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29 September 2016

David Horne  
Managing Director  
Virgin Trains East Coast

Dear David

**Review of East Coast Mainline Company Limited (Trading as Virgin Trains East Coast) Disabled People's Protection Policy (Condition 5 of your Station Licence and GB Statement of National Regulatory Conditions: Passenger)**

Thank you for providing updated versions of your Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) documents for review. A copy of your revised DPPP is attached to this letter, and will be published on our website along with a copy of this letter.

I confirm that we have reviewed your DPPP against the 2009 Guidance "*How to write your Disabled People's Protection Policy: A guide for Train and Station Operators*" (the Guidance) and can confirm that your revised DPPP meets the requirements of Condition 5 of your station licence and GB Statement of National Regulatory Conditions: Passenger (SNRP).

We welcome your commitment to provide a free upgrade to the first class wheelchair space, if available, for the passenger and a companion when a standard class wheelchair space is not available to book, which we believe will have a positive impact for passengers.

Since your DPPP was originally submitted to ORR we have had several exchanges in the intervening period in order to bring about the changes required to make it fully compliant with the Guidance. We also sought views on your policies from Transport Focus, London TravelWatch and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

The main areas where you clarified your policies during our review were:

- **Passenger assistance:** The guidance states that operators are not expected to require passengers to give more than 24 hours' notice for booking assistance. You have now clarified that passengers are not required to give more than 24 hours' notice for assistance bookings.
- **Online booking:** The guidance states that operators are expected to provide passengers with an electronic means to book assistance. You have now confirmed that passengers can book online using your own online booking form.



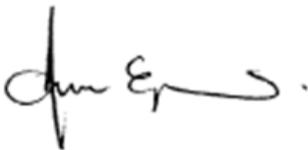
- **Provide assistance when booked in advance:** The guidance states that operators are expected to provide assistance, when booked in advance, at any station during the hours that trains are scheduled to serve that station. The assistance that TOCs provide will be dependent upon the needs of the passenger, and may include alternatives to providing staff (such as accessible taxis), if this is acceptable to the passenger but TOCs should be mindful of allowing passengers to make as much of their journey by rail as possible. You have clarified that in the case that your trains call at a station managed by another operator, and this station is unstaffed when a passenger requiring assistance wishes to use it, you will discuss with the passenger what help they require and make the appropriate arrangements. We note that it is the responsibility of Virgin Trains East Coast to ensure that the assistance requested by your passengers is provided.
- **Luggage:** The guidance states that operators must ensure that luggage assistance is provided when booked in advance. You have clarified that assistance with luggage will be provided where it has been booked in advance.
- **Alternative formats:** The guidance states that operators must commit to providing copies of all documents comprising their DPPP, including those in alternative formats, to passengers on request within seven working days. You have now provided this commitment in your document.

You have informed us that, following a consultation with user groups, you intend to stop advertising the 1st class wheelchair spaces on your HST services due to the limited size of the wheelchair space available. You have made this clear in your DPPP and have also committed to changing the booking process on your website with immediate effect. Please could you provide us with confirmation when this change is complete, given the 14 week booking period you have in place.

It is important that passengers have access to accurate, consistent and up-to-date information when planning journeys. You have confirmed that the information on the Stations Made Easy database is up-to-date and fully accurate, and that it matches the information on stations annexed to your DPPP.

In addition to this, please note that we expect all supporting information, such as that provided on your website and printed documents, to be consistent with the information provided in your DPPP.

Yours sincerely,



**Annette Egginton**



# Making Rail Accessible

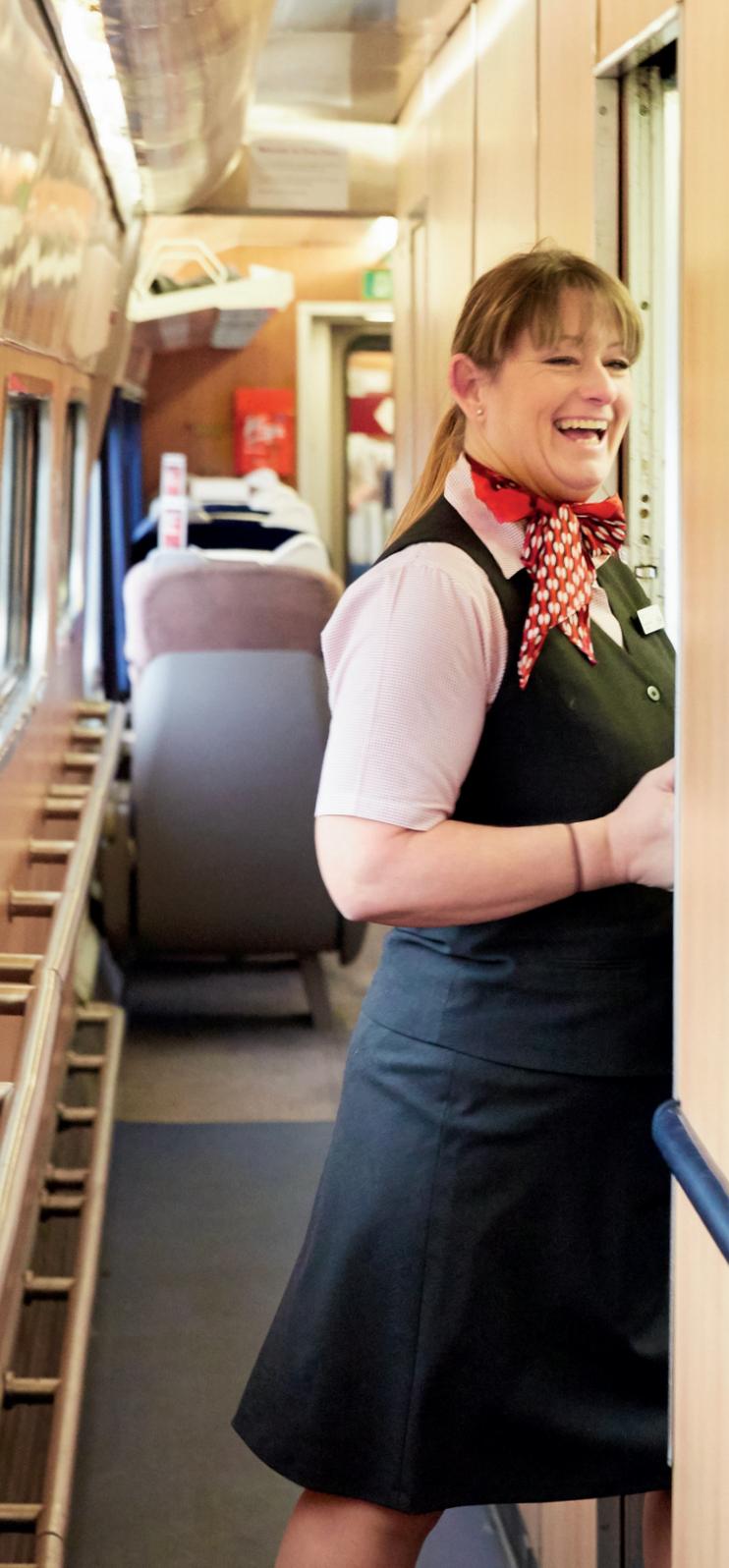
Helping older and disabled customers on our east coast route.

