

# ORR's new guidance to train companies means less able passengers will travel with more confidence

July 29, 2019



The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has published new Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) guidance for train and station operators which will lead to older and disabled people being able to travel by rail with greater confidence.

There were almost 1.3 million journeys in 2018-2019 with booked assistance for passengers, an increase of 2% on the previous year.

While data shows most passengers were satisfied with the service they received, ORR's review – informed by extensive passenger research, input from disability groups and industry experts – showed there are problems, particularly with current industry systems and processes, which mean that passengers do not receive the service they expect all the time.

Providing help to passengers who need assistance

The new and updated requirements, reflect ORR's vision of a railway network where passengers request assistance with confidence and ease. They include:

- **Better staff training** in disability awareness, including involving disabled people in service delivery and requiring refresher training at least every two years
- Increasing the **reliability of assistance** for passengers that book in advance and those that request assistance at the station, by introducing a new standardised handover process for all GB mainline stations, by June 2020
- Improving the ability for passengers to **receive redress** when booked assistance fails
- Reducing the notice required for booking assistance from the current maximum of 24 hours to **two hours ahead of travel**, by April 2022
- Making journey planning easier by improving the **quality of information** available to passengers on what facilities, such as step-free access and staffing, are available at key stations

Disabled people's organisations, industry bodies and train and station operators have all expressed their support for ORR's vision. We will now work with operators to ensure they understand these new requirements. We expect revised policies to be submitted by December 2019.

Stephanie Tobyn, Deputy Director, Consumer Affairs ORR said: "The previous guidance was written a decade ago and since then society's expectations have moved on. The changes we have made reflect a greater awareness of the accessibility needs of different individuals, changing demographics and travel patterns, and the many opportunities presented by new technology. We will now work with the train and station operators to ensure they deliver on society's changed expectations.

"Great Britain's railway must be as accessible to older, frail and disabled people, as every other user, and that is why we welcome the progress that has been made, which we noted in our annual Measuring Up report published last week.

"However, with the number of journeys made by people with mobility needs increasing, we also need to see faster progress towards consistently high standards right across the rail network."