

Northern Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP)

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Operator's strategy

We are striving to continually improve the accessibility of our services to all passengers, particularly those with disabilities or who simply need some extra assistance. We are committed to:

- assisting and enabling people to use the railways confidently, taking into account the wide range of different needs of disabled and other passengers, and
- continuously improving the quality and awareness of assistance available.

As part of our bid we committed to deliver a step change in the customer experience through:

- providing an inclusive approach to the railway
- providing disability awareness training through partnerships with local charities
- developing and publishing a step-free map
- creating Inclusive Hubs at the following 25 stations: Barnsley Interchange, Barrow in Furness, Blackburn, Blackpool North, Bolton, Bradford Forster Square, Bradford Interchange, Chorley, Goole, Harrogate, Heald Green, Kirkham & Wesham, Leyland, Lytham, Morpeth, Poulton Le Fylde, Shipley, Sunderland, Wakefield Kirkgate, Warrington Central, Whitehaven, Wigan Wallgate, Wilmslow, Windermere and Worksop
- installing 18 Harrington Humps to make it easier to access the trains
- partnering with BlueAssist to make it easier for staff to understand customers' specific needs, and
- ensuring staff undertake disability awareness training programmes in partnership with disabled charities.

Additionally, we will be:

- investing over £40m in station improvements
- maintaining an annual fund for minor accessibility improvements, and
- working with Network Rail to support the delivery and development of Access for All schemes.

Aside from physical adjustments to stations and rolling stock, we regularly review our arrangements for disabled people with a variety of stakeholder groups such as:

- our Customer and Communities Investment Board (which will contain experts on mobility issues)
- statutory consultation bodies such as Transport Focus, and
- individual interest groups.

Management arrangements

Figure 1 details key individuals with responsibility for disabled people.

The provision of services to disabled people is an integral part of our planning process. This is why we have created a dedicated post to manage the content of the DPPP and a new organisation to ensure the needs of disabled customers are considered in planning improvements.

The Customer and People Experience Director is accountable for ensuring the best possible service is offered to disabled people through staff, systems and processes.

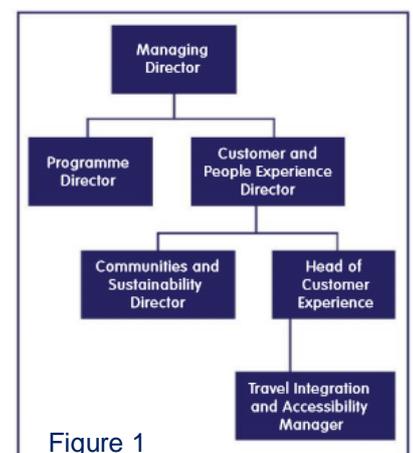


Figure 1

The Head of Customer Experience has overall responsibility for the DPPP and for consulting with accessibility groups and charities.

We are early in the new franchise and there is much to be done to ensure that the DPPP is integrated into both business and project planning. We have appointed the Head of Customer Experience to ensure that the DPPP is considered in business planning right from the start of the franchise. We have also set up a Programme Directorate responsible for the various major projects that will take place throughout the franchise. The Programme Directorate will ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account in project planning.

We have set up a new Community Rail Executive Group (COMREG), made up of 15 industry professionals along with local community representatives and sustainability experts. It will help ensure that through the franchise we are engaging closely with local communities, working in partnership to deliver rail-related projects, and maintaining a strong level of funding for community-based activities.

The Head of Customer Experience will be responsible for driving through service quality improvements. They will be responsible for the Customer Experience Centre and our day-to-day relationship with Transport Focus. The Head of Customer Experience will be responsible for monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction and service delivery, including relating to Passenger Assist bookings.

We have created a new post of Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager who will be responsible for empowering confident use of the railway by all our passengers and promoting awareness of the advice and help available.

The Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager will have overall responsibility for updating and keeping current the information in the Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). They will also be responsible for developing the Minor Works Programme. Minor works have to comply with standards provided in the DfT's Code of Practice.

All managers and staff will receive disability awareness training where they will be made aware of their responsibilities to disabled passengers.

The Head of Customer Experience will be responsible for consulting with disabled people, community groups, and charities to understand where services and facilities do not meet the needs of disabled people. They will then work with the internal teams to prioritise funding requests and tie in with other projects where necessary.

In formulating business cases for investment in new facilities the Head of Customer Experience will assess the likely return on investment of improvements for disabled passengers. In reality the business cases will therefore consider the likely revenue increase as a result of making our services and facilities more accessible to all customers.

The Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager will ensure that services and facilities for disabled passengers are provided according to the operator's DPPP and the Department's Code of Practice. Carillion (our asset management partner) has completed a full asset survey of all facilities at stations. The Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager will be responsible for ensuring the DPPP tables of facilities are correct and reissuing the DPPP for approval where significant changes are needed. They will also update the step-free map.

Carillion will ensure that the Stations Made Easy pages on the National Rail website are updated with new photos and accurate information on station facilities from the station asset survey. The Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager will ensure those pages are consistent with the DPPP tables and the step-free map.

Monitoring and evaluation

We have a culture of continuous improvement and will therefore measure the quality of service provided. Many of our service quality metrics will be published in our Customer Report and will be available on the Data Portal on the website. We will monitor and report to the ORR on the contractual metrics. These metrics will also be reviewed internally at board level annually.

The tools that we will routinely use to measure the quality of service given to disabled passengers include:

- monitoring complaints about assistance
- monitoring complaints about facilities being inaccessible
- NRPS results relating to accessibility
- outputs from service quality audits which test services and facilities
- asking customers to give feedback and suggest improvements
- seeking feedback from regular meetings with local access groups
- holding an annual accessibility conference to receive feedback from stakeholders and passengers
- using passenger assist booking data to track trends in assisted booking and monitor growth and usage, and
- providing post travel surveys for those who have booked assistance to give feedback on their experience.

The table in appendix 1 shows the KPIs we are committed to recording.

Access improvements

We have procured 281 new carriages. The new trains are being manufactured by CAF and will be delivered by October 2018. They will include:

- air conditioning
- audio and visual on-board passenger information systems
- power sockets and tables
- cycle racks
- toilets
- digital CCTV systems, and
- free Wifi for passengers.

We are committed to making every possible effort to meet the standards of DfT's Accessible Train Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice, November 2011 and Persons of Reduced Mobility Technical Specification for Interoperability (PRM-TSI) regulations.

We will also be investing heavily in station improvements. Wherever possible we will adopt a best-practice approach to access for disabled passengers. However, there may occasionally be circumstances where we are unable to comply fully with the Code regarding:

- new or enhanced station facilities
- refurbishment of existing rolling stock, and

- station or on-train services.

In these cases, we will approach the DfT to seek dispensation from the relevant section of the Code at the earliest possible stage after all other possible options have been considered.

Working with others

We have a number of key partners that we will be working with to improve the accessibility of our services. For example:

- Network Rail – collaboration on station investment programmes
- Transport Focus – through a funded post
- Rail North – long term rail strategy
- Passenger Transport Executives – regional transport policies, and
- disabled charities and action groups.

We remain in regular contact with key stakeholders through our Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. This sets out how we engage with all our customers, potential customers and other stakeholders to understand and respond to their experiences. These stakeholders include:

- local authorities
- disability groups
- community groups
- rail user groups, and
- Community Rail Partnerships.

We also regularly engage with disability interest groups such as Doncaster Deaf Trust, Enhance the UK and BlueAssist along with other local disability charities. The relationship with these groups is owned by the Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager and is very much on a working level. We commit to co-chairing a Customer Inclusivity Forum with Transpennine Express.

At National level, we liaise with other bodies such as Age UK, Scope and RNIB via our trade body the Rail Delivery Group (RDG).

Figure 2: listening to customers and stakeholders



Annual: We will carry out an annual stakeholder survey, to find out what customers and stakeholders think of us. This will include disability groups and stakeholders. We will actively publicise this at our stations and on our website. It will be an opportunity for anyone who travels on Northern to express his or her views. This will also help us to ensure that our other methods of engagement are accurately reflecting the views of our customers and stakeholders.

Periodic: We will listen to our customers using the complaints data which we will collate as well as using the National Rail Passenger Survey.

Continuous: We will also carry out ad hoc surveys, particularly during disruption so we can collect and understand, in real-time, how we are performing. Customers and stakeholders will therefore be able to provide feedback about their journey experience.

We will separately survey customers that have booked assistance to give us feedback on the service provided.

Staff training

All staff will receive relevant disability awareness training, including senior managers and the leadership team. All new staff receive disability training as part of their company induction, whilst existing staff receive an update at least every two years. Our training provides delegates with information on our legal obligations to customers and staff and covers the following areas:

- disability and discrimination, including the Equality Act
- the effects of different types of disability
- disabled customers using the Northern network
- communication with disabled customers and colleagues, and
- recognising hidden difficulties and adapting accordingly.

