

May 2021

Guidance for frontline rail staff:

supporting disabled passengers



Image: Transport for All





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Key messages

- Be an advocate for your disabled passengers within your company. You can help make a difference.
- Remember that your disabled passengers may have non-visible impairments, and some may have more than one impairment. Don't make assumptions based on age or appearance.
- Focus on passengers' assistance requirements rather than their impairments. Ask 'Do you need any assistance?' and act on their response.

When communicating:

- Speak calmly, avoid raising your voice, use clear language, rephrase and repeat, and if necessary, try other methods of communication such as writing.
- Listen carefully to what your passenger is saying, and if you are not sure that you've understood then check and ask them to repeat themselves if needed.





During the COVID-19 pandemic, also bear in mind that:

- Disabled passengers may be exempt from wearing face coverings for a range of reasons, not just because of a respiratory condition.
- Some disabled passengers may need to remove their face coverings for short periods of time, for example to make communication easier or to move about safely if this is restricting their view.
- Some passengers, for example deaf passengers or autistic passengers, may find communicating with transport staff who are wearing face coverings difficult.
- Providing your company's policies allow, continue providing the assistance that disabled passengers need.
- Some disabled people may have difficulty seeing, understanding or following signs related to social distancing measures, so provide additional information or assistance where needed.



About this guidance

Who is this guidance for and what is it about?

This guidance is for rail station and onboard staff in England.

It explains how you can help make Deaf, disabled and older people's journeys easier. We hope that having the right knowledge about how to help will give you the confidence and skills to provide the best service you can.

Guidance specifically relating to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic is also included. You can find this guidance in the yellow boxes.



This guidance does not replace Disability Equality Training. If you have not received Disability Equality Training from your company, ask your manager for it. The Department for Transport (DfT) has made a series of [Disability Equality Training videos](#) available on their website. However, face-to-face training developed and delivered by disabled trainers is recommended.

Who has helped to produce this guidance?

The guidance has been developed by Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations, national disability charities and Deaf, disabled and older passengers, in partnership with train operators, the DfT and DPTAC (Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee), the DfT's independent disability advisors.





Welcoming each other back

The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on movement that it has resulted in have been difficult for everyone. Many of you will have experienced illness or bereavement as a result of COVID-19, and many more will have found being in contact with large numbers of passengers during this time very difficult.

Many Deaf, disabled and older people will also have experienced illness or bereavement. Some will have been shielding for many months, which may have created feelings of isolation. Others will have had no option but to use public transport, leaving them feeling vulnerable and uncomfortable.

As the restrictions begin to lift and the numbers of COVID-19 cases begin to reduce, you will be welcoming more and more passengers onto your trains and into your stations, and they will be welcoming you, and the important role that you play in getting them to where they need to be, back into their lives.

Who are your disabled passengers?



Around 1 in 5 people (20%) in the UK are disabled people.



Some disabled people have more than one impairment.



Whilst many disabled people are older people, not all are – working age adults, young people and children may be disabled.

Talking to your disabled passengers

Some people are not sure of the right words to use when talking to a passenger about their access needs, or more generally about disabled people. If you take the time to learn the right words, listen to and learn from your Deaf, disabled and older passengers then you will be less likely to be worried about saying the wrong thing.

We have used the term 'Deaf, disabled and older passengers' in this document to recognise that some Deaf people identify as part of the Deaf community, which has its own culture and language (British Sign Language, or BSL), rather than as disabled people.

There is rarely a need to ask a passenger what their impairments are, your focus is on what assistance the passenger needs – if any – for their journey. Say 'Do you need any assistance?', allowing the passenger the opportunity to say no, or to ask for what they need. Focus on what help you can offer rather than the passenger's impairments, be guided by the words the passenger uses and if you get it wrong, apologise and move on.

Language is a personal choice and so it is important not to impose but to listen. For example, some individuals use 'disabled person' and others use 'people with disabilities'. Also bear in mind that some people with impairments don't identify as disabled, so take your lead on language from the passenger.

Whilst some language choices are subjective, there are some useful key principles:

- It's better to refer to someone as 'living with' or 'having' an impairment rather than 'suffering from' or 'a victim of' an impairment.
- There are lots of different words for different types of impairment. Be guided by your passenger. If you are not sure whether a word or phrase is offensive or not, don't use it.
- Be mindful of your choices. For example, say 'wheelchair user' not 'wheelchair bound'. No one is 'bound' to a wheelchair; wheelchairs represent mobility and freedom to the people who use them.

Talk to ME! Always communicate with the disabled or older passenger rather than anyone travelling with them, unless you are asked to direct your questions and information to a person who is supporting them.

Other useful terms and phrases

Non-visible impairment

Also sometimes called 'non-visible disability', 'hidden disability' or 'hidden impairment', this means an impairment that isn't obvious by looking at someone.

Examples of **non-visible impairments** are: mental health conditions; autism; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); cognitive impairment, such as dementia, traumatic brain injury, learning difficulties; sensory impairments; 'non-visible' physical health conditions such as chronic pain, respiratory conditions, incontinence or diabetes.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity is about recognising that people have neurological differences that impact on the way their brain functions, and that this is a part of the normal variation between humans. Differences can affect the way people process information, behave and interact with others. Most people are 'neurotypical' but it has been estimated that 1 in 7 people are 'neurodiverse'. Commonly someone is considered neurodiverse if they are autistic or have ADHD, dyslexia, or dyspraxia, but there are also other reasons.