September 2016



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## Policy summary

Virgin Trains East Coast ('Virgin Trains'), is a joint venture between the Stagecoach and Virgin Groups.

This document gives details of our services and facilities, how we provide them and the standards of service that can be expected, as well as how we help if services are disrupted.

It forms part of our overall Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) that helps us meet the needs of customers who are disabled or whose mobility is impaired. Our trains are for everyone and we'll do everything we can to make each journey relaxing and enjoyable.

Our routes link London King's Cross with the East Midlands, West Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, Lincoln, Doncaster, Leeds, Hull, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness. These provide for a range of long-distance journeys by direct, through-trains, which are a significant benefit to people with disabilities.

We manage 11 stations:

Berwick-upon-Tweed, Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, York, Wakefield Westgate, Doncaster, Retford, Newark North Gate, Grantham and Peterborough.

The rest of the stations on our routes are managed by other Train Operating Companies and Network Rail and are shown on our route map at the end of this document.

We also have ticket offices and/or customer service teams at London King's Cross, Stevenage, Leeds and Edinburgh Waverley to help you and answer any questions.

We use Diesel (HST) and Electric (Intercity 225) trains. If you'd like to know more about these please have a look on page 15.

# Assistance for customers

## Booking assistance

- a) For information about our services, including any changes due to engineering work, and the services available at the stations at which they stop, please call our Journey Care team on:
- Phone: **03457 225 225\***  
(select option 4 then option 4)
- Text Relay: **18001 03457 225 225**
- Opening times: Monday to Saturday 08.00-22.00  
Sunday 10.00 and 20.00  
(Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day)
- If you'd like to make an assistance booking on Boxing Day just give National Rail Enquiries a call on **03457 48 49 50** and you'll be directed to available call centres.
- b) The Journey Care team also offers travel information and advice about the most convenient and accessible stations for you to use, lets you buy a ticket for your whole journey, and can arrange help through the national Passenger Assist computer system. This includes reserving appropriate seats and wheelchair spaces onboard, as well as help with getting on and off trains.
- c) If possible, please book assistance 24 hours before your journey, or further ahead if you can, and let us know any specific requirements you may have.
- d) You can also arrange assistance online through [virgintraineastcoast.com/assist](http://virgintraineastcoast.com/assist)
- e) As well as our 11 managed stations we call at 42 others and levels of accessibility and assistance available can vary a lot from one to another. With this in mind we and others in the rail industry give information to Knowledgebase, a national database which has details of accessibility at stations and helpline numbers for you to use. This database is available through National Rail Enquiries, our Journey Care team, [virgintraineastcoast.com](http://virgintraineastcoast.com), our ticket offices and at stations.

- f) Knowledgebase is constantly refreshed so that information on the Station Journey Planner is up-to-date, and you can be made aware of any limitations or temporary restrictions. This covers:
- Stations which have a physical constraint that prevents some disabled people from using it
  - Significant temporary work being carried out that affects station accessibility
  - Changes to stations that would make them temporarily inaccessible (eg. when facilities such as lifts or toilets at stations are out of order)
  - Facilities on trains for disabled customers that are unavailable, as far as this is reasonably practicable
- g) All our onboard staff will look out for customers with specific needs and offer help if necessary, including getting off the train, whether you've booked assistance or not.
- h) If your hearing, vision or mobility is impaired, please tell our team on the train as soon as you can - for example when tickets are checked. If you need assistance to use the train's facilities, or if particular help would be needed in an emergency, please tell us this when you call our Journey Care team before you travel.
- i) Our trains serve both staffed and unstaffed stations and levels of accessibility can vary a lot. When you call our Journey Care team they will advise on the facilities available at the stations we serve, help you plan your journey, explain how we can help you and also book assistance or make arrangements so that you can complete your journey.
- j) If you've booked assistance at a station we manage, we will provide assistance off the train when the train arrives. At terminal stations we aim to help you within 5 minutes of the train's arrival.
- k) If you have booked assistance through Passenger Assist and it is not provided at a station we manage, we will refund 100% of the cost of your single ticket or 50% of the cost if your ticket is a return. To claim a refund please complete an online form at the following link: [virgintraineastcoast.com/enquiry](http://virgintraineastcoast.com/enquiry)

## Assistance which has not been booked

\*Calls cost no more than calls to geographic numbers (01 or 02) and must be included in inclusive minutes and discount schemes in the same way. Calls from landlines are typically charged up to 9p per minute; calls from mobiles typically cost between 3p and 40p per minute. Calls from landlines and mobiles are included in free call packages.

