

# Making Rail Accessible

Guide to Policies and Practices



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# Introduction

## Our Routes

TransPennine Express (TPE) is operated by FirstGroup PLC.

We provide Intercity rail services connecting key Northern cities and towns on the following routes:

### North TransPennine

*Services between:*

- Manchester Airport / Liverpool and Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Scarborough and Hull via Manchester Stations, Huddersfield, Leeds and York

### South TransPennine

*Services between:*

- Manchester Airport and Cleethorpes via Manchester Piccadilly, Stockport, Sheffield, Doncaster, Scunthorpe and Grimsby Town.

### North West and Scotland

*Services between:*

- Manchester Airport and Edinburgh / Glasgow via Manchester Piccadilly, Preston, Lancaster, Oxenholme, Penrith and Carlisle.

# Our Trains

We operate two different types of rolling stock: four car Class 350s (North West and Scotland Only) and, three car Class 185s (all routes). During 2018 and 2019, we will introduce three brand-new fleets of trains to our network, offering increased capacity and comfort, and improved journey times across the North of England on more routes.

Throughout this period of change, print versions of our Making Rail Accessible – Helping Older and Disabled Customers guide will continue to be available from those stations where our services call. Information about each additional fleet will be made available on our website at [tpexpress.co.uk](http://tpexpress.co.uk), in leaflets at our stations, or by calling our Assisted Travel Team who will be able to talk you through the features of these trains, and send you a fleet specific supplement to accompany our Making Rail Accessible guide.

# Our Stations

We manage 19 stations, and serve a large number operated by other Train Operating Companies or by Network Rail.

The majority of the stations we operate have level access and many other accessible features, as do many stations at which we call that are operated by others, however at some stations access is still provided by staff operated barrow crossings. We are making efforts during our franchise to see these crossings replaced with lift access, recognising the benefit these offer to all customers.

We will also look for ways to deliver other access improvements in conjunction with our industry partners and stakeholders including, but not limited to, Network Rail, other Train Operating Companies (TOCs), the Department for Transport (DfT), Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) and local authorities.

# Our Policies

Station and train accessibility information is detailed in our passenger document: Making Rail Accessible: Helping older and disabled passengers, which is available at staffed stations, on our website and through our Assisted Travel Team.

This policy has been produced based on guidance contained in: Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations – A Code of Practice, issued by the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland in 2015; and How to Write Your Disabled People's Protection Policy, published in November 2009.

Issuing and complying with a Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP) is a condition of our passenger and station operator's licences as required and approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

This policy and our passenger document set out our commitment and the measures that we are taking to meet the needs of disabled passengers as well as the reasonable adjustments we are making to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

We will review the documents on an annual basis at the end of each anniversary year from their approval date. Customer comments and feedback on our DPPP are very welcome, and will be considered when these documents are reviewed. Feedback is logged by our Assisted Travel team who specialise in this area and comments are passed to the relevant manager for investigation. Data from this feedback is included in our periodic board report and is reviewed by our Executive team. We also continually review our stations and trains accessibility information to make sure that our customers are provided with accurate information.

## 1. Our Strategy

Welcome to 'Making Rail Accessible: guide to policies and practices', part of our Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). We know how important it is to get customers from A to B simply and with the least possible fuss. That is why we are committed to making reasonable adjustments that will improve access to the trains and stations which we operate, to benefit all, including older and disabled passengers.

Our strategy is clear and simple – we recognise the needs and concerns of older and disabled passengers when using public transport and our goal is to provide services that are as accessible as possible.

Our trains are some of the most accessible in the UK, and our stations are largely accessible, but we are committed to continuous improvement. Our planned improvements are outlined in section four of this document. We are also committed to looking at ways we can continue to make it easier for older and disabled passengers to access our services by working with organisations such as the DfT, Rail North, Transport Scotland, Transport Focus, PTEs and ITAs, Local Authorities, Local Access Panels and other groups in order to identify the requirements of our passengers, and seek external funding to deliver improvements. We have active links with Disability Rights UK, RNIB, Action on Hearing Loss and Dementia Friends, as well as with many local advocacy groups, and have formed a Joint Inclusivity Forum, along with Arriva Rail Northern and Hull Trains, to act as a critical friend for discussion of accessibility improvements.