People who support disabled people

Some of your disabled and older passengers may travel with someone to provide them with support. They may use a number of different words to describe this person, including companion, carer, Personal Assistant or Support Worker. Carers may include unpaid carers such as spouses or young carers. Listen to the words that your passenger uses and use them too. Also, do not assume that every person travelling with a disabled person is their carer, they may be a work colleague, friend or family member.



Probably the most important thing you should do is to ensure that passengers have all the information they need to be able to prepare for and to successfully complete their journey. Clear communication is key.

Guide Dogs



Tips for successful communication



General tips

In normal circumstances, one of the key tips would be to ensure that your mouth is not covered, as this makes it easier to lip read you. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, you may be wearing a face covering. Guidance on this situation is outlined in the box on page 11.

- Make and reciprocate eye contact. Remember that some passengers may find this uncomfortable, so if the passenger does not make eye contact, mirror this.
- Make sure that your body language and facial expressions match what you are saying so that your meaning is clear.
- Speak calmly and avoid raising your voice.
- Be patient. Give people time to process what you have said.
- Try using clearer language if you have not been understood.
- Avoid ambiguous phrases, as some passengers will interpret what you say literally. For example, if you say 'There will be another train along in a minute' some passengers may think that the next train will be there in 60 seconds, and become distressed if it is not.
- Don't give up on attempts to communicate.



Passengers who are deaf or have hearing loss

It is important to remember that people who are deaf or have hearing loss are all different, have individual communication needs and use different methods of communication.

General tips include:

- Make sure you are facing the person you are talking to and speak clearly – avoid shouting, speaking too fast or unnecessarily slow.
- Consider the lighting in your environment, especially if there is a screen between yourself and the passenger.
- If someone doesn't understand you, repeat what you said or phrase it differently, use clearer language.
- Please be patient. Avoid getting frustrated when you are asked to repeat yourself.
- Use simple gestures such as pointing or waving to get someone's attention.
- If you are in a noisy place, move to a quieter area or do what you can to reduce the noise, such as turning down your radio.
- In addition, writing things down may help – use pen on paper, text on device screens, or whiteboards.
- If the passenger asks you to, speak to a relative or friend.
- Some passengers may have a Video Relay Service on their smartphone, which provides access to a BSL interpreter. Follow the instructions given to you by the passenger or interpreter on how to respond.

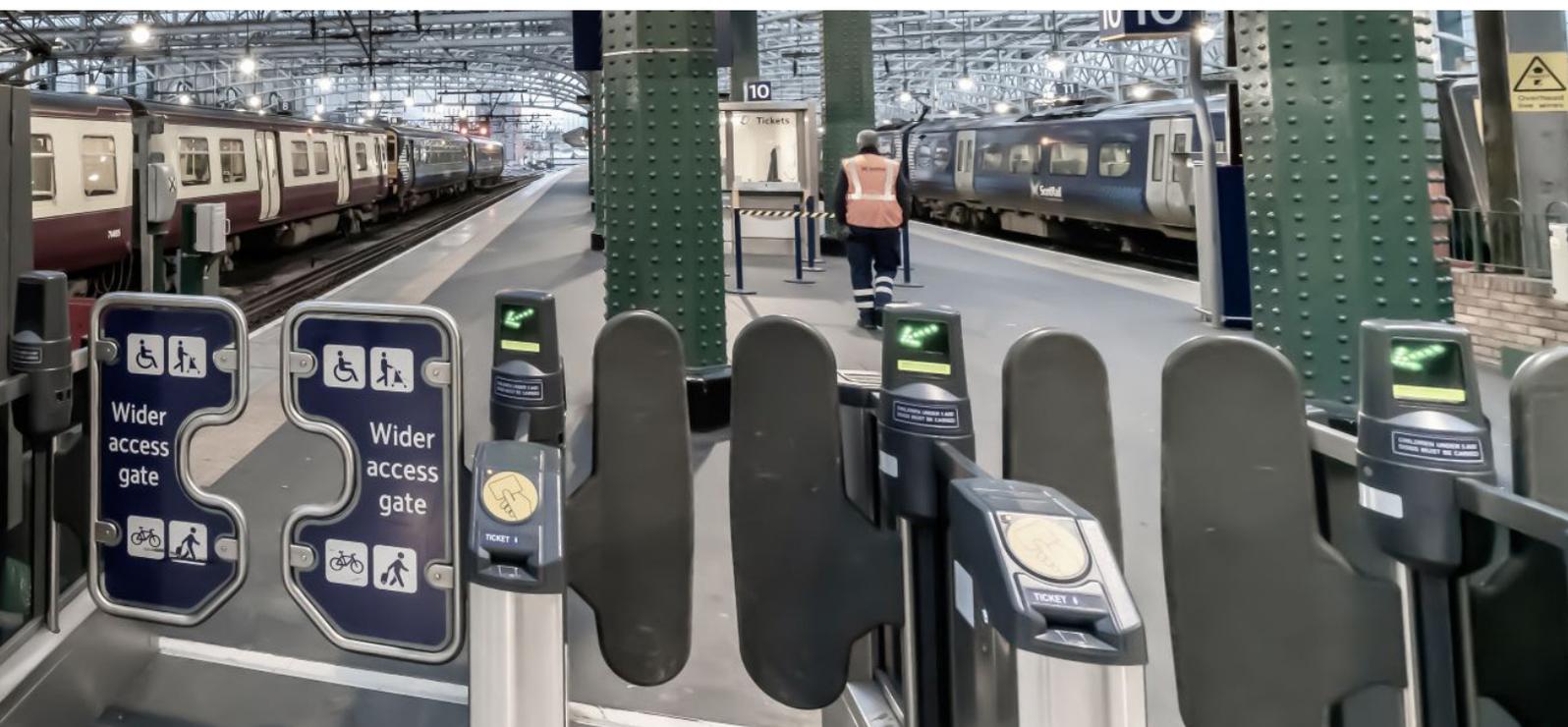
Remember that not all the above tips will be useful for all deaf people. BSL has its own grammar and sentence structure, and people who use BSL may find it difficult to lipread spoken English or understand written English.