We understand that assistance might be needed for journeys you might have to make at very short notice, or that you may not be in a position to tell us in advance what time you're planning to travel. In these circumstances, we'll do everything we can to provide the care and assistance needed and if we can't guarantee this, we'll always tell you why. If you are travelling with us and will need help getting off the train and haven't arranged this in advance, please let our team on the train know and they will arrange help for you.

## Alternative accessible transport

If you can't travel from one of our stations because it's inaccessible to you (eg. because of a physical constraint), we'll provide an appropriate alternative accessible service to take you to the nearest or most convenient accessible station from where you can continue your journey. Our Journey Care team will be happy to discuss these arrangements to meet your specific needs.

Very occasionally our trains are replaced by buses and if this is the case for you, we'll do everything we can to make sure accessible vehicles are available to keep you on the move. We can't always guarantee this so if we can't, alternative arrangements will be made (eg. arranging a suitable taxi) at no extra cost to you.

If getting in to or around one of our stations is affected by temporary lack of a facility, like a lift, we'll organise ways to take you to an alternative accessible entrance, such as an accessible taxi, or to the nearest appropriate accessible station, at no extra charge.

## Passenger information

Our teams at the station have information about station accessibility, meeting customers who have pre-arranged assistance, and details of the availability of facilities such as hearing loops and help points. We constantly review this information with staff at our stations to ensure the best possible pre-travel advice is available to you. You can also find all this information on the National Rail website at [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations)

Our database is updated by our Retail Support team to reflect any changes to accessibility, temporary or otherwise, at our 11 managed stations within 24 hours of notification.

Details of the normal accessibility of our 11 stations can be found on page 24. A list of the different types of trains and routes we use is available on page 15.

This information is updated as part of the annual review of this DPPP.

## Tickets and fares

You can use a Disabled Persons Railcard to get more affordable travel on our trains. This Railcard gives discounts to the holder and an accompanying adult on a wide range of our tickets.

Disabled customers who, due to their disability, haven't been able to buy a ticket before boarding the train, are entitled to buy one during the journey with any relevant reduction, including by a Railcard, without any restriction.

If you don't have a Railcard and are blind or partially sighted and travelling with a companion, or if you use a wheelchair, you can get a discount on Anytime tickets, which may be a cheaper option than other ticket types available for the journey. These discounts range from 34% to 50% off the price. Further details are available from [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)

## At the station



### **Station entrances**

We will not permanently close any entrance at our stations if this leads to a reduction in accessibility for disabled customers to any platform or facility, without having first consulted Transport Focus, London TravelWatch (as applicable) and disability groups, and without having obtained the consent of the Department for Transport.

We'll also take into account the needs of disabled people when restricting or temporarily closing access points at stations, for example during building works.

### **Aural and visual information**

We'll provide clear and consistent aural and visual information of train departures and other relevant messages through our customer information screens and public address systems available at all our stations, particularly in the event of delays or disruption.

### **Information points and displays**

At our larger stations, staffed information points are available for providing assistance.

We generally use these information points, or booking offices at smaller stations, for people who have booked assistance to meet our station staff. We tell customers when they book that these places are where they should go when they get to the station. These are detailed on page 24.

At our smaller stations our booking offices can provide information for you.

All information on the facilities, services and accessibility of all of our stations will be available to you at information points, station ticket offices, by phone and online.

Information on timetables, fares, connections and confirmation of any help arrangements that have been made through Passenger Assist will be available at information points.

Timetables, posters, information leaflets and other materials are placed so that both wheelchair users and

standing customers can obtain or have access to them.

Staff at our information points will give you with the most up-to-date information, including information on the services and facilities provided by other operators, as well as the accessibility of other transport available near the station.

All information about train services on display at stations is also available through our staffed information points.

At stations we provide real-time information about delays, diversions and any other events that may affect your journey as soon as we can.

### **Ticket machines**

Our self service ticket machines issue tickets for use with the Disabled Person's Railcard, and are accessible to wheelchair users.

### **Ticket gates**

All stations we manage which have automatic ticket gates, and any associated manual gates, will be kept open if there are no staff available to supervise them.

### **Luggage**

We can provide assistance with luggage at our stations and when boarding and alighting trains. To book this assistance, please contact our Journey Care team (see page 6 for contact details). This service is free of charge.

You can take up to three items of luggage onto the train unless there is not enough room for it, your luggage would obstruct doorways, gangways or corridors, or the loading or unloading of your luggage would cause delay to trains. Your luggage should not exceed 23kg in weight.

### **Left luggage**

Fully accessible Left Luggage facilities are available at London King's Cross, Leeds, York, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central, Aberdeen and Inverness.

