. Our Squad is made up of teenagers, the youngest end of Gen Z, but the target customer is a mix of their own age as well as older - the rest of Gen Z (early twenties). There is an honesty that comes from this gen-to-gen approach that's not seen in traditional customer research techniques.

# SQUAD SOURCING

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF 150 DIVERSE TEENS

The Squad is a very different environment to corporate innovation. We are working with 150 teenagers from across the UK, all with their own schedules and commitments. Much of the work is done individually and asynchronously.

So, how do we get them to collaborate, and bring their talents and diverse thinking together to amplify their ideas even more? Well, in the final week, we unexpectedly shake things up.

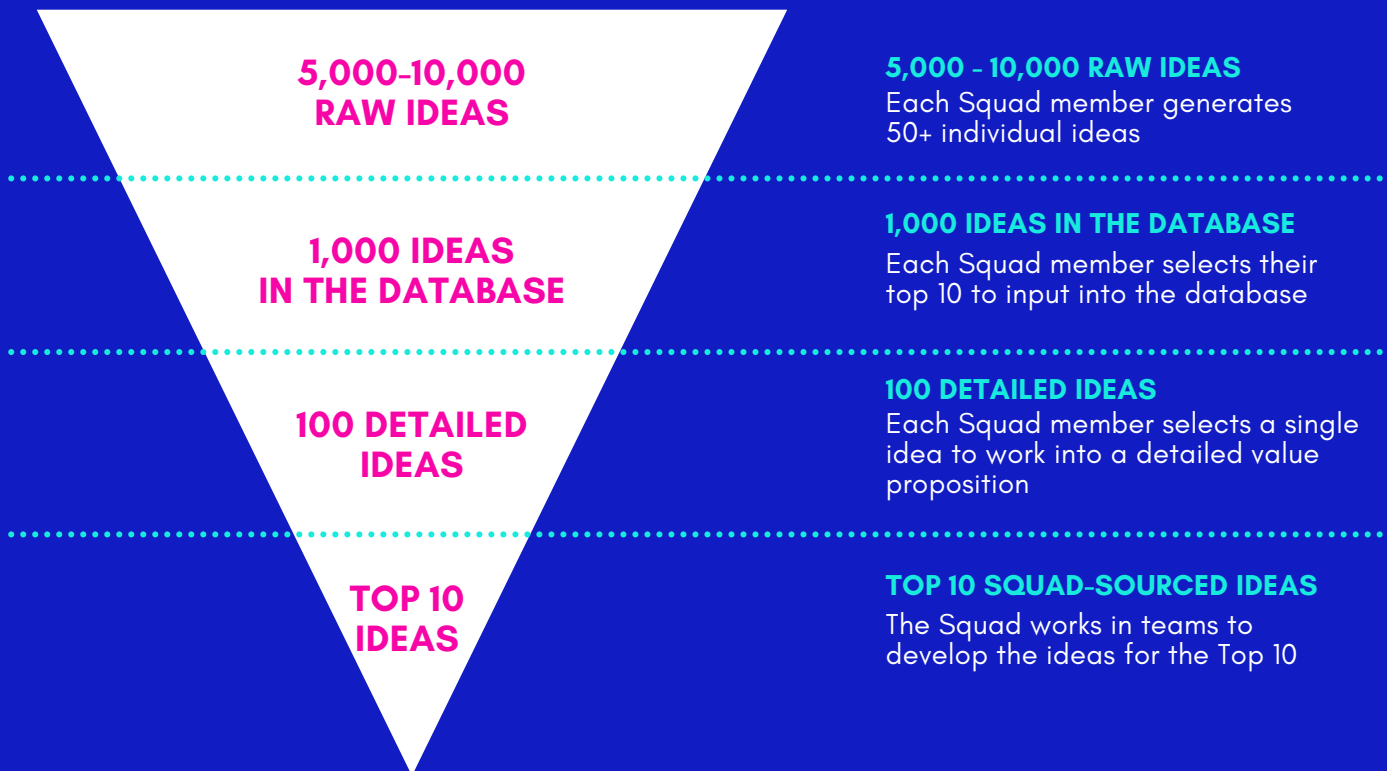
At that point, they have chosen a single idea, they have brought it to life,

and polished it to make it the best version of itself. Then, without warning, we tell them to give their idea to the group, essentially abandoning it and adopting everyone else's ideas. Tough? You bet!

After the shock, they love building on each other's ideas. They're curious, ask questions, add features, change the names and give the brand a new look.

The ideas then belong to the Squad. Collective ownership allows for impartial voting and the Squad raise the best 10 to the top.

**"I loved being part of a group and exchanging ideas, especially because they provided perspectives I hadn't thought of before."**



# DIVERSITY IS OUR STRENGTH

ELSIE

ROLE MODEL FOR  
DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

BESMALAH

WE ALL NEED "ARTHUR  
IDEAS" IN OUR LIFE!

AHMED-TAHA

FOUNDER  
AT 13

YO-YO

CURRENTLY WRITING  
A MUSICAL

USMAN

HARRY

KAITLYN

AUTISM AS  
A SUPERPOWER



# CHAMPIONS OF RAIL THE TOP FOUR THEMES



# OFFICE ON RAILS

## DESIGNATED OFFICE CARRIAGES TO WORK, STUDY AND REVISE

Out of more than 1,000 initial ideas from the Squad, this won the final vote by a mile. Usually two or three ideas come within a few votes of each other, but this got twice the votes of any other idea, voted for by 64% of the Squad. We've never had this before.

The idea came from Emily, who said: "I take trains regularly, both long and short distances, and I notice something every time. Many young people, especially older teens, are trying to work or study but are struggling due to the noise and are juggling with their laptop, folders and notes on the small desk and their lap. They don't have space - or peace. Normal carriages just aren't suitable."

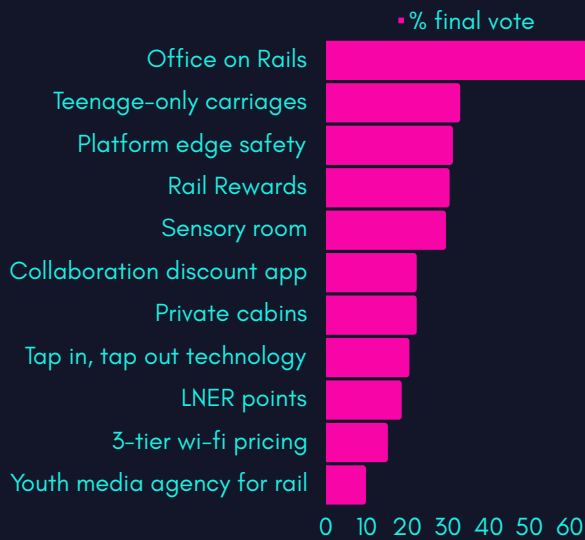
An Office on Rails ticket gives access to pleasing study spaces in designated carriages. These are equipped with larger

tables, laptop/book stands, flexible mini lamps and LNER notebooks. There are vending machines on board "full of stationery goodies" where books, pens, highlighters and other supplies (and biscuits!) can be purchased.

This solves the difficulties young people have when working, studying or doing homework on the train. It helps them to focus on their work, with all essential resources provided, contributing to stress-free travel and a productive journey. The laptop stand also improves people's posture, and is useful for workers having Zoom calls whilst on the train.

'Yes, and ...' ideas from other Squad members are drinks holders, "because you need to stay hydrated when revising", headphones with a playlist especially selected for studying, and window blinds to block out distractions.

Emily's slogan is: Work not shirk - study in your cubby. She says: "It just makes studying on a train a lot better!"



## Why is it important to young people?

Young people's first experience of long-distance rail travel is often when they leave home to go to college or university. LNER routes serve more than 20 university cities, from London in the south of England to Aberdeen in the north of Scotland, including in between Sheffield, York, Nottingham, Newcastle, Dundee and Edinburgh. Students expect to have good facilities to work in when travelling between the two.

At work, as digital natives and COVID school/work adaptors, being tied 100% to an office is completely foreign to young people. They expect hybrid working to be part of their future and to be able to plug in anywhere. Office on Rails gives this generation a train experience that's fit for purpose in this new era; what they need to travel, work and thrive between dual or multiple locations.

## Why is it important to LNER?

As a long-distance rail route connecting major business hubs such as London, Leeds and Edinburgh, and serving multiple universities, Office on Rails is a chance

for LNER to develop a unique and exciting new experience to attract customers and stand out among rail companies. By starting to build the journey of the future now, LNER would become the pioneer and expert in designated work carriages.

While small tables or pull-down tables on the backs of seats may work for shorter commutes, long-distance business travel and home/university trips are a very different experience, with three, five or more hours spent on the train. Rather than something to be endured, these journeys would become productive, even welcomed as an opportunity for head-down time preparing for the next essay conference, presentation or client meeting at the other end.

Winning young people's hearts and minds with services designed especially for their needs can help to turn them into long-term customers.

Stimulating business travel is one of LNER's five big challenges and the company is not content for this sector to recover slowly. LNER wants the industry to be active in hyper-stimulating business journeys. Office on Rails would be an incentive for organisations to get moving, enjoy rail and return to doing business face-to-face.

Since 2020 the list of spaces used by office workers has grown to include office, home office, kitchen table, garden, coffee shop, local library, co-working space, hotel lobby and member's club.

With Office on Rails, we could add LNER long-distance trains to that list. Plus, no more skiving off on Friday afternoons while keeping half a guilty eye on Slack! People could comfortably work

en route to a weekend with family or friends or a city break and arrive in time for pre-dinner drinks.

Likewise on the Sunday evening return, people can get a headstart on Monday morning by catching up on emails, pre-reads and work-related articles in peace, away from the madding crowds.

Business and leisure trips are no longer as separate as they once were, with work being done on trips classed as leisure. Rightly or wrongly, Monday to Friday is no longer as boundaried as it was; for example, Sunday evening is a high usage time for LinkedIn.

## **Why is it important to the industry?**

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail in 2021 stated that post-COVID, commuting and business travel may never be quite the same again.

It might not. It might be better – and we believe that with listening to the new and next generation, with bold ideas such as Office on Rails, it will be.

The long-distance sector as a whole recorded 30 million journeys in the last quarter of 2022, which is 85% of the 36 million journeys in the same quarter pre-pandemic. The number one reason why 53% of business travellers prefer rail, according to YouGov, is because they can work while travelling. Innovative, new services can help the long-distance sector get back to that pre-pandemic level and exceed it by becoming fit for the future.

There is a pressing environmental need for rail to win over long-distance travellers who are choosing domestic flights. The UK has committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 100% from

1990 levels by 2050. YouGov research showed that 49% of business travellers choose the train for environmental reasons, and 27% of people say the pandemic and its effects have motivated them to travel in a more environmentally friendly way.

On the London to Edinburgh route, there are encouraging signs. In April to August 2022, for the first time in decades, more than half of journeys (57%) were by train rather than plane. This is up from 35% pre-pandemic.

Business customers on this route even have a nickname: Willies (Work in London, Live in Edinburgh). Office on Rails would help to attract more of them, competing with the airport's workstations, free wifi and multiple power outlets, bringing them straight into the heart of London without the additional leg of taxis or shuttle buses.

