

TfL marks five years of its 'Please Offer me a Seat' badge and the start of Priority Seating Week

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Transport for London (TfL) is asking people to give up their seats to those who might need them more, as it marks the fifth anniversary of its 'Please Offer me a Seat' badge and the start of Priority Seating Week.

As more people return to travelling around London, TfL is running a series of events this week to raise awareness of priority seats across the public transport network, which are designed to make travelling easier and more comfortable for people with a range of conditions.

The week marks the fifth anniversary of TfL's Please Offer Me A Seat badge with almost 100,000 issued to disabled people and those with invisible conditions since its launch in 2017. The badge was created to help more people travel and access London by enabling those who have less obvious accessibility requirements get a seat on public transport.

People will begin to see the 'Travel Kind' campaign as they travel to remind them to look up and offer their seats to others who might need it more than them. Video clips on TfL's social media channels will highlight

some of the different reasons why people wear a Please Offer me a Seat badge and encourage people to look up and offer their seat, whether they are in a priority seat or not. TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group (IDAG) will also be hosting several live streams on Instagram throughout the week to discuss #TravelKind and #LookUp behaviours on the network including priority wheelchair spaces.

Throughout the week, people travelling will also find pop-up stands in stations like Stratford, King's Cross St Pancras and Liverpool Street which will provide information about TfL's accessible travel tools and services to boost travel confidence. People will also be encouraged to visit a stationary electric bus at Stratford City Bus Station and speak to a bus driver to familiarise themselves with using the bus again as well as the new route 63 bus design. TfL recently introduced new buses to the north-south route 63 that have a range of innovative features including new covers for the priority seats with a contrasting colour scheme to help differentiate them from other seats for passengers who are less able to stand.

Mark Evers, TfL's Chief Customer Officer, said: "As London recovers from the pandemic and the transport network gets busier, it is vital that we ensure that everyone can travel comfortably and safely; however, it's especially important for those with accessibility requirements. Travelling around London has been made easier for almost 100,000 people with accessibility requirements thanks to our Please Offer me a Seat Badge. We hope that during Priority Seating Week even more people will benefit from using the badges, and that everyone travelling will be reminded that not all conditions are visible and will give their seat to someone who needs it more than they do."

TfL has worked closely with a range of disability groups and charities for Priority Seating Week to raise awareness of people's diverse travel needs.

Amanda Jacobs, who has various musculoskeletal conditions, said: "The 'Please offer me a seat badge' helps fellow commuters realise that people such as myself may need to sit down on public transport, when it might not otherwise be obvious to them, because you can't see pain, fatigue and various illnesses or conditions. It means that people who need to sit down don't have to verbally ask their fellow passengers if they could have their seat, which not everybody may be able to do physically, whilst other people don't always feel brave enough to ask.

"The badge is so important to me personally, because when somebody looks up, sees I need to sit down and offers me their seat, I can relax and not worry about being injured and unable to live a full life for several months – just because I couldn't get a seat on the bus, train or tube and had to stand up. Such a relatively small action by a fellow passenger respecting my needs can therefore have a hugely beneficial influence on my life for months to come."

In 2019, TfL launched distinctive priority seating designs on the Jubilee line with different messages like 'please offer this seat' and 'someone may need this seat more'. Priority seats are found on all London Underground, London Overground, DLR and TfL Rail trains as well as London Trams and on buses.

More than half (52 per cent) of the TfL rail network – consisting of Tube, DLR, London Overground, London Trams and TfL Rail services – is now step-free. Since 2016, 21 Tube stations have been made step free as part of the London Underground accessibility programme, the Crossrail project and the Northern line extension.

The recent completion of work at Harrow-on-the-Hill Tube station brings the total number of step-free stations on the Tube to 91 – one third of the whole Tube network.

The entire Elizabeth line will be step-free, providing a new and accessible route for Londoners. All 41 Elizabeth line stations will be step-free to platform level, staffed from first to the last train, with a 'Turn-up-and-go' service offered to anyone needing assistance including providing boarding ramps between the platform and the train. This service is already provided across the TfL Rail network – which will become the Elizabeth line. At two of the new Elizabeth line stations – Farringdon and Liverpool Street, the location of the station entrances required the installation of incline lifts, which move diagonally alongside escalators. As part of preparation works for the Elizabeth line, Network Rail and TfL have upgraded a number of the surface stations in the east and west, including installing new lifts providing better access for all. Work continues at Ilford, which should be complete later this year. Help points will also be available at all Elizabeth line stations.

Every London Underground and London Overground station offer a Turn-up-and-go service for customers who are seeking assistance with their journeys. Customers do not need to pre-book this service and can request help upon arrival at the station. The TfL Go app is regularly updated to show not only fully step-free stations but also where accessible journeys can be made due to particular platforms within stations being step-free for entry and exit as well as to interchange between lines. It was recently updated to show journeys with the 'least walking'.

TfL is also currently reviewing the results of its recent public consultation to help shape future step-free access priorities, with final outcomes of the consultation communicated later this year.

The Please Offer Me a Seat badge is free of charge and there is no need to provide medical proof to be eligible. To request for one, please visit tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/please-offer-me-a-seat