

Northern Gas Networks

Young Innovators Council



Session 2: the experience of future customers

April 2023

Facilitated and written by Solutions for the Planet

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(YIC, S4TP, Northern Gas Networks and other)
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1. Overview of session

2023 marks the third consecutive year of Northern Gas Networks' Young Innovators Council (YIC) led and facilitated by Solutions for the Planet (S4TP)¹. The YIC continues to be the voice of young people (aged 14-19) at Northern Gas Networks (NGN). It provides young people's perspectives and Northern Gas Networks ensures these young people's thoughts and opinions are put at the heart of the business' decision making.

Each session agenda is co-created by S4TP and NGN, influenced by the YIC's input on what topics are most important to them. The aim is for meaningful and relevant engagement which provides a real opportunity for the YIC members to influence decision-making at Northern Gas Networks. This year, the YIC is made up of 36 young people aged 14–18 who are based across the footprint of Northern Gas Networks.

This report provides a summary of the second session of NGN's Young Innovators Council 2023, with recommendations generated from the discussion and feedback the young people provided. This session focused on the experience of future customers.

Background to session:

Northern Gas Networks consistently receives a rating of over 9 out of 10 for customer satisfaction and have been told by their Citizens Panel (made up of adult customers) that maintaining this high performance is a key priority. However, the customer satisfaction scores drop off when it comes to customers in lower age categories and engaging with young people on the topic of the customer journey is vital to informing NGN's current customer strategy.

At the beginning of 2023, Northern Gas Networks hosted a meeting with their Citizens Panel to examine NGN's customer journey and what made that experience good. The objective of that meeting was to find out from that representative group of people what is important and relevant to them regarding their customer experience of NGN. Session 2 of the Young Innovators Council was the opportunity to gather insight on this topic from their future customers (14-19 year olds).

The preliminary questions that Solutions for the Planet used to plan the session were:

- What is the customer journey for this group?
- When you interact with a brand/organization/service, what do you want that customer experience to be like?
- Where do this group go for their information on the customer journey? How do they want to communicate with businesses?
- What do future customers expect or deem to be "good" in terms of customer satisfaction and a good customer experience, and why?
- Where should we allocate future investment in customer service?
- In what ways can we start to be more innovative to improve customer service and experience?

¹ Solutions for the Planets' Youth Insights Programme: <https://www.solutionsfortheplanet.co.uk>

YIC 2023 Session 2: future customer experience

Wednesday 26th April, 5.15pm

Objectives of the session for NGN

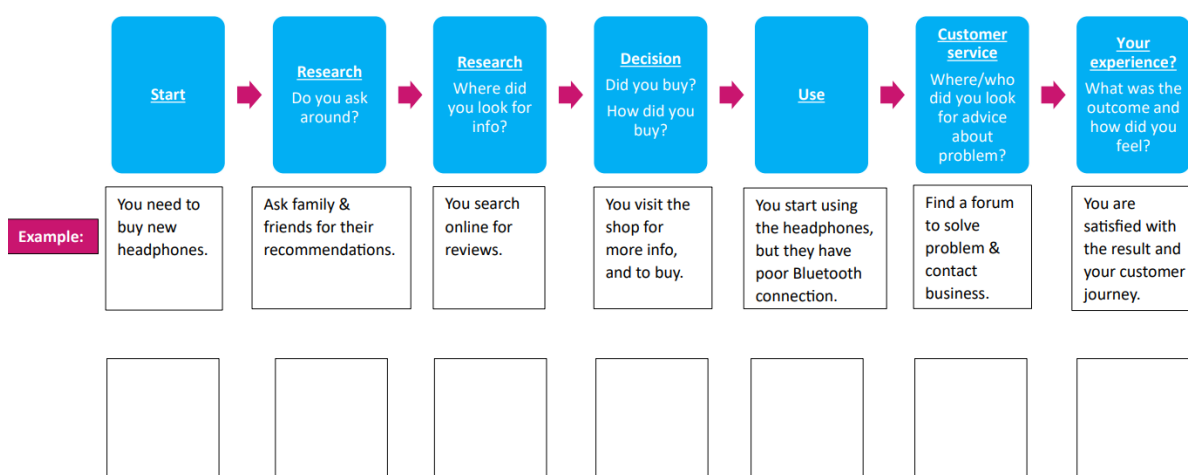
- A. To understand what young people want from their customer journey.
- B. To understand what young people expect a good customer experience to involve, and why.
- C. To discover how they might be more innovative and improve customer service and experience.

Materials and tools used

Prior to the session, the YIC were asked to think of **one time they've had a really bad customer experience**, and **one time they've had a really good customer experience**. They were invited to ask their friends or family if that helped.

- Where did it start? How did they get in touch with the business?
- What particularly struck them as positive or negative about the experience?
- How did that make them feel?