France has taken an industry-leading decision to ban domestic short-haul flights on routes where the journey can be undertaken by train in 2.5 hours or less. Instead of waiting for legislation in the UK, let's create incentives now for business travellers to choose rail every time. Business travel train revenue in Q3 2022/23 was up 6% on the previous quarter, with 24 million business journeys (increasing to 25 million in Q4). It's a small share of total train travel revenue, though. In March, Suzanne Donnelly, Director of Passenger Revenue at the GBR Transition Team, said: "The final quarter of last year [2022] saw journey patterns begin to settle down as customers found a rhythm after the upheaval of the pandemic. We see plenty of opportunity to entice commuters and business travellers back, with simpler fares and the right products to meet customers' needs as they stand today."

# OFFICE ON RAILS

## DESIGNATED OFFICE CARRIAGES TO WORK, STUDY AND REVISE

By Emily Carson

Office on Rails is an add-on experience for purchase. It is aimed at those who have to study, work or catch up on homework! This exclusive ticket would include things like a larger desk to fit your laptop, folders and other notes/sheets, a mini lamp, a laptop stand and a special LNER notebook!



### Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

"Yes, and they could have the option to wear headphones that are given with a specially selected playlist of study songs."

"Yes, and the desks could have a drinks holder because you need to stay hydrated when studying/ revising."



## BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

Office on Rails! My idea is to create a suitable, pleasing study space in a designated carriage. This purchase would include things like a larger desk, LNER notebook, mini lamp and laptop stand. Another unique access is to the special stationery vending machine!

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

This is for young people who are revising, working or catching up on homework on the train. Customers who are maybe having to attend a work Zoom call could be enticed to purchase this uncommon benefit while travelling.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

I take trains regularly and I have noticed something every time. Many young people are trying to work or study and are struggling due to noise, and juggling their laptop and work on the small desk and their lap. Normal carriages and seats just aren't suitable.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

This helps because it lets customers experience stress-free travel, to just focus on their work! A vending machine allows people to buy essential stationery and supplies with a lightweight bag. The provided and available resources all contribute to a productive journey!



# VOICE OF THE (BUSINESS) PEOPLE

**BUSINESS  
TRAVELLERS  
ARE  
CHOOSING  
THE TRAIN...**

**82%**

WANT TO STAY  
PRODUCTIVE WHILE  
IN TRANSIT

**50%**

EASIER TO BE  
PRODUCTIVE THAN  
WITH AIR OR ROAD  
TRAVEL

**75%**

ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT IS LESS  
THAN AIR OR ROAD

**45%**

COMPANY COULD  
DO MORE TO  
SUPPORT  
RAIL TRAVEL

**50%**

MORE  
COMFORTABLE  
ENVIRONMENT FOR  
WORK

**48%**

QUIETER AND  
CALMER EXPERIENCE

**46%**

LESS WAITING  
AROUND

**51%**

MORE RELIABLE WIFI  
ACCESS

**87%**

IMPORTANT TO  
SUPPORT STAFF TO  
STAY PRODUCTIVE  
IN TRANSIT

**65%**

IMPORTANT TO  
MAKE MORE RAIL  
OPTIONS AVAILABLE  
TO STAFF

**68%**

COMPANY COULD  
DO MORE TO  
SUPPORT  
CORPORATE RAIL  
TRAVEL

Source: Trainline, 2022

## RELEVANT ARTICLES

LNER: [Railway to recovery](#): the future of business travel

POW: As France [bans short-haul flights](#), what should the future of domestic travel in the UK be?

ONS: [Understanding towns](#): structure of industry and travel-to-work areas

Channel 5 (YouTube): [How the railways created time](#)

UK Parliament: Mission zero: Independent [review of net zero](#)

City A.M.: Rail sees [popularity boost](#) as business travellers seek to avoid dead time

Kyodo News: Bullet train [office cars](#) launched in Japan

# SO WHAT?

## **CLAIRE ANSLEY, PEOPLE AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DIRECTOR**

It's encouraging that the SuperSquad view trains as a place to work. I've been told before by customers and colleagues that working on a train can inspire creativity and conversation and can help people come up with their best ideas!

Our business customers have been slow to return after the pandemic, with a shift to more flexible working and working from home, but it's interesting to read that younger generations view anywhere as a potential place to do meaningful work – including our trains!

To support customers using laptops on our services, our fold-down tables in standard class can be extended to perfectly fit them, and each seat in first class has a table. We also offer free wifi on all LNER services in both standard class and first class.

It's great that the SuperSquad are interested in LNER merchandise like notebooks and pens – this is something we could consider selling at our Café Bar or via our at-seat ordering service, if there was enough demand for it – we do also sell biscuits on board!

Our stations also have the potential to be utilised for work purposes. We have developed a future LNER station vision to provide a welcoming space that meets the needs for all our customers and colleagues. The space could include more

places to work – giving people flexibility to use our stations as a meeting place, do work, or to carry out meetings before or after catching a train, or, potentially, if they're not travelling at all! We want our stations to be the hub of a community, offering more than just a transactional experience.

## **LINDA WAIN, ENGINEERING DIRECTOR**

I often get asked about making changes to trains. Many people assume it is a simple process, but it's a little more complex! We lease the trains from Agility, they are maintained by Hitachi, and are still under contract to the DfT, so all parties need to agree and work together to make any change happen. Although we have a good working relationship with all of our partners, significant changes to the inside of our trains would require more strategic and long-term thinking.

However, we may be able to move towards Emily's idea in a simpler way. We already have a 'Quieter Coach' on our trains and could make it more work place compatible with booking opportunities on certain services. The fact that this idea was voted so highly by the other SuperSquad members shows how important this is to future generations. I would like to think this could spark some cross-industry conversations about the future of rail travel, and how train design plays a big part in creating these experiences and environments for teenagers, and other customers to work in.



# SAFE SPACES FOR ALL

## TEENAGE-ONLY CARRIAGES, TO TRAVEL IN SAFETY

This idea, from George, is for teenage-only carriages on trains, on both long and short distances. The carriages are for young people who are independent enough to travel by themselves but still need to feel safe and protected.

Fun, safety and diversity are the key benefits of the carriages. Young people can travel more often, see new places and have more adventures. They can feel safe, with less risk of being made uncomfortable by who is around them. They can visit new places to experience different areas and cultures. The carriages can also encourage diverse teens, who may not feel comfortable in the general carriages, making the train a

38

### IDEAS IN OUR SQUAD DATABASE

safe space where their diversity and differences are accepted and welcomed.

'Yes, and ...' ideas from other Squad members included a discounted ticket for these carriages, and adding calming and stress-relieving features.

George says: "This idea will create and unlock unlimited adventures for teenagers my age and up to 18 to have fun and enjoy our lives. We can embrace different cultures. I can go all the way from London up to Scotland on the train, which is crazy!"

## Why is it important to young people?

Safety is an important factor in George's idea. He talked about how easily an adult could take a child off a train on a pretext and feels that travelling alone can be dangerous for a young person. When a stranger sits next to a child it can make them feel uncomfortable. He says he's seen that and wants his idea to change this.

When we asked our SuperSquad about train safety (e.g. likelihood of an accident) and personal safety, 18% were worried about their personal safety and 37.5% were worried about both. That's more than half of our teenagers worried about their personal safety when travelling by train.

Almost 10% feel personally unsafe on public transport 'always' or 'most of the time' and 52% agreed that 'I am alert at all times when I travel'.

Teenage-only carriages would be a safe space - not just free from the chance of an unknown adult sitting next to them, but safe for diverse groups, such as those with visible and non-visible disabilities, different ethnicities and religions, LGBTIQ+ teens, and invisible differences, such as neurodivergence.

Gen Alpha are the most diverse generation yet. They care about all people being treated fairly, no matter what they look like. Multiculturalism is a given and they're growing up with shifting ideas of gender and identity - unlike older generations, who grew up in a different milieu.

As they go out on their own into a world where not perhaps everyone feels the same, teenage-only carriages would be a safe space where diverse groups can all feel accepted and comfortable.

Confidence built in these spaces will help young travellers to ultimately transition to feeling safe in public spaces on the rail network.

Lastly, more fun and adventures - LNER goes to 57 destinations up and down the UK, giving access to hundreds of leisure activities, places of interest, weekend breaks, all of London's museums and galleries, and a long list of towns and cities with tons of rich history to explore.

## Why is it important to LNER?

Spending a significant period of their formative years in lockdown, with disruption to their schooling, has greatly affected teenagers, causing social isolation, health anxiety, loneliness, disrupted sleep, anxiety about leaving the house and risks to mental health.

A 2021 study by NHS Digital of 3,667 children aged 6 to 16, found that during the pandemic 40% experienced deterioration in mental health (and 22% say theirs improved). In another 2021 study of 11 and 12-year-olds, 44% reported an increase in depression since it began, and 26% in PTSD symptoms.

Many of the older Gen Z, who have now entered the workplace, lack skills such as communication and building relationships. Most bosses find Gen Z the most difficult people to work with. In life, many Gen Zers struggle to make and keep friends. It's important that the next group to enter

the workplace don't repeat this situation, and get the personal and social development they need to prepare them for adult life and employment.

What's this got to do with trains – specifically long-distance trains?

Travel and new experiences can expand young people's horizons and broaden their minds. They meet new people and create positive memories. It helps them to develop social skills; life skills, such as budgeting and planning a journey; cultural appreciation, confidence, independence, responsibility and the ability to adapt to new people and environments. Travel helps them learn and grow in multiple ways.

Doing this by train is the easiest way. It's more comfortable, roomy and planet-friendly than cars or flying. Teens don't have to navigate check-in or baggage drop-off/collection, they keep their cases with them, they can see the country and enjoy the scenery, and arrive straight into the destination city or town.

Teenage-only carriages would show that LNER is an operator that has thought about what teens need, and cares not only about their travel experiences, needs and safety, but also their development and well-being.

The carriages would show LNER's dedication to diversity and inclusion, with a service that caters specifically to the needs of young customers, representing them and engaging with them directly. It reflects LNER's investment in inclusion training and commitment to adapting offerings to meet the needs of diverse customer groups. It would support LNER's work with schools, enhancing its support for young people by providing a safe and inclusive space for them to travel.

Creating a space where young people of all backgrounds feel comfortable, valued and represented, would give them a sense of belonging. Ensuring that all passengers, regardless of age, can have a positive and inclusive experience when travelling with LNER aligns with the organisation's goal of ensuring that everyone can be themselves.

## **Why is it important for the industry?**

Compared with large, lengthy innovations that require major investment, this is a relatively easy win that can be introduced quickly and at low risk.

It doesn't require investment in rolling stock or infrastructure, but rather a smaller cost of fitting signage to existing carriages to delineate them plus exterior signposting. (Fixtures, such as the stress-relieving elements suggested by our Squad, can come later.) Even this could be done at a small scale initially to test the proposition.

The initial investment is in design and customer research – by creating an MVP to test on certain lines at certain times, learning from customers and honing the offering. A sub-brand would need to be created as this has to speak directly to the target audience. Today's teenagers are unlike previous generations and we can't assume we know them. The old rules don't apply. Popping a sticker on the train door and an A4 poster in a carriage won't be enough.

This needn't be a large, costly design process – and we already have ready-made focus groups. If young people feel safe and recognised on trains, it may help them choose the railway instead of cars or aeroplanes – and help the industry win customers for life. At 18, they simply step into the next carriage.

