

Passengers asked to check before they travel as new timetables introduced

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Train operators are asking people who must use the railway during lockdown to check before they travel as, for many passengers, new amended timetables are now available to view on journey planners. While the time of some services may change, other services may no longer be running during the period of increased restrictions.

The railway has played an important role supporting the country throughout the pandemic, keeping key workers moving and supermarkets stocked during lockdown, and boosting economic activity as restrictions have eased.

With the reintroduction of lockdown, train companies have worked with government to plan reduced timetables, focussing on morning and evening peak travel times so that key workers can get to where they're needed, and on maintaining space for social distancing. Building on experience and learnings from last year, further work has been undertaken to ensure services used by key workers are retained.

The change will mean a reliable service for passengers as rail staff, like other key workers, may be affected by the virus. It will also ensure that service levels match demand which means better value for

taxpayers, reducing pressure on the public finances.

Robert Nisbet, Director of Nations and Regions for the Rail Delivery Group said: “Changing to a reduced timetable during this period of much lower demand will deliver certainty for those people who need to travel while saving taxpayers’ money. We ask people to check before they travel in the weeks ahead and we thank our frontline rail staff whose hard work is keeping other key workers moving.”

These changes are temporary, and are being made in such a way that rail services can be restored as quickly as possible when restrictions are eased, and more people begin to travel. It also means the railway will be more responsive if services need to be increased during lockdown. Not all changes will be introduced immediately, and operators will continue to monitor services throughout this period to ensure sufficient capacity. Rail companies will be promoting changes to timetables to passengers on trains, at stations and on social media.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: “It is critical that our railways continue to deliver reliable services for key workers and people who cannot reasonably work from home, and that they respond quickly to changes in demand.

“The new reduced timetable delivers that, as well as reducing the financial burden on the taxpayer.

“Levels of services will vary by operator and changes will come into effect steadily over the next few weeks. Passengers who are using the railways, including those who need to travel to vaccination centres, should check their route before they travel, and aim to do so outside of peak times wherever possible.”

Rail companies are doing everything they can to ensure people who must travel can do so with confidence including boosting cleaning, improving customer information and with modern air conditioning now installed on the vast majority of trains, air in carriages is replaced approximately every six minutes meaning a lower risk of transmission compared to other indoor settings.

Anyone whose travel plans have been affected by the introduction of increased COVID-19 restrictions should speak to their retailer to change their ticket or find out if they are eligible for a refund.

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group