

Making Rail Accessible: Guide to Policies and Practices

Introduction

Hull Trains is operated by FirstGroup PLC. We provide intercity rail services between London Kings Cross and Hull with some extended to/from Beverley, calling at Stevenage, Grantham, Retford, Doncaster, Selby, Howden, Brough.

As an Open Access Operator (a train operating company that is not subject to franchising and instead purchases individual timing slots on the railway), we do not operate any stations, however we call at 10 stations which are operated by other Train Operating Companies (TOCs) or Network Rail. We work closely with these companies to ensure a high quality of service is provided to all of our customers, including the delivery of assistance for customers that need this the most.

All but one of the stations (Howden) at which we call have level access and accessible features. We will continue to look for ways to support further improvements in conjunction with our industry partners and stakeholders including, but not limited to Network Rail, other TOCs, the Department for Transport (DfT), Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) and local authorities.

Station and train accessibility information is detailed in our passenger document: **Making Rail Accessible: Helping older and disabled passengers**, which is available at staffed stations, on our website and through our Assisted Travel Team.

This document, **Making Rail Accessible: Guide to Policies and Practices**, forms part of our Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). In our DPPP we set out our commitment to providing high quality, consistent and reliable services to customers who are disabled or whose mobility is impaired. This policy outlines our commitment to improve accessibility and drive our business decisions.

Developing and implementing a DPPP is a condition of the Hull Trains' passenger train operating licence. In developing our DPPP we have taken account of the guidance contained in "How to write your Disabled People's Protection Policy" published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in November 2009 and **Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations – A Code of Practice** issued by the DfT and Transport Scotland in 2015.

We review our DPPP on an annual basis at the end of the anniversary year from their approval date and welcome comments and feedback on how we can improve our policy, strategy or service provision for disabled people. Feedback is logged by our Assisted Travel Team who specialise in this area and comments are passed to the relevant manager for investigation. We continually review our stations and trains accessibility information to make sure that our customers are provided with accurate information.



HullTrains

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1. Our Strategy

Our Commitment

At Hull Trains, we are committed to providing the highest standards of customer service to all our customers. We want everyone to be able to enjoy our services irrespective of age, disability or mobility. We understand the needs and concerns of disabled passengers when using public transport and our aim is to give them the confidence to access our services, either independently, or because they know they can rely on us to provide high quality help and assistance whenever they need it.

This strategy demonstrates how we will both maintain high standards and take practical steps to improve accessibility. We recognise the need to make it easier for disabled customers to access rail services and for all customers to benefit from improved accessibility.

Our Trains

We operate a fleet of five carriage Class 180 trains. These are compliant with the Rail Vehicle Access Regulations 1998 (RVAR) and offer a good level of access, incorporating wheelchair spaces, accessible toilets, hand rails and other relevant features to make travel convenient and comfortable. All our trains have an On Board Manager and Hospitality Host who are able to provide assistance and information should this be required. Our planned improvements are outlined in section 4 of this document.

Assisted Travel Team to Plan Journeys and Book Assistance

The Assisted Travel Team are available to provide accurate information to plan a journey across the rail network in Great Britain. It is important that the service meets with the customer's needs. The Assisted Travel Team can book assistance to help with changing trains and delivering a seamless service regardless of the operators involved.

Working with Industry Partners

We are committed to working with other Train Operating Companies and Network Rail who manage the stations that we serve. Our combined aim is to provide a consistently high quality level of service and accessibility to all customers.

Stakeholders

We understand the important role of consulting a wide range of stakeholders. We regularly consult with local rail user groups, disability groups and local authorities to understand how changes could benefit our customers the most.

Accessible Travel Group

We have a dedicated Accessible Travel Group. The group meets twice yearly to discuss how we have performed in delivering accessible travel over the previous quarter and also steps we can take to improve our services and trains. The group is voluntary and consists of regular travellers,