# TEENAGE-ONLY CARRIAGES

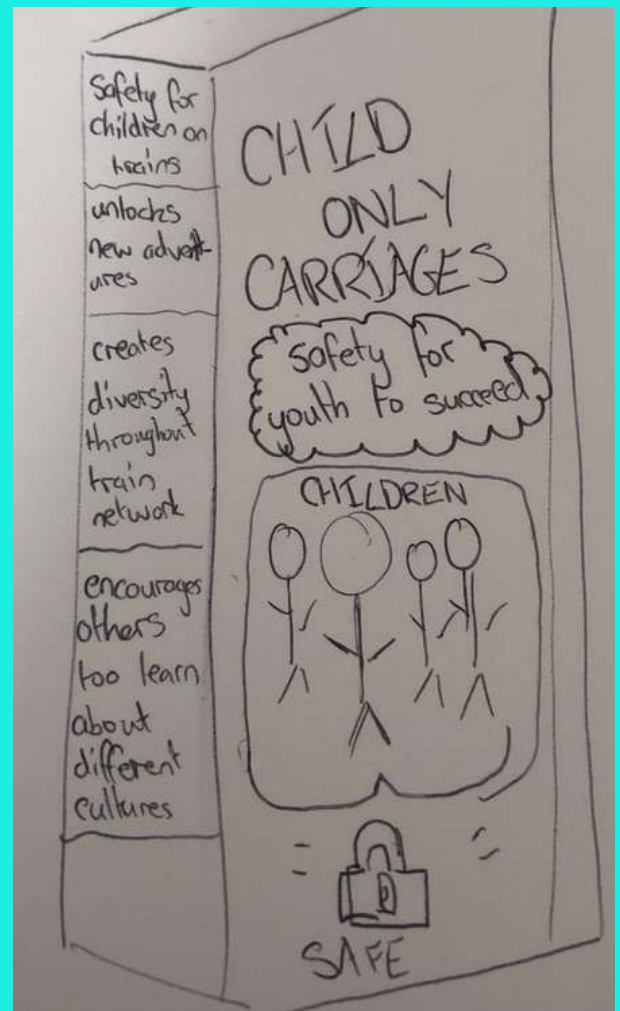
SAFER JOURNEYS.  
WILD ADVENTURES.

By George O'Brien

Helping teenagers travelling independently on trains to have a safe and comfortable experience. This would involve certain segments of the train to be zoned off for only under-18s, allowing for children to be protected from any dangers or threats they might face if they were seated with grown adults.

Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

"YES, AND IF TEENS ARE TRAVELLING WITH YOUNGER KIDS, THERE COULD BE A CHILDREN'S AREA TO PUT THEM IN SO THEY HAVE PRIVACY WHILST STILL OVERLOOKING THEM."



## BBQ PITCH

MY IDEA IS...

TO CREATE TEENAGE-ONLY TRAIN CARRIAGES ON LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS.

FOR THESE PEOPLE...

FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE INDEPENDENT ENOUGH TO GO ON JOURNEYS UNSUPERVISED BUT WHO STILL NEED PROTECTION FROM OTHER PEOPLE WHO COULD BE ON THE TRAIN.

I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

OF HOW EASILY AN ADULT CAN MANIPULATE A CHILD TO GET OFF THE TRAIN WITH THEM OR MAKE A CHILD FEEL VERY UNCOMFORTABLE BY GETTING IN THEIR PERSONAL SPACE.

THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

IT CREATES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR TEENS TO TRAVEL IN OVER LONG DISTANCES AND CAN MAKE MORE TEENS CHOOSE TRAINS OVER A MORE PRIVATE FORM OF TRAVEL.

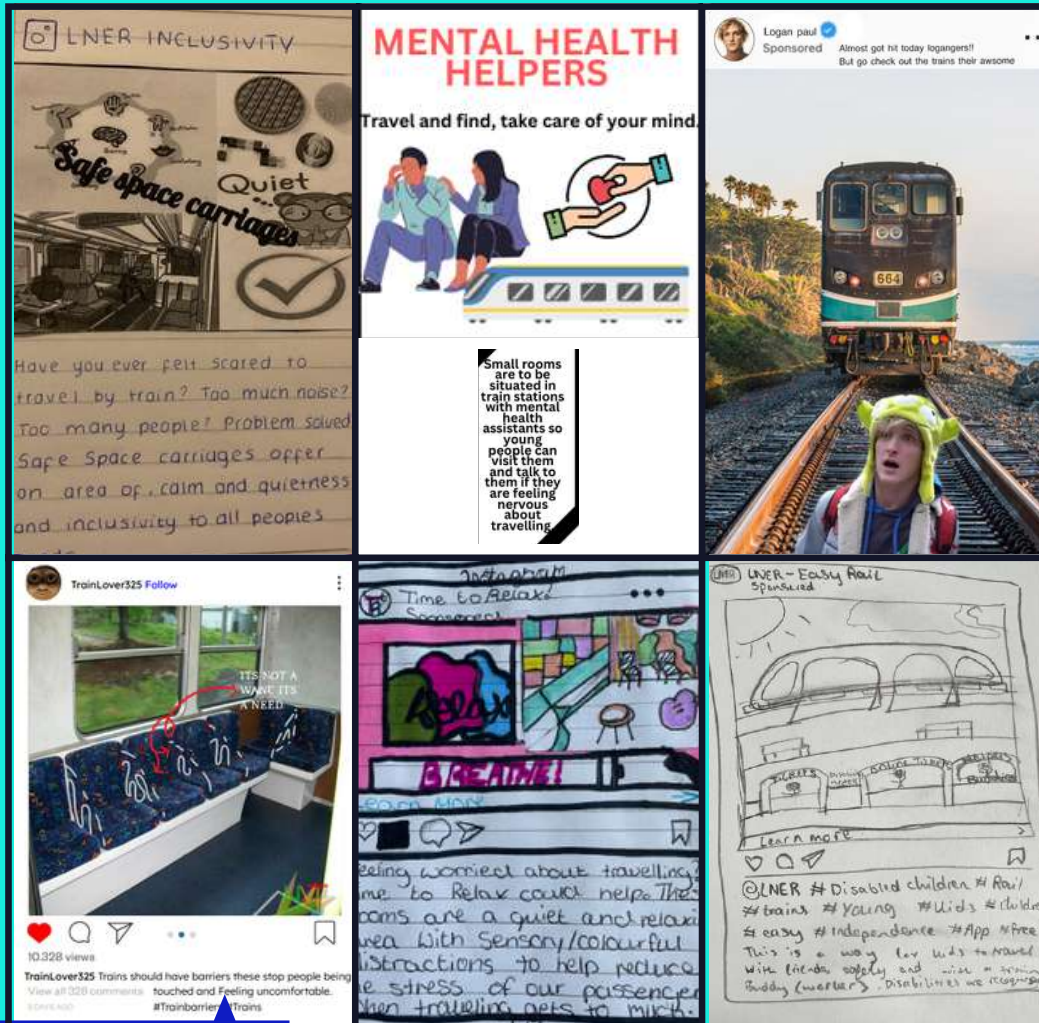
# SAFE SPACES FOR ALL

## A SAMPLE OF THE SQUAD'S IDEAS

Quiet, calming spaces and a focus on inclusivity.

Directly referencing some of the mental health challenges facing some people when they travel.

Creative awareness campaigns to ensure that young people know that trains are for them too.



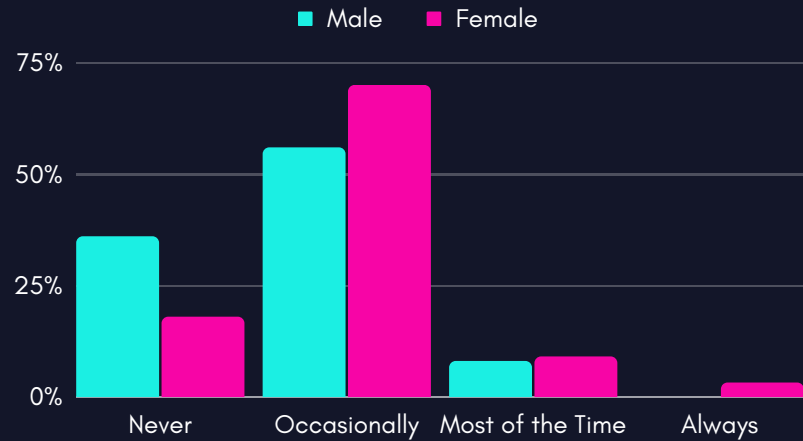
A number of ideas focused on physical space on the train. This one proposes separators between seats. Others suggested swivel seats so you could face any direction (maybe away from someone you don't want to interact with!).

Young people are aware of the benefits of sensory rooms for neuro-diverse young people. They have them in schools, it is time to get them in stations!

Recognising and adapting for disabilities is important for young people.

# HOW SAFE DO TEENS FEEL ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU PERSONALLY FEEL UNSAFE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT?



"I AM ALERT AT ALL TIMES WHEN I TRAVEL."

45%

MALE

59%

FEMALE

Source: Startup Sherpas, 006 Squad

## RELEVANT ARTICLES

King's College London: [How has COVID-19 impacted children and young people?](#)

Startups: [Is Gen Z the most difficult to work with? Bosses say yes.](#)

McKinsey: [What is diversity, equity and inclusion?](#)

Business Wire: [Gen Alpha: the most diverse generation yet.](#)

Forbes: [Mastering marketing strategies for Gen Alpha.](#)

Wunderman Thompson: [Inclusion's next wave.](#)

Mintel: [Three things brands need to know about marketing to Gen Z.](#)



# SO WHAT?

## WARRICK DENT, SAFETY AND OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

It's fantastic that the SuperSquad members want to travel by train and see it as an adventure! And it's clear from reading their ideas that safety, accessibility and inclusion are, quite rightly, very important to them. LNER and the rail industry's number one priority is safety. For many years we have really focused on the safety of our trains, stations and infrastructure, as well as the safety and well-being of our customers and employees. We take any reports of accidents, incidents and close calls extremely seriously, with each one investigated, actions put in place, if required, and lessons learnt. We also have a brilliant, collaborative relationship with the British Transport Police who play a big part in keeping our customers and employees safe day in, day out.

Of course, we want all customers to feel safe on our trains, no matter who they are or when they're travelling, but having a teenage-only carriage wouldn't necessarily make rail travel safer for teenagers as it could bring with it its own challenges.

We see it as important to take a holistic approach, supporting the safety of customers in many ways: with our colleagues in frontline roles always alert for any signs of distress or anything untoward; on the lookout for vulnerable people in our stations or on our trains, and always willing to step in if needed - the BTP being on hand along our route if we

need them to be present; and LNER investigating and acting on reports with the BTP, if needed.

If any teenagers do feel unsafe travelling on any of our trains or in our stations, I would encourage them to speak to any member of LNER staff (identified by their red and blue uniform, lanyard or name badge) who will be happy to support them and to report anything they feel is unsafe.

And, whilst it's great to see George's passion for rail travel and safety, it's not practically possible for us to dedicate a coach on our trains to teenager only. However, our staff are always available and, where possible, willing to find someone a space on the train where they can enjoy their journey. We also have our Platinum Group Booking service - if teenagers wanted to travel together to an event or on a trip, and, if the group is big enough, we can and do allocate a dedicated coach so everybody in the group can travel together.



# WIFI

## A NEW PRICE TIERING

### THREE TYPES OF TICKETS: A NEW TIERING FOR TRAIN TRAVEL

Connor's idea is for three tiers of train tickets, according to wifi access: regular (no wifi), pay-as-you-go, and unlimited wifi. These would suit different types of journeys, with unlimited being the most suitable for long journeys. People pay for what they want - and not for what they don't. It would cut down on the cost of mobile data or, if they don't have enough data left, mean they can still access the internet while in transit.

