

Accessible Travel Policy

April 2024

AVANTI
WEST COAST



Introduction

We are committed to delivering consistently excellent service, making journeys easy and convenient for all our customers.

Our aim is to provide an accessible and welcoming railway for everybody. We will make sure that we consider the needs of disabled or older customers properly at all times when providing our service, allowing them to travel confidently and independently. We have started putting in place extensive plans for investment across our network to make our facilities, systems and services more accessible. We also recognise the importance of putting in place high-quality customer service that is consistent across the UK rail network. We will work with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.

Our Accessible Travel Policy is made up of four parts:

- **Our Accessible Travel Policy (this document)** A guide to our policies and practices. It explains our strategy and vision for providing accessible services.
- **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** This is available on the [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations) page of our website. It gives details of the arrangements and main facilities at each of the stations we manage and those where our services call.
- **Our trains accessibility information** This is available on the [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains) page of our website. It gives details of the accessible features on the trains we operate.

Together these documents form our Accessible Travel Policy.

You can find all of the documents online at [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk) and download them both in standard and accessible formats. Our passenger leaflet is available from any staffed station where our services call.

We also offer the policy in these formats.

- Braille
- Audio
- Large print
- Easy read

Contact our Customer Resolution team or Assisted Travel team if you would like any of these formats. 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 make sure it is up to date and reflects any changes to our stations or services.

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▷ Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire

A. Our commitment to providing assistance

We are committed to providing a reliable and easy-to-access service that allows older and disabled customers to arrange any assistance they may need to help them access any part of our network with confidence using the national Passenger Assist system. We are committed to working with our rail industry partners to make the Passenger Assist service more consistent and reliable, particularly for journeys that involve more than one operator.



A1. Booking and providing assistance

Our Passenger Assist service supports you to make the most appropriate arrangements for your journey, tailored to your 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. They are available 24 hours a day (not including Christmas Day and Boxing Day where the contact centre is closed).

We will make sure the team can meet demand for this service by monitoring how many requests we get and our response times, and by adjusting our service if necessary. As set out in section B6, Staff training, the team receive training that makes sure they understand the needs of our disabled and older customers. They have an in-depth knowledge of our network's accessible facilities and features, which helps them to give the most appropriate advice.

You can ask for assistance for your journey from when tickets are released, usually 12 weeks in advance.

Contact details for our Assisted Travel Team

Call: **0800 015 8123**

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

Online: Visit avantiwestcoast.co.uk/assistance and complete the webform

App: The Passenger Assist by TransReport app is available on both Android and IOS. This app allows you to easily request assistance, saving your profile for future journeys.

We have reduced the amount of notice customers must provide. This means you can make assistance requests up to two hours before travelling when booking for same-day travel during contact centre operating hours. If you need to book after this time, please contact our team and they will do their best to assist. Passenger Assistance is available without a booking, with our staff able to assist you onto the next available service.

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 your 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 provide a reliable assistance service, we will make sure that we regularly review all information on National Rail Enquiries for the stations that we manage. If one of the accessible features or facilities on our stations or trains is not available, or you become aware of an issue with the information provided, we will update that information on National Rail Enquiries and our website. If facilities that affect disabled travellers are out of use (for example, accessible toilets), we will try to let you know before you board the train.

When you call to make a Passenger Assist request, our team will confirm which of the station's features are accessible and the arrangements they have made for you, so that you know what to expect when you travel. They will send you a confirmation email with the details of your booking. We can also send you information about station accessibility by post if requested.

We are taking part in the Office of Rail and Road handover protocol, which enables accurate communication between stations when assistance is needed. As part of this, we will make sure that there is a dedicated phone number and responsible member of staff for each station who can reliably communicate the help you need, as well as a member of staff responsible for receiving the calls at each station. We also use the new rail industry Passenger Assist App.

If you have booked Passenger Assist, 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 finishes its journey (such as London Euston) it can take a little longer to meet you, and we will do our best to assist you within five minutes of your train's arrival.

We can also provide help when you travel, even if you have not booked that help in advance. You can turn up at any station that is accessible to you and ask a member of staff to help you onto the train. You can use a help point at the station where available, or call us on [0345 528 0253](tel:03455280253). To help you understand which services you may be able to use without help from our staff, the accessible features of each of the stations we call at are listed on our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/stations). Our Assisted Travel team will also be able to give you 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.

All of our trains have an on-board team who will be able to help you on and off the train at stations where there are no platform staff available to help 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 of our team are told to look out for customers with specific needs and offer appropriate help. If you need assistance and have not contacted us in advance, this may take some time to provide, particularly if services are disrupted. Instead, we may arrange alternative accessible transport (at no extra cost) to another station.

