

# Accessible Travel Policy

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DECEMBER 2019

AVANTI  
WEST COAST



# Introduction

**Avanti West Coast are committed to delivering consistently excellent service making journeys easy and convenient for all our customers.**

Our vision is to provide an accessible and welcoming railway for all. We will ensure that the needs of disabled or older customers are properly considered in all aspects of service delivery, enabling them to travel confidently and independently. We recognise the potential to improve the accessibility of the rail network and we have extensive plans for investment across our network to deliver accessibility improvements to facilities, systems and service delivery over the life of the franchise. We also recognise the importance of implementing robust and customer service focused processes that are consistent across the UK rail network and we will work proactively with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.

**Our Accessible Travel Policy is made up of four elements:**

- **Our Accessible Travel policy:** A guide to our policies and practices which explains our strategy and vision for delivering accessible services (this document)
- **Our Accessible Travel Passenger Leaflet:** Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers: a summary of practical information about travelling on our services and the wider UK rail network
- **Our stations accessibility information:** Available on the [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations) page of our website, providing details of the arrangements and key facilities at each of the stations which we manage and those where our services call

- **Our trains accessibility information:**

Available on the [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains) page of our website, providing details of the accessible features on the trains we operate

Together these documents form our Accessible Travel Policy.

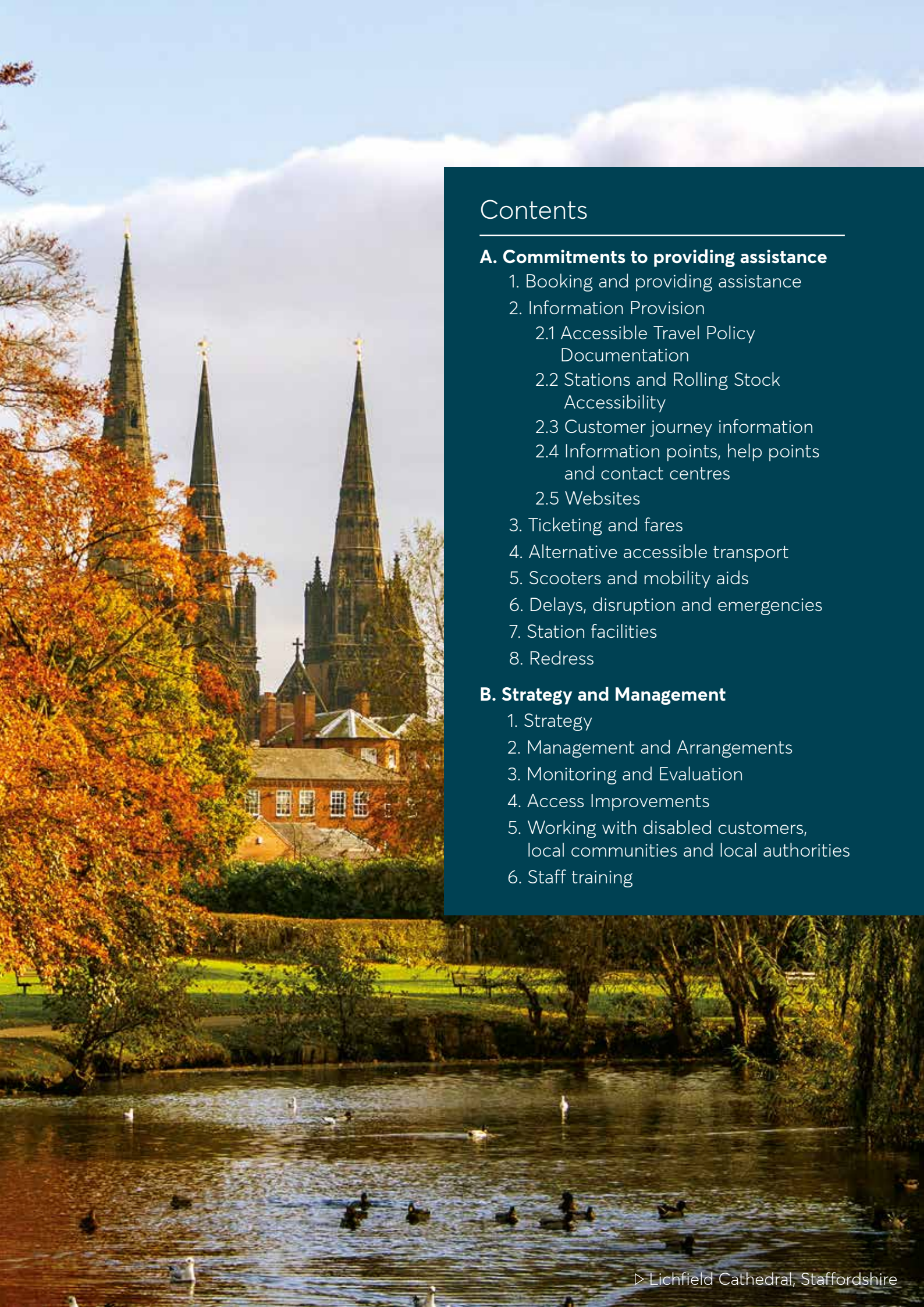
They can all be found online at [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk) and are available for download both in standard and accessible formats. Our Passenger Leaflet is available from any staffed station where our services call.

We also offer our Accessible Travel Policy in alternative formats, specifically:

- Braille
- Audio
- Large Print
- Easy Read

You can ask for an alternative format by contacting our Customer Resolution or Assisted Travel team. We will respond to your request within seven days. These documents are also available in Welsh.

We will review and update our Accessible Travel Policy each year to ensure it is up to date and reflects any changes to our stations or services.



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## A. Our Commitment to Providing Assistance

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**Avanti West Coast are committed to providing a reliable and easy to access service that allows older and disabled customers to arrange any assistance they may require to help them access any part of our network with confidence using the national Passenger Assist system. We are committed to working with rail industry partners to improve the consistency and reliability of the Passenger Assist service, particularly in relation to journeys that involve more than one operator.**

### A1. Booking and Providing Assistance

Our Assisted Travel team will provide our Passenger Assist service to support customers to make the most appropriate arrangements for their journeys, tailored to their needs.

You can book assistance on our services and those of other train operating companies at our station ticket offices, or by contacting our Assisted Travel team, who are available 8am to 10pm daily, excluding Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

We will ensure the Assisted Travel team is resourced to meet demand for this service by monitoring volumes of requests and response times and adjusting our service provision accordingly. As detailed in section B6, Staff Training, our Assisted Travel team receive training that ensures they understand the needs of our disabled and older customers. The team have an in depth knowledge of the accessible facilities and features of our network, enabling them to provide the most appropriate advice.

