

# ORR consults on wide-ranging proposals to make the railway more accessible for all

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## OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has today published proposals significantly revising guidance for train and station operators to make the railway more accessible for all.

The wide-ranging reforms to the Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) are designed to bring greater quality, consistency and reliability to Assisted Travel for disabled passengers.

Most disabled passengers get the help they requested and are satisfied with the service they receive. However, ORR's evidence-led review – informed by extensive passenger research, input from disability groups, industry experts and key stakeholders – has generated new insight into longstanding problems, particularly the industry systems and processes which too often undermine the ability of staff to deliver Assisted Travel with the consistency that passengers expect.

To address this ORR is consulting on proposals to:

- **Increase the reliability of assistance for disabled passengers** by introducing a new standardised handover process for all GB mainline stations. This will work in tandem with new arrangements to strengthen communication between stations and measures to introduce greater accountability for assistance provision.
- **Improve accessible journey planning** by standardising key station accessibility information on facilities, step-free access and staffing to provide a better and more accurate picture of what disabled passengers can expect at each station.
- **Reduce the notice period for booking assistance**, currently up to 24 hours before travel, we are consulting on three options for passengers; booking by 10pm the night before travel, booking a minimum of 6 hours before travel and booking a minimum of 2 hours before travel.
- **Ensure all train companies provide compensation** to passengers if they do not receive the assistance they have booked.
- **Standardise and improve information for passengers** including a more concise passenger leaflet focused on what to expect before travelling, at the station, on the train and if things go wrong. ORR is also recommending the Rail Delivery Group promote Assisted Travel to the people who would benefit from this service but do not currently travel by rail.
- **Strengthen train and station operators' staff training** including involving disabled people in its delivery and requiring staff to have refresher training at least every two years. This would ensure disabled passengers, including those with hidden disabilities, receive a better, more consistent service from all staff whether they book assistance in advance or travel spontaneously.

**Stephanie Tobyn, Deputy Director, Consumer Affairs, ORR** said: "Assisted Travel is a vital service that should offer disabled people the opportunity to travel with ease.

"Throughout this review process we have been encouraged by the good practice we have found, however, we also know more needs to be done until every passenger can travel with confidence consistently.

"Our proposed reforms are a much needed change to the current guidance that was written in 2009. Much has changed since then and while there has been good practice, this often has not gone far or fast enough. We recognise the potential cost of changes and that they may take time to put in place, but we are ambitious in our vision of a more accessible railway for all."