

# Making Rail Accessible

April 2024

Helping Older and  
Disabled Passengers



West  
Midlands  
Railway

## Introduction

Everyone is welcome to travel with us and we want you to enjoy the experience. We understand that some customers, particularly older and disabled people, experience barriers to train travel.

This leaflet gives a handy summary of the kind of assistance we can give you, what you can expect from us and how to get more information.

We don't just offer assistance and support to passengers who identify as disabled or older people. We will help anyone who experiences access barriers to train travel.

## Assistance: what is available and how to obtain it

### How we can help you

We can support you in the following ways as part of our Passenger Assist service:

- Helping you to plan your journey
- Checking what services and facilities are available on the train and at the station
- Buying your ticket (including Advance fares when booking assistance)
- Reserving seats or wheelchair spaces for other train companies (where reservations are available)
- Guiding you on and off the train and finding your seat or space

- Put a ramp down for you to get on or off the train
- Helping with luggage
- Helping you to change to a connecting train
- Providing a wheelchair to help you from the train or to a connecting train (if one is available)
- Helping you to enter or leave the station to reach connecting transport

All staff who give assistance are trained to help customers with visible and non-visible impairments.

We can support you if you feel unsteady (e.g. offering an arm) but cannot support with lifting or similar help. We cannot help with personal care (e.g. using a toilet).

If you need assistance with your journey you can turn up on the day or book this in advance.

The Passenger Assist system is provided by all train companies around the network so you can make seamless supported journeys.

## Turning up on the day

If you know the station is accessible to you, you can turn up for your journey without booking and just ask for assistance at the station. If you do, then we will always do our best to assist you, but some arrangements may not be possible or may take longer.

If the station is staffed, then a member of the station staff can help arrange your assistance. You can find out which stations are staffed and at what times by contacting the Passenger Assist team, our Customer Relations team or via our website.

If the station is unstaffed, please use a help point (usually located by the station entrance or waiting area/ticket office) or call the Passenger Assist team. Our Senior Conductors will help you get on and off the train or the Passenger Assist team can arrange alternative accessible transport over the phone for you if needed.

## Booking assistance

Alternatively, you might prefer to book assistance in advance for reassurance and convenience. Our Passenger Assist team can help you plan your journey and book any assistance you need.

<b>phone</b>	0800 024 8998
<b>next generation text</b>	18001 024 8998
<b>online form</b>	<a href="http://www.wmr.uk">www.wmr.uk</a>

This is a freephone number.

Our Passenger Assist team are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 363 days a year. You can contact us at any time during the day or night to arrange your assistance requirements. Please note we are closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

To making a Passenger Assist booking for anywhere on the national network, including seat reservations for journeys with other train companies, please get in touch with us 2 hours before your departure.

Don't forget you can always simply 'turn up and go' without booking, but may choose to do so for peace of mind.

We can book assistance for journeys with multiple connections, even if they are with other train companies.

## Alternative Transport

We want you to make as much of your journey with us by train. Sometimes we might need to make alternative arrangements for you. You will not be charged for this.

If a station is not accessible to you, (e.g. it is not step free) then we can arrange a taxi suitable for you needs to take you to the nearest accessible station.

In cases of planned disruption, we will organise rail replacement services. This will draw on a range of transport options including bus, coach, accessible and standard taxis. We will find an accessible service for you. Alternatively, we will use our best efforts to find you a different route by train with another operator at no extra cost if this better meets your specific access needs.

In cases of unplanned disruption, we might need to arrange rail replacement transport for you (see below).

If you use a scooter or wheelchair, when organising rail replacement services we will discuss the options with you taking into consideration:

- Your preferences and individual needs;
- If your scooter or wheelchair can fold or be lifted safely in component parts;
- Which vehicles can transport your scooter or wheelchair safely;
- Community transport providers in the area

## What to expect – our commitment to you

### Before you travel

We promise to give you the information you need to plan your journey. We understand why this is very important for our disabled and older customers.

Buying your ticket. There are many ways to buy a ticket:

- At a station with a ticket office
- From a ticket machine at a station
- By phoning **0333 311 0039**
- From our website: **[www.wmr.uk](http://www.wmr.uk)**
- From websites of other companies who sell tickets

You can get help with buying a ticket from staff at ticket offices or over the phone. If you cannot buy a ticket in any of the ways set out above for reasons of inaccessibility, you can buy your ticket from a Senior Conductor on the train or at your destination station. There will be no penalty and you can still get any discount that applies to you.