Passengers with cognitive impairments or learning difficulties and autistic passengers

- If you are speaking to an adult passenger, treat them as an adult.
- It may take longer for some passengers to process what you've said or find the right words. Be patient and encouraging and give them time to ask their question or answer you before you repeat yourself. Don't rush them.
- Listen carefully to what your passenger is saying. If you are not sure that you've understood, then check and ask them to repeat themselves if needed. Most people would prefer to repeat themselves than be misunderstood.
- If you are in a noisy place, move to a quieter area or do what you can to reduce the noise, such as turning down your radio.
- Bear in mind that some people may be completely non-verbal, and may communicate using writing, drawing or gesture. That does not mean that they cannot understand what you say, so continue to use speech unless you are asked otherwise.
- If using speech is not working, offer to use writing, drawing or gestures to get your message across.

Passengers with speech impairments

- Don't assume that someone with a speech impairment doesn't know, understand, or remember something.
- Always listen carefully to what any passenger says. Most passengers would prefer to repeat themselves if you haven't understood them. In this scenario politely ask the passenger to repeat what they have said. In some cases, it may help for either you or them to write something down.
- If you are in a noisy place, move to a quieter area or do what you can to reduce the noise.





Wear a face covering unless you're exempt



Face coverings during the COVID-19 pandemic



Transport staff

If you are wearing a face covering:

- Some passengers, for example deaf passengers or autistic passengers, may find communicating with transport staff who are wearing face coverings difficult.
- If a passenger needs you to remove your face covering for a short period of time to communicate with them, please do so where you feel able to. If you do remove your face covering briefly, remember to maintain a minimum 2 metre distance from the passenger – move back or ask them to move back if you can't.
- If you don't feel able to remove your face covering for a short time, ask the passenger if there's anything different you can do to make communication easier – for example, writing information down may be a suitable alternative for some deaf passengers.

- Bear in mind that some passengers may feel very uncomfortable being around staff not wearing face coverings. If you are not wearing a face covering and a passenger appears to be uncomfortable, give them extra space wherever you can.

Passengers

- Remember that some people will be exempt from wearing a face covering for various reasons, including medical or disability-related reasons. If a passenger tries to board without a face covering, politely ask them if they are exempt, and if they say yes don't question them further.
- Medical or disability-related reasons for exemption from wearing a face covering can include:
 - Respiratory conditions

continued overleaf

- Where this would cause distress, for example for people with cognitive impairments, mental health conditions, or learning difficulties
- Where this would make it difficult to wear hearing aids or a cochlear implant processor securely

A full list of [exemptions from wearing a face covering](#) is available on the Government's website.

Additionally:

- Visually impaired people may need to remove their face covering for short periods if this impedes their vision when, for example, looking down to see stairs or steps or if their glasses steam up.
- Passengers who are travelling with a deaf passenger may need to remove their face covering whilst communicating if their companion is lip reading or they are using BSL.
- Passengers who are travelling with people with cognitive impairments, learning difficulties, or mental health issues may not be able to wear a face covering if their companion is distressed by this.

Also be aware that:

- Some passengers may be able to wear a face covering but find it difficult to understand when they need to do this.
- Some passengers will wear a face covering to avoid being challenged but feel extremely anxious about wearing it.



Other passengers

If a passenger complains that another passenger is not wearing a face covering, explain that this could be because they are exempt and have a non-visible impairment. If this then escalates and there is an altercation between passengers, follow the guidance on dealing with dispute resolution from your company. Bear in mind, however, that some passengers may feel very uncomfortable being around other passengers not wearing face coverings.

Barriers to accessible train travel



Physical barriers

These are barriers to do with buildings, outdoor spaces or vehicles being designed or managed in an inaccessible way.

For example:

- A damaged boarding ramp will be a barrier for a wheelchair user.
- Escalators at a rail station may be a barrier for people with assistance dogs.
- Help Points without induction loops may be a barrier for deaf people who use hearing aids.



Communication and information barriers

These are barriers to do with someone's communication requirements not being met, or information being provided in an inaccessible way.

For example:

- Written signs are inaccessible to some visually impaired people.
- Train timetables are difficult for some people with learning difficulties or cognitive impairments to understand.
- If there is no visual alternative to a PA announcement, some deaf people will not be able to access this.
- If staff are not able to communicate using BSL, Deaf BSL users will not be able to communicate in their first / preferred language.
- Passengers with cognitive impairments may find transport jargon such as 'terminate' and 'alight' difficult to understand.



Attitudinal barriers

These are barriers to do with other people's attitudes and the way they treat disabled people.

For example:

- A member of station staff asks a person with a speech impairment to leave the station because they think the person is drunk.
- A person of shorter stature is made fun of by another passenger at the rail station, and no one intervenes.
- A blind passenger is grabbed by another passenger to help them off the train without asking if the person needs help.