We take guidance from the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) on the latest industry improvements, and follow this guidance to adopt best practice wherever possible to improve the service we provide to our customers.

Our Sustainable Development Strategy recognises the importance of working positively with the communities that we serve and this takes the form of social, environmental and charitable engagement and support. Our Sustainable Development Plan details the approach we will take to deliver this strategy.

We will continue to monitor all aspects of our policies to make sure that they are current, reflect our efforts and build on best practice within the industry. We welcome feedback on this policy which is kept under regular review.

## 2. Management Arrangements

Disability awareness is an integral part of our business activity. Our Strategy Director has overall responsibility for the company's DPPP, and will ensure that the policy is integrated into business plans at the planning stages of all projects.

The Transport Integration Manager will work closely with all of the teams within our business to develop and ensure delivery of our policies and procedures with regards to accessibility. This includes ensuring that accessibility issues are considered for any changes made to our services or network. This will include involving passengers and advocacy groups in design and navigation exercises regarding train interiors, ensuring that they are easy to get on and move around. We undertake assessments of our trains and stations to ensure that we are compliant from a safety perspective but can also offer the best service possible for passengers with different access needs.

Where our DPPP 'Helping Older and Disabled Passengers' document says we will provide a service or meet a standard at stations, on trains or in our customer service, we have quality control systems in place to ensure that these are provided.

Our policies are designed to meet the requirements of our DPPP and DfT Code of Practice and our quality systems ensure these requirements are met and continuously improved.

Our quality systems operate at all levels:

- There are 18 business objectives in our Business Plan, each with a set target to drive improvement.
- Our station staff carry out quality checks and report any issues to the Service Desk for resolution.
- Our on-board staff carry out quality checks and report any issues to our Maintenance Controllers to resolve any immediate issues, or report faults to our train maintenance depots for resolution.
- Our Complaints Handling Process analyses and channels all feedback, whether praise, suggestion, comment or complaint, back to the responsible manager to be followed up for action and monitoring.
- Our customer tool, available via our app, allows customers to notify us of faults they see. These are routed directly to the Service Desk. Disability awareness training and customer service training, coupled with regular briefings to our employees, mean we can meet our obligations to disabled and older customers and help them enjoy their journeys with us. Our staff are all trained to recognise our 'Blue Assist' on trains and stations, which helps improve communication for those who may need assistance when travelling.

TransPennine Express hold a series of regular cross-functional meetings. Our Customer Experience Management Group meets regularly to review customer results and progress against actions to improve customer service, including changes to processes and staff training to deliver accessibility improvements. The responsibility for making physical changes to stations to improve accessibility lies with the Strategy directorate, and changes are discussed at a number of relevant forums. We evaluate the business case for accessibility improvements using such tools as the Passenger Demand Forecasting Model (PDFM).

### 3. Monitoring and Evaluation

We record all instances of customer contact with our Assisted Travel team including praise and complaints broken down by the reason.

Our Franchise Agreement commitments include:

- monitoring of reservations for seating accommodation for and/or the provision of assistance to, persons with disabilities which are made through the Passenger Assistance service;
- Record whether such seating accommodation and/or assistance is actually provided, and provide records to the Secretary of State, when requested.

From August 2017, along with other train operating companies, we introduced a new approach to recording the delivery of passenger assistance.

TransPennine Express collates data on the number of pre-booked assistance requests at our stations, how many of these are successfully delivered, and any instances whereby assistance is not provided. We also collate data on the number of unbooked assistance requests, and any instances where this assistance has not been provided and the reasons why.

This data is submitted to the Office of Rail and Road on a periodic basis, and we are working closely with them, Rail Delivery Group and other train operators to improve the accuracy of this data, and introduce more efficient methods for its capture.

In addition to our own monitoring, we encourage customers using our Assisted Travel Service to give feedback. They can do this via an email survey which is sent with the Assistance Booking confirmation, or by contacting the Assisted Travel team. The information we receive is recorded and used together with all the information from other sources to measure and improve our performance of this service.

