I wish to respond to the call for evidence for the rail timetable changes inquiry, to assist the
Transport Committee in fully understanding the consequences of the ongoing failures of the
rail service for passengers.

I will address the following points in my written evidence:

- Train delays, cancellations, train overcrowding, issues with train stock and lack of
  value for money for the service,
- The lack of effective communication from rail operators and lack of accountability or
  ownership of the failures by the service providers,
- The impact of the disruptions on my working day, wider employment issues and
  career prospects,
- The effect on my daily journeys since May and the effect on my mental health that
  the disruption has caused.

I commute between Huddersfield and Manchester every weekday and have done so for 18
months. Within that period, there has not been a time when I have felt that I could rely on the
train services to be on time, have enough seats, or indeed floor-space, nor have I felt that
the fare I purchased was value for money. I do not have a great deal of expendable income
and my only transport option for this journey is the train. My annual tickets have cost over
£5000 for this period, which is a substantial portion of my take-home pay, spent on services
that are irregular, delayed and overcrowded.

However, since the May timetable change, the services reached a level I could only describe
as chaos, with multiple cancellations a day, significant delays, overcrowding at stations and
on trains and insufficient numbers of carriages being provided for the trains that did
eventually arrive. I have endured many journeys where I have been caused to feel faint or
nauseous after having to stand in doorways for the length of the journey, being pressed into
fellow passengers, or their luggage, and having no opportunity to sit, unless it were on the
floor, if there was indeed space to do so.

There have also been numerous issues with the train stock itself being unfit for service. I
have had to endure 45 minutes on a train with no air conditioning in the sweltering
temperatures in July, one train where only two out of three engines were working, causing us
to crawl through the Pennines, and many trains without working toilet facilities.

I consider that there has been a total lack of accountability or ownership in the wake of the
May timetable change, from all levels. There has been no proper acknowledgment of the
impact of the changes and I find that the compensation schemes have been token gestures,
the level of compensation available is minimal. Further, I understand that the Chief Executive
of Transpennine Express has been dismissed, and yet he will receive a final pay-out of
£700,000. I find this completely shocking, that a person unable to carry out their job to a
satisfactory level can be given so much money on being dismissed from the role. It should
not be permissible.

In July, I overheard Northern Rail staff (identifiable by their lanyards) travelling on a train as
passengers, discussing the recent service failures, and I was given the distinct impression
that they too share the lack of accountability at the lower levels of the organisation. The
Northern Rail staff member who stated that their team were responsible for writing the train
timetables found it amusing that the winter timetables were not yet drafted and would be
late. The staff members then went on to complain that the mistakes they were making were repeatedly reported to their director, yet they felt that such reporting should not be happening and were upset that there had been repercussions. One staff member in particular treated with disdain the complaints from members of the public in relation to cancellations, delays and significant overcrowding and dismissed the complaints as unfounded. After having the misfortune to experience such issues first hand and repeatedly, these comments from Northern Rail staff only served to add insult to injury.

Having to check the service disruptions and any cancellations or delays for the trains before my morning and evening trains is now a part of my daily routine. I have been made significantly late to work in the mornings because of these issues and I am very lucky to have an employer who operates flexible working times, otherwise I would have been facing disciplinary action. I am dropped off and collected by my partner at the station by car each day. Where trains are disrupted, and it is still typical that they are, my partner is left having to drop me off earlier or later than needed, impacting on his arrival at work and he is left waiting for long periods for me to arrive at the station in the evenings, the train disruptions therefore having an impact on his working day too.

I find that it is now somewhat of a lottery as to what trains will be running and what stations I will arrive at or depart from, as each day it is different. Information provided online or at stations is often incorrect or will change at the last moment. I have often had to travel between the three main Manchester stations on the same evening in an attempt to catch a train that is not yet cancelled. This costs extra if I have to use the Metrolink to travel between the three.

The persistent disruption to the train services has not only impacted my ability to get to and from work on time, but impacts the rest of the working day. I am a trainee in my organisation and need to work to my highest standard in order to convince my employer to extend my employment after my traineeship ends. It is a source of deep concern that my performance should be found to be lacking, due to arriving later in the morning or the need to leave early to catch the only running service, after having to miss professional social events for fear of not being able to get home, or for the continued disruption to the rest of the working day. I have considered leaving a good employer on qualification for a job closer to home. I do not wish to do this as a move would be a substantial detriment to my career at this point. I would not be considering such a move, were the train service delivered as it ought to be.

The concern for the impact on my employment and the direct stress of having to deal with cancellations and disruptions on an almost daily basis has negatively impacted my mental health. I suffer with anxiety, though this is something I can usually manage. However, since May I have struggled with more serious periods of persistent anxiety, caused by the stress and uncertainty experienced from the current service. This obviously has a huge impact on my professional and personal life.

I hope that the evidence provided herein will be of use to the Inquiry and that the Committee will fully consider the issues raised and be truly sensible of the effects that these disruptions have had on the ordinary members of the public, the commuters, the workforce of the country, who only want a reliable train service at a reasonable cost. I look forward to the prospect of meaningful change to the service.

Thank you.

September 2018