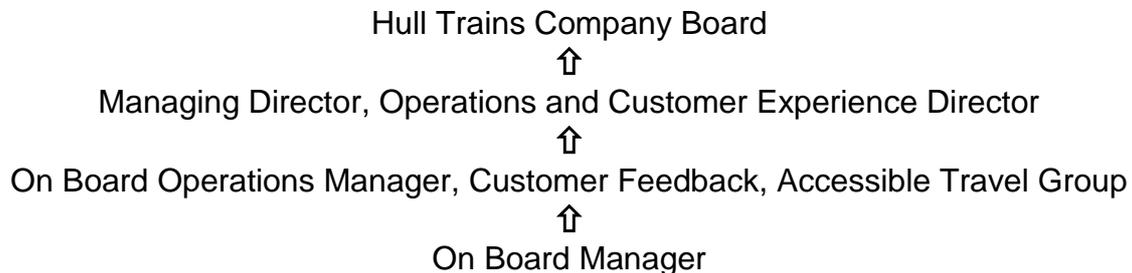
rail user group representatives and disability group members. Information provided to the group focuses primarily on customer feedback, rather than specific Key Performance Indicators. Members are invited to sit on the group based on their interest within the policy and at any one time there can be 5 – 10 stakeholders involved. All relevant touchpoints from the customer journey are covered by the group and outputs from meetings are used to influence company policy and procedures, as well as physical on train accessibility improvements. We also share the outputs of the group, where relevant, with the Station Facility Operators so that they can consider improvements of their facilities at their stations.

Feedback

We monitor our service provision and the feedback we receive through our Assisted Travel Team, our social media channels, local media, stakeholder surveys and the National Rail Passenger Surveys (NRPS) with regards to accessibility to help in forming the basis of strategic changes within the business to drive continuous improvements.

2. Management Arrangements

We consider accessibility in everything that we do and this forms an integral part of our business. We introduce improvements as quickly as we can, following the identification of any issue. Our structure is flat (as shown below) and therefore issues can be highlighted and action taken quickly.



Ownership

Our Operations and Customer Experience Director is responsible for the company's DPPP and reports directly to the Managing Director. They ensure that the policy is integrated into business plans at the planning stages of all projects. The Managing Director and the Operations and Customer Experience Director are represented at Hull Trains Board level and highlight issues relating to accessibility.

Performance and Feedback

Every week Key Performance Indicators are prepared by our Customer Services Team that illustrate customer feedback and the delivery of accessible travel by ourselves. These KPIs are used to drive change within the business. Periodic board reports are prepared by Customer Relations and include any issues arising through accessibility issues.

Our Executive Management team meets monthly to review customer feedback and progress actions to improve the service we deliver. In this way we are able to ensure that the company's progress against its accessibility goals is measured, reported and appropriately adjusted over time. Where appropriate we evaluate the business case of accessibility improvements using such tools as the Passenger Demand Forecasting Model (PDFH).

Policies and Procedures

The Operations and Customer Experience Director and Health, Safety & Environment Manager work together to ensure the delivery of our policies and procedures relating to accessibility.

Staff Training

Our managers and staff receive disability awareness training at least on an annual basis. This is further supported by staff briefings on changes or improvements that we have made.

All of our on board staff have a duty to provide assistance and information to our older and disabled customers as well as suggesting how we could improve things.

As new methods of assistance are introduced staff are briefed and trained on an individual basis and this is recorded on the staff training records.

We operate a safety management system (SMS) with procedures which ensure that services and facilities for disabled customers are provided according to our DPPP and best practice.

Return on Investment

Our Executive team assess the return on investment of improvements for disabled customers as part of our planning process and within the lifetime of our track access agreement.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor and record all feedback that we receive regarding accessibility issues. These include complaints, compliments and suggestions. This feedback is shared within the business through the weekly Key Performance Indicators and monthly through the board report. The Accessible Travel Group raises issues and report on progress and feedback on mystery shopping experiences.

The feedback information contained within our board report includes:

- Number of passengers booking with disabled railcard discount applied
- Passenger assistance bookings
- Assistance delivered on board both booked and unbooked
- Complaints received concerning accessibility

The Customer Services Team prepare periodic reports that are shared with the company board. Any trends or repeated issues are highlighted and new issues raised. The feedback is shared with the customer or staff concerned.

From the end of September 2016, we will survey a minimum of 5% of those who have contacted our Assisted Travel Team to take feedback on their experience and how we can improve our service.

Through this process we are able to monitor the performance of how well we are doing in the practical delivery of our policies and practices in helping disabled and older customers. It is important that day to day issues are identified quickly and managed to prevent repeat issues occurring. We do this by responding to customer feedback and investigating any issues with completed assistances. Where appropriate we will institute changes based around the outcome of these investigations.