If you need help getting off the train and have not booked assistance in advance, you should tell the Train Manager and they will arrange this for you.

Accessing unstaffed stations

All the stations that we manage are staffed during the times that trains call there, although this is not the case at all the stations our services call at. We will always do our best to provide the 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 want to travel because of a physical feature, for example, there is no step-free access), the station operator will provide you with alternative transport (for example, a taxi) to a convenient accessible station from where you can continue your journey by rail. There is no extra cost for this. We can arrange this when you book assistance, and we will discuss with you the type of alternative transport you need so that we can make sure that we provide the appropriate vehicle.

Connections to other train services

When making train connections, please allow yourself enough time to transfer between trains. It may be that the time needed to transfer is longer than the times allocated in journey planning systems. Our Assisted Travel team will tell you connection times when you make your booking and can find alternative journeys for you if you need more time to transfer. All of our stations have wheelchairs which staff use to help customers for transfers around the station. If you need to use a station wheelchair, please ask when booking so that we can make sure there is one available.

We are working with the Office of Rail and Road and other train operators to improve communication between stations where you get on and off the train.

Platform alterations

If platform alterations happen at short notice, station staff, if available, will be able to help you to the correct platform.

Our teams will also:

- update customer information screens at the station and make extra announcements;
- try to identify customers with disabilities and provide any assistance they need; and
- try to give enough time to allow you to board the train at the new platform.

Connecting to different transport

If you are changing transport (for example, from train to bus or taxi), we can help you to make your connection as long as the interchange is within the immediate station area.

We aim to make sure 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 these taxis will always be available. Our staff can help you to and from the station taxi rank.

Seats on trains

You can reserve seats on all of our trains free of charge, when you buy your ticket. We strongly recommend you make a reservation if you have reduced mobility. You can make reservations up to three months before the date you travel and up until two hours before the train begins its journey.

We will confirm your reservation 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.

We may occasionally have to make changes to the seats that can be reserved on board our trains. If this happens, you can find information about it on our website at [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains).

Wheelchair spaces and priority seats

All our trains have dedicated spaces for wheelchair and mobility scooter users. These spaces are 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 make sure customers who need these spaces are given priority.

All our trains are designed to provide a wheelchair space (including a small table) within a standard saloon. We also provide a wheelchair space shared between Standard Premium and First Class. Our trains can take wheelchairs and mobility scooters 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 space shared between Standard Premium and First Class (in Coach J) and two in Standard Class (in Coach B and D).

On Super Voyager trains, we provide one wheelchair space in First Class (in Coach E) and one in Standard Class (in Coach A). When trains run as double sets, an extra wheelchair space is provided in Coach L and one in Standard Class in Coach G.

Our Super Voyager trains will start to be replaced with new Hitachi fleet in mid-2024. For the new fleet, wheelchair spaces will be in Coach A (Standard) and Coach J (First Class) in a 5-car train with Coach L (Standard) and Coach K (First Class) if a 10-car train. We will also introduce a number of 7-car trains where the Standard and First Class spaces will be in Coach A and J.

Other train operators will have different conditions about the size of wheelchairs allowed on their trains. You can find this information at avantiwestcoast.co.uk/about-us/policies-and-procedures/accessible-travel-policy

You can find out more about our trains, including which routes they operate and their seating plans, by visiting avantiwestcoast.co.uk/trains

You can identify the carriages with wheelchair spaces from a symbol on the train door.

All wheelchair spaces feature a small table, with a facing companion seat. On our refurbished Pendolino trains, and new Hitachi fleet, the wheelchair space also includes wireless chargers for mobile devices.

You can reserve wheelchair spaces at the same time as you book assistance.

We will provide at least one companion seat. If you are travelling as part of a group, we will try to provide seats near to the wheelchair space, but this may not always be possible, particularly on busier services.

If you choose to travel in Standard Premium or First Class, we will charge you the appropriate fare or upgrade fee. If you require a wheelchair space in Standard Class wheelchair spaces are already booked, we will give you and one travelling companion a complimentary upgrade. On the rare occasion the wheelchair space you have reserved is being used by another customer when you arrive, our on-board team will make the space available or arrange for you to use another wheelchair space on board.