### **Ramps**

Ramps are available at all of the stations we manage to

help you and your luggage get on and off our trains, as well as other staffed stations we serve. At unstaffed stations our Train Managers will be pleased to help you between the train and platform using the onboard ramps as long as arrangements are in place for you to get out of the station. If you do require use of these ramps or assistance at any station, we recommend that you contact our Journey Care team (please refer to page 6 for contact details).

### **Facilities provided by third parties**

We do everything we can to make sure that services and facilities provided by third parties at our stations are as accessible as possible, and will highlight to them any deficiencies that have been brought to our attention. We also make accessibility considerations a requirement of their contracts with us.

## **On the train**

### **Aural and visual information**

All of our trains have public address equipment and external facing signs in each coach showing the stops the train will call at. Our onboard team make clear announcements when delays occur, and before each station stop in plenty of time to enable you to be ready to get off the train comfortably. If you may have difficulty hearing such announcements please advise our onboard team at the earliest opportunity.

### **Seats on trains**

Seat reservations are strongly recommended for all journeys on our trains. They're free to make if you have a ticket for the journey. We aim to make seat reservations available around 12 weeks in advance of travel until two hours before the train starts its journey (or the previous evening in the case of trains leaving their starting station early in the morning).

We strongly recommend that wheelchair accommodation, priority seating and assistance onboard our trains or at stations is also booked in advance, as described on page 6. Arrangements can normally be made from up to 12 weeks before the date of travel.

All our trains have a wheelchair space and table in Standard and are located near an accessible toilet. Our electric trains

also have wheelchair spaces in First Class which are also near an accessible toilet. All of this accommodation can be reserved through Passenger Assist. The size of wheelchairs we can carry varies by train type:

**Electric train** up to 120cm long and 70cm wide

**Diesel train** 120cm long by 70cm wide in Standard

There is a wheelchair space in First Class on our diesel trains but you will only be able to access it if your wheelchair is less than 55cm wide or you can fold your wheelchair and transfer to the seat on the train. There is no accessible toilet in this coach. We recognise that most wheelchair users will not be able to access this coach and plans are in place to replace these trains from September 2018.

However, two of our diesel trains have a slightly different seating layout with the wheelchair space and accessible toilet being located in First Class rather than Standard. If you have reserved a wheelchair space on one of these trains, or require a wheelchair space and one is available, we'll upgrade you to the First Class space on the train for free. Our teams at the station can advise what type the train you are due to travel on will be.

If you'd like to reserve a Standard wheelchair space, and if all Standard spaces have already been booked, we'll upgrade you to the First Class space on the train, if it is available, for free. This upgrade is also available for one travelling companion.

The places on the train where wheelchair spaces can be found are clearly indicated on the outside of the train by the International wheelchair sign by the appropriate door.

All our trains have a number of 'priority' seats available for customers who require additional leg room. They also have designated seating for customers travelling with an assistance dog. You can reserve these seats through Passenger Assist.

### Mobility scooters

Unfortunately we can't accommodate many of the larger

outdoor runabout powered scooters due to problems with their weight, dimensions and manoeuvrability. If your scooter doesn't exceed the dimensions listed above for wheelchair users and can be manoeuvred into the wheelchair space (this is generally achievable for those with a triangular footprint) we should be able to help. Alternatively we can accommodate it, if it can be folded and carried as luggage. Further advice can be obtained from our Journey Care team.

### Information about our trains

All of our trains have dedicated spaces for customers whose mobility is impaired, including wheelchair spaces located within passenger accommodation next to an entrance door and near to an accessible toilet. There are two wheelchair spaces in Standard with another space in First Class on our electric trains. However, we operate two trains of a different style that just have one space in First Class. There is a wheelchair space in First Class on our diesel trains although access is restricted. Please see page 14 for further details. We also have onboard staff on every train.

Wheelchair accessible toilets are provided on all our trains, near to the wheelchair spaces.

All vehicles have powered interior doors.

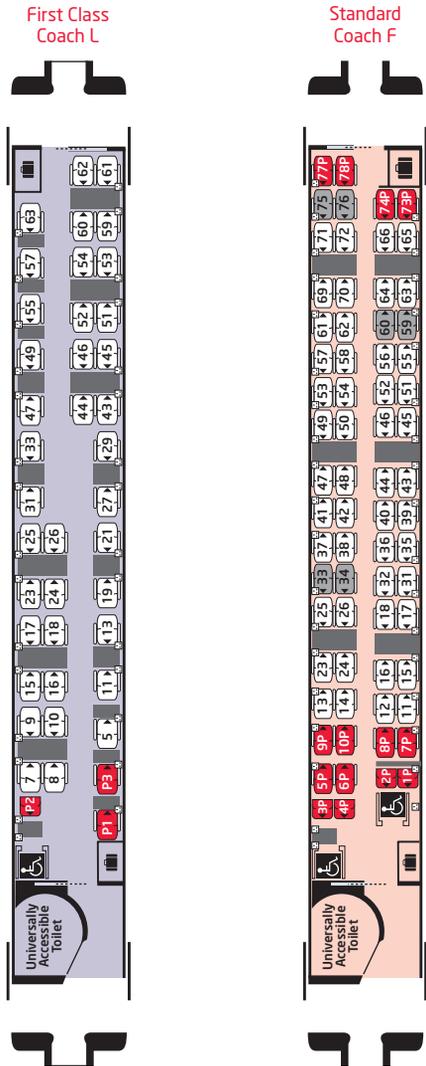
Most trains include a Foodbar which is open for the majority of the journey. Assistance dogs are allowed in all coaches on all of our trains. Our onboard staff will also be happy to serve disabled customers food and drinks at their seat if they're unable to visit the shop.