It's Everyone's Journey

The '[it's everyone's journey](#)' campaign from the Department for Transport and partners aims to enable more disabled people to travel with confidence through sharing the improvements being made on the ground and creating a more considerate and supportive travel environment. The campaign benefits everyone who uses public transport and aims to highlight that we can all play a part in making public transport inclusive. Simple actions like being patient, making space and being prepared to help when needed can make a world of difference to everyone's journey.



COVID-19 has created barriers to getting out and about for everyone, but these barriers can be more significant for disabled and older people.



People with specific types of impairment might be affected differently during the pandemic. For example:

- Wheelchair users might find that other passengers stand too close to them because they are at a different height. Some passengers may stand in the wheelchair space either to maintain social distancing or because they are unable to sit down. Encourage them to stand elsewhere whenever a wheelchair user needs the space.
- People with Tourette Syndrome who have a sniff or cough tic may be treated badly by other passengers who think they have COVID-19.
- Temporary schemes to widen pavements or restrict vehicle access in response to COVID-19 might make it more difficult for visually impaired people, people with learning difficulties or neurodivergent people to make their way to rail stations.

Assistance cards, badges and lanyards

Some transport operators and disability organisations have created free badges, cards and lanyards that can be used by Deaf, disabled and older people to easily communicate that they might need assistance. This can also help increase passengers' confidence to travel.

Below are some examples of these, but as a general rule, if someone shows you an assistance card, badge or lanyard, provide the assistance they need, even if you do not recognise the logo.

Remember that not all disabled people will want to carry a card or wear a badge, for a wide range of reasons, and that they don't need to carry one to receive assistance, which should always be provided if requested. You may want to tell passengers about the availability of these, but don't try to persuade them to get one.



Bladder and Bowel Community - Just Can't Wait Toilet Card



Sunflower lanyard, card and badge



The changing of various rules on trains (and other services) has meant people on the autism spectrum have stopped using them because of not knowing what to do or what to expect.

Transport for All focus group participant



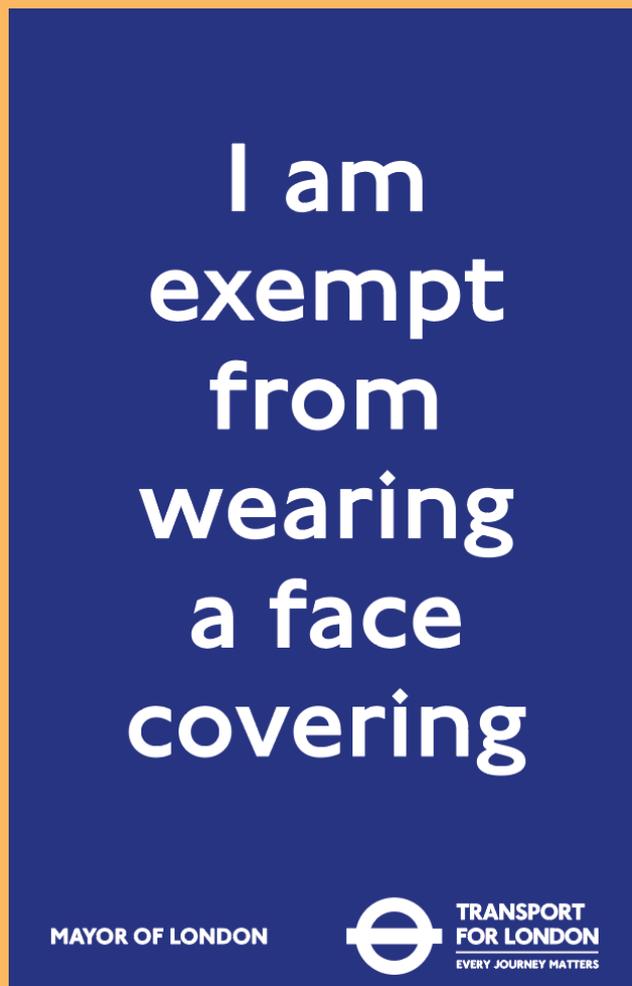
The Government has also created exemption cards and badges, downloadable from the Government website.

It is not mandatory for someone who is exempt to carry one, so if a passenger tells you that they exempt, accept this whether they show you a card or not.

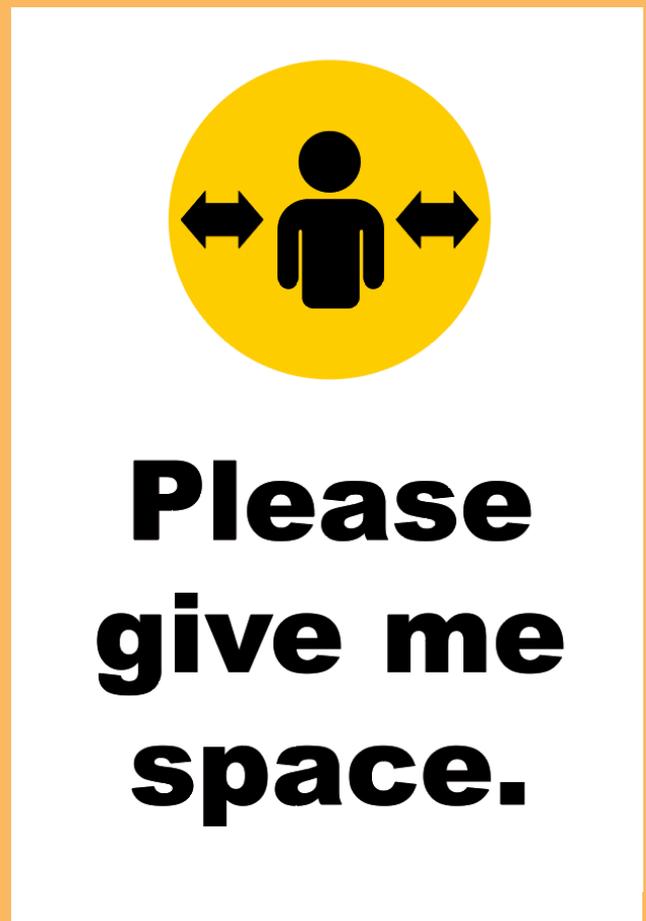
Charities have also created 'Please give me space' cards and badges for people who are concerned about maintaining social distancing – for example because they are unable to wear a face covering – or who may find it difficult to maintain social distancing and want to ask others to help by giving them space. These are downloadable from the Government website free of charge.