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

All our trains have a number of priority seats for customers who need them. These seats are near the doors and have extra 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 seats and assistance in advance to avoid disappointment. If you have arrived at a station and not reserved a space, you may need to wait for the next available service with space. Our Assisted Travel team can reserve seats and wheelchair spaces when you book your assistance and buy your travel tickets. They can also reserve seats on trains run by other train companies who also provide this facility if you are not making all of your journey with us. If you have booked assistance but a specific seat or wheelchair space has not been reserved, for example where seats are already booked or reservations are not possible (that is, on other operators' services), we will make this clear to you at the time you book and confirm this in your booking.

If you have not reserved a seat or wheelchair space, and we are unable to offer you 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 reserved a seat, we will make every effort to make sure you can find a seat and that wheelchair users are able to use wheelchair spaces. If you cannot find seating on board, please tell a member of the on-train staff who will be pleased to help 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 and Hitachis.

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 get on the train. They will help you to find an appropriate seat. If there are no Standard Class priority seats available, we will upgrade you for free to make sure there is enough room for your dog to lie down.

A2. Passenger information and assisted travel

A2.1 Accessible Travel Policy

We will make sure our Accessible Travel Policy, and in particular the passenger leaflet, are widely available so that you understand the services and assistance available and how to get it. You can download the passenger leaflet from our website (in PDF format). You can also get it 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 to make sure the leaflet is widely available at community facilities and with local charities and user groups who may benefit from the information in it. We make sure that we put all information about accessing our services in a place that both wheelchair users and standing customers can access. We will be happy to provide alternative formats on request.

A2.2 Stations and trains

Stations

You can find details to help plan your journey on our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk) which has 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 for customers and staff on the National Rail website. This includes a journey planner called 'Stations Made Easy' which helps you plan your route around a station. Go to 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 access that is limited. 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 through our Assisted Travel team they will tell you the latest accessibility issues relevant to your journey.

Trains

We operate two different types of train: Super Voyager and Pendolino and will introduce a new Hitachi fleet to replace the Super Voyagers in mid-2024. All meet the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and include at least two wheelchair spaces (at least one in Standard Premium/First Class and one in Standard Class) next to an entrance door and a wheelchair-accessible toilet.

Most trains have an on-board shop where you can buy food and refreshments during most of the journey. If you cannot visit the shop, please tell a member of our staff as they pass through the train and they will be pleased to serve refreshments to you at your seat.

On our website there are diagrams of the layout and location of the accessible features throughout all three of our fleets.

A2.3 Passenger journey information

We recognise that many of our customers do not use our services very often 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

All our stations have audio and visual real-time information systems, which give clear and consistent information on train departures and delays or disruption. This includes up-to-date train information on customer information screens on all platforms where services call. We also make spoken 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 will look out for customers with specific needs and offer appropriate help.

If services are disrupted, members of staff will update information screens as soon as they can. We will also make announcements, and staff will look out for customers who need assistance.

Signs and connections to other transport

All our stations have posters displaying information about the station, its facilities, and information about accessibility. 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 signs at the station.

Our stations have signs directing customers to platforms and main facilities such as accessible toilets.

Delays, diversions and disruption

If you have booked assistance (this includes if you have mental or sensory disabilities), and we know the day before that your journey is no longer going ahead due to engineering work, industrial action or severe weather, our Assisted Travel team will contact you to discuss your journey and make other arrangements or provide a refund if you choose not to travel. If we discover a possible issue on the day, station staff will tell you when you arrive to travel and discuss alternative arrangements with you.

For planned disruption, such as engineering work, our online journey planners, with National Rail Enquiries, will give details of the type of rail replacement vehicle for that journey. If possible, we will also provide, information on our information screens, automatic announcements, or staff announcements to direct you to alternative transport.

Our station and on-train staff are trained to look for people who need help, including people with mental or sensory disabilities. They will tell you about any disruption to services and alternative transport through the passenger information systems or, if possible, in person. Help points at all our stations provide a link to our team 24 hours, seven days a week (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day). Our staff will also be able to help you replan your journey.

On the train

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

Our on-board staff are trained to provide helpful and clear announcements and will make sure they make them in enough time for customers, especially those with reduced mobility, to prepare to leave the train.

Our team will make announcements about any alterations to the normal service, including delays. If you have difficulty hearing announcements, please tell the Train Manager or other on-board staff as soon as you can.

A2.4 Information points, help points and contact centres

Information points

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

Our station information points are open at the same times as our ticket offices and can give you information about:

- Station facilities
- train services, including timetables, connections, fares and how accessible the train is;
- delays, disruption, diversions or emergencies taking place along the route which may affect your journey; and
- your Passenger Assist arrangements.

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

We will make sure that at each of our stations we place timetables, posters, information leaflets (including our passenger leaflet) and other materials where both wheelchair users and standing customers can access them.

