



Making Rail Accessible

Guide to policies

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Southeastern Making rail accessible Guide to policies

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1.0 Disabled Peoples Protection Policy Guide

Whether travelling independently or with our assistance, we want to make it easier for disabled and older passengers to make journeys on our trains.

We are constantly looking for ways to improve the accessibility of our stations and trains to give as many people as possible the opportunity to use our service. We want you to be confident in the services we offer, both now and in the future.

We have made changes to improve things and we'll continue to look at how we can make things even better. New initiatives like our Priority seating card, and continued improvements of station facilities will benefit all passengers including those with hidden disabilities, those carrying luggage, elderly people and those with young children and pushchairs as well as those people with mobility problems.

Since 2006 we've made sure that 20 of our busiest stations have step free access. Thanks to the Department for Transport's (DfT) Access for All programme – part of the Railways for All Strategy – we have been able to reduce the barriers to travel for disabled and elderly people across our network. Now many of our stations have step free access, and we'll continue to work closely with Network Rail to further improve accessibility.

Our policy is to ensure that all stations have facilities appropriate to how busy they are, that make them easier to access for disabled people whatever their disability. For example we have installed lifts at Lewisham, Orpington and Bromley South and used third party funding to make Deptford, Greenhithe, Paddock Wood and Bearsted stations step free. We know there is more to do, and we will continue to apply for funding to make more physical station improvements happen.

Through our Minor Works Fund we invest over £300,000 into improving our stations every year. Our plans for 2016 are to continue improving the safety and accessibility of steps at our stations. This year we shall install more tactile paving, highlighted stair nosings and handrails at stations where it is most needed. We will also trial the installation of mobility scooter boxes at stations; these will enable users to check whether their scooter is suitable for on train use.

Working with our partners Network Rail we help ensure that funds assigned to the Department for Transport's (DfT) Railways for All fund are spent effectively. Chatham, Petts Wood, Canterbury East, St Mary Cray, Plumstead, Shortlands, Hither Green and Bexley will all benefit from investment as part of this fund and become step free. The work required at these stations will benefit a number of people, including those for whom step free access is essential and those with luggage, pushchairs and small children. The investment in each station is over £2 million, so work will happen over a number of years, but should be complete by 2024.

Larger improvements, such as improving the forecourt, car park or access to a station, are made possible through the DfT's National Station Improvement Programme (NSIP). Projects are funded on a case by case basis and as with all schemes funding is limited. Improvement work through these schemes is always used as an opportunity to improve facilities for disabled passengers.

Recent examples include the work at Canterbury West, Orpington and Tonbridge stations. Many of these schemes represent another significant investment with the planned spend during this franchise of many millions of pounds.

Stations aren't the only place we can make positive changes for accessibility. Over the years we have replaced our older trains and introduced newer trains, such as the 29 six car Hitachi trains used on our high speed service into St Pancras. Our newer trains are thoroughly modern and equipped for all passengers to travel in comfort. These trains have aural and visual train running information, wheelchair spaces, accessible toilets as well as priority seating, highlighted grab rails, tactile surfaces, automatic doors and clearer signage.

By 2020 all of our trains will be more accessible to disabled people as we are investing millions of pounds in improving access in over 150 of our metro trains.

Our focus is also on ensuring all of our front line employees are well trained, continually briefed and updated on how to assist disabled and elderly people. Their induction training gives them guidance on assisting people with mobility problems as well as helping them recognise hidden disabilities and providing the appropriate assistance. We believe that by empowering our employees we will give you much more confidence in us and in how you travel.

In the last few years we have explored a number of ways we can capture the feedback of all passengers, particularly those with disabilities, who make both booked and un-booked assisted journeys. Until we have developed a more robust way of capturing feedback we will continue to make calls to passengers who have booked assistance. This gives us an opportunity to understand what we need to improve and what we're doing well. We will also continue to employ disabled mystery shoppers to undertake journeys where they need assistance on our services and use their reports to inform employees and managers.

Behind the scenes we are making many other changes. We are currently developing an app to help employees more successfully monitor assisted travel journeys.

Although we realise these improvements will not make it possible for everyone to make independent train journeys, we are confident that they will make the railway accessible for more people and that the number of people who can independently access our stations and trains will increase every year. We will continue to monitor and improve our assisted travel service and do all we can to ensure passengers who need the assistance of employees to complete their journeys receive it.

By 2018 all of our larger projects – whether physical improvements, changes to working practices or operational changes – will include a Diversity Impact Assessment. This will ensure the impact on disabled people, and others protected under the Equality Act, is taken into account and opportunities are taken to improve the service we offer.

2.0 Management Arrangements

The Passenger Services Director has overall responsibility for the DPPP and ensures its implementation by:

- Keeping the Executive Board informed of ongoing improvements such as the Priority seating card, refunds for failed assistance or the improvements planned at stations for disabled people.
- Ensuring all new front line members of employees receive disability equality training to ensure that they have the confidence and competence to assist disabled passengers.
- Employing an Accessibility Manager who is responsible for the briefing of management and employees on the latest developments of our DPPP.