COVID-19 specific cards / badges

Some transport operators are providing Face Covering Exemption cards or badges to give peace of mind to people who are exempt from wearing face coverings. These are available free of charge.



TFL - Face covering exemption card



Social distancing card for mobile phone

Access for mobility scooter users

Train operators' policies in relation to whether passengers can bring a mobility scooter onto a train, and in what circumstances, vary. It is really important that you find out your company's policy, and keep up to date with any changes to this. Also, remember that passengers may not know what the policy is, and may be using a mobility scooter for the first time on public transport. For example:

- Some companies allow any passengers using mobility scooters to travel on trains if their mobility scooter fits within the wheelchair space and / or is light enough to use the ramp safely.
- Some companies only allow passengers using mobility scooters onto trains if their mobility scooter has been assessed and they have a letter or card to show that it is permitted – this is free of charge.
- Some companies do not permit mobility scooters on trains.

If your company allows any passengers using mobility scooters to travel on trains if their mobility scooter fits within the wheelchair space and / or is light enough to use the ramp safely:

- Follow your company's guidance. This might include allowing the passenger to board to see whether their mobility scooter will fit within the wheelchair space.
- Ensure that mobility scooter users are treated in the same way as wheelchair users with regards to booking and using the wheelchair space (e.g. first come first served).

- Some companies offer a voluntary assessment for mobility scooters to check whether their scooter is of a suitable size and / or weight, in order to build the passenger's confidence when travelling. If the assessment is voluntary rather than required, don't refuse access to passengers who have not had one.

If your company only permits passengers using mobility scooters onto trains if their mobility scooter has been assessed:

- Politely ask the passenger whether they have a letter or card issued by your company to show that their mobility scooter is permitted on trains.
- If they show you a letter or card, check that the mobility scooter it refers to is the same one that they wish to board with.
- If they have a suitable letter or card, and the wheelchair space is free (see page 24), allow them to board.
- Ensure that mobility scooter users are treated in the same way as wheelchair users with regards to booking and using the wheelchair space (e.g. first come first served).
- If they do not have a suitable card, politely explain your company's policy to the passenger, remembering to recognise that this will cause them inconvenience, and give them information about how to get an assessment.

If your company does not permit mobility scooters on trains:

- Politely explain your company's policy to the passenger, remembering to recognise that this will cause them inconvenience.

What you can do to help make journeys accessible

For all staff



Communication

- When you are speaking to a passenger, follow the tips for successful communication on page 9.

Providing assistance – General

- Remember that some impairments are not visible, so it may not be obvious what or why assistance is needed. Always ask what assistance your passenger needs rather than assuming based on age or appearance. However, if they appear to be unsure about what help they need, try asking specific questions, such as 'Would you like me to help you find your platform?'. You could also try writing this down.
- Everyone is different, so don't be offended if the passenger doesn't require your assistance. Always continue to sensitively ask others in the future.
- Never touch a passenger or their mobility aid unless the passenger has asked for assistance that requires you to touch them and have given you permission to do so.
- If you are helping a passenger who has an assistance dog, do not interfere with or make a fuss of the dog. Speak only to its owner.



Providing assistance – Pre-booked

- When you start your shift, make sure that you're aware of any passengers who have pre-booked assistance and whether you will need to assist them.
- If you are assisting a passenger to board, check with them whether the details on the booking confirmation – name, journey details and assistance requirements – are correct. Check whether there is anything else they need assistance with, such as getting food or drink, and where relevant, ask them whether there is anywhere specific they would like to sit, such as near a toilet.
- Make sure that you provide any additional information the passenger gives you to other colleagues who will be assisting throughout the journey.
- If you are assisting a passenger to alight, check that they are the person you are expecting and whether they need any assistance for their ongoing journey.



Remember that not everyone has the confidence to ask for help because of the experience of having barriers throughout our lives.