Customers can request assistance for their journey from when tickets are released, usually 12 weeks in advance. We recommend that you call our Assisted Travel Team no less than 24 hours in advance of your journey to ensure that we are able to make the necessary arrangements. If you need to travel within 24 hours, please telephone our team and they will do their best to help you.



## **The contact details for our Assisted Travel Team are:**

Call: **0800 015 8123**

Text Phone: **0800 015 8124** (for deaf or hard of hearing customers)

Online: Visit [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/assistance](https://avantiwestcoast.co.uk/assistance) and complete the webform

From April 2020, we will reduce the amount of notice which customers are required to provide, enabling assistance requests to be made up until 10pm on the day before travel. Our assisted travel team will ensure this is communicated to front line staff. By April 2021 we will reduce this notice period to 6 hours and then to only 2 hours notice by April 2022. We will achieve this by transitioning to the new Passenger Assist system which will enable staff to view assistance bookings via an app.

## **Passenger Assist**

Passenger Assist is the national system used by all UK train operators to coordinate assisted travel.

Because it's a national system, it means we can book assistance for your entire journey irrespective of the number of connections or train services you need to take, all in one request. Where possible, seat reservations will also be made, including priority seats, wheelchair user spaces and companion seats. You can also purchase tickets at the same time as requesting Passenger Assist, all within one call.

Passenger Assist draws station information from National Rail Enquiries, including station facilities and features and the latest information about access arrangements on stations and trains across the UK.

To deliver a reliable assistance service, we will ensure that all information on National Rail Enquiries for the stations that we manage are regularly reviewed. If for whatever reason one of the accessible features or facilities on our stations or trains is not available, or you make us aware of an issue with the information provided, we will ensure that information is updated on National Rail Enquiries and our website within 24 hours. Where facilities that affect disabled travellers are out of use e.g. accessible toilets, we will try to advise customers of this before they join the train.

When you call to make a Passenger Assist request, our team will confirm the station accessibility features and the arrangements they have made for you, so that you are aware of what to expect when you travel. You will receive a confirmation email with the details of your assistance booking. In addition station accessibility information can also be provided to you by post upon request.

We commit to participating in the ORR handover protocol by June 2020. As part of this, we will ensure that there is a dedicated method of communicating between stations that allows monitoring and logging of contact to be made to ensure reliability. We intend to use the new Passenger Assist app to undertake this task, however, should this not be delivered by June 2020, we will ensure that an alternative phone number or suitable technology agreed by ORR is in place in the interim.

Where Passenger Assist has been booked, we aim to provide a member of staff to help you on or off the train as soon as possible. When you arrive at a station where a train terminates its journey (such as London Euston) it can take a little longer to meet you, and we will endeavour to assist you within five minutes of your train's arrival.

We can also provide help when you travel, even if it has not been booked in advance. You can turn up at any station that is accessible to you and request assistance onto a train from a member of staff directly, by using a help point, or by calling us on **0345 528 0253**. To help you understand which services may be accessible to you without staff assistance, the accessible features of each of the stations at which we call are detailed on our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations). Our Assisted Travel team will also be able to provide these details and advice about your journey. All the stations we operate are staffed during the times trains are scheduled to stop there. However, please bear in mind that this is not the case at all the stations where our services call.

Every Avanti West Coast service has an on-board team who will be able to assist you to get on and off our trains at any stations where there are no platform staff available to assist you. We have ramps at all the stations where our services call and on-board our trains.

We will always do our best to assist you and all members of our team are briefed to look out for customers with specific needs and offer appropriate help. Please bear in mind that if you need assistance and have not contacted us in advance, particularly during times of disruption this may take some time to provide. We may instead arrange alternative accessible transport (at no additional cost) to an alternative station. If you need help getting off the train and have not booked assistance in advance, you should advise the Train Manager who will arrange this for you.

### **Accessing unstaffed stations**

All the stations that Avanti West Coast manage are staffed during the times that trains call there although this is not the case at all the stations at which our services call. We will always do our best to provide the assistance and help you need, but if access to and from

trains at the station you plan to use is not possible, for example if the station is not staffed at the time you wish to travel, because of a physical feature, alternative transport e.g. taxi, will be provided by the Station operator to a convenient accessible station at no additional cost from where you can continue your journey by rail. This can be arranged by us when you book assistance, and we will discuss with you the type of alternative transport you require so that we can make sure that the vehicle provided meets your needs.

### **Connections to other train services**

When making train connections, please allow yourself enough time to transfer between trains. Depending on your needs, it may be that the time needed to transfer is longer than the times allocated in journey planning systems. Our Assisted Travel Team will advise you on connection times when you are making your booking and can find alternative journeys for you when more time is needed. All of our stations have wheelchairs which are used by staff to assist customers for transfers around the station. If you require use of a station wheelchair, please request this when booking in order to ensure availability.

We are working with the ORR and other train operators to develop a protocol to improve communication between boarding and alighting stations and apply this once agreed by the industry.

### **Platform Alterations**

If platform alterations occur at short notice station staff, where available, will be able to assist you to the correct platform. **Our teams will also:**

- Update Customer Information Screens at the station and make additional announcements
- Seek to identify customers with disabilities and provide any assistance you need
- Try to give enough time to allow you to board the re-platformed train

## Intermodal connections

If you are changing between modes of transport (e.g. from train to bus or taxi), we can provide assistance to help you to make the connection as long as the interchange is within the immediate station area.

We aim to ensure wheelchair accessible taxis are available at station taxi ranks. We will work with local councils who license taxis to encourage taxi companies that have a permit to operate from our stations to provide wheelchair accessible vehicles and drivers trained in disability awareness. However, we cannot guarantee that such taxis will always be available. Our staff can help you to and from the station taxi rank.

## Seats on trains

Seat reservations can be made on all Avanti West Coast services free of charge, when you buy your ticket. We strongly recommend you make a reservation if you have impaired mobility. Reservations can be made up to three months before the date of travel and up until two hours before the train begins its journey. If you plan to travel on a train which leaves its starting station early in the morning you will need to book by 10pm the evening before. We will provide confirmation of your seat reservations and explain how to find your seat on the train. If you are travelling with others we will do our best to reserve them a seat close to where you are sitting.