Travel Companion

We have launched the trial of our Remote Travel Companion service. This service allows you to contact a dedicated member of staff via WhatsApp when at stations or on-board. Our team will be able to help when staff may not be visible. They can help if plans suddenly change and you need some dedicated assistance, or if you need to speak to the Train Manager but are unable to leave your seat.



A2.5 Websites

Our website [avantiwestcoast.co.uk](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk) is designed to make it easy for you to read and download information, and covers everything you need to know about our Accessible Travel Policy and processes for travelling on our trains. You can easily make Passenger Assist bookings on our website at [avantiwestcoast.co.uk/onboard/assisted-travel](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/onboard/assisted-travel).

Our website has been independently audited and we're happy to be the first train operator with Shaw Trust accreditation and meeting the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA standard.

Our website also includes ReciteMe, which provides text-to-speech playback, 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.

A3. Ticketing and fares

Buying a ticket

You can buy tickets:

- 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](https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk);
- through our app, which you can download 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, whichever train operator provides the service you want to use.

If it is difficult for you to buy 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 you won't be penalised for boarding without a ticket.

Railcards

Disabled Persons Railcard

A Disabled Persons Railcard is available to people with one or more of a range of disabilities. It is valid for one year or three years, and gives you and your companion discounts on Standard, Standard Premium 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](https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk), by calling National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or **0345 605 0600** (minicom for those with hearing difficulties), 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, Standard Premium 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](https://www.senior-railcard.co.uk), by calling National Rail Enquiries on **0345 748 4950** or **0345 605 0600** (minicom for those with hearing difficulties), 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 partially sighted or you travel in your own wheelchair, you are entitled to the concessions below. You cannot buy these from the ticket-vending machines but must buy them from station ticket offices. If there is no ticket office at the station where you get on the train, you can pay the concessionary fare, without a penalty, during the journey or at your destination.

Blind or partially sighted customers travelling with a companion

If you are registered as blind or partially sighted 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. The document must be either a CVI/BP1/BD8 certificate or a document from a recognised institution, for example, Social Services, your local authority, or Blind Veterans UK.

If you are blind or partially sighted, you can buy one adult season ticket that allows 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 sight difficulty with you to prove your eligibility (see the paragraph above for the type of evidence).

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 rate discounts

First Class/Standard	
Anytime Singles or Returns	34% off
Anytime Day Singles	34% off
Anytime Day Return	50% off

In many cases, Off-Peak, Super Off-Peak or Advance tickets may cost less than the discounted Anytime Fare. Ticket office staff will tell you 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 easy to access.

Ticket gates

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

A4. Alternative accessible transport

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

If you can't access a train service because of a physical feature (for example, there is no step-free access) at a station, the station operator will provide alternative transport to a convenient accessible station from where you can continue your journey by rail. This is at no extra cost. We will use vehicles that meet with Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) where possible or vehicles operated under special authorisation. Our rail replacement team has contracts with bus and taxi operators across the Avanti network, including providing, wherever possible, accessible vehicles.

Twelve weeks before major planned engineering works we take appropriate steps to assess the requirement for accessible transport and alternative accessible vehicles for use as substitute transport and where necessary, procure the use of such vehicles.

To make sure we have the best possible rail replacement service, we hold regular meetings with our rail replacement contractors to look at how we can increase the number of PSVAR vehicles. However, there aren't enough of these vehicles available across the industry. We are working with the Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road, and the rail industry to help increase numbers.

If we know about the disruption in advance, you can arrange transport with us when you book assistance. We will discuss with you the type of transport you need.

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

If road transport is used in place of rail services during planned disruption, for example during engineering work, we will try to provide PSVAR vehicles. We will assess how many of these we need as early as possible. If we cannot provide PSVAR vehicles due to lack of supply, or if they are not suitable for longer journeys, we will arrange an appropriate alternative. When you contact us, let us know the type of transport you need so that we can make suitable arrangements for you.

During unplanned disruption, for example, damage to the railway caused by flooding, infrastructure faults or train faults, road transport may be used in place of rail services. We will aim to provide PSVAR vehicles. If this is not possible due to lack of supply or the vehicle is not suitable for longer distance journeys, we will arrange an appropriate alternative. Even if you have asked for assistance in advance, this may take time to find, depending on the location, time of day and type of vehicle needed to suit your needs.

At all times, we are committed to keeping you moving as safely and comfortably as possible, and with as little delay as possible. During all major planned engineering work, we will do our best, as far as is reasonable, to make sure waiting times for alternative accessible transport are similar to those for all customers.

