

Nexus to boost visibility of frontline teams on the Tyne and Wear Metro

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The Tyne and Wear Metro owner and operator Nexus says it is moving more frontline teams onto stations and trains.

The staff, in a new-look uniform, will be available in greater numbers, particularly at night – where feedback as told the operator customers want to see staff the most.

Under the new system, Metro's customer service advisors also have new uniforms and will have two distinct tasks. Roving customer support teams will wear blue jackets and provide a mobile presence across Metro when it is needed most. Meanwhile, concourse teams, in a new red-berry-coloured uniform, will work at busy stations to offer advice and help customers at ticket machines and when passing through gates.

Nexus says the shake-up frees more resources to tackle anti-social behaviour and fare evasion, and means that ticket gates will be in use across the entire operational day as it is rolled out in run up to Christmas and the new year.

The Metro says it currently has the highest customer numbers in the country, with 80% ridership

compared to pre-pandemic levels, and customer satisfaction scores are at a seven year high. Nexus is looking to build on this and attract more people back to using the service.

Metro operations director, John Alexander, said: “Our customers said they wanted to see more staff on duty across the Metro network and we are delivering that. We now have more people than ever before working in frontline roles.

“The changes we are making allow us to put more staff at stations and on trains, right across the day and night, to provide customer support and deal more effectively with issues of fare evasion and anti-social behaviour. It means we have staff at stations for longer, with ticket gates in use over the entire operational day.

“Customers will see staff in distinctive new uniforms. This provides Metro with a fresh new look as we welcome people back in record numbers and seek to rebuild customer confidence in the network.

“Crime rates on Metro remain low, but we know that customers are concerned about anti-social behaviour and we are taking steps to address it through these changes to the way that we staff the Metro system.”

The extra staff on Metro allow for a permanent staff presence on busy concourses, allowing most gatelines to be working seven days a week, throughout the operational day.

There will be an increase in customer support teams patrolling on board trains and more frequently at outlying stations.

The staff, meanwhile, are being given new equipment to support them in these roles, including body-worn CCTV cameras and new two-way radios.

This customer support team will provide a greater presence on unstaffed sections of the network. They will be highly focused on reducing fare evasion and anti-social behaviour. They will work with police and other stakeholders to educate youths about safety and travelling responsibly, while also completing customer service duties as and when they arise.

The concourse team will be highly focused on customer experience and fully responsible for the station they are based at. They are responsible for controlling passenger flows, ensuring customer safety and managing fare evasion.

Nexus frontline staff have welcomed the new roster. The changes have allowed Metro customer services advisor Val Dejong to secure a promotion to customer services manager.

She said: “It’s fantastic news that we are getting more visibility of staff on the Metro. The public will be getting to see us a lot more. We will be out there during the day and in the evenings.

“The customers need that reassurance of seeing staff now that lockdown is over. Anti-social behaviour is an issue and this shows that we are doing more to deal with it.”

Customer services advisor (CSA) Alex Latham, 20, has been in his new role for just a few months. He said: "This new roster will be of benefit to people who use the Metro as there will be more staff out and about. When customers see us more that makes them feel safer when travelling on the Metro. We also have better equipment now,

Keith Oliver, also a Metro CSA, has been in the role for 16 months after a career as a bus driver. He also welcomed the changes. He said: "It's a positive step in my opinion. We hear customers saying they want more staff. It can be challenging for us out there and I think this will make people safer and a lot more people will travel with us now that there is that stronger staff presence on the trains and at stations."