There are a range of discounts available to older and disabled people.

### **Disabled Persons Railcard**

This railcard will save you and a companion 1/3 off train fares. However, see overleaf for automatic discounts without a Disabled Persons Railcard.

### **Senior Railcard**

If you're over 60, this railcard will save you a 1/3 off most train fares.

### **Two Together Railcard**

With this railcard you and the person you travel with the most will get 1/3 off rail fares when you travel together.

### **Travelling without a Disabled Persons Railcard**

Some disabled passengers are automatically entitled to discounts so it may be worth checking this out before buying a railcard. The discounts are as follows:

- 34% off First Class or Standard Anytime Single tickets
- 50% off First Class or Standard Anytime Day Return tickets
- 34% off First Class or Standard Anytime Return tickets

You are entitled to these discounts if you are:

- A wheelchair user staying in your wheelchair during the journey (the discount also applies to one person travelling with you); or
- Visually impaired (blind or partially sighted) and travelling with one other person. You are not entitled to this discount if you are travelling alone. You must provide written evidence of your visual impairment to get the discount.

Child wheelchair users are entitled to 75% off these tickets.

Please note that:

- In some cases it might be cheaper to buy a full-rate off-peak or advance ticket; and
- You cannot buy tickets with these discounts online or from ticket machines, only from ticket offices or Senior Conductors.

## Planning your journey

Our Passenger Assist team can help you plan your journey. Their contact details are on page 4. They can give you information on:

- Accessibility features of trains
- Accessibility features at stations (e.g. disabled parking, staff availability or whether certain things like lifts are out of order)
- Toilet facilities
- Train times and routes
- Whether your planned journey is affected by delays or disruption
- Whether your journey would involve changing trains, and talk you through the best option for your personal requirements
- Restrictions on what wheelchairs and scooters we can carry on trains (see page 13)
- How to get a Travel Support Card or Priority Seating Card (see page 18)
- The JAM cards and Sunflower Lanyard Schemes (see page 18)
- Any useful apps or websites, network-wide or with a station focus.



You can also find the following information on our website or request a printed copy from our Customer Relations team:

Information on the accessibility of all our stations. This includes which stations are step-free and a summary of the other facilities available.

Information on the accessibility of our trains, outlining what facilities and information provision you can expect on the different types of train – and which routes you will find them running on.

## At the station

We are committed to making our stations accessible for everyone and will assist any disabled or older customer who experiences a barrier.

We manage 149 stations – a mixture of large and small stations, some with old historic features and others with brand new facilities.

Here are some examples of station facilities:

- Some stations have car parks. Parking for blue badge holders is free
- Wider ticket gates for wheelchairs, pushchairs, and luggage. These are locked open when staff are not on duty
- Many stations make announcements and have screens with train times
- You can use a Help Point if there are no staff on duty at a station. There is a Help Point at every station. The green button is to call the emergency services (e.g. fire, police, or ambulance). The blue button is

for help with your journey or to contact the Passenger Assist team.

For detailed information on facilities at each station, including staffing hours, please contact the Passenger Assist team or review our station accessibility information. Alternatively, you can also check the National Rail Enquiries website for station details. We will include as much relevant information as possible to help you make informed decisions about your own door to door journey and whether the station is appropriate for you.

If you need assistance, make your way to the ticket office (or the meeting place you have been given) at least 20 minutes before your train so a member of staff can assist you. Please allow extra time if you need to buy a ticket or prefer to travel around the station at a relaxed pace. The type of help we can give is on page 2.

If the station is unstaffed and you have not booked assistance, please wait on the platform in time for your train to arrive and the Senior Conductor will be able to help you get on and off the train (using the on-board ramp or station ramp if you need this).

Senior Conductors always step off the train and check the platform for people waiting to board.

If there is a problem, please use a Help Point or contact our Passenger Assist team for advice.

## On the train

We are investing in more accessible trains for everyone but will always assist any disabled or older customer to use our services.

There are some differences between our trains, and we are investing in our fleet. Full details of what you can expect on board our different trains can be found on our website. Here are some examples of facilities you will find on some of our trains:

- An on-board ramp for anyone who needs this
- Visual screens that show the next stop
- Announcements on trains
- Wheelchair spaces with companion seats
- Priority seats
- Standard and accessible toilets

On the train, the Senior Conductor can help you buy a ticket if you need one and guide you to facilities, like the toilet. There is a help button in the wheelchair space which you can press to get in contact with the Senior Conductor.