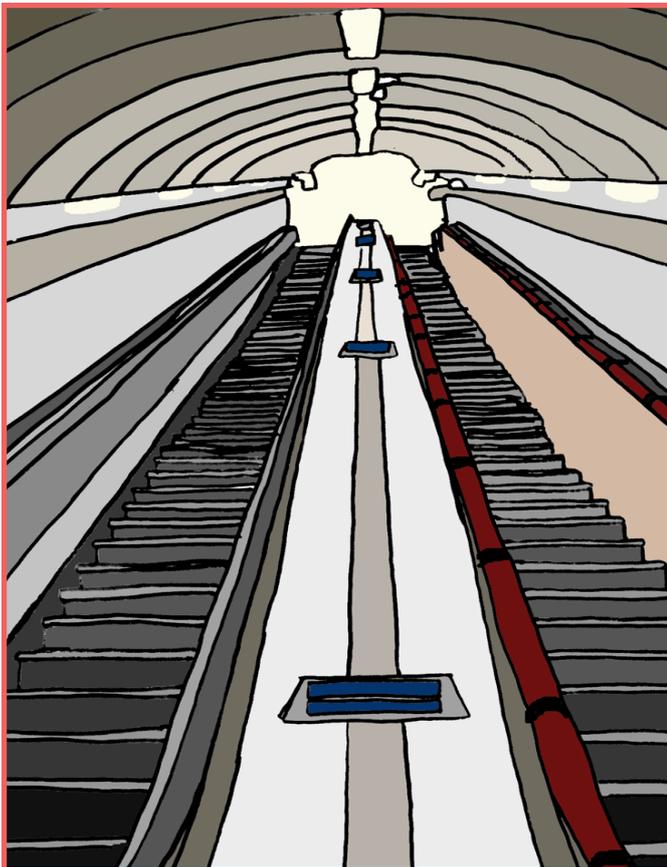
Transport for All focus group participant





Providing assistance – Unbooked

- In accordance with your company's policy, provide unbooked assistance unless you absolutely cannot.
- If you are assisting a passenger to board, ask them their name, journey details and what assistance they require. Where relevant, ask them whether there is anywhere specific they would like to sit, such as near a toilet. Make sure that you provide this information to other colleagues who will be assisting throughout the journey, as this will not be recorded anywhere.
- If you are assisting a passenger to alight, check that they are the person you are expecting and whether they need any assistance for their ongoing journey.
- If required by your company, record instances of unbooked passenger assistance. This will help ensure that your company can ensure that the right level of resource is available in the future.



Providing close assistance



Disabled people who need assistance that requires physical contact or closeness, such as guiding or assistance with their wheelchair, worry that they won't get this now because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Providing your company's policies allow, continue providing the assistance that disabled passengers need. If you can't, explain why politely and recognise that this will inconvenience the passenger.

If you can provide the assistance whilst maintaining social distancing then do. If you do have to get closer than 2 metres, then:

- Follow general guidance in relation to hand-washing and wearing a face covering (if you can).
- Follow any specific guidance that your company has provided and use any PPE that you have been given by your company.
- Spend as little time as possible closer than 2 metres from each other.
- If you can, provide the assistance standing side-to-side rather than face-to-face.

Guiding visually impaired passengers

When asked to guide a visually impaired passenger make sure to:

- Say hello and ask how the passenger would like to be guided.
- Once you have set off, check they are happy with the pace.
- Communicate! Describe the route and say when you need to change direction. Always let them know when a step or slope is coming up.
- If the passenger has an assistance dog, do not interfere with or make a fuss of the dog and speak only to its owner.
- Before you leave the passenger, check that they know where they are, let them know of any obstacles nearby – for example benches or bins – and say goodbye before you leave.



Assisting passengers with boarding ramps

- Make sure that you are aware of your company's specific guidance around deploying ramps. Do not deploy ramps if you have not been trained / briefed on how to do so safely, as you may cause injury to yourself or a passenger – instead, find a colleague who can help. Request training from your manager.
- Be aware that not all ramps are compatible with all rolling stock types – the lugs on the ramp, which are there to secure the ramp to the train, will only fit on the trains they are designed for. If a platform has more than one ramp for more than one type of rolling stock, make sure that you use the correct one.
- Before you deploy the ramp, check that there is no visible damage to it, including the lugs.
- Make sure that the passenger understands and is happy with the assistance you are going to provide before you deploy the ramp.
- If you are assisting a passenger to board, leave plenty of time to deploy the ramp, and remove it as soon as the passenger is on board.
- If you are assisting a passenger to alight, be at the platform at least 5 minutes before the train arrives and ensure that you store the ramp securely after use.

Providing information:

Wherever possible, provide information about changes to services in both audible and visual formats. Make PA announcements and use information boards to display the same information.

Make sure that you are aware of the level of accessibility of your station or train, and know where to find information about other station / train accessibility.

If you are providing assistance to a passenger, check and inform them of any changes to their journey due to disruption and help them to plan an alternative journey if they need to. Be aware of your company's policy on providing taxis if an accessible journey is unavailable.

If a passenger requests information in an alternate format like Braille, large print or BSL translation, follow your company's procedure for organising this, which may include contacting a customer service department.

If a passenger wants to make a complaint, explain to them how they can do this.

Making PA announcements:

When making manual announcements, speak clearly, at a slower pace, and use language that is easy to understand and jargon-free.

Make announcements in good time to allow people who may react more slowly to do so.

Social distancing measures



Be aware some passengers could require extra assistance as they may have difficulty seeing, understanding or following signs, especially in regard to social distancing – for example, visually impaired passengers may find it difficult to avoid a seat that has been taken out of use. Politely ask if the passenger requires assistance.

For station staff:

- If you need to cordon off areas of the station, use physical barriers – tape or cones can be difficult for visually impaired people using canes to detect.
- If your station has a one-way system to ensure social distancing is being followed be aware that this may be difficult for some disabled people and be flexible if you are able to do so safely. **For example:**
 - If the route is longer, people with mobility impairments might find this difficult, painful or tiring.
 - Visually impaired people who regularly use the station may find it difficult to use an unfamiliar route.