We undertake a 5% call back of all calls to the Passenger Assist team and a 5% follow-up survey after the journey to take feedback on our customers' experience. This information is analysed and evaluated every period in order to address any immediate priorities and integrate long term needs into our planning. It is also analysed to inform training needs.

We set ourselves targets to reduce the number of complaints about accessibility issues as part of our customer experience business objective and monitor our progress against this on a four weekly basis. In 2016/17, there were 26.8 million journeys on our services and we received 0.41 complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys relating to accessibility issues, this is slightly ahead of our target of 0.35 complaints per 100,000 passenger journeys. For 2017/18 we have a target of 0.30, and we are currently showing an improvement on the 2016/17 results year-on-year. When setting our targets for 2018/19 we will consider the number of complaints received in relation to accessibility, and set our target to ensure we continually strive to improve our service.

As the figures show, complaints related to accessibility are typically few on our network, but we are committed to learning from these events and improving our service to disabled and older customers. We have set ourselves periodic targets to ensure that complaints in this category remain low, and we will publish our performance against these targets in our Customer Report every six months.

We also follow best practice in the industry by undertaking:

- quarterly customer satisfaction surveys;
- complaints monitoring regarding assistance as well as all other complaints monitoring;
- feedback and service development exercises with local access groups and our joint inclusivity forum;
- analysis of Passenger Assist booking data to track trends in assisted booking and to monitor growth and usage;
- work with local disability charities to spread knowledge and understanding of Passenger Assist, the DPPP and the accessibility of rail.

## 4. Access Improvements

We will comply with Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) and the Persons with Reduced Mobility - Technical Specification for Interoperability (PRM-TSI) and the Code of Practice when installing or refurbishing rolling stock and facilities at stations. If for any reason we are unable to meet these standards, we will apply for derogations and/or dispensations after reasonable endeavours have been made to comply.

We also follow RDG's 'Guidelines for Development Management for Stations' and the DfT Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations in planning new works, including considering the Equalities implications of all plans.

Since our stations are largely accessible, we have the opportunity to focus on small but significant accessibility improvements.

Throughout our franchise, we will manage a minor works programme, investing a minimum of £100,000 per year in small scale physical alterations or additions to improve accessibility of our Stations. The schemes will be reviewed and consulted annually to ensure that they take into account changes in legislation, best practice and operational changes.

Since the start of our Franchise in April 2016, we have delivered improvement works including:

- replacing benches at several of our stations with new seating which is easier for customers to lower into and raise out of.
- installed low counters at Scunthorpe Station to improve access at the booking office
- installed new accessible toilets at Hull Paragon interchange
- installed tactile paving and dropped kerbs to the taxi rank at Hull Paragon interchange

Our plans are developed with consideration of customer feedback, industry improvements and opportunities, and the adoption of best practice, with the aim of delivering a consistent level of service across our network.

We will work with partners Rail North and with operators of stations at which we call to seek match-funding for NSIP schemes, such as more level boarding of trains. We will draw on our engagement with local stakeholders to prioritise investment. Our plans will be published in our six monthly Customer Report.

We will continue to provide free alternative transport where a disabled customer wants to travel to an unstaffed station.

We will work closely with other train operators and Network Rail to ensure details of station and train accessibility are kept up to date, and reflect any changes to the facilities.

Our Passenger Assist team is trained to discuss individual needs with passengers to ensure that the appropriate assistance is provided, with as much of the journey by rail as possible. The team's calls are recorded and monitored for performance.

We have also made changes to our assistance booking process, to allow customers to request assistance with a reduced period of notice, recognising that change is required within the industry to enable spontaneous travel for disabled customers.



## 5. Working with Others

We recognise the importance of working in partnership in order to make continuous improvements to the accessibility of our stations and trains for people with disabilities. As a result, we will continue to work and consult with organisations such as Department for Transport, Rail North, Transport Scotland, Transport Focus, Passenger Transport Executives/Integrated Transport Authorities, local authorities and advocacy groups, including our Joint Inclusivity Forum, in order to anticipate the requirements of all our passengers, including those with disabilities.

