

# Train companies cut time needed for disabled people to book assistance by two-thirds

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Train companies have reduced the amount of time it takes to book Passenger Assist from six hours ahead to two.

This reduction will give disabled customers and others who require assistance greater flexibility and control over their journeys, the Rail Delivery Group has said..

Passenger Assist allows people to request an assistance booking in advance so that train company staff will be on hand to help with things like navigating a station, boarding a train, or arranging a ramp on and off a train. Since 1 April, people can book assistance just two hours before their journey is due to start, at any time of the day and any day of the week.

During the first three weeks of April since booking times were reduced, train companies have provided over 51,500 assistances for journeys booked more than two hours ahead, and over 4,700 assistances for journeys booked with less than two hours' notice.

The reduction in booking times comes after rail companies last year introduced a new app, Passenger

Assistance by Transreport, which speeds up the process to request assistance. Customers can also book assistance by phone, text phone or online.

Improving Passenger Assist is part of a wider strategy to make the railway accessible to all. Train operators are also providing better information to all customers, delivering Disability Equality Training to all frontline staff, and integrating accessibility into all industry planning to provide equality in the customer experience.

Jacqueline Starr, Chief Executive Officer of the Rail Delivery Group, said: “We want to make the railway more accessible for our customers with accessibility needs to help them travel in safety, comfort and with dignity. This is a positive step that will have a big impact on our customers using Passenger Assist, giving them greater flexibility so they can travel with confidence.”

Accessibility Minister, Wendy Morton, said: “Passenger Assist already supports disabled passengers to board trains and navigate stations.

“These measures will have a real-life impact on the people that rely so heavily on our rail networks and reiterate our commitment to building back fairer.”

Clive Wood, Lead Regional Policy & Campaigns Manager at Guide Dogs, said: “Passenger Assist is a vital service for many blind and partially sighted people who want to travel by train independently and with confidence. Reducing the minimum booking time from 6 to 2 hours before travelling will enable passengers who prefer to book assistance the opportunity to be more spontaneous. This is a significant step to making train travel accessible for all.”