The member of station staff helping you on-board will check the wheelchair space is free before you board. If there are ambulant passengers or luggage in the space, they will ask passengers to vacate the space. Wheelchair spaces cannot be reserved so access to these areas, for wheelchair and scooter users, is on a first come first served basis.

When a train reaches its destination, we aim to assist you off the train within 5 minutes.

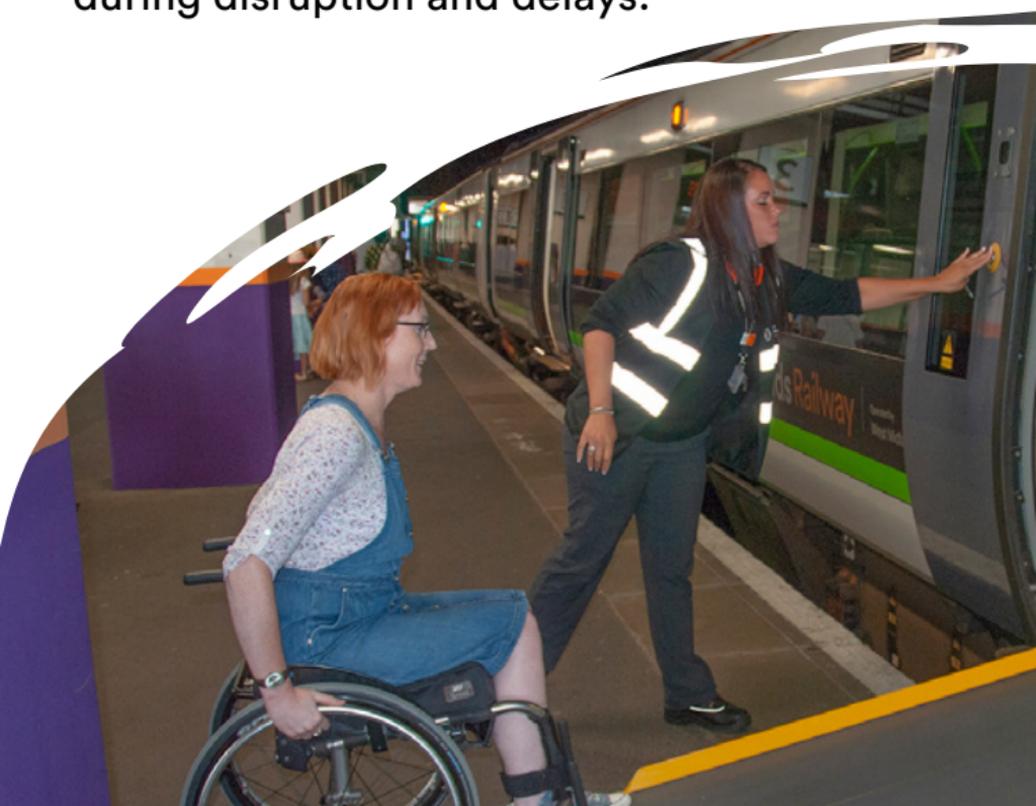
We are only able to carry wheelchairs, scooters, and mobility aids up to a certain size for safety reasons and to meet turning circle restrictions. The maximum size dimensions are:

- 700mm by 1200mm;
- 300kg (combined weight of passenger and wheelchair/scooter)

If your scooter or wheelchair is particularly large, staff may ask you to confirm the dimensions to ensure your safety on our services. If you are not sure of these, please contact your wheelchair or scooter provider before you travel.

### **If things do not go as planned**

We understand that we may need to provide additional assistance and be particularly mindful of disabled and older passengers during disruption and delays.



As part of the booking process for assisted travel, we check and tell you if your journey might be affected by planned engineering works. This allows you to make an informed decision about whether to change your plans or what alternative arrangements can be made.

If you have booked assistance in advance and, before your journey takes place, planned disruption is announced (such as engineering works), we will contact you to discuss the impact and go through the options with you. We want you to be fully informed of your travel choices, so if we need to make changes to the booking, we have time to make that happen.

In times of disruption, at the station and on board the train we will issue audio and visual announcements. We will also put information on our website and on social media.

Please make yourself known to a member of staff who will help get you on your way as comfortably as possible. This might include rearranging your assistance for a different route or booking alternative accessible transport for you.

Our staff keep customers safe in times of emergencies. We will not evacuate wheelchair users or customers with mobility impairments from our trains without appropriate support from the emergency services unless it is a life-threatening situation.