No wifi would be a slightly cheaper ticket than usual. Pay-as-you-go would be the same plus a cost for whatever level of wifi use the customer wants on their journey. Unlimited would be "a couple of quid extra".

24

WIFI IDEAS IN  
OUR SQUAD  
DATABASE

117

ENTERTAINMENT  
IDEAS

Another Squad member described this idea as "making the onboard experience more attractive to young people by having fully functioning superfast wifi, streaming services and gaming access". Forget first class and second class: the new tiering for the train journey of the future could be giga-class, mega-class and offline class.

## Why is it important to young people?

Data is precious for young people. Not all of them have access to unlimited data. We asked Squad members if they have unlimited data on their phone and, of 47 responses, 33 said no. They have data ranging from 25gb to 200gb, with mixed opinions on what constitutes enough.

Squad member, Safiyyah, made a video of advice for young travellers and one of her top tips is to take advantage of the free wifi in train stations. To avoid using up their valuable data, she advises them to send texts and plan their journey using Google Maps while they're in the station.

Then there's the matter of onboard reception. We're all familiar with "I'M ON THE TRAIN" shouty phone calls as connections drop in and out. Even if young people have enough data, mobile reception is hindered by multiple obstacles that make it difficult for a phone to lock on to a signal from a mast or antennae: the speed the train is travelling at, the metal body of the train, the ultra-thin metal coating (thermal insulation) on windows, patchy network coverage, especially in rural areas, and of course tunnels where the signal is lost completely.

Wifi, however, uses antennae on the train which are outside the carriages so perform much better, picking up a 3G or 4G signal from masts or base stations near the tracks then relaying this to passengers via routers in carriages. It aggregates the demand through one connection to the train so it works better for more people overall, and maximises and smooths connectivity from different mobile networks.



**LISTEN TO  
SAFIYYAH'S FIVE  
TIPS FOR YOUNG  
RAIL TRAVELLERS**



## Why is it important to LNER?

As a long-distance rail network, wifi access is even more important than on shorter lines. Leisure is the most common purpose for rail travel and the highest revenue source, ahead of business trips and commuting. In Q3 2022/23, trips for leisure made up more than half (54%) of industry revenue, with 214 million journeys bringing in £1,139m - and leisure requires keeping ourselves entertained and having fun.

This is the expectation for teenagers on long-distance trains. SuperSquad members submitted their 10 best ideas from the project to give us a database of 1,140, of which just over 10% are entertainment ideas.

Providing onboard entertainment has been attempted in the past, with limited success. In 2010, First Great Western introduced Volo TV, transmitted through an aerial on the carriage roof onto seat-

back screens. By 2014 it had been outdated by the rapid spread of 3G-enabled smartphones and tablets and was discontinued. India's high-speed Tejas Express introduced wifi-enabled screens in 2017 but, after complaints about their frequent malfunctioning, and fed up with passengers damaging them, the operator removed them.

Today, such investment in new fixtures is not needed. Tiered wifi would put online access – and therefore the full range of entertainment options, including radio, podcasts, gaming, social media and movies – in the passenger's hands. It's the most futureproof option, and revenue from the wifi portion of the fare could be invested in 5G and future tech developments, allowing onboard entertainment to keep pace.

## **Why is it important for the industry?**

Three days after the SuperSquad completed the project, the UK government announced that it may cut passenger wifi on trains. The DfT wants to reform all aspects of the railway and cut costs, and has told operators in England to stop offering wifi if they can't justify it financially. The treasury wants to reduce expenditure rather than investing (e.g. in 5G) to attract more customers.

What our young people are telling us goes against this proposal. Wifi connectivity is a must-have for them. The DfT says passenger surveys show that onboard wifi is low on people's priorities – but young people expect to be connected, and listening to the new and next generation, not just current customers, is essential to get our railways fit for future travel.

An Ipsos survey in 2022 found that 64% of young people in the UK aged 16 to 35 would

be more likely to consider taking the train than other forms of transport (e.g. car or plane) if there was fast, reliable wifi onboard.

If investment is an issue, monetisation of access could be one solution. The DfT has said that it's not fair to keep asking the taxpayer to fork out for our railways. Pricing wifi into tickets would raise revenue to put into it.

Only about 60% of train wifi is used by passengers. Wifi would still be needed for staff communications, payment systems, telematics, track imaging and so on. The amount that would be saved by cutting passenger wifi could be short-sighted and discourage people from travelling just as numbers are recovering.

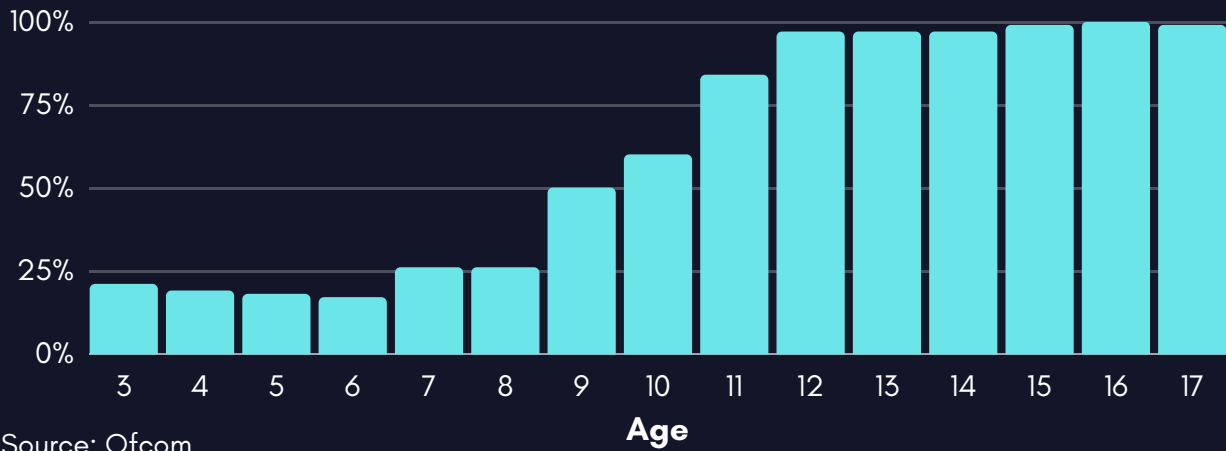
This would not be the first mode of transport to move to a paid, tiered wifi approach. Cruise ships already have it. Because they rely on satellites while they're out at sea, but can't afford to launch satellites themselves, they pay to rent bandwidth from maritime communications companies. Operators such as P&O and Royal Caribbean offer two or more options depending on whether guests just want to send emails and post their travel pics to social media or want to stream music and videos.

With most airlines now equipped with in-flight wifi on some or all planes, removing wifi from rail travel or failing to invest in it, will make trains look old and low-tech in comparison. To reduce carbon emissions in the UK, it is essential that the industry wins customers over from planes to trains.

Young people care about the planet and know the damage that flying does – but they also need attractive wifi access. Through the lens of net zero, they are a crucial user group to attract and retain.

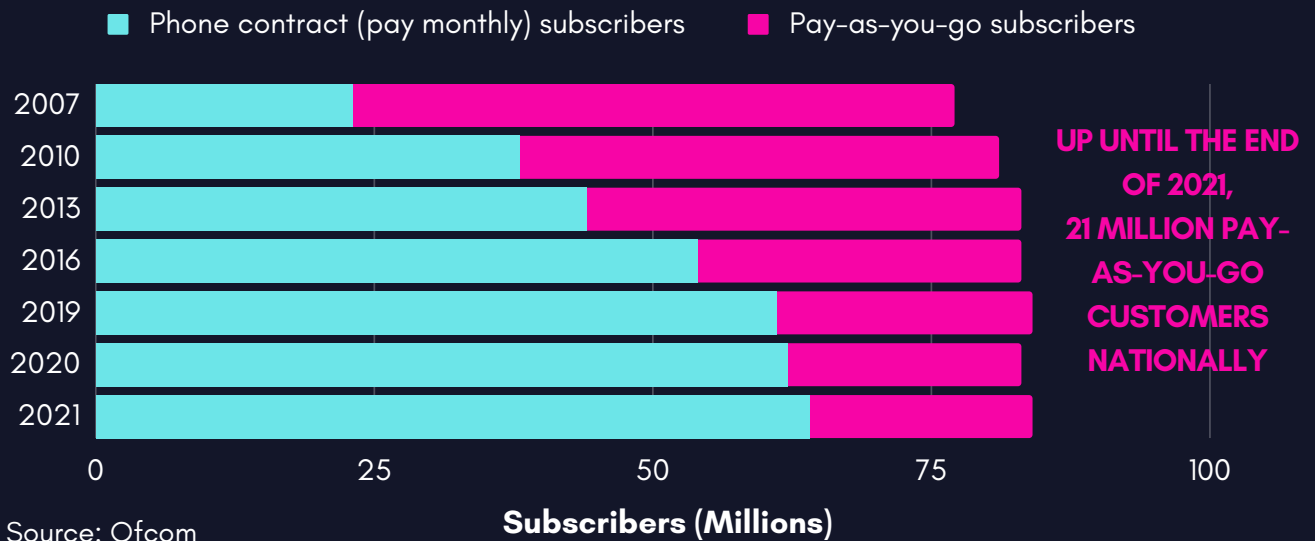
# KIDS WITH MOBILES

## PERCENTAGE WITH OWN PHONE, UK, 2023



# UK PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONTRACTS

## IT'S STILL A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER



## RELEVANT ARTICLES

- Rail UK: Young adults [more likely to consider rail](#) with fast and reliable wifi.
- Vodafone: Why is it so hard getting an [unbroken mobile signal](#) on a train?
- Webwatcher: Does your teen have [unlimited data](#)?
- The Guardian: [How does train wifi work](#) and why is it under threat?
- The Guardian: [Rail passengers in England](#) could lose wifi amid cost cuts.

# SO WHAT?

## **JAMES DOWNEY, FINANCE DIRECTOR**

This is a really interesting concept! And a good reminder, highlighting that wifi is so important to young people due to them not commonly having unlimited data.

We know wifi is important to customers for both leisure and business journeys, whether that's using social media, streaming a service, or joining a work call, and we offer free wifi on all of our trains in both First and Standard Class.

But getting consistent, reliable wifi to a train moving at 125mph, over hundreds of miles of track, is a challenge that faces all rail operators. Coverage is strong in some areas and poorer in others. LNER has continually investigated how to try and improve this over many years; upgrading to the latest wifi/mobile technology, and running small-scale trials of new solutions to measure if they have positive impact to the customer, etc.

We recently trialled a rail-first 'Edgecasting' proof of concept - three trains had a device installed that content could be cached from, allowing customers to seamlessly stream from ITV X without impacting the train's wifi capacity. We're currently reviewing the results of the trial before deciding whether to investigate this solution further.

We're also under way with a satellite connectivity trial - in collaboration with Network Rail and Starlink. This solution is a

hybrid of satellite and mobile connectivity technology to determine how we improve internet connectivity and coverage along our routes. We're currently in the process of fitting a Starlink terminal (a device with an antenna that establishes connections with satellites as they pass overhead) to one of our trains - but this is not as easy as it sounds!

We're also working really closely with our suppliers to ensure that the reliability and availability of wifi improves and that they respond quickly as soon as we are aware of issues on-train.

