Benchmarking operators' performance in rail passenger assistance: 2026 report

5. Next steps

92. ORR's objective remains to improve outcomes for passengers who require assistance by promoting the reliable delivery of high-quality passenger assistance across the rail network. While many passengers continue to report positive experiences, the findings in this report demonstrate that reliability challenges remain and that sustained focus is required from operators to address them.

Continued regulatory oversight

93. We will continue to monitor passenger assistance delivery using a range of data sources, including passenger research, Passenger Assist mobile app feedback, industry reporting and intelligence gathered through regulatory engagement. We will focus our efforts on those areas where intervention is likely to have the greatest benefit for passengers who require assistance, including operators demonstrating persistently poor performance, deteriorating outcomes or emerging risks affecting disabled passengers. Where necessary, we will continue to engage directly with operators and take further action to secure improvements.

Monitoring delivery of improvement activity

94. During the coming year we will continue to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of improvement programmes developed by operators, including South Western Railway, West Midlands Trains, Transport for Wales and Avanti West Coast. Our engagement will focus on

evidence of delivery, the impact of actions on passenger outcomes, the sustainability of improvements over time and the effectiveness of governance and assurance arrangements. We expect operators to continue embedding continuous improvement approaches and to identify and address emerging issues before they adversely affect passengers.

Embedding and sharing good practice

95. The findings in this report highlight a number of common themes associated with successful improvement. We will continue to identify, promote and share examples of good practice across the industry, encouraging operators to learn from one another and adapt successful approaches to their own circumstances. In particular, we will continue to promote effective use of customer insight, strong governance arrangements, targeted operational interventions and meaningful engagement with disabled passengers and stakeholders.

Developing the benchmarking framework

96. We will continue to refine the benchmarking methodology to ensure it remains robust, proportionate and focused on the outcomes that matter most to passengers. This will include continued use of Passenger Assist mobile app feedback, further monitoring of confidence-to-travel measures and consideration of how additional operational performance information can be incorporated into future assessments. We will continue working with industry partners to improve understanding of passenger assistance performance across all operators, including those not currently covered by survey-based benchmarking.

Looking ahead

97. Passenger assistance demand is expected to continue growing and operators will need to ensure that accessibility considerations remain embedded within operational planning, decision-making and service delivery. We expect operators to move beyond a narrow focus on compliance and adopt approaches centred on understanding passenger experiences, identifying risks and driving continuous improvement.

98. The Railways Bill, which is currently passing through Parliament, creates a new passenger watchdog that will take on some of ORR's consumer functions including monitoring of services provided to passengers who require assistance. The new watchdog will grow out of Transport

Focus and we are working collaboratively with them to plan and prepare for the transition, and to ensure that passenger protections are maintained and enhanced.

- ← Previous 4. Common themes from operator improvement activity
- → Next Annex A: Operators included in benchmarking assessment