These experiences could be absolutely anything, whether it's buying a pair of trainers, selling second-hand clothes or organising an event. The YIC were sent a map of a typical customer journey to help guide them:



A **customer journey** is the end-to-end experience a customer has with a brand or business. Your experience! It is in a business' interest to create a successful customer journey – it helps them to reduce costs, increase earnings, and establish and nurture your loyalty as a customer.

The primary objective of **customer service** is to answer your questions quickly and effectively, resolve issues with empathy and care, improve brand credibility, and nurture relationships. Support teams can measure objectives with key metrics such as: average first response time.

Figure 1: Example of a typical customer journey with definitions; YIC 2023 Session 2

Methodology

- Zoom main room discussions and chat functions were used to host an introduction to the topic and the witness presentation about the customer journey at NGN.
- In this session, a longer breakout session helped to frame the topic through two different scenarios:
 - Scenario 1: You become aware of a utility emergency at your house.
 - Scenario 2: The Wi-Fi goes down and you need to sort it out immediately.
- These scenario-based breakout rooms were designed to encourage the YIC members to come at the topic from their personal experience as customers. This was with the understanding that not all of them will have had experience of dealing with utilities businesses yet, and to show them that regardless they are still customers and consumers already.
- As the topic is a broad one, it was important that the YIC had enough time to consider and approach the topic of the customer journey through their own experiences, and then to examine, discuss and present their behaviours and preferences.

Witness: Eileen Brown, Customer Experience Director at Northern Gas Networks

- NGN as a monopoly provider
- Example of a customer journey at NGN
- How NGN try to improve their customers' experience

Agenda:

Time	Activity	Lead	Room (M/B)	Timings (mins)
5:15	Welcome Quick reintroductions and an ice breaker	S4TP/NGN	M	5
5:20	You said – we did	NGN	M	5
5:25	3 or 4 young people share examples of excellent customer experience	YIC	M	10
5:35	Knowledge input - (from a witness, or S4TP/NGN facilitators) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we mean by customer experience/journey • What NGN's commitment is to their customers 	S4TP/NGN	M	5
5:40	Breakout rooms 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eileen to rotate every 7-10 minutes. • Facilitators to rotate with 10-15 minutes to go 	All	BO	40
6:20	YIC feedback from breakout rooms	All	M	10
6:30	Final questions and thanks	All	M	5
6:40	FINISH	TOTAL:	1 hour 20 minutes	

Table 1: Agenda; YIC 2023 Session 2

2. Attendees

Young Innovators Council

Amiee	Jack
Anisha	Joyce
Ben	Kaitlin
Bradley	Lauren
Chloe	Lucy
Dhanayus	Mary
Druvan	Maryam
Lizzie	Nadheerah
Ellie	Oliver
Georgina	Theo
Henry	Thomas
Holly	Toby
Imose	Yasmeen

26 attended out of 36 panel members

Solutions for the Planet

Fran Isherwood	Youth Insights Coordinator
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Northern Gas Networks

Alex Brightman	Hydrogen Home Coordinator
Eileen Brown (<i>witness</i>)	Customer Experience Director
Jarred Knott	H21 Project Engineer
Jenny Wilkinson	Stakeholder Lead
Kati Sexton	Connections Advisor

Other

Louise Hawson (<i>observer</i>)	Independent Auditor
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3. Key Discussion Points

Feedback from YIC pre-session work

One week before the session, the YIC were invited to think about their own real-life experiences of customer service, both the best and the worst, to help them understand the meanings of 'customer journey' and 'customer service'. They could then see themselves as existing customers and understand that they will be NGN customers in the future. This context for the session helped when inviting them to examine their own behaviours and preferences. We were also keen to understand how each of these experiences made them feel. During the session the YIC were reminded what the pre-work had been and then a couple of them shared their thoughts. Further pre-work was also shared by email following the session [see Appendix 1].

Theo shared a bad experience of returning a faulty fountain pen part. The purchase and subsequent contact with the business to report the fault were both made online.	
Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> told fault was with the customer business took no responsibility used condescending language having complaint passed on to another customer service operative the part was advertised incorrectly, not what was expected on opening 	Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> felt disappointed chose not to use the business again in the future
Maryam shared bad experiences of trying to contact businesses online after purchasing.	
Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often businesses either don't reply at all, regardless of follow-up emails or use condescending language on reply if help is received, it's often given in a condescending, accusatory tone businesses not listing their customer service operating times on websites 	Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> an apparent reluctance of businesses to help when reached out to by younger customers don't call if they think that will take longer 'frustrating, tiring, long' processes of receiving desired result (i.e., return and refund) means some people just give up
Chloe shared bad experiences of a local shop and witnessing poor customer service.	
Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> customer service is bad from this business every time they go in noticed a pattern of behaviour towards Asian customers 	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feel a coldness from that business, and perceives it as 'mean' business receives a reputation for rudeness towards specific groups/races
Luce shared experiences of having food allergies in restaurants, and needing to bring their own food.	
Negatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> being told one thing at first, and something different on arrival too much back and forth with staff Positives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff relating authentically with the customer receiving an apology 	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> felt like there was no overview of the customer journey

Table 2: YIC pre-work responses; main room Zoom discussion; YIC 2023 Session 2

As is evidenced here and was noted and agreed during the session by both the YIC and NGN facilitators, customers are often far more likely to reach out to businesses with negative feedback: when they need to resolve an issue, file a complaint, or make their poor customer service experiences public.