Finally, we're investing in improving mobile phone connectivity where coverage is poorer. We've been working with a range of suppliers to build mobile phone masts between Newcastle and the Scottish Borders and are funding Network Rail to add connectivity into the first two tunnels out of King's Cross.

And, whilst Connor's idea has been useful at highlighting how young people rely on wifi whether for gaming, studies or streaming, we aren't looking to monetise wifi on our services. We need to focus first and foremost on finding an improved solution to offer superfast and reliable wifi consistently, for every customer - offering another reason to travel by train.



# RAIL REWARDS

## A GAMIFIED LOYALTY SCHEME WITH DISCOUNTS AND BRAND PARTNERSHIPS

Charlie's idea is for a gamified loyalty scheme giving rewards for travelling by train. Get lucky and get a discount! The more a person travels, the more rewards they get. This would help to reduce the premium price of rail travel for young people and attract them to travel by train more often. The app is free and easy to use.

Charlie's slogan is: 'Rack up the miles; reap the rewards. Take the train and travel smart.'

Passengers earn points for every mile they travel by train, then use their points to get discounts on their next tickets (students also get their student discount). Additional benefits include cinema tickets, hotel stays and restaurant offers from LNER partner deals. There are cash rewards, too, and extra rewards and offers for travelling at less busy times.

50

## IDEAS IN OUR SQUAD DATABASE

The programme is gamified to add a fun element, such as Wordle (matching up letters to make train-related words) or a version of Minecraft that entails going on an expedition by train, with an exciting chase element. There are competitions to win free goods and tickets.

These options make the app entertaining and encourage people to keep coming back. Charlie wants his idea to incentivise people to travel by train and he has essentially outlined a whole loyalty programme for LNER.

He says: "This idea will encourage young people to travel by train more often, rather than cars or planes, as trains are more environmentally friendly."

## Why is it important to young people?

Young people need discounts. They perceive rail travel to be expensive, even with a young person's railcard. Squad members told us that not everyone can afford train travel and getting discounts helps. A lot of the 1,140 ideas in our Squad's database are around loyalty and discounts (see panel below).

Young people also like gaming. Following a boost in use during the lockdowns, 91% of UK children up to age 15 now play online or offline games, and 82% of kids aged 12 to 15 play online games such as Fortnite and Minecraft, up from 67% in

2019. Among children aged 7 to 18, 68% have their own games console. Social connection is one of the main reasons they play: according to a 2023 Ofcom report, 55% use it as a way of playing with people they know and 47% use it to chat to each other.

Creative and building games are the most popular, such as Minecraft and Roblox, played by 47% of 12-15-year-olds, and 40% of 7-16-year-olds had played Minecraft in the past week in an Ofcom 2021 survey.

Charlie's idea puts discounts and gaming together to bring young people on to trains and build loyalty.

## GIVE US DISCOUNTS... GET US FOR LIFE!

IDEAS FROM THE SQUAD'S TOP 10 DATABASE. MANY OF THESE WERE RECURRING THEMES.

- Flash sales that make tickets very cheap, to attract more young people.
- Discounts during school holidays to encourage families and young people to use trains more.
- A campaign like Germany's, where rail travel for under-19s is €10 for the whole summer, to any destination.
- One day a month where travel is free (or heavily discounted) during Super Off-Peak hours.
- At 18, you get a full week of free transport. You can choose when you want to use it; maybe on holiday, or in your older years, when you can't drive any more.
- Student and family discount. Many students find the price jump from under-16s to over-16s very high, and this would keep the train appealing.
- Family discounts help people choose the more sustainable option, instead of the car.
- A forever train pass you can buy when you're younger. We save money, and it brings an influx of revenue.
- Develop loyalty programmes that reward young people for using rail travel, such as discounts on future trips or access to exclusive events or experiences.
- Special off-peak offers of cheaper tickets to fill quieter trains. It's better for the environment than having an almost empty train running.
- Railcards that give young people special offers for things they enjoy doing.
- Make some carriages cheaper, at the expense of being slightly less comfortable.
- Partnerships with hospitality companies for packages and promotions; for example, partner with Travelodge and people staying at their hotels get a discount if they travel there by rail.
- Collaboration with other apps like Trainline or Nando's (you take a journey then get a discount at Nando's).
- Codes hidden around the train, when you find one, you unlock another level towards a prize.



## Why is it important to LNER?

Unlike LNER Perks, this is personalised to a specific group: young people. LNER has already toyed with gamification and is using the Seatfrog app to help gamify upgrades to first class. However, this assumes customers are OK with the current ticket price and are looking to spend more for the comfort of first class.

Here, we have an equivalent for young people for whom the base price can be unaffordable. Better still, it's designed by them! Listening to young people and designing for them would give LNER an advantage and point of difference over other rail companies.

Charlie's idea wasn't the only reward scheme idea in the Squad's top 10. Three of the top 10 are based around rewards, discounts and gamification.

It's clear that teenagers find this exciting. A gamified loyalty programme specifically for them would show that LNER is listening to the newest and next generation. LNER can create a unique selling point for itself among teenagers, and differentiate itself from competitors.

Collaborations can contribute to a positive brand image among consumers. Access to exclusive deals and promotions enhances the perceived value of the scheme, helping to build stronger relationships with young passengers and positioning LNER in their minds, not only as a method of transportation, but as a company that gives them extra benefits and experiences (especially Nando's. They really like Nando's!).

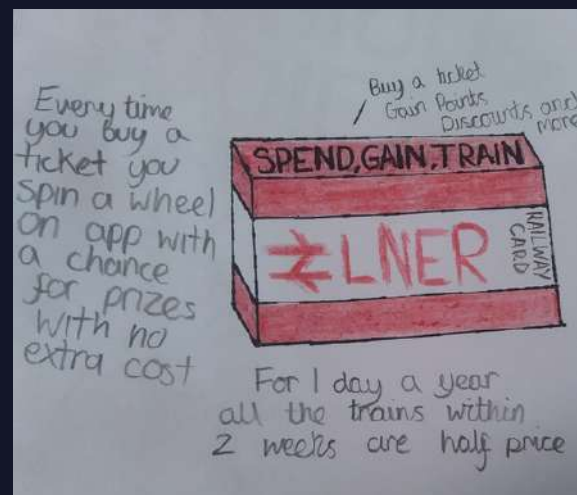
It would also enable valuable data

collection and insights into the preferences, behaviours and travel patterns of young passengers. This data can be used to optimise marketing strategies as well as improve overall service offerings – not just the rewards scheme. With greater, data-based understanding of this demographic, LNER can make informed business decisions about services.

It would put LNER at the forefront of innovation; a rail company that's not only embracing change, but leading the way on it to attract and retain young people and build the customer base of the future.

Two more loyalty ideas from the Squad:

Alfie had the idea of an LNER card that has loyalty points added for each ticket purchased, with an app where customers can spin a wheel for a chance to win prizes. His group said it would make train travel more fun and affordable and make LNER stand out.

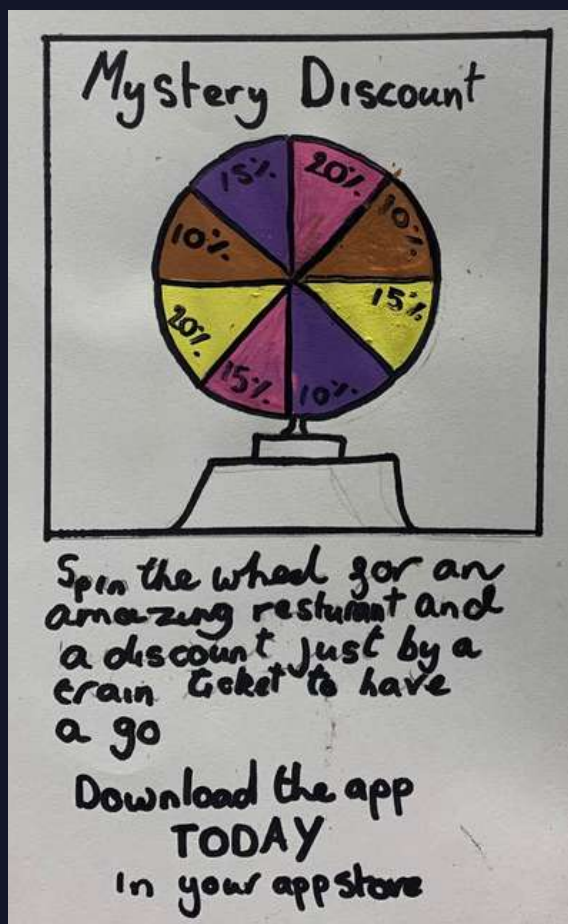


### HEAR FROM ALFIE

Scan the code and hear about the idea



Laura's idea is an app partnering with brands; so, for example, if LNER collaborates with Nando's, teenagers get a discount code for the restaurant when they buy a train ticket. This would boost local economies, encouraging people into stores and businesses.



## Why is it important to the industry?

The rail industry can face challenges in attracting and retaining younger passengers. Listening to young people and designing for them is not only aimed at bringing them on board, it's about locking in loyalty at a young age.

Whether it's fickle or being a clever consumer, only 30% of UK/US Gen Z

revert to their go-to brand for a new product or service. Twice as many, 62%, search other options – even if they have a favourite brand. More than half would switch from a favourite brand if another was cheaper or higher quality.

But, something they do love is gamification. Gamified features, such as points, badges and rewards, could encourage them to repeatedly choose the train over other options, especially coaches – attracting a new customer segment as well as leading to engagement, retention and long-term brand loyalty.

Research by YouGov in 2022 found that 70% of Brits belong to a loyalty programme and we belong to an average of four. Of particular interest to the rail industry, 71% of us think loyalty programmes should help people live more sustainably or support the environment.

Among pure loyalty cards, the biggest (unsurprisingly) are Tesco Clubcard, Sainsbury's Nectar, M&S Sparks and Amazon Prime. Brands successfully incorporating gamification elements include O2's Priority, Nike's Run Club, Fitness First, Duolingo and Pets at Home's Very Important Pet Club.

By sharing best practices and insights, it could serve as a model for other rail companies to develop similar programmes, not only for young people, but that could be tailored to different customer segments and used to improve customer engagement and experience. Observing the impact and success of LNER's loyalty programme would be a learning opportunity for the industry.

# INCREASE IN GAMING 2018 TO 2022

| YEAR   | 12 - 15 YR OLDS | 16 - 17 YR OLDS |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2018   | 61%             |                 |
| 2019   | 67%             |                 |
| 2020/1 | 80%             |                 |
| 2021   | 82%             | 80%             |
| 2022   | 82%             | 79%             |

Source: Statista

## SOME FACTS GEN ALPHA AND GEN Z GAMERS

% OF TIME  
SPENT  
PLAYING  
GAMES

21%

GEN ALPHA

17%

GEN Z

% PREFERRED  
PLATFORM IS  
MOBILE

73%

GEN ALPHA

69%

GEN Z

% OF  
GAMERS  
WHO PAY  
TO PLAY

52%

GEN ALPHA

52%

GEN Z

Source: Newzoo

## RELEVANT ARTICLES

Uswitch: [Online gaming statistics 2023](#).

UKIE: [Popularity of online games](#) continues to grow as pandemic subsides.

McKinsey's Mind the Gap: [Why Gen Z won't be tied down](#) to one brand.

McKinsey's Mind the Gap: Gen Z loves [games and gamification](#).

The Wise Marketer: What the British want from [loyalty programmes 3.0](#).

The Motley Fool: A business owner's [guide to gamification](#).

Propello: How the UK's biggest brands are [rewarding customer loyalty](#).