- Putting in place a Facilities Approval Panel to check that all new proposed facilities meet the requirements of the DfT's Code of Practice.
- Making sure independent advice is sought from a consultant with disabilities, through maintaining the disabled mystery shopping programme.
- Maintaining membership of the Employers' Forum on Disability.
- To introduce Diversity Impact Assessments for all major proposed physical and operational changes and ensure that all groups covered by the Equality Act are considered, do not lose out and where possible opportunities are taken to improve the service to them.

3.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor the service we offer disabled people in the following ways:

Call backs are made to people who have used the assisted travel service and their feedback evaluated to provide a performance measure. Any complaints raised are recorded and investigated by the relevant manager to find the root cause and take the necessary action to prevent a reoccurrence. We aim to call back at least 20% of those passengers who make a booking every month. From this we gain insight into the number of passengers who were satisfied, which we can then relate to the total number of customers who have booked assistance over the same period.

- All comments/complaints received are categorised as to the type of issue so that we can evaluate our performance against each type of complaint. Letters relating to incidents involving disabled people are similarly categorised then investigated by the relevant manager to find the root cause and take the necessary action to prevent a reoccurrence.

- We employ a company that provides mystery shoppers with disabilities to carry out 'mystery shops' of our assisted travel service. Their findings are evaluated in two ways; they firstly provide a quantitative score which enables us to track the performance of managers across the business and secondly offer us qualitative feedback which we use to inform performance reviews and employee briefings. We ensure we receive diverse feedback from mystery shoppers with various disabilities. We work with those who have visual impairments and use white sticks or guide dogs to get around, to wheelchair and scooter users, to those with learning difficulties or other mobility impairments.
- We also record the amount of staff that have received disability awareness training per period as well as the amount of alternative transport we have provided during each period. This information, along with information about complaints concerning disability and the amount of assisted travel bookings is shared with the Office of Road and Rail and published on their website.

4.0 Access Improvements

Recent key actions we have undertaken to improve the service we offer disabled people include

- Introducing our Priority Seating card
- Investigating the use of roller ramps for accessing trains as it is believed they will benefit staff and improve confidence of passengers who use the ramps – evaluation is ongoing
- We have carried out a survey of all stations in our network to evaluate them against accessibility standards. This ensures that as funding becomes available we are able to target improvements at the stations that will directly benefit disabled passengers.

- We are ensuring that key improvements like handrails, highlighted stair nosings, tactiles to stairs and dropped kerbs are being undertaken as part of our minor works improvements.
- We are introducing a 'scooter box' to many of our stations as an easy guide for passengers and staff to use to ensure that the scooter they wish to use on our trains is suitable for on train use.
- We will be checking and updating all the photos currently shown on our station pages of the National Rail website to ensure they remain current.

We comply with the DfT's 'Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations' – a code of practice through which the DfT ensures the implementation of the European Technical Standards for Interoperability for Persons of Reduced Mobility (PRM TSI).

On the rare occasion that we are unable to comply with this, we will apply for the appropriate derogation from these standards, but only when all avenues of compliance have been exhausted.

Access for All Programme

We will continue to work closely with Network Rail to deliver access improvements funded directly by the Department for Transport under Access for All schemes.

The following stations have recently been announced as benefiting from new lifts/bridges under a further phase of the DfT Access for All scheme with delivery of the schemes by 2024.

- Petts Wood
- Shortlands
- Chatham
- Canterbury East

- Hither Green
- Bexley
- St Mary Cray
- Plumstead

National Station Improvement Programme

Major improvements that will benefit both disabled and non-disabled passengers will be completed through the National Station Improvement Programme. This work includes improvements such as new waiting shelters, refurbishing toilets and waiting accommodation, adding car park spaces and remodelling forecourts.

Rolling Stock improvements

Southeastern currently has 112 Class 375 mainline trains, 36 Class 376 metro trains and 29 Class 395 high speed trains that have all been manufactured to meet the requirements of the RVAR (Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations) making most of our trains accessible to the majority of passengers. They have wheelchair spaces, accessible toilets, tactile surfaces and priority seating.

Over the next 4 years it is planned to upgrade our remaining Metro services 465/466 trains, through a process called Targeted Compliance, which will ensure that all of our trains will be made more accessible to disabled people by 2020, to include accessible toilets, wheelchair spaces and priority seating.

5.0 Working with others

We are keen to hear from any individuals and/or groups that represent disabled people. We are keen to know what our disabled passengers want to see improved on our trains, in our stations and generally about the service that we provide. This can be done by writing to or phoning our customer services team, by completing a comment form and leaving at your local station and/or using the web comment option on our website or via twitter @SE_Railway.

We work with and consult many outside agencies and stakeholders. This contact can vary from regular or ad hoc meetings to providing briefings or updates on service changes or improvements. Examples of this include:

We recently changed the message on our website about booking assisted travel after feedback from Transport for All.

We are working with Alzheimer's Society to produce a code of practice for transport providers on how to ensure those with dementia can continue to use public transport.

We are working with various stakeholders including RSSB on a project to produce guidance for mobility scooter users on using trains.