Main takeaways from pre-session work:

- In most examples, the YIC used online methods to communicate with the businesses.
 - When this was first point of contact, speaking to businesses in this way made YIC members feel like they weren't getting the best quality of customer service.
 - In relation to telephone contact with businesses, the YIC emphasised the long time it usually takes to connect and/or resolve an issue this way.
- Feeling like they are being taken seriously by a business is very important to the YIC.
 - Positive experience when customer service team is relating to them as a person with a specific complaint or need,
 - It was when this didn't happen that they expressed the most negative reactions – namely, frustration, disappointment, and not returning to that business.

Breakout session

In the first half of the session, the YIC had a chance to recall specific experiences of being consumers and customers, and received knowledge input of the customer journey from an NGN perspective. The breakout session was then designed to better understand and explore what they each want and expect from a business to have the best customer experience. Scenario-based breakout rooms were used to invite the YIC to examine their behaviours, their preferences and the desired responses and actions of businesses, detailed in the table below:

We would like to hear what you need and expect at each stage of the customer journey	
	Where do you go first?
Scenario 1: utilities emergency	Look online first; the majority of our age group are not bill payers yet, so we would have very little idea of what to do otherwise.
	Business website, e.g., 'there is an outage in your area'
	"The first thing I do is look on Twitter, because it's updated and it usually covers everything."
	Not everyone will have mobile data, so it is still really important that all modes of communication remain open, in an emergency scenario.
	Face to face communication in an emergency is reassuring, especially in longer term cases.
Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption	Planned interruption: text message with adequate notice, clear and concise information
	Unplanned interruption: text with context on the problem, with an option for a further call.
	Chat functions are useful because customers can do other things whilst waiting.
	Live chat, not a chatbot, needs to be an expert and ideally somebody localised.
	With no data, phoning; interactive menu and option of a call back if that's quicker

	What do you want to know?
Scenario 1: utilities emergency	A care telephone number on the business website, emergency and non-emergency
	Reasons for the outage
	Comprehensive timeline of how long it's going to take to fix
	How widespread the problem is, is it happening to anyone else or just you?
	A choice of how to be contacted with pertinent updates
	Social media links on the homepage to platforms where the business covers small outages or localised updates, to distil information that would otherwise be too broad or generalised
	Twitter: have an expert available to answer customer questions
	As well as a phone number, provide a live chat function for people who don't like using or can't telephone.
	If it's a reoccurring problem – knowing this helps customer think about longer term personal situations
	Safety information first and instructions around health and safety that customers can carry out themselves
	Where necessary provisions are being distributed
Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption	Failure to provide the service should be reimbursed or credited on account.
	Notifications
	Timelines
	Information overload is not wanted.
	The customer service operative who can help resolve your specific issue, due either to having the most apt expertise or closer geographical location, should reach you the earliest when you contact a business.
	How do you want to feel?
Scenario 1: utilities emergency	Reassured: knowing that the business knows what's happening and is doing something about it.
	Comforted: make sure that I know what will happen, I'm not left in the dark by the business at all, I'm updated and I know what's happening and I know it will be resolved.
	A business demonstrates accountability – very important.
	Transparency
	Like you're not alone.
	To know that all the information is fully and continuously up to date, i.e., time stamp the details
	Business should be personable, sympathetic, caring, human to human.
	Understood, not patronised.
Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption	If you must be redirected for whatever reason, prioritise efficiency and timeliness over friendliness.
	That the business is organised
	Accountability
	That the business is knowledgeable about the problem, whether planned or unplanned.

