

OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

# Improving assisted travel



What you said and what happens next

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# Introduction



The **Office of Rail and Road (ORR)** has been looking into how **Assisted Travel** is working.

We asked people what they thought.



This document explains what people said and what we plan to do next.



**Assisted travel** is the help that disabled people can get so they can travel by rail.



The **Office of Rail and Road (ORR)** is responsible for:

- Making sure the railways are safe
- Making sure the railways are fair to everyone
- Checking that the railways are run properly



We had over 800 replies to their consultation questionnaire.



Most were from people who wanted to have a guard on all trains. They didn't want trains to only have only a driver and no other staff.



Over a hundred were from people who only left their name and address on the form. They didn't answer any of the questions.



A hundred were from individual people.



Over 20 were from disability campaign groups or charities



12 were from rail companies and industry groups.

# Knowing about the schemes



**1. The ORR asked:** How can rail companies improve the way information about assisted travel is provided in stations?



Some organisations said that there should be adverts on TV and Social Media to help people to know about assisted travel.



Other organisations said that information at stations had to be clear and put in a place where people will see it.



One train company is giving passengers cards with information about assisted travel.



It is difficult to keep printed information up-to-date.

It is easier to give up-to-date information online.



## 2. The ORR asked: Are there any reasons why information should not be in plain English?

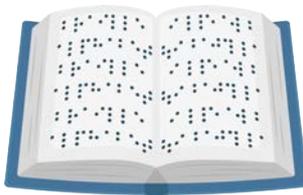


Many people say that documents should be written in plain english.



Many of the organisations said that documents should also be available in:

- Easy Read



- Braille



- Large print



We may have to change our policy for disabled people to make sure that information is properly accessible.



### 3. The ORR asked: What should railway companies do to make their websites more accessible?



Rail companies said that they were working to make their websites more accessible.



Transport for London said that they are planning to put information about the number of steps at stations onto their website to help people who have difficulty with walking.



Some disability organisations said that websites should only have the information people needed. Lots of adverts made it harder for people to find the right information.



**Social media** allows people to share information online using apps like Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.



**4. The ORR asked:** How can rail companies use **social media** to tell more people about assisted travel?



Most people thought that social media was a good way to tell people about assisted travel.



But people also said that it is not enough on it's own. Companies should use other ways to give information as well as social media.



Disability charities said that it is good to use videos showing how assisted travel has helped people.



They also said to use social networks that are for disabled people like 'Special Friends'.



**5. The ORR asked:** Should rail companies give information about assisted travel with one click from their website's home page?



Some companies said that accessible information was available with one-click from the home page of their website.



Others said that the home page was already too cluttered.



Disability charities said that:

- Websites should not have drop down menus



- Companies should use the same ways of talking about assisted travel to avoid confusion



- There should be one website that gives information about assisted travel across the railway network



**6. The ORR asked:** Should people be able to book assisted travel at the same time that they book their ticket?



People wanted to be sure that assistance was available before they started to buy their tickets.



If people are using a disabled railcard, the company should assume they want assisted travel as well.



Most companies explained that there were many practical problems in booking assisted travel at the same time as booking tickets.



The plans for a new computer system for booking tickets should be linked to computer systems for booking assisted travel, so they work well together.



**7 and 8. The ORR asked:** How can rail companies tell more people about assisted travel schemes and work more closely with organisations that work with disabled people?



Rail companies said they already work with local groups and services, like doctors and libraries.



They also said they work with national and local disability organisations.



One difficulty is that there are many such organisations.



Another challenge for them is to reach more people who might like to travel by rail, but don't at the moment.

# Improving the schemes



**9. The ORR asked:** How might we improve the way information is shared?



Some companies say that there have been improvements.

Others say that the systems are out-of-date.



Some companies are developing apps for mobile phones to give up-to-date information.



A new computer system is coming soon and should help rail staff communicate better with each other and customers.



There are problems when an assisted journey moves between different rail companies and stations.



Blind and visually impaired passengers would like to be able to contact each station themselves.



**10. The ORR asked:** Would new rules for rail companies make the service better passengers who need the Assisted Travel Schemes?



Most people said that assistance for passengers is not good enough.



Most people said that it is important to have a guard on every train who can help passengers.



Many people thought that new rules for every rail company to follow would help.

Some people thought that not enough companies were keeping to the existing rules.



**11. The ORR asked:** Should rail companies refund the cost of the journey if assistance does not work properly?



Over half the rail companies already give compensation once they have investigated the problem.

Others say it depends on the specific needs of each person.



**12. The ORR asked:** Should rail companies write their own policies for giving passengers compensation when Assisted Travel Schemes don't



Many people thought that one scheme for the whole country would be best.



Some of the rail companies wanted to be able to write their own policies.

# Staff training



**13. The ORR asked:** How can different railway companies give the same good training to their staff?



Most people wanted the same training about assisted travel for staff in all rail companies.



Some disability charities said that the training should include work on all disability types, including hidden disabilities.



Some disability organisations said that disabled people should be involved in the training.



Some companies said that the training should be face-to-face, not just online.



**14. The ORR asked:** How often should disabilities training take place?



People said that staff should get training every 1 to 2 years.



**15. The ORR asked:** Should there be rules about including disabilities training in staff training programmes?



Most organisations said that there should be rules to provide training on all types of disabilities.



**16. The ORR asked:** Should there be agreed standards of disability training for railway staff?



Most people said that an independent organisation should check that the training is right.

# Better checking



**17. The ORR asked:** What information should be collected about how the Assisted Travel Schemes are working?



The rail companies say that they already collect information about how the assisted travel schemes work.

Disability charities said that companies should collect information about:



- Passenger experiences - good and bad
- What help is given to book the assistance
- What happened when something went wrong
- What happens when you turn up at a station and want assisted travel





## 18. The ORR asked: How should we get better at checking that Assisted Travel Schemes are working well?

Some companies suggested ways to get more information about how the Assisted Travel Schemes are working.

Some people suggested:



- There should be groups of disabled people in each region to check on how the scheme is working



- There should be **mystery shoppers**



A **mystery shopper** is someone who is pretending to be an ordinary customer to check how good the service is.

The company does not know that the mystery shopper is checking on them.



**19. The ORR asked:** Are there any ways that we could use new computer systems to check how Assisted Travel Schemes are working?



Most people said that there is already new technology coming soon which should help with organising Assisted Travel.

# Next steps



We thank everyone who gave their views.



We are planning to write some new guidance around assisted travel schemes. A draft will be ready for people to look at in September 2018.



We will ask people what they think before writing the final guidance in December 2018.



We are setting up a group to help us with Assisted Travel. This will include people from some of the disability organisations.

# For more information

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