We will also work with other train operating companies and the Rail Delivery group (RDG) to introduce a degree of consistency across the industry where possible. Our Joint Inclusivity Forum with Arriva Rail Northern and Hull Trains, which is attended by a number of representatives from disability groups based in the North of England acts as a critical friend to challenge the operators on current practice, and keep us informed of any new technology or approaches from other industries which could be adopted, with the aim of improving services for disabled customers.

We will also work with other transport service providers and advocacy groups to make sure that the needs of disabled passengers are incorporated into any jointly planned integrated transport initiatives, and we are open to consultation with any groups wishing to contribute to this process.

TransPennine Express also promotes accessibility by partnering with the charity Blue Assist, who have helped promote this scheme in consultation with groups representing those with various disabilities. This scheme is designed to help people easily explain the help they need using a simple blue card, with space for them to write on. A mobile phone app is also available, which can speak the words typed out. Our staff are trained to recognise Blue Assist cards and will offer any assistance that passengers may reasonably require, whether relating to a mobility issue or other need. Cards are available at all staffed TPE stations.

## 6. Staff Training

We are committed, through the provision of training, to ensure that accessibility issues are understood both by staff, who deal directly with passengers, and by all those in management.

All frontline staff have received disability awareness training, and it forms part of the initial training received by any new employees we recruit or existing employees who move into customer service roles.

Our disability awareness training has been developed with help from Action on Hearing Loss, RNIB and Dementia Friends, and encompasses a mixture of online modules, classroom and experiential learning to enable our employees to better understand the needs of disabled customers who use our services. This includes accounts from customers, discussion of national statistics, helping staff to understand some of the issues faced by disabled customers who travel by train, and an introduction to British Sign Language. Staff have the opportunity to further this knowledge with additional British Sign Language courses.

Further training, including the use of ramps and other equipment such as induction loops, is provided as part of ongoing coaching and mentoring by local managers. Wider training on our customer culture and customer service also helps staff to perform their duties confidently and to assist older and disabled passengers.

We support our employees to gain NVQs in customer service, further demonstrating our commitment to service excellence.

We routinely produce staff briefings on aspects of accessibility or changes to legislation in order to keep our staff informed and able to provide the best possible service for our disabled passengers.

Any staff who answer telephones will be trained in communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding.

The number of staff who have received training during the year is reported to the ORR when we submit our DPPP for review.

## 7. Emergency Procedures

Our staff are trained in evacuation and safety procedures to ensure that the needs of all our customers are considered at all times and particularly at times of emergencies. Our policy is not to move disabled passengers before the emergency services arrive, unless they are in a life-threatening position. Our policy applies to both our station and train environments.

If an emergency takes place on-board, the conductor will take responsibility for the safety of all passengers, and if there is another member of staff on-board, the conductor will appoint them to assist passengers to exit the train when it is safe to do so. If there is no member of staff to assist, the conductor will ask another passenger to assist. If any passengers use a wheelchair, again the conductor will appoint a member of staff or another passenger to stay with them until the emergency services can evacuate passengers safely from the train.

Likewise, at our stations, we have identified a number of strategically placed disabled people's refuge points, where disabled customers can wait until the emergency services can perform a safe evacuation away from the station.

## 8. Communications Strategy

As part of our ongoing communication strategy, copies of our Making Rail Accessible – Helping Older and Disabled Customers, is available at all staffed stations that we serve. It is also available from our website for download, and can be obtained by writing to us at:

**Assisted Travel Team**  
**TransPennine Express**  
**Customer Relations**  
**Admail 3878**  
**FREEPOST**  
**Manchester M1 9YB**

Both parts of our DPPP are available in other formats such as Audio, Large Print, Braille and Easy Read and Audio on request within seven working days from the date we receive the request.

### 8.1 Telephone

We provide free telephone and minicom numbers for our disabled customers to allow them to contact us to arrange their travel, including making advance requests for travel assistance.

Customers with reduced mobility can also use these numbers to give us feedback, buy travel tickets, make enquiries on accessibility of our stations and trains, make reservations, and arrange onward travel with other train operators or to obtain a copy of our policy and customer documents.