### Our Train Types

Station	Routes	Space for wheelchair	Wheelchair accessible toilet	Fully RVAR compliant
Diesel (HST)	All routes	Yes	Yes	No
Electric (Intercity 225)	All routes other than those to/from Inverness, Aberdeen, Hull, Harrogate and Lincoln	Yes	Yes	No

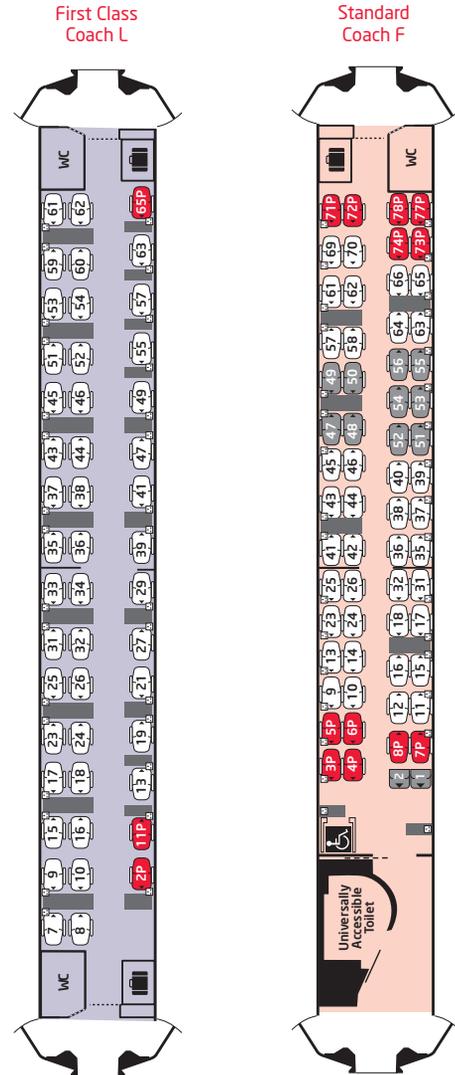
## Facilities for disabled passengers on our Electric\* trains

All seats have fold-up armrests to make it easier to get in and out. "Priority" labelled seats with additional legroom and fold-up tables are situated near doors in all coaches. There is one wheelchair space in First Class and two in Standard all with companion seating. Assistance buttons can be found adjacent to wheelchair spaces and in accessible toilets.



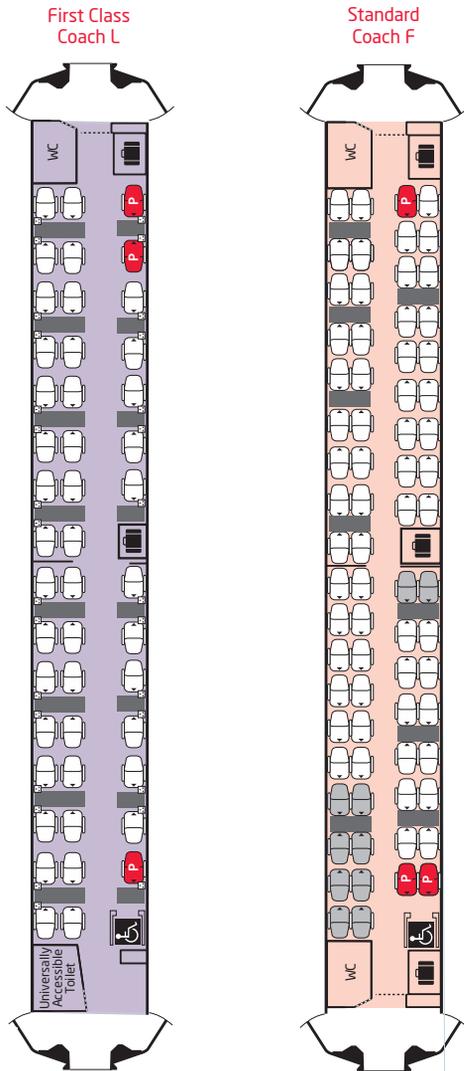
## Facilities for disabled passengers on our Diesel\* trains with standard seating layout

All seats have fold-up armrests to make it easier to get in and out. "Priority" labelled seats with additional legroom and fold-up tables are situated near doors in all coaches. There is one wheelchair space in First Class and two in Standard all with companion seating. Assistance buttons can be found adjacent to wheelchair spaces and in the accessible toilet (please note access to the First Class wheelchair space is restricted. Please see page 14 for further details).



## Facilities for disabled passengers on our Diesel\* trains with a non-standard seating layout

There is one wheelchair space in First Class and one in Standard both with companion seating. Please note that there is no accessible toilet in Standard on this train.



## Making connections

### Connections to other train services

We'll help you make your connections to other trains when requested, whether they're our trains or not.

We'll make sure we give you sufficient notice aurally and visually if platforms change at short notice, and will give any assistance necessary to any disabled customers.

### Intermodal connections

We'll help you between trains and other modes of transport within the boundaries of our stations.

We specify in our contracts with taxi and bus companies that provisions are made for disabled customers whenever possible, and we prioritise companies with accessible vehicles in our negotiations. Staff at our stations can help disabled customers to arrange their own accessible taxi where necessary. We also have information posters at our stations that give details of other transport operators which serve the station.

## Disruption to facilities and services

Our onboard team has details of all customers who have reserved accommodation or arranged mobility assistance through Passenger Assist. Our Journey Care team receive automated updates on changes to a train's itinerary in response to operational contingencies. When such changes are made, the team will review the Passenger Assist information and take appropriate action.