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 and weight and because they can be hard to manoeuvre. Safety is our top priority. If you have a scooter that is less than 70cm wide and 120cm long and that weighs less than 300kg when you are seated in it, you can take it on any of our trains.

If you have a model which can be folded and carried as luggage you can take it 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 getting on and off the train.

Remember that if your journey involves more than one train operator, you may find that each operator's policy on scooters is different. Our Assisted Travel team will be able to help by booking assistance and advising you on each operator's policy. You can also find other operators' information at https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/216140.aspx.

We will take part in developing a new nationwide policy for carrying scooters on trains across the UK rail network. This policy aims to introduce a consistent approach to scooters on trains, allowing customers to easily take journeys involving more than one train operator.

A6. Delays, disruption and emergencies

We understand that disruption to services and facilities can cause difficulties for older or disabled customers. We are committed to improving how we manage disruption for all our customers, including providing alternative transport and improved information.

When services are disrupted we will do everything possible to make sure that our disabled customers and those with reduced mobility are able to continue their journeys. We will take your needs into account in our contingency plans and the service we provide on the day.

Before you travel

When you plan your travel, our Assisted Travel team will be able to tell you about any engineering work or changes to train services that might affect your journey and tell you the best options for your needs.

During your journey

We will make announcements at all our stations to update you during disruptions and update our information screens with the latest travel information. You can also use help points provided at stations. Information notices at the entrance to our stations show contact details for both our Customer Resolution and Assisted Travel teams. We will also tell you about severe disruption on banners across the top of rail websites such as nationalrail.co.uk and avantiwestcoast.co.uk

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

If there are platform alterations at short notice, station staff will help you to the correct platform. **Our teams will also:**

- update customer information screens at the station and make further announcements;

- look out for customers with disabilities and provide any assistance you need; and
- try to give enough time to board the train.

If facilities that affect disabled travellers (for example, accessible toilets) are out of use, we will tell you before you join the train. We will also report the fault to our maintenance teams so that it can be fixed quickly. If necessary, we will find another solution that suits your needs.

If replacement transport is in place, if possible we will provide visual information on our information screens, automatic announcements or staff announcements to direct you to alternative transport.

If your service is disrupted while 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 need help or advice, make yourself known to a member of the team, who are usually located next to the shop. (Please see our rolling stock guide at avantiwestcoast.co.uk/about-us/policies-and-procedures/accessible-travel-policy for details of where this is.) We encourage all on-board staff to provide the highest levels of customer service and to deal with appropriate issues as they happen. If your train service has to end before your train has arrived at its destination, the on-board staff will arrange assistance for you for your onward travel.

If you need to change your journey because your service is disrupted, our staff will help arrange your revised journey and any assistance you may need. If you have booked assistance, we will also tell other operators and stations about the changes to your journey so they can still provide the help you need. If we are not able to run train services at all and you want 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 time, or if we know more than 24 hours before you travel that there is going to be a problem, our Assisted Travel team will contact you if you have booked assistance using Passenger Assist and will be affected by the disruption. They will tell you about the changes and provide advice, including helping you make new arrangements if appropriate.

HS2

We expect that the HS2 rail project will affect access to and from the West Coast network during our 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 make sure that onward journeys are well managed. If you need assistance, we tell you about arrangements, including suitable alternative routes for all customers to use when parts of the network are closed.

If there is 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 those who may be less mobile during an emergency. All our staff who deal with customers are trained in emergency procedures and they will supervise any action that needs to be taken. There is safety information 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 help you. In nearly all cases, the safest option is to stay 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. These parking bays are always in accessible locations as close to the station as possible. They are within the parking area where people have to pay, so normal car parking rates apply. We monitor our car parks to make sure that designated spaces are not being used by people without Blue Badges.

Where we are introducing extra parking spaces at our stations, we will assess the number of Blue Badge spaces and may provide more of these. If a car park has fewer bays than the number set by industry standards, we monitor their use and try to add more where possible. Whenever we find there's a much larger demand for more bays in a certain car park, we will try to add more. We also have a programme to make any bays that do not meet current guidelines bigger.

A7.3 Facilities and services provided by other operators

If we use other operators to provide facilities and services, we will make sure they are aware of the needs of our disabled customers. As service providers, they will have their own duties under the Equality Act 2010, but we will monitor the service they provide, share any feedback we receive and work together to make facilities and services more accessible, including telling those operators about anything that has been brought to our attention.