During times when our Assisted Travel team is busy or the office is closed, clear automated recorded information is activated informing customers when the next advisor is likely to be available or the opening times of the Assisted Travel team.

## 8.2 Website

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At TransPennine Express we aim to be open and accessible to all, and this is why our website has gone through extensive testing to ensure that it is available and accessible to as many customers as possible. We have ensured our website is usable by all modern text-to-speech browsers and that it is accessible by customers with colour-blindness. For those customers with poor eyesight, you will find that our website fonts resize easily to make the text larger or smaller. Please consult the help section of your device's web browser to find out how to change the text size or turn on text-to-speech functionality.

## 8.3 Signage

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We have good working relationships with local authorities and use our regular meetings and communication structure to ensure that stations within their areas are clearly signposted, and that nearby places of interest are clearly signposted from our stations. We will follow the guidance in the Code of Practice, Royal National Institute for Blind People Sign Design Guide and Rail Safety and Standards Board's Wayfinding good practice guide where possible.

# 9. Car Parking

We offer free car parking to disabled passengers who display an International Blue Badge holder's permit in the car windscreen. We ensure that parking for Blue Badge holders is in accessible locations close to the station and that spaces are of the correct size. If designated parking spaces are unavailable for any reason, disabled customers displaying an International Blue Badge holder's permit may park for free in our pay and display car parks.

We monitor the use of these spaces to ensure that they are sufficient to meet demand, and to discourage non-Blue Badge holders from parking in them. If people are found to be parking illegally, we will issue a Parking Charge Contravention Notice (PCCN). If we find that the spaces assigned are not sufficient to meet demand, we will, wherever possible, introduce an appropriate number of additional spaces.

All of our car parks have closed circuit television (CCTV) which is linked to our Control Centre. These are monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All of our station car parks are accredited with the Park Mark for safer parking.

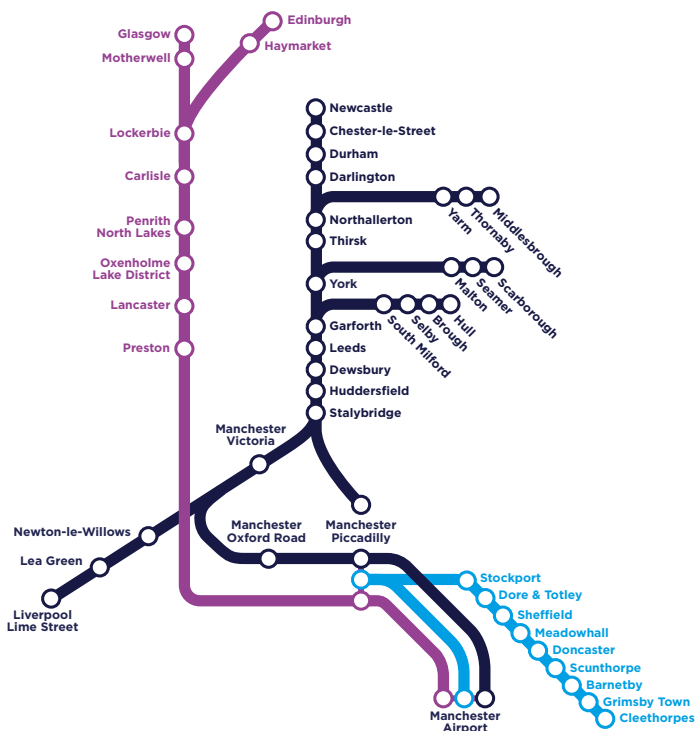
The provision of pick-up and set-down points for cars and taxis is reviewed frequently, to ensure that where provided, these are as close to our station entrances as reasonably practicable.

# 10. Contact us

We welcome feedback on our DPPP. Our contact address is:

**Assisted Travel Team  
TransPennine Express  
Customer Relations  
Admail 3878  
FREEPOST  
Manchester M1 9YB**

# Route Map



Buy online at [tpexpress.co.uk](http://tpexpress.co.uk)