## Wheelchair user spaces and priority seat reservations

All our trains have dedicated spaces for customers whose mobility is impaired, located next to an entrance door and near to an accessible toilet and the on-board services team. We ask our customers to give up priority seats for people who need them more, but it's not always obvious why someone needs a

seat. Our on-board team will be happy to help ensure priority use of these spaces is given to customers who need them.

All our trains are designed to provide a wheelchair space (including a small table) within a standard saloon. We also provide a wheelchair space in First Class. Our trains are accessible by wheelchairs with a maximum width of 70 centimetres and a maximum length of 120 centimetres. You can find spaces for wheelchair users by looking for the wheelchair symbol on the outside of the carriage, by the appropriate door.

On Pendolinos, we provide one wheelchair user spaces in first class, (in coach J), and two wheelchair users spaces in standard class, (in coaches B and D).

On Super Voyager trains, we provide one wheelchair user spaces in first class, (in coach E), and one wheelchair users space in standard class, (in coach A). When trains run as double sets, one wheelchair user space is additionally provided in coach L, and one in standard class in coach G.





You can find out more information about our trains, including which routes they operate and seating plans by visiting [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains)

The carriages with wheelchair user spaces are identifiable by a symbol on the train exterior door

All wheelchair user spaces feature a small table, with facing companion seat.

Wheelchair user spaces can be reserved at the same time as booking assistance.

A minimum of one companion seat will be provided. Where you are travelling as part of a group, we will endeavour to provide seats in the vicinity of the wheelchair user space, but this may not always be possible, particularly on busier services.

If at the time of requesting assistance you require a wheelchair user space and all the standard class wheelchair user spaces are already booked, you will be provided with a complimentary upgrade. This upgrade facility is also available for one travelling companion. If you specify that you wish to travel in First Class, we will charge you the appropriate First Class fare or upgrade.

On the rare occasion the wheelchair user space you have reserved is in use by another customer when you arrive, our on-board team will make the space available, or arrange for you to use an alternative wheelchair user space on-board so you can carry on your journey as planned.

If you have not reserved a wheelchair user space, we will allocate any unreserved wheelchair user spaces on a first come first served basis.

Super Voyager and Pendolino trains have a number of 'Priority Seats' for customers who need them. These seats are located near the doors and have additional legroom, which may be useful for people travelling with an assistance dog.

Some of our services can be busy, particularly at peak times or when events are taking place across our network, so we strongly recommend

you book wheelchair spaces or priority seating and assistance in advance to avoid disappointment. If you have arrived at a station and not reserved, you may need to wait for the next available service with space available. Our Assisted Travel Team can make reservations for seats and dedicated wheelchair user spaces for you at the same time as booking your assistance and buying your travel tickets. They also can make seat reservations on trains run by other train companies who also provide this facility if you are not making your entire journey with us. Where assistance has been booked but a specific seat or wheelchair space has not been reserved, e.g. where seats are already booked or reservations are not possible i.e. on other operators' services, we will make this clear to you at the time of booking and confirm this in the confirmation of your booking.

If you do not have a seat or wheelchair user space reserved, and we are unable to travel on an alternative service within an hour of your intended journey time, we will provide alternative accessible transport for you and your companion.

## **If you have not made a seat reservation**

If you are an older or disabled customer and you have not made a seat reservation, we will make every effort to ensure you can find a seat and that wheelchair users are able to use wheelchair user spaces. If you are unable to find seating on-board, please advise a member of the on-train staff who will be pleased to assist you. They aim to pass through the train regularly, or can be found in Coach C near the shop on our Pendolino trains, or at the rear of the train on Super Voyager trains.

## **Assistance Dogs**

We welcome guide or assistance dogs on our trains and they are allowed to travel in all carriages. If you are travelling with an assistance dog and don't have a priority seat reserved, talk to station staff before you board. They will help you to find a priority seat. If there are no standard class priority seats available, we will upgrade you for free to ensure there is sufficient room for your dog to lay down.





## A2. Passenger Information and the Promotion of Assisted Travel

### A2.1 Accessible Travel Policy Documentation

We will ensure our Accessible Travel policy and in particular the Passenger leaflet are widely available ensuring that you understand the services and assistance available and how to obtain it. In addition to being available on our website to download (in [Word] and PDF formats) the Passenger Leaflet can also be obtained on request from our Customer Resolution Team and from information points, ticket offices and leaflet racks at all stations where we call. We will work with our local community stakeholders and user groups to ensure the leaflet is widely available in community facilities such as community centres, job centres, citizens advice bureaux, libraries, and tourist information centres. We ensure that we place all information about accessing our services in a position that both wheelchair users and standing customers can obtain and access. We will be happy to provide alternative formats on request as outlined in the introduction

### A2.2 Stations and Rolling Stock Accessibility

#### Station Accessibility Information

Details to help you plan your journey are available on our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](http://avantiwestcoast.co.uk) which provides information on the accessible features at each of the stations we serve. The same information for every station on the UK rail network is provided on the National Rail

website. This includes a journey planning tool called "Stations Made Easy" which helps you plan your route around a station. Go to [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations) for more details.

We will regularly update "Stations Made Easy" and other information on our website and the National Rail website so that you can find out about any limitations to access. This includes any temporary restrictions, for example, because of building work or when facilities such as lifts and toilets at stations are out of order. If you book assistance via our Assisted Travel Team they will advise you of the latest accessibility issues relevant to your journey.

#### Train Accessibility Information

We operate two different types of train: Super Voyager and Pendolino trains. Both are fully compliant with the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and include at least two wheelchair spaces (at least one in First Class and one in Standard) adjacent to an entrance door and a wheel chair accessible toilet.

Most trains have an on-board shop where you can buy food and refreshments during the majority of the journey. If you are unable to visit the buffet car, please tell a member of our on-board staff as they pass through the train who will be pleased to serve refreshments to you at your seat.

On our website we provide diagrams that detail the layout and location of the accessible features throughout our trains, both the Super Voyagers and the Pendolinos.

## **A2.3 Passenger journey information**

We recognise that many of our customers are infrequent or occasional users of our services and may not know how to best access the information they need to travel with confidence. This can be a particular problem when services are disrupted. We have various solutions in place to provide the information customers need when travelling.

### **At the Station**

#### **Train Arrival and Departure Information**

All our stations are fitted with audio and visual real-time information systems, giving clear and consistent information regarding train departures and delays or disruption. This includes up to date train running information on customer information screens on all platforms where services call. We also make audio announcements when there are any changes to the schedule and when a train is approaching.

All the stations we manage are staffed during the times trains call and our staff are there to provide information, help and assistance. All members of our team are briefed to look out for customers with specific needs and offer appropriate help.