A7.4 Replacement facilities

Our station management team regularly check our stations, and our on-board teams report any faults they see on trains. This means that any problems can be put right as quickly as possible. If for whatever reason one of the accessible features or any of the facilities on our stations or trains is not available (for example, an accessible toilet), we will take all reasonable steps to fix this as soon as we can and provide a reasonable alternative. We will tell you the new arrangements, and make sure that information is updated on National Rail Enquiries and our website within 24 hours of being made aware of any facilities that may be temporarily out of order. We will publish when facilities are expected to be back in use (if we know).

A7.5 Station entrances

If for any reason we have to permanently alter facilities at any of our stations and this leads to restricted access for disabled customers, we will consult the Department for Transport, Transport Focus, London Travel Watch (if this applies) and local access groups before we make any changes. 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 work) and make sure that any temporary reductions in access keep to the Joint Code of Practice so that you are not obstructed.

A8. Putting things right

Our teams work hard to provide you with the help and assistance you need to be able to complete your journey easily. 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 needs, please let a member of staff or the Assisted Travel team know at the time so that we can sort out the issue.

If you need to give us feedback after travelling, please contact our Assisted Travel team. Their details are in section 4 of this leaflet.

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

If you have booked assistance but not received it, you will be eligible for compensation for your journey. If you booked assistance 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 contact them direct or we can contact them for you.

If you ask for Passenger Assistance compensation following a problem, you will need to provide a copy of your train tickets along with your Passenger Assistance reference number, which is on your confirmation email.

If we have not provided assistance due to a delay, both Delay Repay and Passenger Assistance compensation could apply, up to the combined value of your purchased ticket for that journey.

Taking your complaint further

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

The Rail Ombudsman is there to help sort out 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 you and us 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, 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 in a letter or email (sometimes called a 'deadlock letter'); or
- we haven't dealt with 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 complaints about the way one of our services has been designed or industry policy, or about events which took place before the Rail Ombudsman service was established. If that's the case, 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.

Online chat: www.railombudsman.org
Phone: 0330 094 0362
Textphone: 0330 094 0363
Email: enquiries@railombudsman.org
Rail Ombudsman address: FREEPOST, 1st Floor, Premier House, Argyle Way, Stevenage SG1 2AD

B. Strategy and management

B1. Strategy

Making the rail network more accessible and supporting older or disabled customers to travel with confidence, ease and independence, is our main aim. Our franchise commitments include significant investment in developing and improving accessible facilities across the West Coast network, covering your full journey from when you decide to travel, to your final destination. We recognise the importance of consistent services across the rail network and we will work with industry partners to improve services during our franchise, involving customers and user groups.

B2. Management and arrangements

Our Accessibility and Inclusion Manager reports to the Customer Proposition Director and is responsible for developing and delivering our strategy and for its success. They will oversee how we develop and put in place our improvement plans, through strong business planning, project management and how we deliver our customer services. The Commercial Director will be responsible at executive level for the strategy and improvement plans.

Our accessibility panel, which meets at least four times per year and is chaired by our Customer Proposition Director as well as an external independent chair, will be made up of senior decision-makers who look at our approach and priorities for improving accessibility, managing our Accessibility Policy and monitoring our performance and how we deliver our services. Projects across the business, both for staff and passengers, will be presented to the panel for feedback. This group will include representatives from stakeholders, industry partners, customer champions and disabled groups, as well as our senior management team.

We will ask for feedback from local customers, our stakeholders and the community through our seven regional accessible stations panels. These panels are made up of customers, local user groups and employee representatives. They will provide two-way feedback between the accessibility panel and accessibility issues specific to each station where our trains call. The panels meet twice a year to review and act on feedback, including taking part in trials of new ideas and products, mystery shopping, and helping to decide priorities for investment.

We will make sure that every member of our team understands their responsibilities for improving travel for our older or disabled customers. We will carry out Inclusion Impact Assessments for all new projects, making sure we consider all protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 when making improvements. (The nine protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.) Training programmes, online learning modules, internal briefing and communications such as newsletters, employee online information and apps will help make accessibility and inclusion a central part of our core values and make sure we consider the needs of people with disabilities in all parts of our business. Together with our engineering team, our customer service managers will make sure that we follow all parts of our Accessible Travel Policy, including the Joint Code of Practice, consistently and reliably across all journeys in relation to the quality of our trains.

Our accessibility champion in our communications and marketing team will make sure we provide all our communications in the most accessible way, including in alternative formats for customers who have sight or hearing difficulties.

B3. Monitoring and evaluation

We will closely monitor how we follow all aspects of our accessible travel policy. We will also track how we keep to legal requirements and industry guidelines, and measure our performance against our accessibility goals and targets, particularly focusing on feedback from our customers. The results will help to guide and prioritise our efforts to improve accessible travel.