All onboard staff are encouraged to provide the highest levels of customer service and are empowered to resolve appropriate issues on the spot. We also have dedicated Customer Service Controllers located in our Control office who can make arrangements for individual customers during disruption to journeys,

In the event of serious delay we focus on the requirements of customers with disabilities or impaired mobility. We encourage anyone requiring help or advice who hasn't booked assistance in advance to make themselves known to the onboard staff.

All our onboard teams have smart devices available with various journey planning tools to help you re-arrange your journey should your plans change for any reason. The teams are also regularly in touch with our Control office.

In the event that facilities on trains which materially affect disabled customers are out of use (eg. accessible toilets), we will do everything we can to let customers know before joining the train.

Where trains are replaced by other transport, we will give aural and visual information to enable disabled people to find the substitute transport, and provide staff assistance where required.

If customers have booked assistance in advance through Passenger Assist and provided contact details, we will aim to contact them if the service is seriously delayed or cancelled. When doing so, we will also offer to re-book the assistance if required.

If a train changes platform after a disabled person has been helped onboard, staff will return to assist them to re-board at the new platform.

Where services or facilities for disabled customers at our stations are altered or removed we'll provide reasonable replacement services or facilities that are accessible.

We have written procedures for our station and onboard staff to follow in the event of an emergency which deal specifically with the arrangements for dealing with disabled customers.

## Contact us

Please let us know what you think about any aspect of our service, including information about facilities which are not working. You can get in touch through any member of our station or onboard teams, at [virgintraineastcoast.com](http://virgintraineastcoast.com), by phone, email, or post.

Website: [virgintraineastcoast.com/contactus](http://virgintraineastcoast.com/contactus)

Telephone: 0345 7225 333\*  
(available during normal office hours)

Email: [customers@virgintraineastcoast.com](mailto:customers@virgintraineastcoast.com)

By post to: Virgin Trains East Coast  
Freepost RTUH-TUGH-GCL2  
Cramlington  
NE23 1WG

Textphone: 18001 03457 225 225  
(available during normal office hours)

Normally our Customer Solutions team will respond to customers in writing, and if requested to do so will reply in alternative formats such as large print, by telephone, or in audio format.

## Alternative formats

Copies of the full Disabled People's Protection Policy are available for free from our Customer Solutions team, at the above address. The Policy can be obtained in alternative formats on request, within 7 working days, such as in large print or audio format. A copy is also available electronically through [virgintraineastcoast.com](http://virgintraineastcoast.com)

## Station accessibility information

The present position regarding access at our own stations can be found in the Appendix of this document. All stations we manage have Secure Stations Accreditation, awarded by the Department for Transport.



\*Calls cost no more than calls to geographic numbers (01 or 02) and must be included in inclusive minutes and discount schemes in the same way. Calls from landlines are typically charged up to 9p per minute; calls from mobiles typically cost between 3p and 40p per minute. Calls from landlines and mobiles are included in free call packages.

## Station facilities at stations managed by Virgin Trains East Coast

All of the stations listed below are staffed during the times when trains are calling, have Customer Information screens and Public Address systems, seating, hearing loops within booking offices, and meeting points. They all have a taxi rank, and an accessible set down area.

Station	Step free access	Step free access note	Low level ticket counter	Number of waiting rooms	Refreshment facility	Wheelchair accessible toilet	Car park spaces	Blue Badge car park spaces	Designated meeting points at Virgin Trains stations
Peterborough	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	6	Yes	All platforms	1186	28	Customer Information Point, main concourse
Grantham	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	2	Yes	Platform 1	796	17	Customer Service Office, Platform 1
Newark North Gate	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	5	Yes	All platforms	276	7	Ticket Office, main concourse
Retford	Part	Access to Platform 3 on low level is via a stepped footbridge or a narrow crossing which requires staff assistance	Yes	2	Yes	Platform 1	101	3	Ticket Office, main concourse
Doncaster	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	4	Yes	Platforms 3 & 8	573	25	Customer Information Point, main concourse (or ticket office outside 08.15-18.00)
Wakefield Westgate	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	2	Yes	All platforms	900	19	Customer Information Point, main concourse
York	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	6	Yes	Platforms 2 & 9	634	12	Customer Information Point, main concourse
Darlington	Full	Access to platforms from Victoria Road station entrance is via steep ramps	Yes	1	Yes	Main concourse	382	8	Customer Information Point, Platform 4
Durham	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	2	Yes	All platforms	358	11	Customer Information Point, Platform 1 or 2
Newcastle	Part	Access to platforms 5 to 8 is via a steep ramp	Yes	4	Yes	Two on main concourse and another on Platform 4	481	20	Customer Information Point, main concourse
Berwick-upon-Tweed	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	3	Yes	Main concourse and Platform 1	124	5	Ticket Office, main concourse