Passenger Assist

We are committed to Passenger Assist. This is the national system for booking assistance for rail journeys anywhere in Britain. Passenger Assist allows you to book help in advance of your journey and this can be done by the following ways:

- Telephone
- On-line application
- Minicom
- Ticket office

Prior to every train departure the On Board Team review the assistance bookings and check if the correct seat reservations have been allocated. Shortly prior to arrival at the appropriate station, they will prepare the access ramps for customers who may require these. The Customer Services Team check on a weekly basis the fulfilment of assistance and highlight any issues that arise. The Customer Service Team conducts follow up calls to identify customer satisfaction with the delivery of assistance and the result of this satisfaction research is shared within the board report.

We will provide assistance at stations where the SFO cannot do so. In some cases this may involve alternative transport such as taxis to enable customers to reach staffed or accessible stations. There will be no extra charge for this service. We will consult with the customer at the time of booking or on their journey to ensure that these arrangements meet with their journey needs.

We review any failures in the delivery of assistance with the station facilities provider and also meet regularly with the various station management teams to review the delivery of DPPP.

The DPPP and the policy practices are reviewed on an annual basis. Changes to policy and practices are made, when appropriate, to improve the delivery of the assistance and these will be incorporated into the annual review and listed as improvements that have been completed.

4. Access Improvements

Access to the stations that we serve and the facilities that they offer varies considerably. We are committed to working pro-actively with our industry partners, station facility operators and Network Rail to invest in stations, the improvement of passenger facilities and influence changes appropriate to the benefits of all customers.

Where any change is proposed to train and station services or facilities it is our aim to ensure that the new arrangements comply with the DfT's "**Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations** – A Code of Practice or the RVAR (Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations, 2010) where applicable. If for any reason we are unable to meet the standards in the TSI-PRM or Code of Practice, we will apply for derogations against the TSI-PRM and/or dispensations from the Code of Practice, after every effort has been made to ensure compliance. From December 2020 we plan to introduce a new fleet of hybrid trains which will meet, if not exceed the RVAR requirements. At the time of writing of this document we are still in discussions about the type and formation of these trains.

We will continue to provide free alternative transport where a disabled customer wants to travel to an unstaffed station and, where practicable, we will send a member of staff to an unstaffed station to assist disabled customers. Our Assisted Travel Team is trained to discuss individual needs with customers to ensure that the appropriate assistance is provided, with as much of the journey by rail as possible. The team's calls are recorded and monitored for performance.

5. Working with Others

We recognise the value and importance of working in partnership with all stakeholders both at a national and local level to deliver continuous improvement in the service available to disabled customers. In particular we are committed to continuing our proactive and productive partnerships with the other train operators and Network Rail who manage the stations that we serve. It is important to us that we learn and share best practice with other operators and industries.

We will continue to work and consult with national organisations such as Transport Focus, Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, the Department for Transport, Blue Assist and Local Authorities such as East Riding County Council, North Yorkshire County Council and Hull City Council with local and national disabled passenger user groups and our own Accessible Travel Group.

6. Staff Training

We are committed to the continuous development of our staff. As part of our commitment to delivering excellence in customer service, our staff undertakes disability awareness training as part of the crew initial training programme and also through regular safety briefings.

Our On Board Team receives training in all the practical aspects of providing assistance. This includes deploying wheelchair ramps, assisting customers to their seats, delivering 'at seat' service, as well as providing information.

All our On Board Team members are trained to proactively look out for customers with disabilities or mobility problems and check if they need assistance.

All employees who answer telephones will be trained in communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding.

We will use our company team briefing process to ensure that all our employees are kept informed and up to date concerning any developments and issues that relate to the service we provide our disabled customers.

We will continue to develop and improve our training courses in relation to disabled travel, in consultation and partnership with local disabled stakeholders and representatives, taking into account feedback from employees and customers. We will review industry best practice, particularly drawing on the wide experience of First Group in the UK transport industry and take into account industry relevant publications such as DPTACs Disability and Equality Awareness Training Framework for Transport Staff.

7. Emergency Procedures

All of our On Board Team are trained in evacuation and safety procedures including how to respond to emergencies. Our policy is not to move disabled passengers before the emergency services arrive, unless they are in a life threatening position.