These organisations include:

- Local authorities
- Community Rail Partnerships
- Transport Focus
- London Travel Watch
- The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) (through the Atoc Disability Group)
- Other train operating companies such as GTR, South West Trains, London Overground and London Midland

- User and charitable groups including Kent Association for the Blind, Alzheimer's Society, Skillnet, Kent Autistic Trust, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Arthritis Care, The Business Disability Forum.
- Transport For All
- MPs
- Network Rail
- London Underground
- Railway Safety and Standards Board (RSSB)

6.0 Employee Training

Our employees receive training to give them the skills to assist disabled passengers travelling with us. We train our employees to recognise, anticipate and do everything possible to remove difficulties encountered by disabled people when using our trains and stations.

- All passenger-facing employees have been given training with equipment that they are likely to operate, such as wheelchairs, ramps and induction loops. This is in addition to the training they receive to make them more aware and proactive when assisting disabled passengers.
- We will provide disability training and/or briefing to all relevant managers to ensure that the wider issues concerning disability, like policies and procedures, are regularly reviewed with the aim of removing barriers.
- We have a training course for frontline employees to ensure that they are more proactive in their approach to passenger problems. This helps them identify the barriers that passengers with different needs have and enlighten them as to how to remove these barriers. It also helps them understand better what hidden disabilities are and what they can do to assist these passengers.

- Our call centre is managed under contract, however all customer contact staff there have been through on line training in disability awareness and the correct procedure for booking assisted travel (if their role requires them to book assistance).

We recognise the importance of making all employees aware of the wider issues concerning disability and we will continue to keep employees updated on relevant changes in the law that affect the service that they provide to disabled people.

7.0 Emergency Procedures

Managers throughout the company are kept updated on the latest developments on equipment and procedures to assist with evacuating disabled people. This includes evacuation from trains, stations and offices and these plans include employees as well as passengers.

Design changes to buildings, stations or trains will be made with consideration of evacuation procedures for everyone, including those with disabilities. Portable platforms are available for non-emergency evacuation from train to train. These help people get from one train to another without the need to climb down off a train or walk on uneven surfaces.

Our managers will ensure that employees are briefed and updated on the contents of emergency plans, including the procedures to assist disabled people including Generic and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (GEEPs and PEEPs).

8.0 Communications Strategy

We use a number of channels to regularly communicate with our stakeholders and passengers through a variety of means. These include:

- Our managers engage directly with user groups, local authorities, local access groups and organisations that represent disabled people.

- Monthly meet the manager sessions, held at London Terminals and other major Kent and East Sussex stations.
- Updating the relevant Members of Parliament with the latest developments and changes from our network.
- Sending press releases to appropriate media when necessary.
- Regular updating our website and sections of the National Rail website concerning facilities.
- Placing information posters on display at our stations.
- Providing station employees with adequate and relevant information for them to direct passengers.
- Aural and Visual Announcements at stations and on trains
- Providing help points at all stations with direct access to National Rail Enquiries 24/7.

We aim to provide our passengers with a real person to talk to should they have any issues with our services so they can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week (excluding Christmas day) on 0345 3227021 and can answer most questions. If passengers require the use of a text phone this is available on 0800 783 4548

Those calling our assisted travel line will hear a recorded message before being put directly through to an operator. However, when contacting our Customer Services team please listen to the recorded message and select the correct option by key pad selection or holding for an operator.

We have improved access to our website and now include the 'Recite me' app as standard on the website that gives better access to the information by including a screen reader (so text is read out) as well as the ability to increase the font size and change the background colours to suit the user's requirements. This doesn't need any additional software on the user's computer and can be turned on and off as needed.

When changes are being made to the layout of roads around stations, we will work with local authorities to ensure that the necessary signage is in place, is legible and ensures that both motorists and pedestrians can both easily find the station particularly around station forecourts and approach roads.

Customer Guide

We also produce a guide called 'Making rail accessible guide' which is available as a download from our website or on request from our customer services or can be picked up from staffed stations. Together these documents form our Disabled Peoples Protection Policy (DPPP).

9.0 Car Parking

Indigo Park Solutions manages the majority of station car parks on our behalf (with the exception of Ebbsfleet which is managed by CP Plus) and can be contacted on 0330 1235 247 or by visiting southeasternparking.co.uk.

Blue badge holders can park free of charge at all of our managed car parks (with the exception of Ebbsfleet) when using our services. This applies to both accessible parking bays and standard bays (excluding premier parking bays marked in red). If travelling on our trains this would be free all day, for all other purposes it will be limited to a maximum of three hours.

Where car parks have specific marked spaces for disabled motorists, vehicles will be checked to ensure that only blue badge holders use the spaces and a Parking charge notice (PCN) will be issued to motorists who abuse these spaces.

We will monitor and review the provision of disabled motorists' parking spaces at our Indigo controlled car parks, with a view to adding additional spaces where there is demand.

Where we feel that there is a case for reducing the provision of blue badge parking spaces, especially during a refurbishment or enlargement of an existing car park, we will consult with stakeholders and apply for a dispensation from the DfT.