If you travelled on, or were due to travel on, one of our trains and you had booked assistance which failed to be provided, please contact us. You are entitled to redress, the nature of which is determined on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Customer Relations.

## Where to get more information and how to get in touch

### Customer Relations

Our Customer Relations team welcomes your comments, complaints, and praise. contacting Customer Relations is the most efficient and effective way to deal with specific journey issues.

**phone** 0333 311 0039

**next generation text** 18001 0333 311 0039

**website** [www.wmr.uk/contact-us](http://www.wmr.uk/contact-us)

**by post** FREEPOST - West Midlands Railway  
Customer Relations

**X** @WestMidRailway

**Facebook** @WestMidsRailway

Our Customer Relations Team are available:

- 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday
- 8am to 4pm on weekends and bank holidays. We are closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

## Alternative formats

Customer Relations can send you this leaflet in the following formats:

- A printed copy
- A printed copy in large print
- Audio
- Easy read

**If you want a copy of the information in this leaflet in large print, contact Customer Relations on 0333 311 0039**

## Accessible Travel Policy

We also have a separate policy document that forms part of our overall Accessible Travel Policy. This provides more detail about our ongoing plans to improve accessibility.

We also provide information about accessibility features on our trains and at what is available at each of our stations.

This information is available on our website in various accessible formats. A copy of any of these documents can also be sent to you by post or by email, free of charge, by contacting Customer Relations.

This includes accessible formats such as audio or large print.

## Support on the day of travel

Contacting Customer Relations is the most efficient and effective way to deal with specific journey issues, including when travelling.

We monitor and respond to social media as soon as possible. We may ask you to send us more information in a more suitable but accessible way to properly investigate a matter.

## Rail Ombudsman

If you do not receive the assistance you needed or something has gone wrong, please contact our Customer Relations team in the first instance.

If you are not happy with the way we have dealt with your complaint, you can also contact the Rail Ombudsman.

<b>phone</b>	0330 094 0362
<b>SMS text</b>	07427 580 060
<b>textphone</b>	0330 094 0363
<b>email</b>	<a href="mailto:info@railombudsman.org">info@railombudsman.org</a>
<b>website</b>	<a href="http://www.railombudsman.org">www.railombudsman.org</a>
<b>by post</b>	FREEPOST-RAIL OMBUDSMAN



## National Rail

National Rail offers a Passenger Assist booking service.

**freephone** 0800 0223720

**SMS text** 60083

**textphone** 0845 60 50 600

**website** [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/travel-assistance](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/travel-assistance)

## Stakeholder Equality Group

Our Stakeholder Equality Group is made up of a wide range of people who provide us with very helpful views on the accessibility of our trains and services. It includes disabled and older customers who provide feedback, ideas and help us improve accessibility of our services. For more information on the group's activities and how to get involved please contact our Accessibility Manager on [accessibility@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:accessibility@wmtrains.co.uk)

## Travel Support Card

Our staff are trained to listen to all passengers. However, if you would be more comfortable showing a member of staff a card that explains the help you need, you're welcome to download and print our Travel Support Card. Just fill it in - or ask someone to fill it in for you - and show it to a member of our station staff or Senior Conductors during your journey. If you can't download and print the card yourself, our Customer Relations team will be happy to send you one through the post.

## Priority Seating Card

All our trains have designated priority seats for disabled, older or pregnant customers. When asked politely, most people will be quite happy to move from the seat (unless they need it too) to allow you to sit there instead. However, we understand that not everyone is comfortable or able to ask so we can give you a Priority Seating card to show that you have a real need for a seat. You can get one for free from our website or our Customer Relations team.

## JAM Card & Sunflower Lanyard Schemes

We promote use of the JAM cards and Sunflower Lanyards. These schemes help people with non-visible impairments to indicate that they might need support from staff.

JAM Card allows people with a learning difficulty, autism, or communication barrier to tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.

The Sunflower Lanyard can be worn by people with non-visible impairments to let others know that you might need additional support or time.

We will be training our staff to look out for people using them at our stations and on our trains.

For more information please visit

**[www.jamcard.org](http://www.jamcard.org)** and

**[www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com](http://www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com)**



## Who to talk to about our accessibility strategy?

We welcome any questions or comments about our Accessible Travel Policy. We can also provide more information about the work of our Stakeholder Equality Group on request.

You can contact us via **Customer Relations** or by emailing **[accessibility@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:accessibility@wmtrains.co.uk)**

Please note that contacting Customer Relations is the most efficient and effective way to deal with specific journey issues.