At times of disruption, members of staff will update information screens as soon as they can. We will also make announcements to keep customers informed of the situation and staff will actively seek to identify those customers in need of assistance.

#### **Wayfinding and Connections to Other Transport**

All our stations have posters displaying information about the station, facilities and accessibility information. The posters include a station map, the contact details of our Assisted Travel Team and those of any other operators who use the station.

Where we manage stations, we will work with the local authority to provide wayfinding signage to the station.

Within our station, signage is provided directing customers to platforms and key facilities such as accessible toilets.

#### **Delays, Diversions and Disruption**

Where customers have booked assistance, and we know more than 24 hours in advance that the journey is no longer viable due to engineering works, industrial action, severe weather, our Assisted Travel team will contact you to discuss your journey and make alternative arrangements or provide a refund if you choose not to travel. Where a potential issue is identified with less than 24 hours' notice, station staff will inform you when you arrive to travel and discuss alternative arrangements with you.

Where replacement transport is in operation we will provide, where possible, visual information on our information screens, automatic announcements or staff announcements to direct customers to alternative transport.

Our station and on train staff are trained to anticipate your needs, which also covers mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. They will communicate news of any service disruption and provision of alternative transport via the Passenger Information Systems or, where possible, in person. The provision of Help Points at all our stations, provide a link to our team 24 hours 7 days a week (except Christmas Day) who will also be able to assist you in re-planning your journey

## On the Train

All our trains have public address equipment and a visual display in each coach showing the train's destination and the next stop.

Our on-Board staff are trained to provide timely, helpful and clear announcements and will ensure these are made in sufficient time for customers, especially those with reduced mobility, to prepare to alight, at least two minutes before arriving at each station.

Our team will make announcements about any alterations to the normal service, including delays. If you have difficulty hearing such announcements, please advise the Train Manager or other on-board staff at the earliest opportunity.

## A2.4 Information Points, help points and Contact Centres

### Information Points

We have information points at a number of our stations. These are located in key areas of the station, including the concourse or in waiting rooms. Signage is provided to direct you where these are not immediately obvious. Where stations do not have an information point, the ticket office will provide this service

**Our station information points are staffed to the same times as our ticket offices and can provide you with information about:**

- Station facilities
- Train services, including timetables, connections, fares and the accessibility of the train
- Delays, disruption, diversions or emergencies taking place along the route which may affect your journey
- Confirm your Passenger Assist arrangements

They can also help with any other general enquiries you may have.

We will ensure that at each of our stations we place timetables, posters, information leaflets, (including our Accessible Travel Policy passenger leaflet) and other materials in a position that both wheelchair users and standing customers can obtain and access.

### Help Points

We have help points at our stations. Staff answering these help points will be able to help you with local information, train running details, assistance requests and information relating to other operators and stations.



## A2.5 Websites

Our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](http://avantiwestcoast.co.uk), uses a HTML format and is designed to provide easy access to read and download information, covering everything you need to know our Accessible Travel Policy and processes.

Our website includes the ReciteMe tool which provides text to speech playback functionality, screen reader functions including style sheets, easy to adjust font sizes and colours, a magnifying glass, ruler, screen mask and browser accessibility functions, as well as dyslexia software, and an interactive dictionary.

We will ensure that by the end of 2021 our website and app comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines v 2.1.

## A3. Ticketing and Fares

### Buying a Ticket

Tickets can be bought from the ticket office at staffed stations, at stations with self-service ticket vending machines, by phoning our Customer Resolution Team, online at [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](http://avantiwestcoast.co.uk), via our app which is downloadable from the App Store (iOS/Apple) or Play Store (Android) or by contacting our Assisted Travel team.

We are committed to providing you with impartial and accurate ticketing information and advice about the best ticket options for you, irrespective of which train operator provides the service you wish to use.

Where it is difficult for you to purchase a ticket before you travel due to your disability, you will be able to buy tickets on-board the train or at your destination. You will still receive any fare reductions that you are entitled to, and no penalties for ticketless travel will be applied.

## Railcards

### Disabled Persons Railcard

A Disabled Persons Railcard is available to people with one or more of a range of disabilities. They are valid for one year or three years and they give you and your companion discounts on standard and first-class tickets throughout the UK rail network. A one-year Railcard costs £20 or a three-year Railcard costs £54.

If you have a Disabled Persons Railcard, we'll give you a discount of up to 34% when you buy your tickets online or at the ticket machine. At the ticket office, you just need to show your Railcard when you buy tickets. You also need to carry your Railcard with you when you travel for when your tickets are checked.

If you don't already have a Disabled Persons Railcard, you can find out more and apply for one by going online to [disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk), by calling National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or **0345 605 0600** (minicom for those with hearing impairments), or by picking up a leaflet from your local ticket office. You will need to supply proof of disability as part of your application.

### Senior Railcard

Senior Railcards are available to anyone aged 60 and over. They are valid for a year or for three years and give you up to a third off standard and first-class tickets for journeys throughout Great Britain.

If you have a Senior Railcard, we'll give you a discount when you buy your tickets online, at a ticket office or from a ticket machine. At the ticket office you just need to show your Railcard when you buy your tickets. You also need to carry your Railcard when you travel for when your tickets are checked.

If you don't already have a Senior Railcard, you can find out more and apply for one by going online to [senior-railcard.co.uk](http://senior-railcard.co.uk), by calling National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or **0345 605 0600** (minicom for those with hearing impairments), or by picking up a leaflet from your local ticket office.



## Concessionary Fares - without using a Railcard

Discounts are also available in some cases where you do not have a Railcard. If you are blind or visually-impaired or you travel in your own wheelchair, you are entitled to the concessions detailed below. Please be aware these cannot be purchased from the ticket vending machines and should be purchased from station ticket offices. If there is no ticket office at the station where you board you may pay the concessionary fare, without penalty, during the journey or at your destination.

### Blind or visually-impaired customers travelling with a companion

If you are registered as blind or visually-impaired and you are travelling with another person, the concessionary discounts below apply to adult fares only for both you and your companion. You cannot get a discount if you are travelling on your own, unless you have a railcard. You must show a document confirming your disability when you buy your ticket and when travelling. It must be either a CVI/BP1/BD8 certificate or documentation from a recognised institution, for example, Social Services, your Local Authority or Blind Veterans UK.

If you are blind or visually-impaired, you can buy one adult season ticket that enables a companion to travel with you on National Rail services only at no extra cost (so two people travel for the price of one). It doesn't have to be the same person travelling with you on every journey. Please take evidence of your visual impairment (as described in the paragraph above) with you to prove your eligibility.