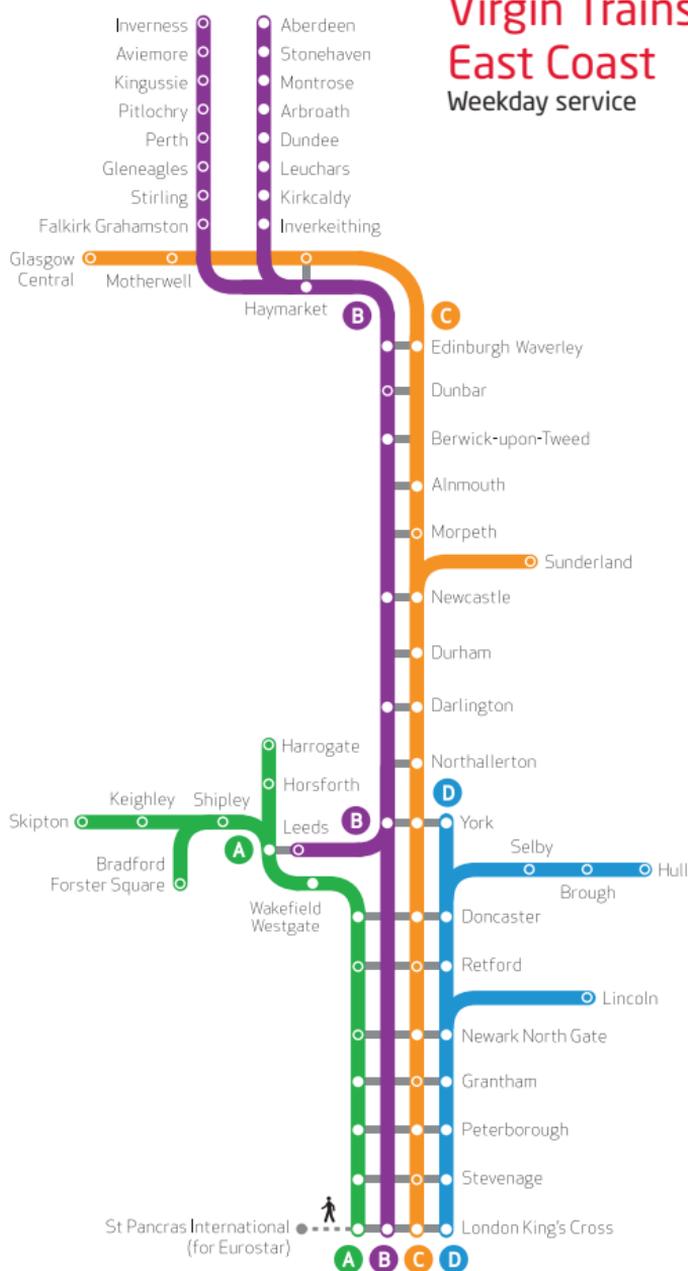
## Station facilities at stations managed by Network Rail

All of the stations listed below are staffed during the times when trains are calling, have Customer Information screens and Public Address systems, seating, hearing loops within booking offices, and meeting points. They all have a taxi rank, and an accessible set down area.

Station	Step free access	Step free access note	Low level ticket counter	Number of waiting rooms	Refreshment facility	Wheelchair accessible toilet	Car park spaces	Blue Badge car park spaces
London King's Cross	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	Seating in main concourse,	Yes	Four in main concourse	322 Car park	12
Leeds	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	6	Yes	Main concourse Platforms 8 & 12	299	14
Edinburgh Waverley	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	Seating in main foyer (covered)	Yes	Accessed from main concourse	617	16
Glasgow Central	Full	Lifts to all platforms	Yes	1	Yes	Two in main concourse	555	6



## Virgin Trains East Coast Weekday service



- A** Leeds services and West Yorkshire services
  - B** Edinburgh express services (calling at selected stations only) and North of Scotland services
  - C** Edinburgh services (calling at most major stations) and Glasgow Central services
  - D** Newark / York services (calling at all major stations) and Lincoln / Hull services
- Four or more services per day on this route  
 Fewer than four services per day on this route

Weekend services operate over similar routes as shown above. Please check timetables before travel.

# Making Rail Accessible

Guide to policies and practices on our east coast route.

September 2016



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## Our strategy

We'll maintain and improve current standards of accessibility of our services for people with disabilities, or whose mobility is impaired. We continually strive to deliver a high standard of care to all our customers through our staff and our use of the Passenger Assist booking system. We will prioritise plans and policies that improve accessibility according to value for money in terms of customer service benefits to all customers.

Details of our plans for improving access and services are explained in section 4.

## Management arrangements

This policy is in compliance with the Passenger Operator's and Station Operator's Licences held by East Coast Main Line Company Limited. It has been approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the Customer Experience Board of Virgin Trains East Coast. It will be formally reviewed every year by this board and the ORR.

Protecting and improving access to rail services for customers with disabilities is integral to our business strategy. Our Customer Experience Director is accountable for the delivery, development and promotion of accessibility and will ensure it is included across our business processes. This includes the development of business plans, the specification and delivery of projects and as part of our review of business performance.

Through training and briefings all managers and staff are made aware of their responsibilities to help disabled customers.

Our Head of Government Partnership Working will make sure our commitments to this policy are carried out through internal checks and regular review of feedback received from disabled customers. We'll consult with the ORR when we believe that these commitments are not being met.

## Monitoring and evaluation

We aim to provide easy access and excellent customer service for all customers. We regularly review our arrangements and services and will continue to introduce improvements as quickly as is reasonably practicable. We recognise that sometimes small changes, such as clear signs or the clarity and audibility of announcements, can make a significant improvement to the journey of all customers, especially those with disabilities.

We welcome customer comments and will take these into consideration in reviewing and implementing this policy. We'll consider customer feedback in developing spending plans where this suggests specific enhancements that would improve accessibility of our stations or trains.

Where a customer has made a complaint about the service they have received we'll investigate with the responsible line manager and appropriate action will be taken where necessary. We will also consider appropriate compensation depending on the circumstances.

As well as taking direct feedback from customers, we also take note of research findings from surveys undertaken by third parties such as Transport Focus or the ORR.

We will provide a report to the ORR each year explaining our progress towards meeting the objectives within this policy. Any problems with any aspects of the policy will be raised with the ORR as they arise.