We will monitor and evaluate:

- response times for Passenger Assist bookings, however the booking is made;
- any failure to provide booked assistance;
- the number of booked assistance requests;
- the number of 'turn up and go' requests;
- the availability of accessible features, for example, accessible toilets and lifts;
- satisfaction scores for Passenger Assist, broken down by each station;
- whether improvement plans are delivered on time; and
- customer complaints about accessibility.

We will evaluate results every four weeks and carry out an in-depth review each year. We will share information and the results of our

evaluation across industry forums, such as the Rail Delivery Group, and with the Office of Rail and Road, fully keeping to the ORR's core data reporting requirements, including giving them details of any of our main actions to improve performance.

We will measure how far our customers are satisfied with our accessible services, to help us improve and identify best practice. We will do this through:

- mystery shopping exercises;
- the feedback given to our Assisted Travel team we will always ask customers who use our Assisted Travel service to provide feedback and suggestions;
- weekly surveys of with customers who have used our Passenger assistance service to get direct feedback about their experience of our service; and
- feedback from our customer panel, disabled customer groups and other organisations.



B4. Improvements to access

Our franchise plans include extensive investment across all parts of the customer experience, many of which will have direct and positive effect on making the rail network more accessible for older or disabled customers.

All projects will assess the needs of disabled passengers, with the aim of improving travel for all passengers. We also have a dedicated accessibility fund designed to improve the full 'end to end' passenger journey. We will aim to keep to the NTSN-PRM (train requirements for disabled customers) and the Joint Code of Practice when developing proposals for improvement across our business. If we cannot keep to these we will apply for any necessary exemptions, but only after we have made every effort to meet the relevant requirements.

Information and assistance

We will work closely with the Rail Delivery Group to support more improvements to the new Passenger Assist system, so it is consistent across the UK rail network and provides an easy-to-use and reliable assisted travel booking service. This in turn will mean clearer and more direct communication between customers and our teams providing assisted travel.

We promote the RDG's Passenger assistance app. This will mean customers can book Passenger Assistance easily through their phone.

We are always looking for ways to improve our website.

In 2021 we carried out an independent audit of our website against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standards. We made various improvements and in November 2021 were Shaw Trust accredited as meeting these standards on our website. Since then, we receive monthly reports on how to improve our website to ensure we continue to improve.



At our stations

We have a comprehensive investment programme to improve customer facilities at stations across our network to make them more accessible for people with physical, mental or sensory disabilities.

We continue a programme of investment through our Station Development Group. In the last year we have seen a major redevelopment of Coventry station. We installed Changing Places toilets at Carlisle, Preston and Coventry with more planned for Lancaster and Stoke.

We have improved customer information, installed totems across all stations, giving more live, accessible and relevant information.

We have also installed a Passenger Assistance room at Carlisle, giving a comfortable space to wait for customers who have booked assistance.

In 2024 we plan to:

- Provide large, fully accessibility 'Changing Places' toilets at a minimum of one more station on our network
- Install more Passenger Assistance points at Avanti stations.
- Install Goodmaps digital wayfinding at other Avanti stations.

On the train

In 2023, we will start to replace our Super Voyager fleet with new trains, including wheelchair spaces, with easy access to an accessible toilet.

We are continuing to roll out our refurbished Pendolino trains with the first refurbished trains now on the network. These will include Braille signs for key features (for example, door close buttons) and improved facilities for wheelchair users.

We continue to consult disabled user groups when developing the details of our plans, and report on progress at least every year.



Sunflower Scheme

In 2023, we partnered with the Sunflower Scheme in recognising the sunflower lanyard. The lanyard allows the wearer to discreetly show that they may have additional needs that are not immediately obvious.

JAM Card

We also recognise the JAM card. JAM stands for 'Just a Minute'. It is a scheme designed to help you communicate with our teams if you have dementia, speech difficulties or any 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.



All our staff who deal with customers have been trained to recognise both the Sunflower Scheme and the JAM card.

They have completed hidden disability awareness training and many have been given a Sunflower Scheme or JAM pin badge to wear that lets you know that they are trained to understand how to respond when you show them the card

Travel Companion

In 2023, we launched our Travel Companion WhatsApp service. This service aims to improve journeys when the unexpected happens by giving disabled customers the opportunity to chat to someone in real time that really understands. Customers can reach out for extra assistance by messaging Avanti West Coast Travel Companion on WhatsApp on 07980037037.