## People who stay in their own wheelchair for a rail journey

If you need to stay in your own wheelchair during a journey and you do not have a Railcard, you are eligible for the concessionary discounts below on both adult and child fares. The discounts below apply if you are travelling alone and are available to one adult travelling with you.

### Concessionary Fare Discounts

#### First Class/Standard

Anytime Singles or Returns	<b>34% off</b>
Anytime Day Singles	<b>34% off</b>
Anytime Day Return	<b>50% off</b>

In many cases, Off-Peak, Super Off-Peak or Advance tickets may cost less than the discounted Anytime Fare. Ticket office staff will make you aware if there is a cheaper fare available.

### Ticket machines

Our self-service ticket machines can issue reduced-rate tickets to holders of a Disabled Persons Railcard and their companions as well as holders of Senior Railcards. These ticket machines are designed to be accessible.

### Ticket gates

Where there are ticket gates in operation at our stations, there will be at least one wide aisle gate. Our ticket gates are normally staffed but we will ensure that they are kept in the open position if this is not the case.

## A4. Alternative accessible transport

We will ensure you can make as much of your journey by rail as possible but the accessibility of the stations at which our services call and across the UK rail network does vary considerably.

If you can't access a train service because of a physical feature at a station, alternative transport, usually a taxi, will be provided by the Station operator to a convenient accessible station at no extra cost from where you can continue your journey by rail. This can be arranged by us when you book assistance, and we will discuss with you the type of alternative transport you require so that we can make sure that the vehicle provided meets your needs.

When we are unable to operate trains, our aim is to keep all customers moving.

Where road transport is used in place of rail services during planned disruption e.g. during planned engineering work, we will seek to provide PSVAR compliant vehicles. Where this is not possible due to lack of supply, or suitability for longer distance journeys, we will arrange a specific appropriate alternative. When you contact us, let us know the type of alternative transport you need so that we can make sure the arrangements are the most suitable for your needs.

During unplanned disruption, e.g. damage to the railway caused by flooding, infrastructure faults, train faults or similar, road transport may be used in place of rail services. We will seek to provide PSVAR compliant vehicles. Where this is not possible due to lack of supply, or suitability for longer distance journeys, we will arrange a specific appropriate alternative. Even where assistance has been requested in advance, this may take time to source depending on the location, time of day and type of vehicle needed to suit your needs.

At all times, our commitment is to keep customers moving as safely and comfortably as possible, and with minimum delay.

## A5. Mobility Scooters and Mobility Aids

We understand that scooters are useful for many people – but carrying them on trains can cause problems because of their size, weight and manoeuvrability. Safety is our top priority. If you have a scooter with a footprint of less than 70cm wide and 120cm long, that weighs less than 300kg when you are seated in it, you can take it on any Avanti West Coast train service, but please be aware that scooter users are required to transfer to a seat whilst travelling for safety reasons.

If you have a model which is capable of being folded and carried as luggage it can be taken on any of our trains.

If you are travelling with a scooter, we recommend contacting our Assisted Travel Team who will be able to arrange assistance for you when boarding and alighting the train.

**REMEMBER** that when making a journey that involves more than one train operator you may find that each operator's policy relating to scooters varies. Our Assisted Travel Team will be able to help by both booking assistance and advising you on each operator's policy on scooter carriage.

We will proactively participate in the development of a new nationwide policy for the carriage of scooters on trains across the UK rail network which seeks to introduce a consistent approach to scooters on trains, enabling customers to easily undertake journeys involving multiple train operator services.

## A6. Delays, disruption and emergencies

We understand that disruption to services and facilities can cause difficulties for older or disabled customers. Avanti West Coast are committed to improving the management of service disruption for all our customers, including providing alternative transport and improved information.

When services are disrupted we will do everything possible to ensure that our disabled customers and those with impaired mobility are able to continue with their journeys, proactively taking your needs into account in both our contingency plans and the service we provide on the day.

### In advance of travel

When you plan your travel our Assisted Travel Team will be able to advise you of any planned engineering works or amended train operations that might affect your journey and advise you of the best options.

### During your journey

We will make announcements at all our stations to update customers during disruption and update our information screens with latest travel information. You can also use help points provided at stations. Station Information notices at the entrance to our stations show contact details for both our Customer Resolution and Assisted Travel teams. Severe disruption will also be communicated in the form of banners across the top of rail websites such as [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk) and [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](http://avantiwestcoast.co.uk)

If disruption occurs before the train has left the station, we normally offer the next available service and station teams will help you to rearrange your booked assistance.

If platform alterations occur at short notice, station staff, where available, will be able to assist you to the correct platform. **Our teams will also:**

- Update customer information screens at the station and make additional announcements
- Seek to identify customers with disabilities and provide any assistance you need
- Try to give sufficient time to allow you to board the re-platformed train

Where facilities that affect disabled travellers are out of use e.g. accessible toilets, we will try to advise you of this before you join the train. We will also report the fault to our maintenance teams so that it can be fixed quickly.

Where replacement transport is in operation we will provide, where possible, visual information on our information screens, automatic announcements or staff announcements to direct you to alternative transport.

If service disruption occurs whilst you are on the train our on-board team will be able to advise and assist you. The Train Manager on each of our trains has the details of all customers who have booked assistance. If you haven't booked assistance in advance but require help or advice make yourself known to a member of the team, who are usually located next to the shop. All on-board staff are encouraged to provide the highest levels of customer service and empowered to resolve appropriate issues "on the spot". If a train terminates before it has arrived at its destination, the onboard staff will arrange assistance for you for your onward travel.

If you need to change your journey due to service disruption, our members of staff will assist you arranging your revised journey and any assistance you require. If you have booked assistance, we will also inform other operators and stations about the changes to your journey, so they can still provide the assistance you need. If we are not able to run train services at all and you wish to travel on a different day, we will help you to make a new booking. We will also arrange accessible transport to take you back to the station where you started your journey if this is more convenient.

If services are going to be disrupted for a longer period of time, or if we are aware more than 24 hours before you travel that there is going to be a problem, our Assisted Travel team will call or email customers who have booked assistance using Passenger Assist, and who will be affected by the disruption to make them aware of the changes and provide advice, including helping them make new arrangements where appropriate.

## **HS2 construction**

We anticipate that the development of the HS2 project may impact access to and from the West Coast network during the franchise, particularly at London Euston. We will work closely with our industry partners including Network Rail, Transport for London, other Train Operating Companies and other public transport operators to ensure that onward journeys are well managed and that arrangements for customers requiring assistance will be identified and communicated including suitable alternative routes for all customers to use when parts of the network are closed.