# SO WHAT?

## DAVID FLESHER, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

It's intriguing to see how important loyalty and gamification are to young people and how the SuperSquad have brought the two together to form ideas.

We know rewarding loyalty is important to our customers, and Perks (our loyalty scheme) has been running for three years and grown in popularity to 730,000 members. Customers earn Perks points every time they buy a ticket, which can be redeemed against future ticket purchases, gifted to friends, or even donated to our charity partner, CALM. We also run bonus events where customers can earn extra points, and Perks members receive a permanent 10% discount on our Let's Eat at Your Seat catering service in Standard Class on board our trains.

It's also interesting that Charlie picked up on the idea of extra rewards for travelling at less busy times. We know trains at peak times or busy times of the year can cause customer pain points and it's something we're hoping to address with our fares reform project and upcoming 'Simpler Fares' trial - aimed at simplifying fares whilst giving customers flexibility and the best value for money, especially if travelling at quieter times. Younger people potentially have more flexibility over when they can travel so can avoid peak trains to get the cheapest fares, and if they can book in advance, they'll save even more.

It's clear from these ideas that partnership deals are popular. Our Commercial team are exploring local partnership opportunities with shops and restaurants in the destinations we serve as a potential for the future.

I like the SuperSquad's idea of adding in gamification to a loyalty scheme, or the booking process, particularly aimed at attracting young people to rail, and love the idea of spinning a wheel to potentially win an extra discount!

Gamification is something we'd like to explore as a collaboration between our Commercial and Digital departments. We're planning to delve into this theme further with another SuperSquad, focusing specifically on gamification, with the view to create some prototypes out of their ideas to trial!

It's been fantastic to be involved in this project and tap into the creativity and entrepreneurship of young people. It's given us some great ideas to explore, but also highlighted the need to raise awareness of rail travel and LNER's offerings with young people - as some of their ideas, we already do! - perhaps we could look at co-creating a future marketing campaign aimed at teenagers, to have a greater impact.

# WHAT NEXT?

FOR YOU, FOR US, FOR THE SQUAD...

The purpose of this report is to see the future of rail through the eyes of the newest and next generation of customers, encourage you to think differently, and inspire you to act.

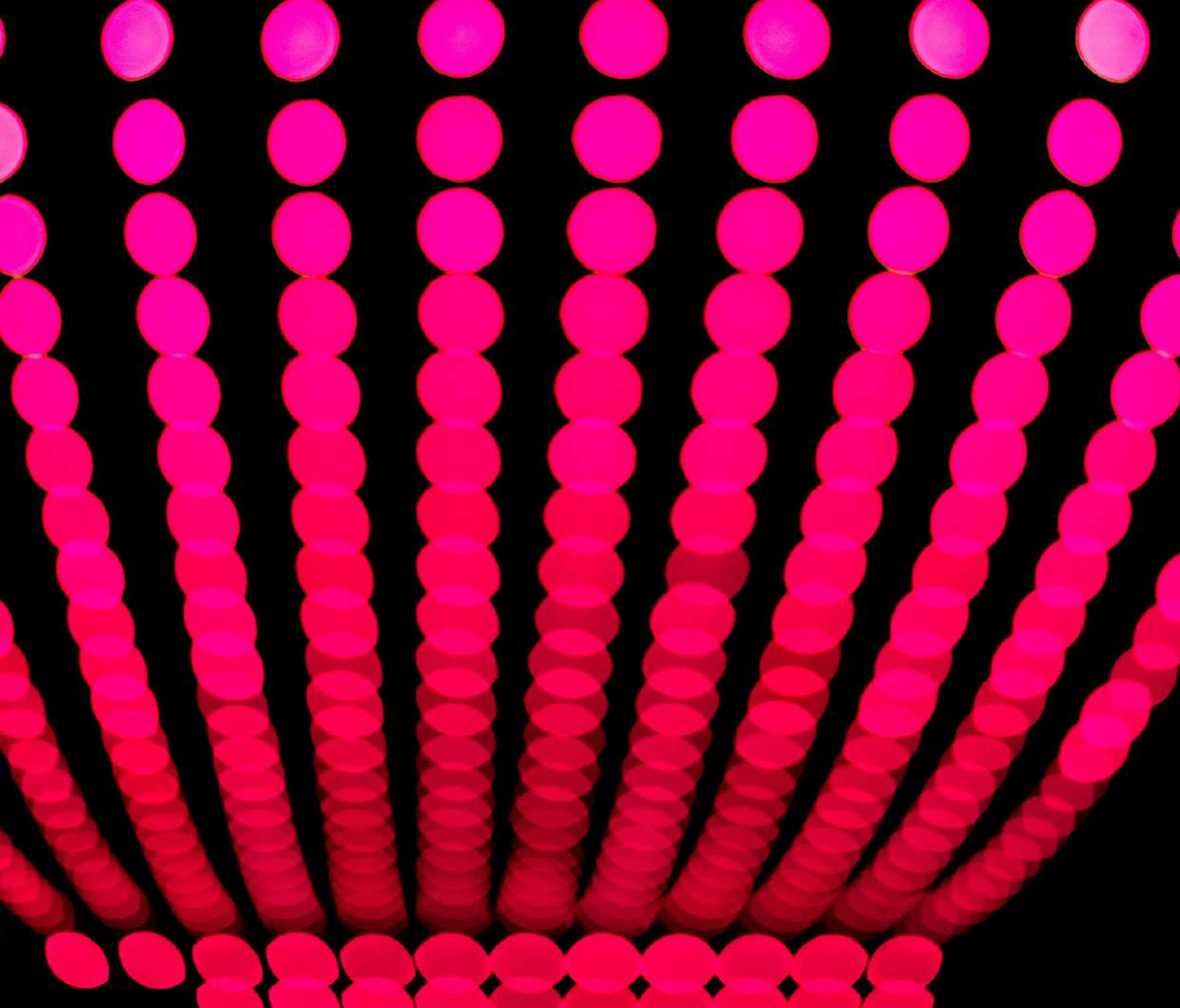
Each of the four ideas has purposefully directed you to possible next steps. Some of these are an opportunity to continue working with our community of teenagers - not just because this is our whole reason for being, but because they are hugely talented and have a lot to give.

**We exist to create a generation of trained innovators who can solve the world's biggest challenges.**

We cannot do that alone. We started this thinking and hoping that young people could be the champions of rail. Turns out, they can, with bells and (train) whistles on! They love trains and genuinely want to travel on them, as the sustainable choice and as their route to fun and adventures. You, us and the Squad are perfect partners in the mission to make the railways attractive now and fit for the future.

Enjoyed the top four ideas? Explore all of the top 10 in the Idea Catalogue starting on the next page. Then at the end, read more about who we are and what we do.

**Continue the conversation**  
**Contact Hugo on**  
**[hugo@startupsherpas.co.uk](mailto:hugo@startupsherpas.co.uk)**



# THE IDEA CATALOGUE

# TOP 10 IDEAS

1. OFFICE ON RAILS
2. TEENAGE-ONLY CARRIAGES
3. PLATFORM EDGE LIGHTS
4. THREE TIER SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE FOR WIFI
5. RAIL REWARDS
6. MYSTERY DISCOUNT
7. LNER TRAIN CARD
8. TAP ON TAP OFF UK
9. RAIL SENSORY ROOMS
10. COMFORTABLE, COLOURFUL CABINS

To showcase each idea, the group created the following:

## INSTA AD

A concise, creative view of an idea, with a sales hook. (We'll change this to TikTok soon – Gen Alpha aren't IG users.)

## YES, AND THREAD

Our version of the famous improv game that encourages diversity of thought by building on each other's ideas.

## BBQ PITCH

Our equivalent of an elevator pitch. Who pitches in a lift? No one! But you might pitch your idea to a friend at a BBQ.

## VIDEO PITCH

For some ideas, we have included a pitch to video – raw rather than polished (after all, it is v1).

# OFFICE ON RAILS

## DESIGNATED OFFICE CARRIAGES TO WORK, STUDY AND REVISE

By Emily Carson

Office on Rails is an add-on experience for purchase. It is aimed at those who have to study, work or catch up on homework! This exclusive ticket would include things like a larger desk to fit your laptop, folders and other notes/sheets, a mini lamp, a laptop stand and a special LNER notebook!



### Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

"Yes, and they could have the option to wear headphones that are given with a specially selected playlist of study songs."

"Yes, and the desks could have a drinks holder because you need to stay hydrated when studying/ revising."



## BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

Office on Rails! My idea is to create a suitable, pleasing study space in a designated carriage. This purchase would include things like a larger desk, LNER notebook, mini lamp and laptop stand. Another unique access is to the special stationery vending machine!

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

This is for young people who are revising, working or catching up on homework on the train. Customers who are maybe having to attend a work Zoom call could be enticed to purchase this uncommon benefit while travelling.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

I take trains regularly and I have noticed something every time. Many young people are trying to work or study and are struggling due to noise, and juggling their laptop and work on the small desk and their lap. Normal carriages and seats just aren't suitable.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

This helps because it lets customers experience stress-free travel, to just focus on their work! A vending machine allows people to buy essential stationery and supplies with a lightweight bag. The provided and available resources all contribute to a productive journey!

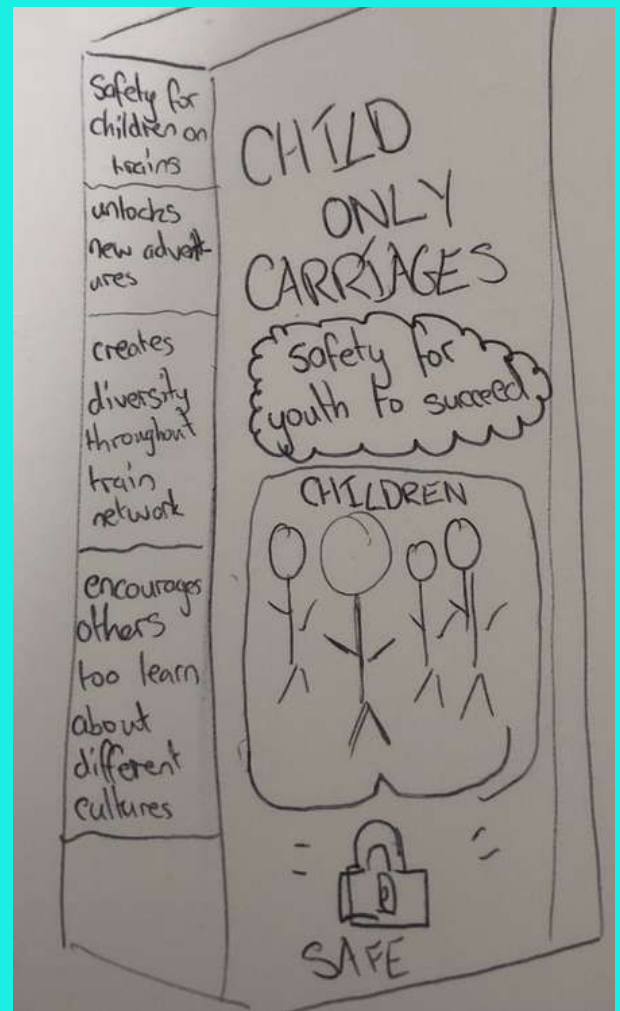


# TEENAGE-ONLY CARRIAGES

SAFER JOURNEYS.  
WILD ADVENTURES.

