

OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

Improving assisted travel



What people said and our next steps

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Introduction



The **Office for Rail and Road (ORR)** asked people what they thought about our plans to improve **Assisted Travel**.



Assisted Travel is where you can ask for staff to meet you and help you to get on or off the train, carry your bags or provide other help.



You can book in advance or ask when you get to the station.

There is no extra cost for assisted travel.



The ORR is the organisation that makes sure that train companies do their jobs properly.



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

The name of the policy



We asked if we should change the name of the Disabled People's Protection **Policy** to either:

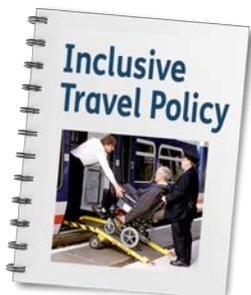
- Inclusive Travel Policy, or
- Accessible Travel Policy



A **Policy** explains how we want rail companies to work

Inclusive means helping everyone to take part.

Accessible means disabled people can use it.



Some groups of disabled people preferred 'Inclusive Travel Policy'.

But the word '**Inclusive**' may make people think that the policy is about other groups as well, not just disabled people.

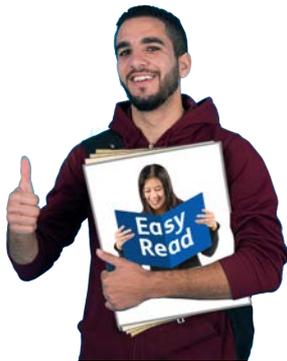


We decided to call it 'Accessible Travel Policy'.

Passenger leaflet



We asked about what information needs to be in the leaflet about Assisted Travel.



Everyone thought that the leaflet should be shorter and easier to read.

Some people thought that there should be one leaflet to cover all the different train companies.



We held a meeting with groups of disabled people and train companies to confirm what should be in the leaflet.



We agreed what information should be in a leaflet about assisted travel at stations.



Next steps

Rail companies should be able to give you an easy read version or other **accessible versions** of the leaflet if you ask.



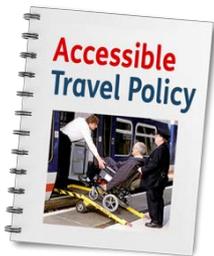
Accessible versions may include:

- Large print
- Easy Read
- Braille
- Sign language video



Rail companies must provide 2 documents:

1. A leaflet for passengers called “Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers”



2. A document that explains their Accessible Travel Policy



Instead of 1. **Network Rail** must provide a guide for all its stations for older and disabled people.



Network Rail is a government company that runs the largest stations.

Policy document



We asked people what they thought about putting all the details about trains and stations in the policy document rather than the leaflet?



Groups of disabled people agreed with this as long as people could get the details when they needed.



Most rail companies also agreed. Some thought there should be one place with all the detailed information.



Next steps

We agreed that information about the accessibility of trains and stations should be online.

That way it can be kept up to date.



It should be available in easy read and other accessible versions.



You can download and print your own copy or you can ask for a printed copy.



Network Rail must provide printed information at each station they manage about the services and **facilities** at that station.

Checking the policies



We asked people if rail companies should regularly talk to local disabled people when they write their policies about assisted travel.



Groups of disabled people all thought this was a good idea.



Rail companies thought it was a good idea but asked for information. They want to know more about the best ways to involve disabled people.



Next steps

We agreed that rail companies should talk with local disabled people before they make their plans about assisted travel.

How to explain how accessible a station is



We asked if train companies should always use the same way of explaining how accessible a station is.



Most groups of disabled people thought stations should be put in 3 categories. This would be easier for people to understand.



Next steps

We decided that stations should be put in just 3 categories:



- **Category A:** You can get to all platforms without having to go up or down steps



- **Category B:** You might have to use steps or steep ramps in some areas of the station. Check for details.



- **Category C:** We are sorry but you have to go up or down steps to get to the platforms

Information when you book



We asked if staff should always check if stations are accessible to you when you book a journey.



All groups of disabled people thought this was important.



We have agreed that staff should always give you information about how accessible a station is when you book help.



What to expect at stations

We asked how should rail companies give information about what to expect at different stations.



Groups of disabled people suggested that companies should work with disabled people to make sure this information is correct.



We agreed the passenger leaflet should explain how you can get help at each station:

- Buying a ticket



- Getting on and off trains



- Moving around the station



- How to tell staff you need some help

Rules for passing information between different rail staff



We asked about what rules there should be for passing information between different rail staff about people who need help travelling.



Rail companies are working towards an app on your mobile phone which can be used to give staff and the passenger all the information.



We asked about having a separate telephone line for staff at each station to pass on information about disabled passengers who need some help.



We are trying out some new rules in some stations from August 2019. If these go well we will ask all stations to use them from June 2020 if they do not use the app.

Staff training



We asked people what they thought about our ideas for staff training.



Groups of disabled people liked our suggestions but also had more ideas.



