

John Larkinson
Chief Executive

26 July 2019

Dear ,

Guidance for operators on Accessible Travel Policies

Tomorrow, we will publish the new **Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance (the Guidance) for train and station operators**. This replaces the DfT's 2009 Guidance on how to write your Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). The new ATP Guidance can be found on our website: <https://orr.gov.uk/rail/consumers/what-we-do-for-consumers/improving-assisted-travel>.

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention the main changes to the Guidance, and to set out the process for submission and implementation of the revised ATP for your company.

I am grateful for the positive engagement from rail companies, including your own, as we developed and refined our proposals for the Guidance, and welcome the support given for our vision of a railway network where passengers can request and receive assistance with confidence and ease. We recognise the good work that many companies are already undertaking to improve assisted travel, and expect the new and updated Guidance requirements to build successfully upon these.

The development of the revised Guidance has also been informed by work with our Assisted Travel Advisory Group of experts from disability organisations, industry bodies, passenger champions and franchising authorities, as well as separate workshops with rail companies and disability organisations to discuss our proposals in detail. This is underpinned by the research we carried out in 2017 on passengers' experience and awareness of assisted travel.

Alongside the new Guidance we have published a summary of the responses to our November 2018 consultation 'Improving Assisted Travel', which set out our initial proposals to change the Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) Guidance, and an overview of our new requirements. We have also published a Regulatory Impact Assessment of these requirements and, in accordance with our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, an Equality Impact Assessment.

Revised Guidance requirements

In conjunction with our published advice to the Williams Rail Review on improving accessibility for passengers¹, the Guidance is the product of a significant body of work we have undertaken since 2017 to understand, and where necessary, improve the experience of assisted travel for passengers that use the service. The changes set out in the published Guidance reflect our ongoing commitment to securing those improvements. In particular, operators will now be required to:

- Introduce measures to improve the reliability of assisted travel, for both assistance booked in advance and when assistance is requested at the station, including the provision of up-to-date, more accessible journey planning information;
- Update and strengthen the disability awareness training provided to staff;
- Incrementally reduce the amount of notice passengers can be required to provide when requesting booked assistance, from the current maximum of 24 hours to 2 hours by 2022;
- Provide redress when assistance is not provided as booked; and
- Assess the risk of passengers not receiving the assistance they are entitled to when Driver Only or Driver Controlled Operation of trains is either introduced or included in the policy of new licence holders.

Approval and implementation of ATPs

It is important that passengers can benefit from the improvements to assisted travel as soon as possible. Therefore, we have developed an implementation plan that has taken into consideration each operator's individual circumstances and challenges, and we will provide proactive support and guidance to operators to help them to meet the timescales for submission of the ATP. The deadline for submission of the initial draft of []'s ATP is [].

Within the revised Guidance, we have set some specific deadlines for implementation of improvements to the provision of assistance for passengers, most notably:

- **Notice period:** the notice period operators ask passengers to provide when they request booked assistance is reduced, from the current 24 hours to:
 - 10pm the day before travel, by 1 April 2020;
 - 6 hours by 1 April 2021; and
 - 2 hours by 1 April 2022.
- **Reliability:** by June 2020, operators have either adopted new safeguarding procedures to ensure key information is passed between staff at boarding and alighting stations, informed by a planned trial, or have agreed with us the use of alternative technology that will deliver the same benefits, such as the forthcoming Passenger Assist mobile application.
- **Staff training:** by July 2021 operators are required to meet the new training requirements in full.

¹ <https://orr.gov.uk/rail/publications/consumer-publications/orr-advice-to-the-williams-rail-review>

We recognise that the extent to which these requirements will require business changes will vary from operator to operator. Therefore, we will work with individual operators prior to submission of the ATP in order to ensure that the new requirements are understood and the submission deadlines are met.

It is also important that we understand operators' progress in delivering the ATP commitments. As part of this we will require that operators submit:

- a plan alongside the revised ATP setting out how the new staff training requirements will be delivered; and
- a report in July 2020 on progress towards meeting the new training requirements.

Separately we expect to undertake a review of the accessibility of operator websites by July 2020 including monitoring the accuracy of online journey planning information (including on the National Rail Enquiries website and published network accessibility maps). We also intend to carry out mystery shopping exercises at stations and over the phone and we will publish data showing the rate of change over time for booked assistance delivery in our Annual Consumer Report, 'Measuring Up' from July 2020.

Next steps

We will be in touch with your team to arrange a meeting date(s) to discuss the submission of the new ATP. In the meantime, if you or any of your team has any questions about this letter, please contact the ATP team at ATP@orr.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



John Larkinson
Chief Executive