	How should a business follow up with you?
Scenario 1: utilities emergency	Updates on public platforms as constantly and as quickly as possible on Twitter or social media: the customer will feel like they're being put first and they have access to all the information and can understand what's happening as best as possible.
	Offer multiple ways for people to choose how they want to be followed up with
	A clear message when the issue is resolved
	If someone has reached out to a business with a personal challenge, this should be addressed specifically, not generalised.
	There needs to be additional and specialised operatives for those with specific needs or vulnerabilities.
	"Text or email back would be preferable for people our age, as I found that most people do not like talking on the phone at all."
	Numbers to call within the text
	Majority wouldn't use automated chatbots in this situation; but might do if the information required could be provided instantly without phoning and being passed around too often.
Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption	Text messages are good to use for important, pertinent, time-sensitive information; emails could get lost.
	Customer experience surveys: short and straightforward, with an added option for customers to provide more detail only if they choose.
	Apologetic, transparent behaviour from a business goes a long way.
	Feedback forms: ask a few pertinent questions; demonstrate they are being actioned, like NGN's 'You said, we did' for the YIC
	Don't chase incessantly, provide options for people who don't want to be contacted anymore
	Language of acknowledgment and appreciation, that is meaningful and authentic
	If the initial call has taken a long time, don't call the customer back to follow up. A succinct email is preferable.
	If the business needs to call back, provide specific time window.
	Always provide summary of what has been spoken about, for proof and longevity.

Table 3: Summary of breakout room discussions; YIC 2023 Session 2

Feedback responses

Some of the questions that the YIC were asked in the feedback form for this session are pertinent to the session objectives, so are highlighted here. The remainder of the responses are in Appendices 2 and 3.

Please rank the following customer service channels in order of preference:



Figure 2: Topic-related graph 1 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 2

How willing are you to use chatbots on businesses' websites? *

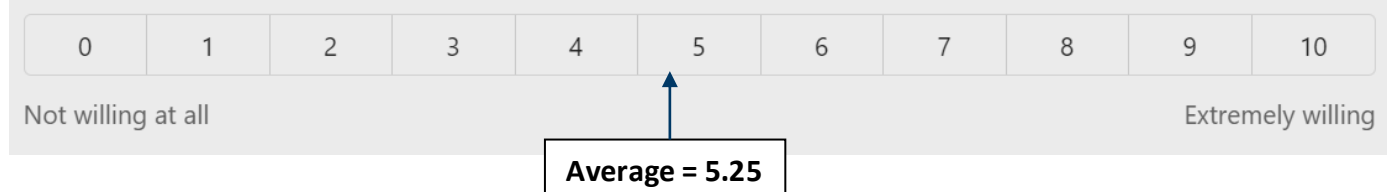


Figure 3: Topic-related graph 2 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 2

Does having a chatbot on a business' website make you more or less likely to engage with that business?

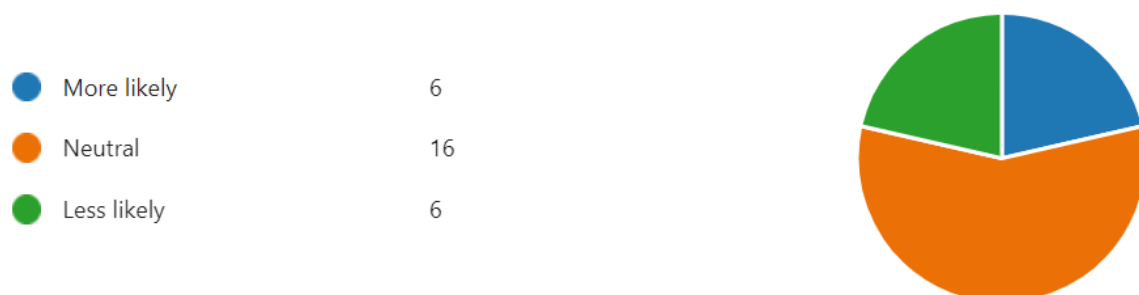


Figure 4: Topic-related graph 3 extracted from feedback form responses; YIC 2023 Session 2

4. Key recommendations (priorities)

The nature of the subject of the customer journey meant that this sessions' objectives were broader than our usual YIC sessions. This led to breakout room discussions that were lengthy, varied and covered quite a breadth of topics. There were clear distinctions between emergency and non-emergency situations, and something that was emphasised across all the areas of discussion was that **a business should provide choice for the customer, therefore proving their understanding that each customer is an individual.**

The YIC communicate with businesses in a variety of ways, largely expecting very up to date information to be made available by a business through online platforms in emergency scenarios, and preferring to call or chat online with a business when it comes to something like a Wi-Fi disruption. **A business should continuously provide a distinct variety of options for a customer to contact them in each instance, as it was most important to the YIC that the customer can choose, and change formats should they want or need to.**

The YIC highlighted that they are very understanding of a business that experiences unplanned outages or interruptions that aren't their fault, as long as they perform well on customer service. **As far as is possible and appropriate, a business should maintain communication with their customers publicly (and all over social media); it shows that they're not trying to cover anything up to maintain a perfect reputation.** The YIC value authenticity.

As customers and people, the YIC want transparency, accountability, reassurance and understanding. Sentiments the young people repeated throughout the session were:

- Customers want to know exactly what the business is doing when there is an emergency.
- Businesses should never be seen to be acting or responding "off the cuff" but prove to their customers that this is something they want to prevent in the future.
- Speed is paramount but shouldn't be prioritised over outcome. Timeliness tends to be best achieved with the right person (and only sometimes, technology) for the job.