Reporting faults

- If an accessible facility or feature at your station or on your train – such as ramps, toilets or Help Points – fails, report the fault as quickly as possible using your company's fault reporting system and advise passengers through signage and / or announcements that it is not available.
- Also report any damage or wear and tear to stations or trains that might create a barrier for disabled passengers, such as damaged flooring, steps or seats.
- Remember that asset failures will make the journey inaccessible for some passengers and be prepared to help passengers to plan alternative accessible journeys if required.



Keighley	8	17:08	On time	Nicklefield	2	17:02	On time	Poppleton	138	17:16	On time
Kirkstall Forg	50	16:56	On time	Middlesbrough	38	17:26	17:31	Poulton L Fyld	10	17:29	On time
Knaresborough	48	17:09	On time	Mills Hill	158	17:49	On time	Preston	110	17:05	On time
Knottingley	38	16:59	On time	Mirfield	12A	17:23	On time	Ravensthorpe	110	17:05	On time
Ladybank	138	17:16	On time	Moorthorpe	110	16:56	On time	Rawcliffe	110	16:56	On time
Langley Mill	8	17:08	On time	Morley	11A	17:48	On time	Relford	138	17:16	On time
Leuchars	17B	17:05	On time	Moston	110	16:56	On time	Rochdale	6	17:15	On time
Littleborough	8	17:08	On time	Mytholmroyd	12A	17:23	On time	Rotherham CU	108	17:18	On time
				New Pudsey	12A	17:23	On time	Saltire	11A	17:48	On time
					110	17:05	On time	Sandwich	50	16:56	On time
								Sandwich	128	17:21	On time

For station staff



General

- Stand out! If you have been issued with a hi-vis jacket or vest, wear this to help passengers easily and quickly identify you as a member of staff.
- If you approach a passenger to offer information or assistance, introduce yourself and give your name and job title.



Being approachable, non-judgemental and sympathetic to different needs will really help those with anxiety when travelling.

Anxiety UK



Many customers may be feeling high levels of anxiety at the moment, it is important to remain sensitive and understanding.

West Midlands Combined Authority



Being proactive

- Transport hub stations can be noisy and busy and often huge and complex. This can be difficult for lots of Deaf, disabled and older passengers. Some neurodiverse people and people with mental health conditions will find the sensory environment (noise, smells, brightness etc.), crowds and other passengers rushing around challenging. If you spot a passenger looking confused, lost or anxious, approach them calmly and offer assistance.

Interchanging

- Do what you can to assist your disabled passengers to interchange onto other services or modes at transport hubs. That might include:
 - Wherever possible, assist your passenger to board other services. If this is not possible, work closely with colleagues from other modes to ensure that assistance is seamless.
 - Provide clear and easy-to-understand information about other services, including directional information, timetable information or information about service accessibility.

Purchasing tickets

If you are working in the ticket office:

- If your ticket window has a hearing loop, make sure that you know how to use it, that it is switched on at all times when the window is open, and that you report any faults with the equipment.
- Be aware that glazed screens can make it difficult for deaf people to hear or lipread you. Follow the tips for successful communicating above, but if a passenger clearly cannot understand what you are saying, try using an alternative method of communicating, such as writing things down. If this is not successful, ask a colleague to come and assist.
- Be aware that a visually impaired passenger may not see you behind a glazed screen, so address them and ask them if they need assistance.

If you are working in the ticket hall:

- Remember that some passengers will not be able to use ticket machines – for example, if they are not able to reach or use the buttons, or to see, read or understand the instructions on the screen. Be proactive and offer assistance if a passenger appears to be finding the machine difficult to use.

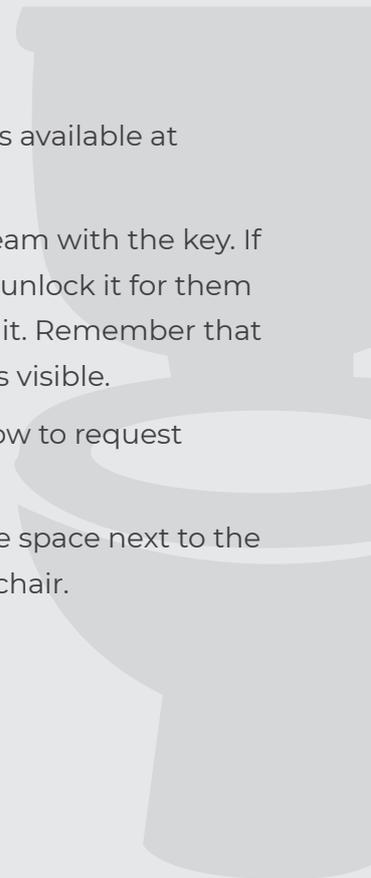
General:

- Some people, such as people with dementia, may need extra time to remember their PIN or count out notes or coins, so be patient.
- Offer assistance if a passenger appears to be finding it difficult to scan their smartcard or use the payment system.

Access to toilets

Access to toilets will be important to many of your passengers. If there are toilets available at your station:

- If the accessible toilet has a RADAR lock, ask your company to provide your team with the key. If a passenger asks to use the accessible toilet but does not have a RADAR key, unlock it for them – make sure that there is a RADAR key at the station and know where to find it. Remember that people might need an accessible toilet for lots of reasons, and this isn't always visible.
- Make sure that there is a sign outside the toilet advising passengers about how to request assistance if required.
- Keep accessible toilets clear, and make sure that bins are not kept in the large space next to the toilet – this is for wheelchair users to transfer onto the toilet from their wheelchair.