Communications and marketing

Our Communications and Marketing team make sure all our communications are delivered in the most accessible way, including for those customers with sight or hearing difficulties. This includes timetables, leaflets and posters, press releases, advertising, information on our website or social media or information we provide to other organisations, such as the National Rail Enquiries website.

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

Our regional accessible station panels provide an essential way of directly involving and getting feedback from customers, user groups and local stakeholders on how we can continue to improve access and services for disabled or older users. They can also help decide our priorities and identify and develop 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. In 2021 we also launched a Facebook group for disabled passengers to find more information about our services, share tips to travelling and give direct feedback. We continue to grow this group more in 2024

We will work with our regional accessible station panels to find suitable opportunities to distribute our passenger leaflet where public services are provided in the communities our train services serve. We will use a wide range of other appropriate methods to promote the opportunities and benefits of travel by rail for older or disabled customers.

This will include:

- online forums to test ideas; and
- promotion and information about travel online and on social media, for example videos, and interactive media.

Our Accessibility and Inclusion Manager will represent us on industry forums such as the Rail Delivery Group Accessibility Group (RDG-AG) meetings, held every three months, and take an active part in associated working groups.

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

We will widely consult and involve relevant stakeholders on our plans for accessibility across the franchise.

As well as the Department for Transport, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, we will also aim to work with the following.

- 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

In our annual accessibility report, we will provide an annual summary of how we have involved stakeholders on accessibility across our network.

B6. Staff training

We recognise the importance training plays in delivering consistently excellent customer service. We will provide all our staff with appropriate training and development to make sure that they have the knowledge and skills to consistently provide 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 work with charities who have expertise in supporting those with physical, mental or sensory disabilities to deliver training programmes to our team members who directly support our customers. This will give them the confidence and skills to provide appropriate support and assistance.

The aims of our disability awareness training are as follows.

- To help our teams to identify and meet the needs of our customers, so we can make sure that the service we provide reflects their needs at all points of the journey.
- To understand the requirements of relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.
- To gain an appreciation of the different types of disability and what this means for customers.
- To learn about our processes relating to our Accessible Travel Policy, including the accessible features of our trains and stations.
- To learn how to assist wheelchair users safely and appropriately.
- To recognise customers with additional needs, whether these are physical, mental or sensory, and demonstrate effective ways of communicating with them.

Disability and awareness training forms part of our induction training and refresher training for new employees and all frontline employees.

It covers the following.

- **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 difficulties 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 disabilities, staff will gain skills to help them identify customers who may need assistance, and how best to provide this.

- **The Railway Regulatory Framework**

- Staff will appreciate the policies, procedures and processes which exist throughout the industry for the benefit of customers with disabilities, including the Accessible Travel Policy, Minor Works Fund and Access for All.

- **Passenger Assist**

- Staff will have an in-depth understanding of Passenger Assist, how it works, its features and benefits, and a solid understanding of the part they play in delivering the service.

All employees who are in direct contact with customers will also receive relevant training in the following.

- **Communication**

- Understanding how best to communicate with customers with a range of disabilities, and the importance of effective communication between staff providing assistance, for example, telling customers about a change to an assistance booking.

- **Accessibility in stations and on trains**

- Making sure staff are aware of the importance of certain station features, where they can find information about other stations, and what to do if 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 using ramps.

We will have an appropriate refresher training programme to make sure that all our team meet the necessary outcomes for the training listed above (as appropriate to their role) every two years.

We will develop our training programmes with input from our accessibility panel and give employees the opportunity to deal directly with disabled and older customers to better understand the real-life challenges that they can face when using the rail network. Our training team will make sure that our training reflects current legislation, information and language.

We will provide a concise version of our disability awareness training course, which will include Passenger Assist, communication, and providing safe help to any contact centre team member, including if they are temporary staff or a third party.

We will work with our third-party suppliers to help them deliver appropriate accessibility training to their team members. Their employees will interact directly with our customers, for example, contact centre teams, rail replacement bus operators, taxi drivers and cleaning teams, so that they are able to provide appropriate and high-quality assistance. This may include sharing training materials, agreeing training principles, and providing introductions to disabled user groups.

We will include a report on our disability awareness training every year as part of our annual review.

Annual review and report

We will review all aspects of our Accessible Travel Policy each year. Our results will form an Annual Accessibility Report that we will share with the ORR. This report will include:

- our progress against our plan;
- any problems or challenges we've experienced when meeting our goals and promises;
- training results;
- a summary of key performance results on accessibility; and
- a summary of how we have involved our stakeholders on accessibility.




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