If an emergency takes place on board the On Board Manager will take responsibility for the safety of all passengers and will direct On Board Team members how to best assist any disabled passengers or persons with reduced mobility, including exiting the train when it is safe to do so.

If there is no member of staff available to assist, the On Board Manager will ask another passenger to help the disabled person.

Should the disabled person be a wheelchair user, or an individual whose condition impairs them from alighting from the train, the On Board Manager will appoint a member of staff or another passenger to stay with them until they can be evacuated from the train by the emergency services.

Dedicated wheelchair positions are located in first class and standard class with an accessible toilet close by on all our trains. Each position has an emergency contact point to speak to on-train staff. There are also two emergency contact points in the accessible toilet in coach E.

At some of the stations at which we stop there are a number of strategically placed disabled people's refuge points, where disabled customers can wait until the emergency services can perform a safe evacuation away from the station.

8. Communications Strategy

We understand that easy access to clear and accurate information about travelling by train is particularly important for people with disabilities so that they can plan their journeys with confidence. We appreciate that many disabled people may not be frequent travellers and are not aware of the facilities that we provide to help make their journeys easier.

We will ensure our DPPP is easily accessible, free of charge and communicated widely. Copies of our passenger document, "Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers",

will be available from all the stations where our services call, on our website in PDF and Word format for easy download, or from our Assisted Travel Team. We will also ensure this document is made more widely available in the communities we serve e.g. libraries, Tourist Information Centres and through local user groups.

This policy document, “Making Rail Accessible, Guide to Policies and Practices”, will be available on our website for download in PDF and Word format and from our Assisted Travel Team on request.

We will provide our DPPP within 7 days in alternative formats, such as Large Print, Easy Read and Audio on request. We have a supplier that is able to provide Braille information and this can be made available upon request.

We will work to ensure that we communicate clearly and effectively with disabled users when they are using our services.

We will provide high quality information in a variety of formats on our trains, such as public address, visual information screens, on train information posters and leaflets, and of course directly from our On Board Team.

We will work to identify and take advantage of advances in technology and across the rail industry to deliver improvement.

On stations, we will work in partnership with the operators to ensure high quality information and communication is always available and to encourage improvement in standards and consistency of service and facilities provision.

Telephone

We provide our disabled customers with a free phone telephone and a text phone service to contact our Assisted Travel Team who can arrange their travel, including making advance requests for travel assistance. Customers with reduced mobility can also use this number to give us feedback, buy tickets, make enquiries on accessibility of stations and trains, make reservations, and arrange onward travel with other train operators or to obtain a copy of our policy and customer documents.

Tel: 0800 316 1323

The Assisted Travel Team opening times are 06:00 – 23:00, 7 days a week.
This facility is closed on Christmas Day.

Outside office opening times or when our Assisted Travel Team are busy we provide a clear recorded telephone message, informing the caller when the team are back in the office.

At all other times or in an emergency National Rail Enquiries can be contacted 24 hours a day on **03457 48 49 50**.

Website

We recognise the need for our website to be accessible to all and have designed it to adhere to best practice following the W3C standards. Pages have been built to comply with a minimum standard of the Web Accessibility Initiative's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. We have ensured that our website (hulltrains.co.uk) provides high quality, accurate and accessible information. All of our documents are available as PDF format and these can be re-sized to suit requirements. We are committed to improving how we display and publish our documents and website content.

Signage

We will follow the guidance in the Code of Practice, Royal National Institute for Blind People Sign Design Guide and Rail Safety and Standards Board's Wayfinding good practice guide where possible and applicable on board our trains.

9. Car Parking

Car parking facilities are available at most of the stations that we serve and details of the Blue Badge spaces can be found on the National Rail Enquiries website (nationalrail.co.uk).

We do not currently manage any car parking however through regular management meetings we work with the station operators to effectively manage the facilities and provide the appropriate number of blue badge spaces.

If we receive any complaints about this service we will pass them on to the relevant station operator and advise the person making the complaint when we have done this.

10. Reviews

We review our policies, including the DPPP, every year and include all relevant feedback in the review. When changes are made to the DPPP, the revised policy will be submitted to the Office of Rail and Road for re-approval.

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