We include in our training a number of simulated and practical activities, including:

- methods of leading people with visual impairments, and
- assisting wheelchair users on and off the train and in station lifts.

Members of staff in customer facing roles and those who use the telephone to speak with customers are provided with specific training in communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding. This helps them understand the importance of:

- clarity of speech
- intonation
- emphasis
- timeliness, and
- language.

This training is designed to raise awareness of potential communication issues and emphasise how ineffective communication can impact upon disabled customers.

Frontline staff and managers who may need to assist passengers will receive appropriate training in the use of equipment provided to assist people such as ramps, wheelchairs and induction loops as part of their induction training.

Any staff and managers that will deal directly with passengers will receive appropriate training to help them communicate with people of different disabilities. Our Charity Incentive Fund has been set up and committed whereby we ask disabled charities to provide staff training in return for donations.

Emergency procedures

Every manned station has a local emergency plan which details the actions that station staff must take in an emergency. These plans include detailed evacuation arrangements and take into account the needs of disabled passengers. The assistance provided to disabled passengers varies between locations based upon a risk assessment, but includes the need to identify those who may need

assistance, provision of wheelchairs and ramps and identification of and direction to safe havens if normal evacuation routes are not accessible. Our staff have all been trained in the correct emergency and evacuation procedures. Our policy is not to evacuate wheelchair passengers or other passengers with significantly reduced mobility without the support of the emergency services unless the situation is life-threatening.

Communications strategy

We recognise that different people have different needs when it comes to receiving and understanding information.

We therefore take the varied needs of different disabled passengers into account when considering how our information is communicated. This includes working with local authorities, charities and local access groups.

Telephone

All our telephone services for disabled people can be provided through text phones. We use the text relay service so that customers with textphones can call 18001 to be connected with a text relay assistant.

We have taken the decision to minimise the use of recorded information given by telephone, preferring to connect directly to a human operator who can deal with any of the issues that may be raised, including booking assistance.

Websites

In some respects, we rely on and reproduce information from other websites, such as journey planning information. However, we commit to making our content as accessible as possible and have committed to working towards achieving the industry-recognised W3C standards.

Signage

We work closely with local authorities to ensure that stations are clearly and consistently signposted from local roads. We also liaise with local authorities in the maintenance of Station Travel Plans which include signage and interchange. This is the responsibility of the Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager. We will monitor complaints about road signage and prioritise any raised.

We are investing heavily in stations and will be replacing and renewing signs that are not fit for purpose. In making these changes we will consider industry best practice, using sections K1–K9 of Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations: A Code of Practice which provides standards and guidance on signage at stations.

We will also refer to the good practice guide published by the RSSB: Wayfinding at stations: A good practice guide (T321 Good Practice Guide) when considering how and where at stations to locate signage and provide information.

Our publicity meets industry best practice design standards which are designed to meet the needs of disabled customers. We seek to make disabled people aware of our services by

methods including advertising and sending information out to other public sources (such as libraries and local authority shops). We use the text relay service which is provided 24 hours a day. Our Customer Experience Centre is open from 0700 to 2200 (on days when trains run) so that customers can always speak to a human operator.

Car parking

Our Station Managers and car park contractors are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the use of designated parking bays in station car parks to ensure that motorists without disabled parking badges are not using the designated parking bays.

Where offences are identified penalty, notices are issued supported by photographic evidence. The initial penalty notice is £50, which escalates to £80 if not paid within 14 days (subject to any appeal received).

We regularly review the demand to ensure that we have sufficient car parking spaces available and commit to providing to the DfT on a periodic basis the usage figures for Blue Badge spaces where the number of designated disabled parking spaces is less than 5% of the total number of parking spaces available.

Appendix 1 – Key Performance Indicators

Metric	Owner	Frequency
Total number of customers who have booked travel assistance	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Percentage of passengers who booked assistance who have responded to the post travel survey	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Percentage of customers who booked assistance and received the assistance booked successfully	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Percentage of customers who were satisfied with the booked assistance	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Number of customers who were booked alternative transport as they were unable to access the station	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Total number of complaints relating to disabled travel	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Percentage of complaints received about assistance compared to the number of booked journeys	Head of Customer Experience	Periodically
Total number of employees who have received disability awareness training	Customer and People Experience Director	Annually
Minor works spend to budget	Travel Integration and Accessibility Manager	Annually
Annual investment in accessibility schemes	Communities and Sustainability Director	Annually
Number of meetings with access groups and disabled stakeholders	Communities and Sustainability Director	Annually