By George O'Brien

Helping teenagers travelling independently on trains to have a safe and comfortable experience. This would involve certain segments of the train to be zoned off for only under-18s, allowing for children to be protected from any dangers or threats they might face if they were seated with grown adults.



Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

“YES, AND IF TEENS ARE TRAVELLING WITH YOUNGER KIDS THERE COULD BE A CHILDREN’S AREA TO PUT THEM IN SO THEY HAVE PRIVACY WHILST STILL OVERLOOKING THEM.”



## BBQ PITCH

MY IDEA IS...

TO CREATE TEENAGE-ONLY TRAIN CARRIAGES ON LONG-DISTANCE TRAINS.

FOR THESE PEOPLE...

FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE INDEPENDENT ENOUGH TO GO ON JOURNEYS UNSUPERVISED, BUT WHO STILL NEED PROTECTION FROM OTHER PEOPLE WHO COULD BE ON THE TRAIN.

I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

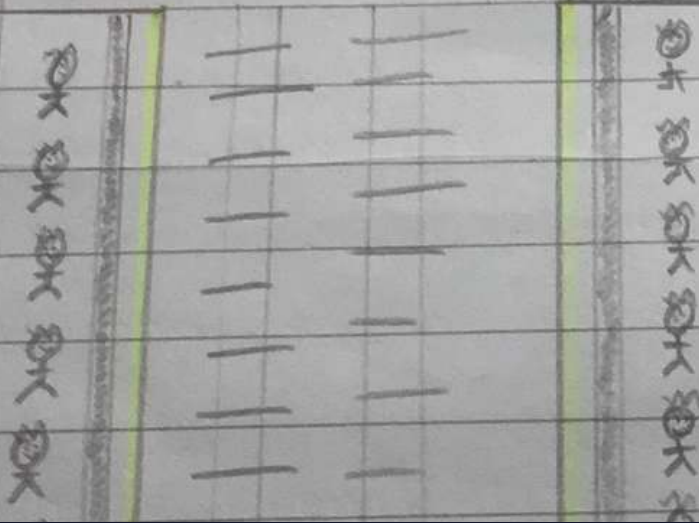
OF HOW EASILY AN ADULT CAN MANIPULATE A CHILD TO GET OFF THE TRAIN WITH THEM OR MAKE A CHILD FEEL VERY UNCOMFORTABLE BY GETTING IN THEIR PERSONAL SPACE.

THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

IT CREATES A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR TEENS TO TRAVEL IN OVER LONG DISTANCES AND CAN MAKE MORE TEENS CHOOSE TRAINS OVER A MORE PRIVATE FORM OF TRAVEL.

# PLATFORM-EDGE LIGHTS

Railway Safety,  
Re-invented



edge.

Flash whenever someone steps onto it as a warning to keep back.

Can vibrate as well if people are blind.

Will vibrate on and off every 3s - warns passengers a train is approaching.

Helps people learn to keep well away from

## PLATFORM EDGE LIGHTS

### RAILWAY SAFETY, RE-INVENTED

By Jamie Walker

My idea involves installing lights in the platform edge to help with railway safety. These lights will vibrate as a warning when someone steps too close to the platform edge. The system can be deactivated when a train stops in the station.

#### Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

"YES, and it could also have a built-in speaker which gives audible announcements of "Please stand back from the platform edge" at certain intervals."

"YES, and we could install different coloured lights to decorate stations."

## BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

Fixed white lights built into the platform edge. They will constantly vibrate if someone steps on them as a warning to keep back. System is de-activated by sensors built into the track which detect when the train has stopped.

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

To help keep young people safe by teaching them how far away from the edge they should stand. It can also benefit any other rail customer.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

Too many people are at risk of/involved in accidents as they (however consciously) step too close to the platform edge.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

People (even those who are distracted) will be alerted when they step too close to the platform edge - so they know to step back again.

# THREE-TIER CONNECTIVITY TICKETS

## PROTECT YOUR MOBILE DATA WITH UNLIMITED WIFI

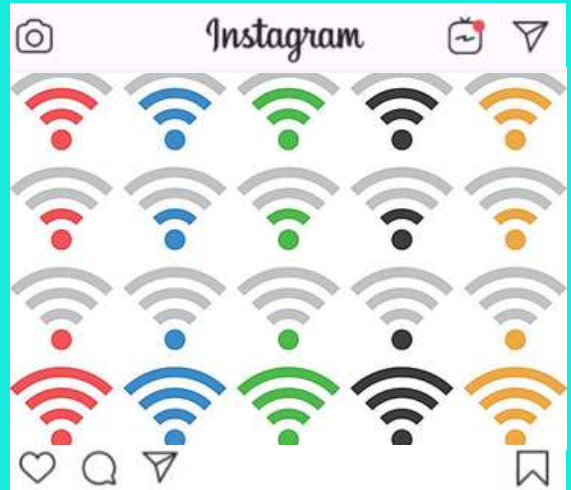
By Connor Holmes

Three levels of ticket prices depending on your required access to wifi:

Level 1 = No wifi

Level 2 = Pay-as-you-go wifi

Level 3 = Unlimited wifi (recommended for a long journey to protect your mobile data)



### Cheapest tickets = No Wifi!

Just prepare in advance...a bit like making a packed lunch for the journey!!! Or go digital-free for the train ride and read a book.

*"YES, and if you are a regular traveller, you can get unlimited wifi for the year at a discounted price."*

*"YES, and you get refunds on your ticket price if the wifi speeds are slower than promised."*

## BBQ PITCH

MY IDEA IS...

Ticket prices that differ depending on the type of wifi you can get on the train.

FOR THESE PEOPLE...

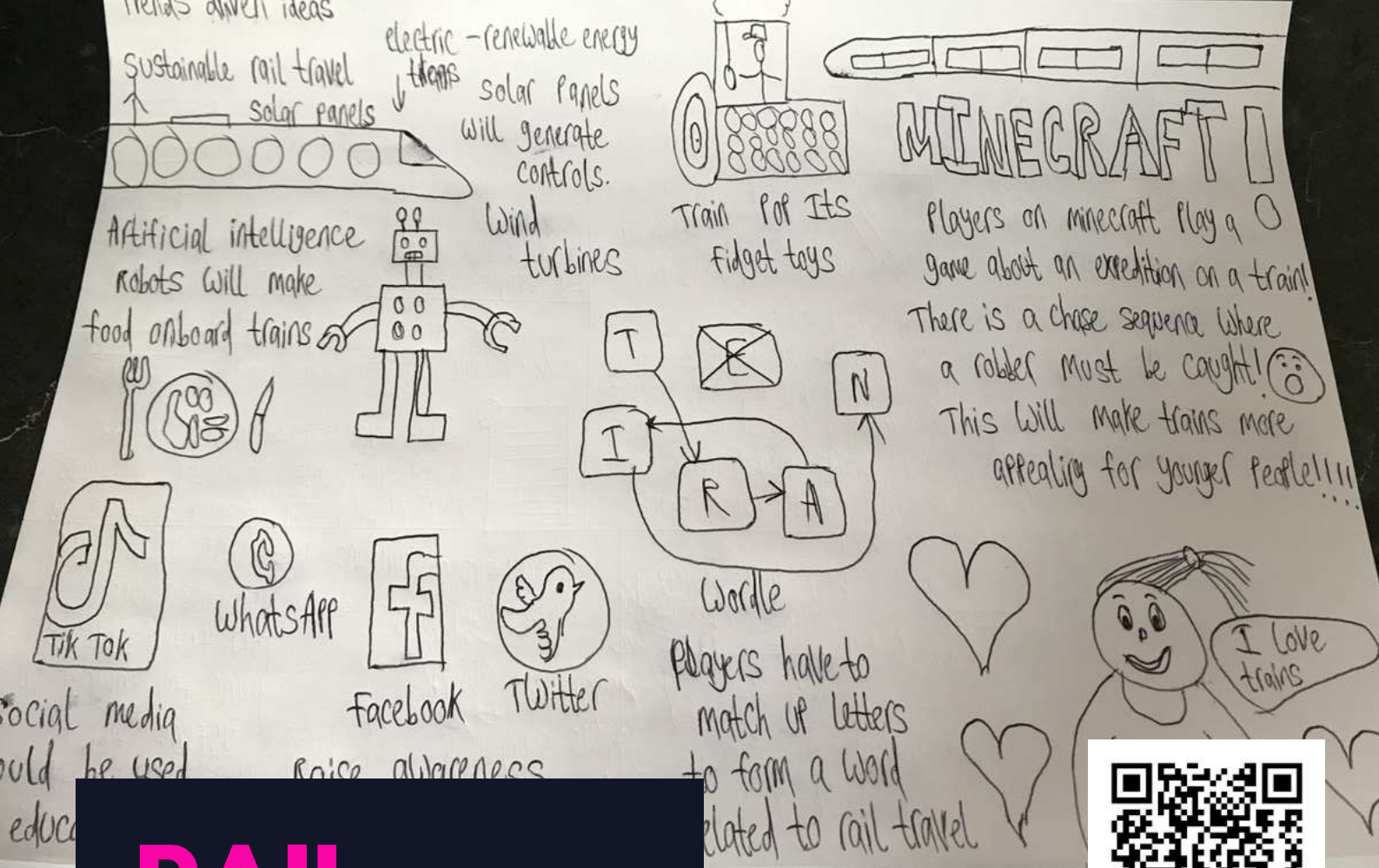
Young people that want cheaper train tickets.

I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

People want to be entertained on long journeys so want access to great wifi but, at the same time, young people complain that train tickets are too expensive.

THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

It gives young people a choice. What do you want more? Wifi or money in your pocket? If it is money in your pocket then this frees up bandwidth for other passengers who are willing to pay more.



# RAIL REWARDS

By Charlie Gray

For every mile you travel, you earn points. These points can lead to rewards such as free cinema tickets, restaurant offers, and a tree being planted for every mile travelled to help protect the environment.

## Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

**"Yes, and you can do a game system where passengers can win free stuff or ticket opportunities for holidays."**

**"Yes, and passengers with the ticket could play games at the station to keep themselves entertained."**

## MY BBQ PITCH

**MY IDEA IS...**

Rail Rewards, a loyalty programme where you earn points for every mile that you travel by train.

**FOR THESE PEOPLE...**

Young travellers (teenage passengers) who may currently view rail travel as too expensive.

**I SAW THIS PROBLEM...**

Not enough young people are travelling by train, as they are often put off by the perception that it is expensive.

**THIS HELPS BECAUSE...**

It encourages young people to travel by train. Rail travel is becoming more environmentally-friendly than cars and planes. This is a great incentive for young people, it will make them the champions of rail travel.



