

Jacqui Russell
Head of Consumer



Michael Adlington
Accessibility and Inclusion lead
South Western Railway

By email only

16 March 2026

Dear Michael,

Enabling disabled passengers to travel with confidence by delivering assistance reliably

On 12 December 2025, ORR published our report: [Benchmarking operators' performance in rail passenger assistance](#). In that report ORR requested an action plan from South Western Railway (SWR) by the end of January 2026, to address poor performance in passenger assistance reliability. Thank you for submitting SWR's plan on 30 January 2026. We will now hold SWR to account for the delivery of the plan and will monitor its effectiveness closely.

Our request for an action plan arose from our assessment of SWR's capability to improve its passenger assistance service, carried out between July and November 2025. We thank SWR for its constructive engagement throughout and for providing all the requested information promptly. SWR's plan is structured around the key areas for improvement identified in our assessment:

Monitoring and reporting / risks and mitigations

1. Improve data categorisation, insight and ownership
2. Establish a formal risk register
3. Enhance governance and reporting

Engagement / training

4. Strengthen feedback loops
5. Strengthen training assurance

SWR's plan sets out a programme of activity to address these key areas over the next 12 months.

By the end of April 2026, SWR has committed to progress:

- Managing failed assistance via existing safety systems
- Assigning ownership for assistance delivery at a station and on-train level
- Passenger research on expectations around assistance
- Tracking failed / incomplete assistance data
- Establishing a staff survey to gather feedback on challenges to assistance delivery

There is one action due for completion in May 2026 with a further six due for completion between September 2026 and December 2026.

ORR understands that these actions are intended to build a strong foundation from which continuous improvement in passenger assistance can be built. We expect SWR to assess the effectiveness of each action and identify further opportunities to drive improvement on an ongoing basis.

Next steps

Thank you for suggesting an engagement plan. Taking account of your planned timescales:

- we ask that you provide short monthly updates by email on progress in delivering planned actions. The first update should be provided at the end of March 2026.

- we will arrange meetings for May 2026, September 2026, January 2027 and April 2027 to review the impact of completed actions, progress towards outstanding actions, and any new or amended activity planned as part of continuous improvement.

Stewart Hill will be your primary point of contact at ORR during this monitoring phase. Please do reach out to him with any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqui Russell