In summary the YICs' recommendations are:

1. Utilise social media, especially Twitter, throughout the customer journey.
2. Live chat functions are a first port of call for the YIC when contacting a business.
3. Chatbots are the least preferred means of communicating, with the majority of the YIC finding them unhelpful beyond very specific, instantaneous questions/answers.
4. Provide clear options for customer contact and publicise them across each of those platforms so that customers can choose to escalate/switch between them.
5. Demonstrate a clear overview of each individual customer's circumstances when they call to speak to a business, passing them on as few times as possible.
6. Customer service operatives should listen actively and show business accountability in both scenarios.
7. Reassurance will be best given through continuous, relevant, accurate updates.
8. Provide clear and thorough timelines in all scenarios.
9. Conversations with customers should not be scripted or outsourced, so the conversation flows and they are being related to as a person.

*I feel like I expressed my idea clearly which I'm usually not good at.
I had time to think about other people's ideas as well as my own.*

[YIC member]

5. Conclusion

Northern Gas Networks score consistently high scores in relation to their current customers' journeys, so this was an opportunity to find out from their younger stakeholders how they can continue to do this in the future. Overwhelmingly, the YIC made it clear that NGN should demonstrate transparency, authenticity and an understanding of their customers predicaments, whatever the scenario of this customer contact. Interestingly, and perhaps despite preconceptions, the YIC did not seem interested in interacting in chatbots (clear from both the breakout rooms discussions and session feedback forms), because they limit effectiveness; unless it is for very straightforward questions or to be connected more quickly to the right person.

Once again, the YIC was represented by 26 out of a possible 36 members. Despite planning around exam timetables, it is perhaps inevitable at this time of year that several young people will prioritise revision – which is what the majority of the YIC who sent apologies gave as their reason.

Each member of the YIC appeared to have an opinion on this topic, including a handful of those who couldn't attend. It was fascinating, engaging and useful to hear from them about their personal experiences. Some of the YIC fed back after the session that the scenario-based breakout rooms helped with context and creativity and also then allowed them to branch off into deeper discussions. This perspective and thoughtfulness really came through in the session.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Pre-work shared by YIC members

Aiden N

Start: I wanted to buy some new trainers.

Research 1: I knew that I wanted some Adidas Gazelle's, but was unsure of what colours and what company I would use, I spoke with friends who also had a liking for Gazelles, about what they thought where best colours/new editions etc.

Research 2: I then started to Google around what where available, was there any new additions due to come out that I should wait for? What were the pricing for the trainers? Did different shops have an 'specials/sales' on? I also asked my mam, who is a student nurse, if she could get any discount from different online shops, after checking with a few online shops I found out that going direct to Adidas and using mams discount code gave me a better price than my usual shop such as JD sports.

Decision: Once I realised the biggest discount was with adidas I went with them, their quick postage was also a plus for me, so I purchased them online using my visa card.

Use: When the shoes came I was waiting for them as I knew the delivery date and was able to track the parcel so was excited about them coming. As soon as they came I opened the box and tried them on straight away. When I put them on I noticed that there was some threading near the toes than looked frayed, I was happy to put up with it as everything else was great but my dad said I should complain due to using my money and not getting what I wanted perfect.

Costumer Service: I was a little nervous about ring up so opted to email adidas and attach a photo of the damage, the damage was only small so I was expecting anything other than an exchange, which would have been awkward due to having to re parcel the trainers back up and post back, that's even if they accepted responsibility for the damage and I would be without my new trainers for a few days, so I was a bit disappointed about the whole thing really.

Outcome: However I got an email about 2 hours later from costumer services apologising for a bad experience and they gave me 2 options, which were I either sent the trainers back for a refund (as they were sold out in my size of the colours that I wanted, or I could receive a £20 pound off discount code to be used on their website.

I immediately took the discount code, which meant I could still have my new trainers (which I couldn't notice the damage really) and was able to buy a T shirt which ended up costing £2.99 due to the discount voucher they gave me.

I was really pleased that I did complain and was impressed that they got back to me quickly, accepted responsibility (which I was worried they would blame me) and also gave me options rather than just asking me to send them back, leaving me to make the decision. If the damage had been really noticeable, I would have sent them back, but since they weren't that bad I managed to get a t shirt more or less free.

Alexa R

My friend had a good customer experience when they broke their new laptop. They emailed the company and got a response the next day about the issue, they then sent the laptop in to be repaired. They expected to be charged or to have to wait weeks for the computer to come back which was a problem because of GCSE revision they needed to do. However, the computer came back and the whole interaction was over in a week plus they were not charged at all.