# MYSTERY DISCOUNT

## SPIN THE WHEEL AND GET MONEY OFF YOUR JOURNEY

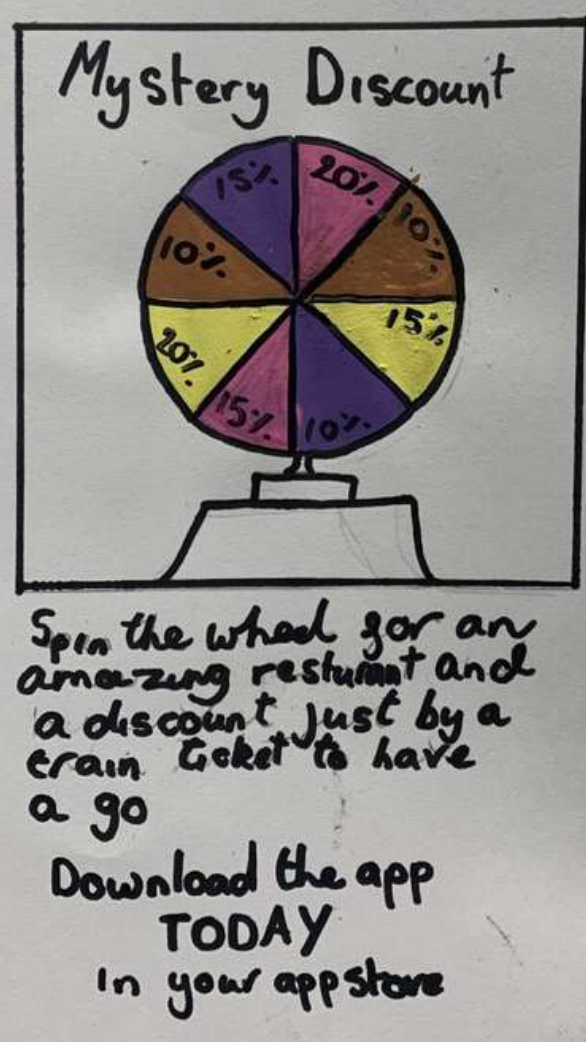
By Laura Fountain

For every download of our 'mystery' app, once you have bought a train ticket, you access a wheel to spin for a prize. You end up getting a discount of up to 20% off a restaurant bill, to spend either at the station, on the train, or out and about in the city or town you have travelled to.

Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

"YES, and it could boost local economy as people are going to places they wouldn't normally go to or maybe going again."

"YES, and it will encourage businesses to set up in train stations, which will provide more money to the rail service."



## BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

My idea is that you download an app which has a mystery wheel on it and, once you have bought a rail ticket, you get to spin the wheel for a prize; you end up getting a discount of up to 20% off a restaurant bill.

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

For families who find going out expensive, they could go on a train and get a cheaper meal; and for young people as they will think that it's worth it as they are getting money off just for going on a train.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

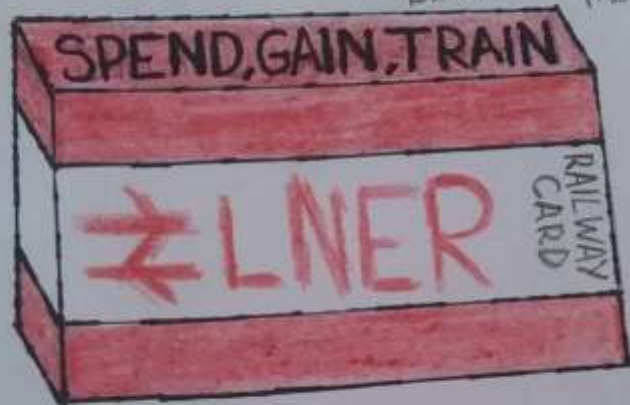
Air pollution caused by cars is a major problem, so this would encourage people to travel by train.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

It would expand the railway industry and reduce the amount of air pollution.

Every time you buy a ticket you spin a wheel on app with a chance for prizes with no extra cost

Buy a ticket / Gain Points Discounts and more



You get points from buying tickets and they are used to get discounts tickets or refreshments on board.

For 1 day a year all the trains within 2 weeks are half price

# LNER TRAIN CARD

By Alfie Chapman

My idea follows the concept of gaining points when you purchase a ticket on LNER trains. The points turn into valuable options to buy refreshments during your travel, or could even be used to purchase future tickets!

## Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

**"YES, and it makes traveling more exciting because, rather than feeling like you're losing, you'll feel like you're winning!"**

**"YES, and it may make the travelling experience less difficult because you'll have a loyalty card that'll speed up the process of getting past barriers."**

## MY BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

Is to create an LNER loyalty card that provides extra services and points for those who use this train service.

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

It'll encourage more people to use train services and take longer journeys on trains rather than flights or buses because of the rewards they'll be gaining.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

Less people may use LNER because of how expensive it is, especially if you're not eligible for a rail card, but this will encourage more people to travel.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

There's great gains to be had from this idea, and people who aren't able to afford an LNER ticket will be more inclined to now due to better options.

# TAP ON TAP OFF UK

## LOWERING THE BAR, LOWERING THE COST

By Henry Ritz

My idea is to focus on making it easier and quicker to travel by rail in the UK. The idea also includes loyalty schemes and regional fare caps. All fares are regulated by a national price per mile. You can tap in/out using the contactless card.

Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

“Yes, and the card could have its writing also in braille for people who require this type of formatting.”

“Yes, and if you travel for a certain distance using your card, you’ll be able to upgrade to first class.”



## BBQ PITCH

MY IDEA IS...

To limit prices per mile by implementing tap in tap out technology using contactless bank cards and travelcards at all stations in the UK. People who travel often will get cheaper prices per mile.

FOR THESE PEOPLE...

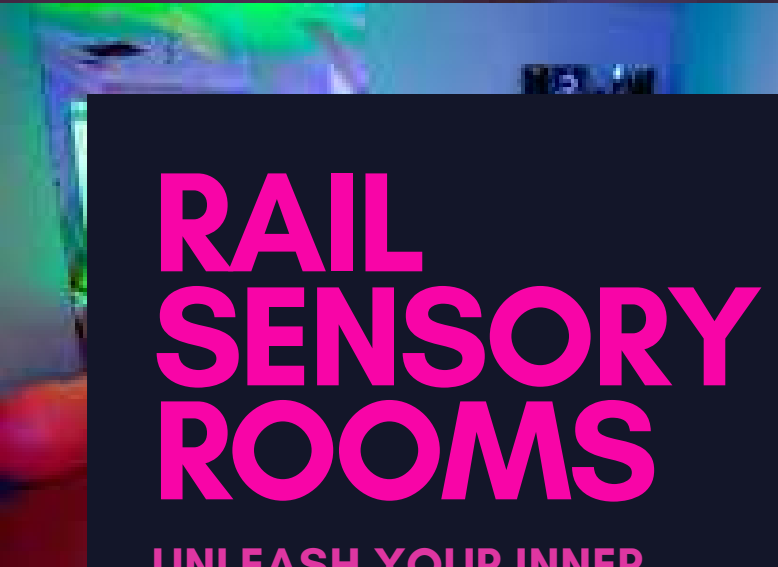
My customers are young adults who require prices to be cheaper.

I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

I found people would like to travel by train but find it too expensive, so, if we reward people for travelling often, we can get people to travel by train every day. This would also make it easier to travel by train and would make everyone more likely to travel as they don't have to go through the tedious and expensive task of ordering season tickets.

THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

It ensures you only pay for the days you actually travel on and also makes it easier to travel as you don't need to order tickets or even order a travel smartcard.



# RAIL SENSORY ROOMS

## UNLEASH YOUR INNER CALMNESS

By Gwendelyn Orton

A calm space to use before the train ride for families of special needs/neurodivergent/anxious kids; or for special needs/neurodivergent/anxious teens and adults. By making step one of the journey a time to relax, it will help make the train ride nice and easy.

### Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

**"YES, and for on the train, you could provide some sort of suitable toy or game to help keep their mind off the train ride."**

**"YES, and you could maybe make a sensory carriage, too, for once on the train, or provide helpful services while travelling."**

## MY BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

A sensory room or quiet room for special needs, neurodivergent, and anxious kids or adults before they board a train.

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

For neurodivergent, special needs, or people with anxiety, whether they are kids, teens, or adults.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

I'm trying to solve the problem of trains being too stressful for special needs, neurodivergent and anxious people, who are a big part of the population and not able to easily travel on trains.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

My idea will help to hopefully make travel calmer and help more people to consider the train as an option. This should also help families with special needs, neurodivergent or anxious kids.





# Comfy

# Colourful

# Cabins

Liven up your travelling experience, take the train, give the cabins a go  
<https://www.lner.co.uk>

## COMFORTABLE COLOURFUL CABINS

### BRIGHTLY COLOURED CABINS THAT SOOTHE

By Alejandro Manjarres Celedon

Some colours stimulate the brain and others calm it. These different feelings are what we want to evoke in our customers. Our private cabins are specifically designed to help you relax and enjoy the trip.

#### Threads of how the Squad built on the original idea

**"YES, and you could provide headphones so people can listen to music to make them feel more relaxed if they aren't really accustomed to trains yet.**

**"YES, and you could make cabins for specific age ranges."**

## MY BBQ PITCH

### MY IDEA IS...

Comfortable cabins that make people feel relaxed on long journeys by adding personality to the long ride through gorgeous interiors.

### FOR THESE PEOPLE...

This is for young teenagers who won't feel comfortable travelling on their own for the first time, and may feel nervous.

### I SAW THIS PROBLEM...

On the bus the other day, I was travelling alone and felt a bit down, until I saw this shop with an explosion of colours in the front window, and I suddenly felt slightly more upbeat.

### THIS HELPS BECAUSE...

These cabins serve as a temporary private safe space, until whoever is using it feels confident enough to sit around others. Outside these cabins, there will be signs to show the bright colours, patterns and styles, to make sure that the cabins affect people's moods in a positive way.

# THE SHERPAS

## HUGO PICKFORD-WARDLE

Hugo launched his first startup when he was just six years old: selling potpourri to golfers. Not put off by the fact he only made £1, he has since brought a number of ideas to life, including launching an airline, being the UK's truffle expert and founding an AI consultancy. Hugo has strong connections to the world of insurance, having been a client director at Ninety Consulting, working with Swiss Re, AXA XL and Zurich. He has particular strengths in commercial and specialty lines.



## KATHY WALKER

Kathy is passionate about the student experience and learning outcomes. This stems from her desire to give a broader view on careers and to enable people to do what they love. She also has a strong background in insurance. As another Ninety Consulting alumni, she worked primarily with Generali, helping to shape its innovation strategy and designing and delivering its Innovation Champions programme.



## DAN ROE

Dan has years of corporate senior and c-suite experience under his belt, including as Managing Director of Kaplan Open Learning and VP English Products for Pearson. But under that professional facade was a wannabe tech startup founder. He is the genius behind the Start Up Sherpas platform, which enables 1,000 students to innovate asynchronously. He was also pivotal in the design of our Step-by-Step methodology.



# WHAT WE DO

## OUR CAPABILITIES

### WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

- Rail industry talent accelerators
- Cyber talent accelerators
- Sustainability talent accelerators
- Diverse apprenticeship talent pipelines
- Social mobility programmes
- Future of work

### SOCIETY & COMMUNITY

- Social impact programmes
- Youth engagement programmes
- Community programmes
- Scalable social impact for ESG
- Quantified ESG investment
- Climate studio

### FUTUREPROOFING

- Co-create with future customers
- Horizon-scanning
- Designing for Gen Z and Gen Alpha
- Roadmap validation
- Innovation best practice
- Diversity in innovation

Speak to us about how to be part of the mission and create true impact for your organisation.



# THANK YOU

## TO OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Thank you to LNER for so enthusiastically supporting us with this report. From our first meeting, we felt your drive and energy to give a platform to young people to showcase their creativity. You believe, as we do, that their voices have something valuable to contribute to the rail industry.

Thank you also for giving us and a couple of the Sherpees an opportunity to showcase our work at the FutureLabs Demo Day in York in July 2023. It was a fantastic day and fabulous exposure to the wider industry.

Thank you in particular to Ross Welham and Katey Ellen who have committed hours to ensuring that this partnership succeeded.

*The  
start up sherpeas  
team*