## Access improvements

We'll adopt the services, standards and guidance in the Department for Transport's "Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations: A Code of Practice" (The Code), with regard to activities within our direct control, and also take into account requirements within the Equality Act. We will work with other rail industry partners where complementary activities such as station services are supplied under contract. This policy will be reviewed when updates to The Code are made by the Department for Transport (DfT).

If dispensation from The Code or PRM TSI is needed for rolling stock refurbishment, or new, renewed or improved facilities and services on trains or at stations, this will be sought at an early stage in the design process, but only after every effort has been made to meet the standards in The Code and also the PRM TSI.

We've made substantial improvements to accessibility at stations we manage. The facilities and arrangements currently provided for disabled customers are detailed in the publication "Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Customers".

We have implemented a programme of minor works to deliver improvements in accessibility at all the stations we manage. This has covered areas such as improved access to station entrances, new customer information offices and the installation of tactile maps.

## Improvements Delivered in the Year April 2015 – March 2016

Some examples of accessibility improvements made at our stations during the 12 months to March 2016 include:

- installing RNIB 'Maps for All' at stations we manage to improve independent wayfinding both within the station and from the station to key points of interest within the communities we serve
- installed dropped kerbs and a raised safe crossing outside Peterborough station
- installed additional perch seating at a number of stations we manage
- the installation of three additional customer information offices that provide weather proof waiting facilities for customers waiting for staff assistance, low level information counters covered by audio induction loops and are accessed through automatic doors.

## Schemes Involving Third Parties

Where third parties contribute funds towards station improvements we'll make sure that accessibility improvements form part of these schemes. For example, the customer information office we installed at Durham was part funded by the local authority.

## Future Plans

The minor works schemes for 2016-17 have been consulted, and approved, Transport Focus. We are currently awaiting approval from the DfT to go ahead so the list of schemes is not finalised. However, we are hoping to deliver an ambitious programme of works that will include the following:

- additional RNIB Maps for All
- additional seating and improved signage
- the installation of safe walking routes between designated car park bays and station entrances where these do not already exist.

## Working with others

Many of our customers start or finish their journeys with other Train Operating Companies, or at stations operated by other companies. We'll liaise with these operators to review interchange arrangements for all customers and improve them where we can.

We've consulted with the Disabled People's Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, and will continue to consult with them and the ORR when proposing changes to this policy. It is a living document, which will be reviewed and updated as necessary. It will be submitted to the ORR annually from the date of approval and no changes will be made without the agreement of the ORR.

We also liaise with a number of disabled organisations from across our route such as Newcastle Disability Forum, DIAL Peterborough and the National Rail Accessibility Forum. Suggestions for improvement are reviewed by our Customer Experience Board or our Property team for feedback solely concerning the built environment.

## Staff training

Disability awareness is a part of our staff customer service training programmes and concerns the assistance we can provide for any disabled person rather than focusing on the impairment. The best practice training materials produced by a range of national disability training organisations under instruction from ATOC are extensively used to form the basis of the training we provide.

Other staff, including our management team, are also briefed to improve disability awareness. We also provide training in using accessibility equipment such as ramps and wheelchairs and also in skills for our staff to better assist customers who may have difficulty communicating. Details of our staff training, including the numbers of people trained, will be provided to the ORR annually or as otherwise requested.

As an example of progress being made, in 2015-16 we rolled out a disability awareness training programme for all of our 1700+ frontline employees. Further, all staff in our Journey Care team completed an e-learning training package produced by ATOC concerning the Passenger Assist service. This was in addition to the more general training given to all those handling calls in our Journey Care team such as in customer service and the importance of clear communication with customers who may experience difficulties in hearing, speaking or understanding our agents.

## Emergency procedures

We recognise that disabled customers may need extra assistance at times of train or station evacuation. We have written procedures for our station and on board staff to follow in such circumstances that deal specifically with assisting disabled customers.

Procedures vary from station to station, by type of train, the nature of the emergency and by location of incident. Our teams will assist in the most appropriate way for the safety of all customers, including those with a disability. As a general principle, we will not evacuate customers with a significant mobility impairment unless in a life-threatening situation.

## Communications strategy

We make our Disabled People's Protection Policy available through our website and display the customer facing part of the policy (Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers) at staffed stations where our trains call. We will also circulate the policy to the disability groups we meet from time to time.

## Telephone

Where provided, such as when contacting our Customer Solutions or Journey Care teams, our textphones have a dedicated telephone number. Recorded information provides an option to be connected to an operator.

## Websites

Our website takes into consideration the needs of disabled people with a variety of impairments. We have worked with The Shaw Trust to improve the accessibility of the website and were consequently accredited to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 as a result of this work.

We promote the availability of the assistance service to our disabled customers through this website.

## Signage

We work with local authorities to make sure that directions to our stations are clearly signposted and we'll address any deficiencies with the relevant local authority.

Where signage improvements are planned within our stations, we will take account of the good practice guide published by the RSSB into Wayfinding at Stations.

## Car parking

At our stations the level of legitimate usage of 'blue badge' holder car parking spaces will be monitored regularly, as well as the level of usage by motorists who do not hold these badges. Where misuse of blue badge spaces is discovered, a suitable notice will be placed on the vehicle advising of the relevant byelaw being contravened.

We will review requirements and, if legitimate demand regularly exceeds the available 'blue badge' spaces, we will provide extra spaces if we can. Any new disabled parking spaces or spaces that are re-lined will be compliant with the dimensions specified in the Code of Practice.