I don't have any particularly bad customer experiences, except a time when I was selling second hand items online. On this website you had to pay for the item after receiving, however the buyer reported the item and subsequently cancelled the payment and didn't communicate with me. I found this frustrating because since they didn't communicate, I couldn't solve the issue, however I did not need to speak to an employee of the website because the website had a number of options, one of which was to request the item back (When I did, they decided to pay). However, the website was pretty good because contacting a real person was easy to do.

Nitya S

Good customer experience:

- The printer in our home wasn't printing correctly and after doing some checking we realised that there were some minor issues with the hardware. So, we called up the customer service number and were directed to a staff member.
- The staff member listened to what we had to say and instructed my dad to check the printer in some certain areas and simultaneously report his findings back to the person he was on call with.
- The staff member realised the printer was not going to be fixed so asked my dad if HP could send over a new printer, which he agreed to. The new printer arrived promptly with new inks as well.
- All in all, the experience was very positive as the staff member listened carefully to the issues my dad was describing and provided him with an effective solution.

Bad customer experience:

- My parents and I had arrived at Heathrow airport after nearly a 10-hour flight and minimal sleep so we were pretty exhausted, and we also had a connecting flight to catch. After our arrival we had to go through several checks and the first one was a passport check or something like that, and I was the first to go have my passport checked.
- In all honesty I had no idea what it was, so I was trying to figure out where to put my passport on this machine. After several failed attempts and a lot of confusion (as there were no instructions to tell me what to do), a member of staff rose from one of the surrounding booths and told me what to do.
- Their tone was extremely rude and condescending and I felt as if I was a child in school who was being reprimanded for poor behaviour.

- The staff member, even after seeing me visibly struggling from the surrounding booths, refused to help me and when they did, their tone and actions were very rude and kind of ruined my whole trip as it was also quite embarrassing. I would have preferred if they talked to me respectfully and gave me clear instructions on what to do.

When your generation interact with a business or service, what do you want your customer journey to be like?

Simple and quick. I would hope that I could effectively relay my point and that the customer care staff member would listen to my queries and respond in a respectful and professional manner.

What elements are important for a good customer experience for future customers, and why?

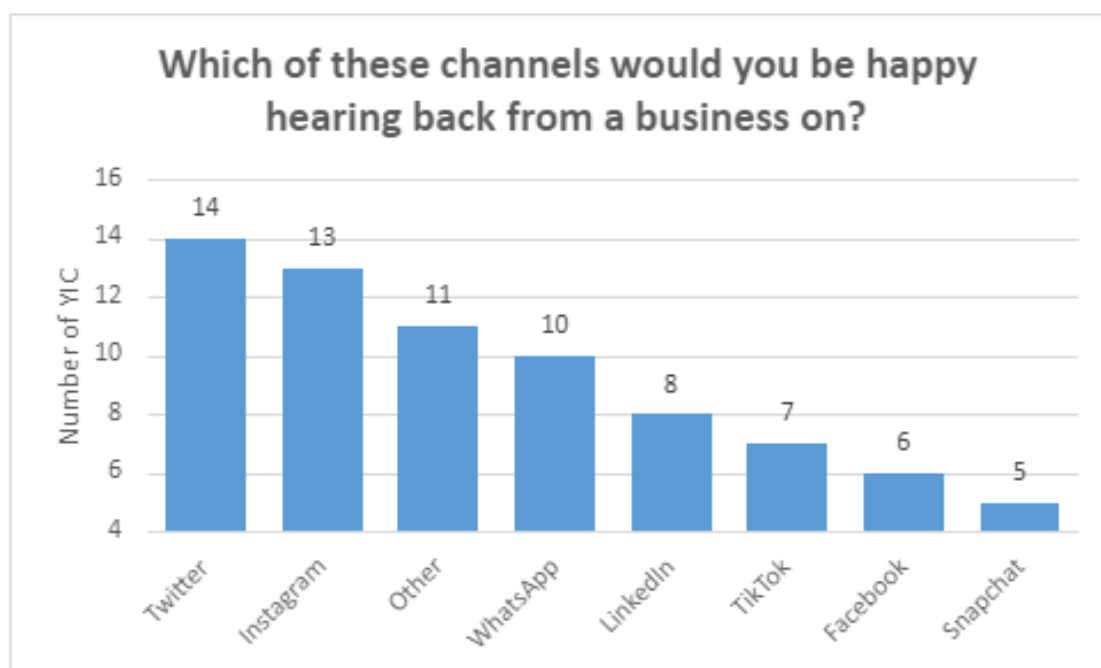
Having policies and systems in place to support a customer in finding the best solution to their problem. Also having a place such as an active forum a customer can go to.

What ways they can be more innovative and improve customer service and experience?

