

Data shows rail industry has delivered twice as many bookings for support and passenger assists

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Industry figures show that, in the year to March 2023, the railway more than doubled the assistance provided to customers who request additional support while travelling by rail, according to the [Rail Delivery Group](#).

[Office for Rail and Road \(ORR\)](#) data on passenger assists requested during the year to March 2023 shows an increase of over 60 per cent when compared to the previous year.

The Rail Delivery Group welcomed this data, adding that it showed the industry had responded to increased demand for assistance as part of its ongoing commitment to make the railway accessible and inclusive for everyone.

Disabled passengers and those who require assistance can choose to pre-book their assistance or request it at the station. The Passenger Assist service enables passengers to pre-book assistance, while 'Turn Up and Go Service', available at stations, allows them to make spontaneous journeys without prior booking.

Additionally, staff are on hand to offer support (where available) or customers can ask for assistance at the help point and be connected to someone who can assist them.

Customers can request Passenger Assist by either turning up at a staffed station or, if they would prefer, pre-booking up to two hours before travelling by calling, using the app or website, texting or in person at a staffed station.

The growth in volumes of assistance provided helps to drive wider improvements, making rail as accessible and inclusive as possible. Upgrades include providing information to passengers on cancellations and amendments made to their bookings, which minimises disruptions and allows for a smoother journey.

To support customers with non-visible disabilities initiatives such as the Sunflower Lanyard and Just A Minute (JAM) cards are recognised by the rail industry. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is for customers to share that they have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent discreetly, and JAM card allows people to inform others that they may need extra time and understanding in a private and easy manner. Further, efforts are underway to improve accessibility in the station, including installing British Sign Language (BSL) information screens at major stations and piloting live lift availability status on the National Rail Accessibility Map.

Jacqueline Starr, Chief Executive of Rail Delivery Group said: "It's great to see demand for rail is rising and more people requiring assistance are using the services we provide to complete their journeys. We know that the service isn't perfect every time, but we are committed to creating a more inclusive and accessible railway for disabled passengers. Staff do a wonderful job helping people with accessibility needs every day, and our focus is on continuing to improve the services available to customers to request assistance and help them to travel when and how they prefer.

"In our ongoing 'Travelling in our shoes' initiative senior members of Rail Delivery Group along with myself, travel on the network with passengers who have disabilities. This provides firsthand insights into the challenges faced by our disabled passengers, directly learning from those with lived experience.

"We will continue to work collaboratively with stakeholders and accessibility groups, working towards a long-term accessibility strategy that continues to create a more inclusive railway, accessible to all."

Looking ahead, the industry is working on a long-term accessibility strategy led by the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) co working with Rail Delivery Group. This strategy aims to combine the voices of disabled people, industry representatives, and key stakeholders to create a customer-focused plan for a more accessible and inclusive railway.