Some rail companies wanted to be able to decide for themselves what training was needed.



Some organisations agreed that disabled people should be involved in training staff.



Next steps

We have made new rules about staff training in **disability awareness**.



Disability awareness is learning more about disability and what disabled people need.



All staff will have had disability awareness training by the end of July 2021.

Telling people about assisted travel



We asked people what they thought about different ways to tell more people about assisted travel.



Some companies think that the new app on mobile phones will help more people to know about assisted travel.



Other companies thought that we need to focus on people who are not already travelling by train.



Groups of disabled people said that there should be a way of booking assisted travel when you book a ticket online.



Next steps

We think there should be an **advertising campaign** to tell everyone that you can get free help with rail travelled if you are disabled.



An **advertising campaign** may include, television and radio adverts, billboards, posters and leaflets.



Better websites

Groups of disabled people thought there should be rules about rail companies' websites.



Websites should be accessible. It should be easy to find information about accessibility on rail companies' websites.



Next steps

We now have stricter rules for rail companies about their websites. We will test websites in July 2020.

When to book your assistance



Mostly people book their assisted travel before they go on the journey.



We asked how soon before leaving should you have to book.



Groups of disabled people said that it should be as short a time as possible.



Some organisations said that disabled people have the right to turn up and go, like anyone else. You should not have to book your assisted travel beforehand.



Next steps

We want people to be able to book their assisted travel up to 10pm on the day before they travel.

But we want this to improve so that:



- By April 2021 you can book assisted travel up to 6 hours before you want to travel



- By April 2022 you can book assisted travel up to 2 hours before you want to travel



You can use the free telephone line for people to book assisted travel which is open all day and night, everyday.

Different types of train



We asked people what they thought about journeys which involve different types of train. Some trains may not have a guard. Some of the stations may not have staff.



Disabled people said that they wanted a guard on every train and staff at every station.



Some rail companies run trains without a guard, or have some stations without any staff.



Next steps

We want rail companies to think about and show how people will get the help they need if there is no guard on a train, or no staff at a station.

Compensation



We asked what should happen if the assisted travel service does not work properly.



People agreed that there should be better rules that say what should happen if the assisted travel does not work.



Sometimes it is not the fault of just one company. Sometimes the problem is because 2 rail companies do not share information properly.



Next steps

We are making a new rule so companies have to tell you how to make a claim if things go wrong.

Text relay



We asked about text relay.

Text relay is a way to communicate which helps people who are deaf or have difficulty with hearing.



The user types the message to a 'relay assistant'.

They speak the words to the person you are calling.

The relay assistant types the reply so you can read it on a display.



Next steps

All rail companies now have to provide a text relay service for passengers with hearing or speech problems.

Rail replacement buses



If the train can't run the companies will provide rail replacement buses.



We asked people about changes to the rules about rail replacement buses.



Groups of disabled people wanted to be sure that bus drivers had disability awareness training. They wanted the replacement buses to be accessible.



Rail companies say it is not always possible to get accessible buses in time.



Next steps

We want rail companies to show that they are trying to get accessible buses as rail replacement buses.



We want rail companies to show that they are trying to make sure the drivers of rail replacement buses have had disability awareness training.

Contacting staff at a station



Not all stations have staff on hand to help.



We want train companies to make sure that people know how they can contact a member of staff to get help.

Scooters



We asked people what they thought about the rules about taking scooters and powered wheelchairs on trains.



Rail companies say that it is not always possible to take some scooters and powered wheelchairs on trains.



Sometimes it is not possible because of the design of the train or station.

Passengers should be allowed to travel if their scooter is able to fit on the train and can be used safely at the station.



Next steps

We are not going to make rail companies take scooters or powered wheelchairs on trains at this time.

Warning you that a train is not accessible



People agreed that there should be a new rule which says that train companies have to tell you that a section of the train is not accessible before you buy the ticket.

Accessible toilets



We have a new rule which says that train companies have to tell people that an accessible toilet is not working before they get on the train.



Rail companies said that this is difficult because toilets can break down at any time.



Some rail companies think that they may be able to prove up-to-the minute information about accessible toilets when we have the new app for mobile phones.

Good practice



We asked people for their views on a list of other ideas that might be good for disabled people.

Groups of disabled people had other ideas to add to our list.



Some rail companies told us about other things that they do to help disabled people.



Next steps

We plan to write a list of all the good ideas that would help disabled people to travel on trains.



We also plan to set up a new group called the ORR accessibility forum.

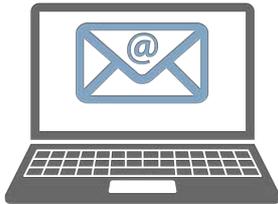
This would be a meeting for groups of disabled people to tell us more about ways to make the railways more accessible.



We plan to meet at least 2 times a year.

For more information

If you need more information please contact us by:



Email: **ATP@orr.gov.uk**



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