For onboard staff

Before you leave the depot

Are you ready? Your passengers are relying on you!

- Check any accessibility features such as toilets (standard and accessible), induction loops, and Passenger Information System (PIS) are working before you leave the depot – if not, follow your company's guidance.

Make sure that you follow your company fault reporting processes so that the issue can be rectified.

Boarding and alighting

- Make sure that you are aware if a ramp is being deployed onto your train and that if it is, you allow sufficient time for this to be completed safely.
- Help manage passengers so that wheelchair users, passengers with an assistance dog or passengers being assisted by a member of station staff are able to board first at that doorway.



- Be aware that guide dogs are only one type of assistance dog. If a passenger wishes to board with an assistance dog, allow them onto the train if the dog is identifiable as an assistance dog or the owner presents evidence or otherwise in accordance with your company's policy. Transport for [London's guide to assistance dogs](#) can help with understanding the types of dogs that passengers might have.
- Priority for the wheelchair space should be given to wheelchair users (including children using specialist buggies as a mobility aid), and you should ask non-wheelchair users to vacate the space or move their luggage when required.
- You should follow your company's guidance on what you can do to help ensure that this happens. This might include using automated announcements, making manual announcements or speaking to the other passenger directly. Do as much as you can as far as your company's policy allows.
- Make sure that other passengers move out of the doorway to enable a wheelchair user to reach the wheelchair space.
- Signpost priority seating to passengers who you feel may find that information useful.
- Wherever you can, assist passengers who need a seat to find one. Remember that some people have non-visible impairments that mean they need to sit.

- Keep an eye out for any passengers that may be taking longer to board or alight and give them sufficient time to do so safely. Bear in mind that some passengers with mobility impairments may not stand up to leave until the train has fully stopped.
- If a passenger approaches you and asks for assistance because they have missed their stop, ask if they would like you to arrange for them to be met by staff at a suitable alternative station. If your company policies allow and the passenger wants, arrange for them to be transported back to their intended station.

Assisted passengers

- Make contact with any passengers who have been assisted by staff to board and / or will be receiving assistance to alight, and:
 - Check their journey details to ensure that there are no disruptions that will affect them. If there are, help them to replan their journey.
 - Check what assistance they need, and that this has been properly arranged.
 - Check whether there is any assistance they will need during the journey.
- Be prepared to answer any questions that passengers have during the journey, and to repeat yourself if needed, as some passengers may forget what you have told them or need reassurance that they've understood correctly.



If you have regular passengers, take the opportunity to say 'hi' and connect with them. You can be a lifeline to a person with dementia who is feeling isolated.

Person affected by dementia



Social distancing and seating



As part of the social distancing measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the seats in your train may have been taken out of use. Bear in mind that this may impact on your disabled passengers in particular. Visually impaired people may find it difficult to locate a suitable seat. People with mobility impairments might find it more difficult to get a seat because fewer will be in use. Some disabled people will need to sit next to a companion to travel. Provide assistance where needed.

Announcements

- Ensure that the train's PIS is on, working and at a sufficient volume in all carriages. If the PIS becomes faulty during the journey, make sure that you follow your company's guidance for fault reporting and / or taking the train out of service. In the meantime, make manual announcements if required.
- When making manual announcements, provide visual information as well as audible information wherever the PIS system allows. Follow the guidance for making audible announcements on page 20. If it is not possible to make manual visual announcements, bear in mind that passengers who are deaf or have hearing loss may not have access to this information.
- Make announcements to keep passengers informed when routes are disrupted or changed, and provide information about loss of step-free access at any stations on the route.



Access to toilets

Access to toilets will be important to many of your passengers. If there are toilets on your train:

- Make sure that these are working and in good condition. If toilets become faulty or unusable during the journey, make sure that you follow your company's guidance for fault reporting and / or taking the train out of service. In the meantime, provide suitable signage and make announcements to advise passengers – visual announcements as well as audible announcements wherever the PIS system allows. Follow the guidance for making announcements on page 20.

Checking and selling tickets

When you are checking or selling tickets:

- Be patient. Give people time to find their ticket, smartcard or bank card.
- Offer assistance if a passenger appears to be finding it difficult to scan their smartcard or use the payment system.
- Some people, such as people with dementia, may need extra time to remember their PIN or count out notes or coins, so be patient.
- If the passenger does not have the right ticket, explain calmly and clearly what the issue is, and be sympathetic if they appear to be distressed.
- Follow your company's guidance for situations where a vulnerable passenger is unable to pay for the right ticket.

Be an advocate for your Deaf, disabled and older passengers

Like all passengers, Deaf, disabled and older passengers don't always have the time or energy to make formal complaints when things go wrong during their journeys. You are the link between them and the decision-makers within your company. Be an advocate. Talk to your managers about the barriers that you see them face. Share ideas that you have for making accessibility improvements to the service. Encourage your company to engage with disabled passengers to hear their voices directly. If you have not received good quality Disability Equality Training from your company, ask for this. **You can help make a difference.**



With thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of this guidance, including:

Deaf, disabled and older passengers

Alzheimer's Society
Anxiety UK
DPTAC
Guide Dogs
MS Society
National Autistic Society
RNIB
RNID
Royal Association for Deaf people
Sense
Thomas Pocklington Trust

Network Rail
West Midlands Combined Authority