## **In the event of an emergency**

Keeping our customers safe is our priority. Our emergency plans for stations and trains include how to support people with a disability or who may be less mobile during an emergency. All our customer facing staff are trained in emergency procedures and they will supervise any action that needs to be taken. Safety information is provided on all our trains with clear diagrams and pictures, and in the rare event of an emergency on a train, our on-board team will advise and help you. In nearly all cases the safest option is for all customers to remain on the train and wait for instructions until our team have fully assessed the situation. If you do have to leave the train between stations, the emergency services will provide equipment and help you get off the train safely. If we need to evacuate an unstaffed station, we will use the station Public Address System to alert you.





## **A7. Station facilities**

### **A7.1 Left luggage**

We do not provide a left luggage service at our stations; however, accessible facilities are provided at some of the larger stations operated by Network Rail including London Euston, Birmingham New Street, Manchester Piccadilly and Glasgow Central.

### **A7.2 Disabled parking**

We have car parking facilities at all our stations and provide marked bays for Blue Badge holders. We always locate parking bays for Blue Badge holders in accessible locations as close to the station as possible. These spaces are within the chargeable parking area, so the normal car parking rate applies. We monitor the use of our car parks to make sure that designated spaces are not being used by people without Blue Badges.

Where we are introducing additional parking spaces at our stations, we will assess the number of Blue Badge spaces, and may look to provide more of these. If a car park has fewer bays than the number specified in industry standards, we monitor usage. Whenever we find there's a significantly larger demand for more bays in a certain car park, we will endeavour to add more, and we also have a programme to address any bays that currently don't meet the dimensional guidelines.

### **A7.3 Facilities and Service provided by third parties**

Where we provide facilities and services using third parties we will work with them to ensure that these operators are aware of the needs of our disabled customers. As service providers

they will have their own obligations under the Equality Act 2010, but we will monitor the service they provide, share any feedback we receive and work together to improve the accessibility of facilities and services including highlighting to them any deficiencies that have been brought to our attention.

### **A7.4 Replacement Facilities**

Our station management team conduct regular checks at our stations and our on-board teams report any faults they see on trains, so any defects can be put right as quickly as possible. If for whatever reason one of the accessible features, or facilities on our stations or trains, is not available, we will take all reasonable steps to fix this as soon as we are able to, and provide a reasonable alternative. We will advise you of the new arrangements, ensuring that information is updated on National Rail Enquiries, and our website within 24 hours of notification of any facilities that may be temporarily out of order. Where known, we will publish an expected timescale for facilities to return to use.

### **A7.5 Station Entrances**

If for any reason it becomes necessary for us to permanently alter facilities at any of our stations, leading to restricted access for disabled customers, we will consult the Department for Transport, Transport Focus, London Travel Watch (where applicable) and local access groups before any permanent changes are undertaken. These changes will be approved by the Department for Transport. We will also take into account the needs of disabled people when restricting or temporarily closing access points at stations (for example during building works) and ensure that any temporary reductions in access comply with the Joint Code of Practice in relation to unobstructed progress.

## A8. Redress

Our teams work hard to provide you with the help and assistance you need to be able to complete your journey with ease, however we recognise that sometimes, things do not go as planned.

If the assistance you have booked is not provided or does not meet your requirements, please let a member of staff or the Assisted Travel team know at the time so that we can resolve the issue.

If you need to provide feedback after travelling please contact our Assisted Travel Team. Contact details can be found in section 4 of this leaflet.

Where things have not gone as planned, we will use feedback provided to improve how we work and the approach of others who provide the assistance service on our behalf.

When you have booked assistance and it has not been delivered you will be eligible for compensation for your journey. When your assistance was booked for travel on one of our trains we will provide both the compensation and a response. You can claim this by contacting our Assisted Travel Team. If you were travelling on another train company's service for all or part of your journey, you can choose to complain to them directly, or we can liaise with them on your behalf.

If you are requesting Assisted Travel redress following an issue, you will need to provide a copy of your train tickets, along with your Passenger Assistance reference number, which can be found on your confirmation email.

Where assistance has not been provided due to a delay, and both Delay Repay and Assisted Travel redress could apply, you will be entitled to whichever value is the highest but will not be able to claim both.

## Escalation

Please give us the opportunity to try to resolve your complaint. If you're unhappy with the response you receive, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman.

The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve complaints between us and our customers. It's free to use their services and they are independent of the rail industry. They don't take sides, but just look at the evidence available. They will help us both to try to reach an agreement, but if this doesn't happen, they will make a decision based on the evidence they've received. If you agree with their decision, then we have to act on what they say.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- You're unhappy with our final response to your complaint which will be contained in a letter or email (sometimes called a 'deadlock letter'); or
- We haven't resolved your complaint within 40 working days of receiving it; and;
- No more than 12 months have passed since we sent you our final response.

There are some complaints that the Rail Ombudsman won't be able to look into, for example if it's about the way one of our services has been designed, industry policy, or if your complaint relates to an event which took place before the Rail Ombudsman service was established. If that's the case, then they'll contact you to let you know. If possible, they will transfer your complaint to another organisation that may be able to help you further, such as Transport Focus, the independent consumer watchdog for the rail industry. They will independently review your complaint and where appropriate, follow things up on your behalf.

On-line chat: [www.railombudsman.org](http://www.railombudsman.org)

Telephone: 0330 094 0362

Textphone: 0330 094 0363

E-mail: [enquiries@railombudsman.org](mailto:enquiries@railombudsman.org)

Rail Ombudsman Post: FREEPOST, 1st Floor, Premier House, Argyle Way, Stevenage SG1 2AD



## B. Strategy and Management

### B1. Strategy

Improving the accessibility of the rail network and supporting older or disabled customers to travel with confidence and ease, is the central element of our vision for the Avanti West Coast. Our franchise commitments include significant investment in the development and improvement of accessible facilities across the West Coast network both at stations and on trains. We recognise the importance of providing consistency in approach and service provision across the rail network and we will proactively work with industry partners to deliver incremental and continuous improvement over the life of the franchise, engaging with customers and user groups.

### B2. Management and Arrangements

Our Accessibility and Inclusion Manager, reporting to the Head of Station Development is accountable for the development, delivery and success of our strategy. They will oversee the development and implementation of our improvement plans which will be managed through robust business planning, project management and customer service delivery processes. The Partnership and Strategy Director will have Executive level ownership of this strategy and improvement plans.