I know I can't speak for everybody of my generation, but generally people of my and near my age group don't exactly prefer to call in for any issues. So having perhaps any live chats with a staff member, chat bots, good email service and active forums would be quite good.

Appendix 2: Further detail of feedback form responses pertinent to the session topic.

Why? <i>[in response to 'Does having a chatbot on a business' website make you more or less likely to engage with that business?']</i>	
Less likely	I don't need fancy chatbots being boasted if they don't help with the problem. I'd rather have all the information laid out and easily accessible.
Less likely	Makes the situation more complicated and removes the human touch.
Less likely	I don't like them, I feel like my problems aren't being taken seriously.
Less likely	I prefer talking to a person as it is easier to communicate what you want to know.
Less likely	They take ages and sometimes don't resolve the issue well enough
Less likely	I believe they are quite hard to talk to if you cannot easily rationalise the question.
More likely	I can ask any questions that I have and hopefully get them answered.
More likely	The chatbot gives instant feedback for a generalised problem or contacts the right person directly if there is a more personalised question. The chatbot will also give reassurance to you if you are in a chaotic situation. These attributes will only gain the most success with a customer if programmed correctly.
More likely	More incentive to find out information.
More likely	To answer any questions.
More likely	I feel that due to there being a chatbot, I can engage more with the business as I know there is something there that I can go to if I have any queries. Having a chatbot makes everything more seamless.
More likely	You get an immediate answer and you know that if you have a problem, it won't result in wasting a whole day on hold waiting, but rather you can send your question and text back when they reply so you can get on with other stuff.
Neutral	The chats are not often helpful.
Neutral	I think chatbots can be helpful in many cases and are enough to help me with any issues I have, but sometimes it's a lot easier to speak to an actual person who will understand you better and may be able to help you more. I think a choice between the two is nice because both are useful.
Neutral	Their responses often aren't relevant to my query, and it feels like I need to talk to a real person to get anything done.
Neutral	Just not a big deal.
Neutral	It depends. Sometimes they annoy me greatly because they give the same answers each time. However, if they are intelligent enough then they can be helpful, but I find this is rare.
Neutral	No real reason, they can sometimes be buggy and not give the help you need and sometimes they're extremely helpful.
Neutral	They seem like they would be scripted in a way that makes complex problems difficult to talk about.
Neutral	I tend to not look at the website of the business after I have visited unless I want or need something.
Neutral	I've never had an experience with a chat bot so I'm not sure.
Neutral	Prefer personalised answers and quickly rather than going round in circles at times.
Neutral	Chatbots in some ways would be helpful with basic questions that an individual has, however it won't be as useful for detailed answer.
Neutral	Chatbots are generally just the same as FAQs or help centres, which all websites have so I don't think they help to engage with a business that much. They are also generally unhelpful.
Neutral	I'd rather an actual human.
Neutral	It's there as an option.
Neutral	Useful tool if needed, but would prefer a real person or FAQ page. Not going to affect my engagement with the company.
Neutral	They are sometimes unhelpful and likely to crash.



'Other:' [from above graph]

Email

Email

Email

Email

Email

Would rather have email, I think businesses responding here is unprofessional and not as useful because it is difficult to save this as evidence of the engagement, which is something I like to have.

SMS message

SMS message

Built in messaging app

Voicemail

Discord

What annoys you the most about any customer journey?
When they give feedback not related to the issue or no feedback at all
A lot of companies seem to have terrible customer service, even to the point where they go out of their way to discourage you from filing a complaint to avoid having to fix the issue.
Misinformation and the lack of ability for the company to take responsibility
NOT BEING LISTENED TO!!!!
No response back
When somebody is not understanding
Repetition of events
When they refer you to someone else and you have to explain the problem again
Getting constantly redirected
Being passed around, and slow speeds
Being passed around different people
This generally applies to chatting with a customer care staff member rather than talking with them either via email or live chat, but a lot of the time the message you are trying to get across isn't fully understood by the staff member, so it takes a lot longer to get a solution to your problem.
The amount of time and referrals that you go through before getting an answer and then that answer not solving the issue.
Very long waiting periods
How long it takes to sort the problem the majority of the time
The amount of time they sometimes can take unreasonably. Especially long phone call hold times.
The waiting
Slow replies from the business
Long waits
Waiting times for calling, but it is understood that it can't be instant
Waiting periods between different parts of the journey
Online, many companies use bots which is understandable however they are generally pretty unhelpful and to speak to a real person is rare. I find this quite annoying.
Hold music
How uncomfortable you feel when asking for help
Having an issue
Unnecessary subliminal marketing