Our Accessibility Panel, established within three months of the start of the franchise, chaired by our Partnership and Strategy Director, will be the senior decision making cross functional forum that determines our approach and priorities for improving accessibility, managing the delivery of our Accessibility Policy and monitoring performance and delivery. This group will include representatives

from stakeholders, Network Rail, customer champions and disabled groups as well as our senior management team.

We will proactively seek local customer, stakeholder and community feedback and by July 2020 set up seven Regional Accessible Stations Panels, comprising customers, local user groups, and employee representatives. This will provide a two-way feedback conduit between the Accessibility Panel and accessibility issues specific to each station where our trains call. Meeting twice yearly the Regional Accessible Stations Panels will review and act upon feedback, including taking part in the trialling of new ideas and products, conducting mystery shopping and helping inform appropriate prioritisation of investment.

We will ensure that every member of our team understands their responsibilities in relation to improving the travel experience of our older or disabled customers. Training programmes, online learning modules, internal briefing and communications such as newsletters, employee online information and apps will all help ensure that accessibility and inclusion form a central pillar of our core values ensuring the needs of people with disabilities are considered in all aspects of our business.

Our customer service managers will ensure all aspects of our Accessible Travel Policy, including the Joint Code of Practice is delivered consistently and reliably across all aspects of the customer journey partnered by our Engineering team in relation to the quality of our trains.

By the end of 2020 we will appoint an Accessibility Champion within our communications and marketing team to ensure all our corporate communications are delivered in the most accessible way, including for customers who have a visual or hearing impairment.

### B3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Avanti West Coast will closely monitor the delivery of all aspects of our Accessible Travel Policy and processes. We will track compliance with this policy, legislative requirements and industry guidelines, as well as measuring our performance against our goals and targets in relation to Accessibility, particularly focusing on feedback from our customers. The results will inform and prioritise our efforts to deliver improvement in relation to accessible travel.

#### **Our approach will include monitoring and evaluating:**

- Response times in relation to Passenger Assist bookings on all channels
- Monitoring any failure to provide booked assistance
- Monitoring the volume of booked assistance requests
- Monitoring the volume of turn up and go requests
- Availability of accessible features e.g. accessible toilets, lifts etc
- The delivery of improvement plans to projected timescales
- Customer complaints received in relation to any aspect of Accessibility

We will evaluate results every four weeks and carry out an in-depth annual review. We will share information and the results of our evaluation across industry forums such as the Rail Delivery Group and with the ORR, fully complying with the ORR's Core Data reporting requirements including providing the ORR with details of any key actions to improve performance.

#### **We will measure customer satisfaction in relation to our accessible services, to inform improvement and identify best practice, using:**

- Mystery shopper exercises
- Feedback to our Assisted Travel team: as standard we will ask customers who use our Assisted Travel service to provide feedback and suggestions
- Formal telephone interviews with customers (where consent has been given) who have used our Assisted Travel service [every month] to obtain direct feedback about their experience of our service
- Feedback from our customer panel, disabled customer groups and other organisations

Delivering continuous improvement is central to our business approach. All results will be collated into a monthly Accessibility Performance Report by our [Insight team] and shared across the business as appropriate to inform improvement strategies.





## B4. Access Improvements

Our franchise plans include extensive investment across all aspects of the customer experience, many of which will have direct and positive impact on improving the accessibility of the rail network for older or disabled customers.

We will comply with the PRM-TSI and the Joint Code of Practice when developing proposals for improvement across our business. If compliance is not possible we will apply for any necessary derogations but only after every effort has been made to comply with the relevant requirements.

### Information and Assistance

We will work closely with the RDG to support the introduction of a new Passenger Assist system that is consistent across the UK rail network and provides an easy to use and reliable assisted travel booking service enhancing clear and direct communication between customers and our teams providing assisted travel.

We will use the RDG's accessibility application programming interface when it becomes available to enable customers to book Passenger Assistance using voice based smart home assistant technology.

We're always looking for ways to improve our website. We plan to conduct an independent audit of our site from a specialist digital accessibility business during the first year of the franchise against national and industry best practice such as W3Cs Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and consult with users and our Accessibility to identify further areas for improvement.

We will ensure that by the end of 2021 our website and app comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines v 2.1.



## At our Stations

We have a comprehensive programme of investment to improve customer facilities at stations across our network to improve the accessibility for those with physical, mental, sensory or cognitive impairment.

In the first year of the franchise our focus will be to establish our Accessibility Panel and then conduct detailed accessibility audits of each of our stations to identify where improvements can be made. The audit results will inform the development of prioritised investment. We will conduct detailed feasibility studies seeking the active participation of our Accessibility Panel members. We have committed £1.4million to a minor works fund for such improvements which will include improvements to ticket offices (such as providing accessible ticket desks), waiting rooms, signage, shelters, seating and cycle facilities.

### Specifically, in 2020 we plan to:

- Investigate opportunities to provide and promote spaces for adapted bicycles to increase cycling opportunities to and from our stations

- Make improvements to wayfinding both within and around each of our managed stations and from the wider localities they serve, working in partnership with local authorities, communities and other transport providers. This will include a digital wayfinding trial at Birmingham International using electronic beacons
- Our station social and commercial development plan aims to diversify and expand the wider role of the stations within the communities they serve. This will consider how wider development of the stations can incorporate and enhance accessibility for all.

### In 2021 we plan to:

- Provide changing places toilets at Coventry, Stockport, Preston, Birmingham International
- Develop a journey planning and guidance tool specifically for customers with hidden disabilities
- We will replace all ticket vending machines within the first two years of the franchise. They will be compliant with the Rail Delivery Group design guidelines in relation to accessibility



## On Train

In 2022, we will replace our Super Voyager fleet with new trains which will be fully accessible, including wheelchair user spaces, with easy access to an accessible toilet.

We also plan to refurbish our Pendolino trains between late 2020 and early 2023. This will include braille signage for key features, e.g. door close buttons, and improved facilities for wheelchair users.

We will consult with disabled user groups in the detailed development of our plans and report on progress at least every year.

## JAM Card

JAM, stands for 'Just a Minute'. It is a card-based scheme designed to help you communicate with our teams if you have dementia, speech impediment or other disability which affects your communication. Showing a member of our team a JAM card lets them know that you need a little more time, and that you have a hidden disability.

You can download the JAM card app from the App Store (iOS) or Play Store (Android) to show staff, or you can order a physical card free of charge from [www.jamcard.org](http://www.jamcard.org).



All our customer facing staff have been trained to recognise the JAM card, and have completed hidden disability awareness training and many have been given a JAM pin badge to wear that lets you know that they are trained to understand how to respond when presented with the card.

## Communications and Marketing

Our Accessibility Champion within our Communications and Marketing team is tasked with ensuring all our corporate communications are delivered in the most accessible way, including for those customers with visual or hearing impairments whether that be timetables, leaflets and posters, press releases, advertising, information on our website or social media or information we provide to third parties such as the National Rail Enquiries website.

## B5. Working with disabled passengers, local communities and local authorities

Our regional Accessible Station Panels will provide an essential forum for direct engagement and feedback with customers, user group and local stakeholders on how we can continue to improve access and services for disabled or older users, informing priorities and identifying and developing new initiatives.

We will work with local authorities, other local service providers, local and regional access groups and charities to promote the opportunities and benefits of accessible travel on our network.

We will work with our [Regional Accessible Station Panels to identify suitable opportunities to distribute our passenger leaflet where public services (such as doctors' surgeries or libraries) are provided in the communities our train services serve. We will use a wide range of other appropriate channels to promote the opportunities and benefits of travel by rail for older or disabled customers. **This will include:**

- Online fora to test ideas
- Promotion and information about travel online and social media e.g. video, and interactive media



Our Accessibility and Inclusion Manager will represent us on industry forums such as the quarterly Rail Delivery Group Accessibility Group (RDG-AG) meetings and be an active participant in associated working groups.

We will play an active role in the RDG-AG, working with our fellow operators to improve the accessibility of the UK rail network by sharing best practice and implementing consistent approaches. We will also attend Network Rail's Built Environment Accessibility Panel (BEAP).

We will widely consult and engage relevant stakeholders on our plans in relation to accessibility across the franchise.

**In addition to the Department for Transport, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee we will also seek to work with:**

- Members of Parliament
- Members of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government
- Members of the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government
- Local government members and officers at Unitary, County, District and Parish level
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Chambers of Commerce
- Community Rail Partnerships and Rail User Groups
- Station adoption groups
- Charity and Community groups

We will provide an annual summary of how we have engaged with all stakeholders in relation to accessibility across our network in our annual Accessibility report.

## **B6. Staff training**

We recognise the importance training plays in delivering consistently excellent customer service. We will provide all our staff with training and development appropriate for their role in relation to accessibility to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to always provide consistently high quality, reliable and safe services appropriate to the needs of our disabled or older customers.

As part of our diversity, equality and inclusion strategy we will engage with charities with expertise in supporting those with physical, mental, cognitive and sensory impairment to deliver training programmes to our team members who directly support our customers, to give them the confidence and skills to provide appropriate support and assistance.

**The aims of our Disability Awareness training are:**

- To enable our teams to identify and meet the needs of our customers, so we can ensure that the service we provide reflects their needs at all points of the journey
- Understand the requirements of relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010
- Gain an appreciation of the different types of disability and what this means for customers
- Learn about our policy and processes in relation to our Accessible Travel Policy including the accessible features of our trains and stations
- Learn how to assist wheelchair users safely and the correct etiquette
- Recognise customers with additional needs whether they be physical, cognitive and demonstrate effective ways of communicating with them

Disability and awareness training will form part of our corporate induction training for all new employees by 31st July 2021. **It will cover:**

- **Understanding disabled people and their everyday challenges**

- Through sharing the experiences of disabled customers who use our services, and exploring what behaviours encourage customers to have the confidence to travel by train

- **Equality legislation**

- Staff will gain an understanding of the Equality Act 2010, its origins and how it influences their day-to-day duties

- **Defining Disability**

- Focusing on attitudes, staff will gain an appreciation of the broad range of disabilities and impairments which customers may have, and how best to meet their needs



- **Recognising Customers who need assistance**

- Considering all disabilities, including hidden disabilities such as learning difficulties or mental-health, staff will gain skills and be provided with tools to help them identify those customers who may need assistance, and how best to provide this

- **The Railway Regulatory Framework**

- An appreciation will be gained of the policies, procedures and processes which exist throughout the industry for the benefit of customers with disabilities, including the Accessible Travel Policy, Minor Works scheme and Access for All

- **Passenger Assist**

- An in depth understanding of Passenger Assist, how it works, its features and benefits will be gained, with a solid understanding of the part they play in delivery of the service

**All employees who interact directly with customers, will also receive relevant training in:**

- **Communication**

- Understanding how best to communicate with customers with a range of disabilities, and the importance of effective communication between staff providing assistance, e.g. communicating a change to an assistance booking

- **Accessibility in stations and on trains**

- Ensuring staff are aware of the importance of certain station features, where they can find information about other stations, and the process to follow should a facility become unavailable

- **Providing safe assistance (including providing assistance in an emergency)**

- Providing new staff, and reminding existing staff of the safest way to provide assistance, including guiding blind or partially sighted customers or deployment and use of the ramp

We will develop an appropriate refresher training programme to ensure that all our team meet the mandatory learning outcomes for the training listed above as appropriate to their role by 31st July 2021. We will devise future training programmes to ensure training remains current

and each employee is re-briefed at least every two years. Our training programmes will be developed with input from our [Accessibility Panel] and include the opportunity for our employees to engage directly with disabled and older customers to aid better understanding of the real-life challenges that they can face when using the rail network. Our training team will ensure that that our training reflects current legislation, data and language.

We will provide a condensed version of our disability awareness training course, covering as a minimum Passenger Assist, Communication and Providing Safe Assistance to any contact centre team member, including where contracted on a temporary basis or through a third party.

We will work with our third party suppliers to support them in delivering appropriate accessibility training to their team members, where their employees will interact directly with our customers e.g. contact centre teams, rail replacement bus operators, taxi drivers, cleaning teams, so that they are able to provide appropriate and high quality assistance. This may include sharing training materials, agreeing training principles and/or providing introductions to disabled user groups.

We will include a report into the training we have delivered in relation to Disability Awareness every year as part of our annual ["Assistance Report"]. Additionally, we will report progress against the specific targets in relation to training outlined here to the ORR by 31st July 2020.

## **Annual Review and Report**

We will review the delivery of all aspects of our Accessible Travel Policy annually and our results will inform an Annual Accessibility Report that we will share with the ORR. This report will include:

- Progress against plan
- Identifies any problems or challenges we've experience in delivery our goals and promises
- Training results
- Summary of key performance results in relation to Accessibility
- Summary of stakeholder engagement in relation to Accessibility

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