And what appeals to you the most, when you're interacting with a business as a customer?
When a business is very helpful and send clear and fast replies
Fast response time and a simple journey to fixing my issue, for example not being transferred repeatedly. A lot of the time companies have an automated system to guide you to who can help you, but I think it's quite limited and often leads to being transferred, which causes longer waiting times. It could be useful to have a real person transfer you to a specific department from the beginning.
Having my questions answered with high quality, relevant answers.
Understanding. This makes a company very appealing.
Easy access to all the information about a product or service.
Acknowledgement of their actions and your own needs, whilst also acting on your feedback.
Good response and quick turnaround
When they are willing to listen and act upon what you say, negotiating some sort of compromise, instead of simply rejecting a request because it isn't in their customer service guidebook. I also like it when they don't shove questionnaires in your face but give the option to give feedback if necessary.
Making sure that I know what is going on, and that I'm not being left in the dark by the company
Smooth operation and a general well-run feel
Human contact
An active conversation where both parties are engaged
When they can understand what you want and are willing to help
Fast replies and being considerate.
Quick answers
Quick action that they think and reasonable/helpful advice that is useful to the situations.
Good Communication is very helpful, both online and in person.
Being fast to reply and listen to any problems
How available you are
When the business is very professional and respectful and listen in full to what you have to say.
good staff and customer relationships
quick communication and feedback
Smooth journey without any disruptions or annoyances
Easy to interact
Them replying quickly and for the person replying to be able to solve the issue without referring.
Well worded. Lack of "corporate speech" in favour of words a regular customer could process easier

Appendix 3: Plenary of key feedback from each breakout room

Group 1 (Scenario 1: utilities emergency)
In an emergency, what would we want and expect from them? Transparency, reassurance, understanding and accountability. We want to know what the business is doing for us in that scenario.
“None of us like to complain” on the phone – not all young people want to use the telephone contact if it’s just to complain, due to confrontation.
Everyone seems very happy to complain to their friends, or on Twitter, but not directly to the business. This reiterates power of word of mouth.
Group 2 (Scenario 1: utilities emergency)
People who are more vulnerable need additional and specific customer journey and extra resources. Is it a positive thing for a business to be seen to address vulnerable or isolated customers first; it shows the character of the company, and that they can deal effectively with all different types of situations.
Group 3 (Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption)
Compensation: how a company should compensate depends on the issue raised and the disruption caused, whether it was planned or unplanned, but acknowledgement and accountability are key.
How the customer can feed back to a company should be varied and effective in the ways the customer is engaged. Realistically a lot of customers may not take the time to explain their experience in full.
Group 4 (Scenario 2: Wi-Fi disruption)
Do we prefer chats with robots or people? Different preferences, depending on the scenario. Welcome a mixture of tech and real people: customer’s choice.
Observed that there tends to be a longer wait to speak to a person, and technology customer service options can be quicker and easier. So if it’s an easy problem better to go to technology, but if it’s something that needs explaining in more detail, a person customer service operative is preferable.

Appendix 4: YIC 2023 Session 2 feedback form remaining responses

1. Do you feel that you were given enough information about this topic?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	9
Agree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



2. Do you feel that you had the opportunity to contribute to the discussions in this session?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

Strongly agree	13
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



3. Do you feel that your ideas were listened to?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

Strongly agree	12
Agree	10
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



4. Was it clear what NGN wanted from the YIC in this session?

[More Details](#)

Strongly agree	10
Agree	10
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	1



5. Did you like the longer breakout rooms and feedback?

[More Details](#)

Yes	13
No	2
I don't mind	11



How did you feel about the scenario-based format of this session?

I like it as we can apply knowledge from situations we have probably experienced before.

This session was quite interesting. I only had one idea to add to my breakout room, but when listening to other groups tell their ideas, afterward I found it helpful because I had a few thoughts on what they were saying.

Worked well. Perhaps if we had the prompt written on our screen it would have made it easier, as we could keep referring to it.

I like the idea; it helps to put everything into perspective.

Very positive.

Scenarios bring a perspective into view, how someone might handle a situation and what they want to gain from it. For bringing change into a company, scenarios would be more beneficial after change has been implemented, to test the resources available.

It allowed for a greater amount of ideas based on scenario stimulus

It was good to get started, but we soon moved away from the scenarios, meaning they could be argued to be ineffective.

Groups got different scenarios, each group was allowed to think in detail about a specific scenario and how we would feel as customers, as well as what we would want.

Gives a more specific idea of what to say

I liked it a lot, the monitors of the rooms could have given some people more support but overall it was productive.

It was good

I quite liked it and everyone was able to say something different.

I enjoyed it because instead of us just giving ideas, it allowed us to put the ideas into a scenario.

It was useful and well informative.

I enjoyed talking about it.

It was easier to feedback

I liked it more as it gave context

I liked it, it felt more in depth and interesting to talk about

Good, it helps start the conversation

I think it was good but very concentrated so we ended up going off the scenario so we could discuss other aspects of the topic.

It gives us more room to be creative and come up with real-world solutions to problems

[Extracted May 2022; sample size 28]