

Making Rail Accessible

Guide to Policies and Practices

Introduction

South Western Railway (SWR) is operated by FirstMTR. We provide a mixture of rail services across the South West running from Dorset, the South Coast and metro lines towards London Waterloo, our services are divided into 3 main service groups:

Long Distance

Metro

Outer suburban, local and Island Line

We currently manage 186 stations and currently call at 24 stations operated by other Train Operating Companies or by Network Rail. We operate a number of rolling stock types, details of which are found below

The majority of our stations have step-free access and we continually work towards improving the accessibility at all of our stations, full details of all the station facilities and accessible features can be found in the 'Making Rail Accessible – Helping Older and Disabled Passengers' leaflet. We will continue throughout the franchise to look for ways to deliver further improvements in conjunction with our industry partners and stakeholders including, but not limited to, Network Rail, other Train Operating Companies (TOCs), the Department for Transport (DfT), Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) 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 policy has been produced based on guidance contained in: **Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations – A Code of Practice**, issued by the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland in 2015; and **How to Write Your Disabled People's Protection Policy**, published in November 2009.

Issuing and complying with a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) is a condition of our passenger and station operator's licences as required and approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

This policy and our passenger document set out our commitment and the measures that we are taking to meet the needs of disabled passengers as well as the reasonable adjustments we are making to comply with the Equality Act 2010.

We will review the documents on an annual basis at the end of each anniversary year from their approval date. Customer comments and feedback on our DPPP are very welcome, and will be considered when these documents are reviewed. Feedback is logged by our Assisted Travel team who specialise in this area and comments are passed to the relevant manager for investigation. Information on our assisted travel bookings and compliance will also be reviewed by our Customer Experience Review Group (to be formed within 6 months of franchise start). Data from this feedback is included in our periodic board report and is reviewed by our Executive team. We also continually review our stations and trains accessibility information to make sure that our customers are provided with accurate information.

1. Our Strategy

Welcome to 'Making Rail Accessible: guide to policies and practices', part of our Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). We know how important it is to get customers from A to B simply and with confidence in the accessibility of stations and trains. That is why we are committed to making reasonable adjustments that will improve access to the trains and stations which we operate, to benefit all passengers, including older and disabled passengers.

We are continuing to work on improving accessibility across our stations estate and fleet, our trains are nearly all accessible and we are working with our suppliers to ensure that all future rolling stock is fully PRM-TSI compliant, this is the European Union standard for 'Technical specifications for interoperability relating to accessibility of the Union's rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility'. We have a strong relationship with Disability Rights UK as well as active engagement with Transport Focus, London Travel Watch and Travel Watch South West, local rights and access groups across the network.

We take guidance from the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and the Office of Rail and Road on the latest industry improvements, and follow this guidance to adopt best practice wherever possible to improve the service we provide to our customers.

We have a strong community engagement strategy which incorporates a close relationship with our key stakeholders in communities across our network as well as our funding and co working with community rail partnerships across the area, we fully appreciate the importance of a close and positive relationship with the communities we serve.

We will continue to monitor all aspects of our policies to make sure that they are current, reflect our efforts and build on best practice within the industry. We welcome feedback on this policy which is kept under regular review.

2. Management Arrangements

Disability awareness is an integral part of our business activity. Our Customer Experience Director is responsible for the company's DPPP, and will ensure that the policy is integrated into business plans at the planning stages of all projects.

The Accessibility and Inclusion Manager (Recruited by January 31st 2018) will work closely with all the teams within our business to develop and ensure delivery of our policies and procedures with regards to accessibility. This includes ensuring that accessibility issues are considered for any changes made to our services or network. This will include involving passengers and advocacy groups in design and navigation exercises regarding train interiors, ensuring that they are easy to get on and move around. We undertake assessments of our trains and stations to ensure that we are compliant from a safety perspective but can also offer the best service possible for passengers with different access needs.

Where our DPPP 'Helping Older and Disabled Passengers' document says we will provide a service or meet a standard at stations, on trains or in our customer service, we have quality control systems in place to ensure that these are provided.

Our policies are designed to meet the requirements of our DPPP and ORR guidance for DPPP production, our quality systems ensure these requirements are met and continuously improved. Our reporting systems operate throughout the business and the Customer Experience reporting structure is detailed below.

Disability awareness and customer service training coupled with regular briefings to our employees mean we can meet our obligations to disabled and older customers and help them enjoy their journeys with us. Our staff are all going to be trained to recognise our 'BlueAssist' cards and app, this will be rolled out through a

marketing campaign in mid-2018 and aims to help improve communication for those who may have difficulty travelling.

SWR hold several cross-functional meetings on a regular basis to allow information to be shared across all areas of the business. Customer Experience Review Group will be meeting monthly to review customer results and progress against actions to improve customer service, including changes to processes and staff training to deliver accessibility improvements. The responsibility for making physical changes to stations to improve accessibility lies with the Property Team, the Facility Owner and the Customer Experience Director who sits on the Customer Experience Strategy Group which is the group chaired by our Customer Experience Director who develop the long term customer experience approach of the organisation. We evaluate the business case for accessibility improvements using such tools as the Passenger Demand Forecasting Model (PDFM). It is through these groups that the return on investment of improvements for disabled passengers is assessed when making investment decisions.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

We record all instances of customer contact with our Assisted Travel team including praise and complaints broken down by the reason.

Our Franchise Agreement commitments include:

- monitoring of reservations for the provision of assistance to, persons with disabilities which are made through the Passenger Assistance service;
- record whether such assistance is provided,
- provide records to the Secretary of State, when requested.

We also encourage customers using our Assisted Travel Service to give feedback. They can do this by contacting the Assisted Travel team. The information we receive is recorded and used together with all the information from other sources to measure and improve our performance of this service.

As the figures show, complaints related to accessibility are typically few on our network, but we are committed to learning from these events and improving our service to disabled and older customers. We set ourselves periodic targets to ensure that complaints in this category remain low, and we will publish our performance against these targets in our Customer Report every six months.

We also follow best practice in the industry by undertaking:

- customer satisfaction surveys;
- complaints monitoring regarding assistance as well as all other complaints monitoring;
- feedback and service development exercises with local access groups and our joint accessibility forum;
- analysis of Passenger Assist booking data to track trends in assisted booking and to monitor growth and usage;
- work with local disability charities to spread knowledge and understanding of Passenger Assist, the DPPP and the accessibility of rail;

We will establish an accessibility forum in conjunction with Disability Rights UK within the first 9 months of the franchise; the forum will go on to meet at least 3 times a year. The forum will be made up of a representative group of customers and relevant stakeholders, output from this group is then fed into the Customer Experience Strategy group who use the findings to help shape the organisation, findings are also shared with relevant functional teams – property, fleet and operations to ensure output can be incorporated in decision making within the franchise.

We will on an annual basis report to the ORR details of actions we have taken as well as our performance against a set of Key Performance Indicators which will be shaped from our accessibility consultation being undertaken at the start of the franchise, as a minimum we will report the number of assistance bookings received and those met, also the number of un-booked assistances provided.

4. Access Improvements

We will comply with the PRM-TSI (Technical Specification for Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility) and the Code of Practice when installing or refurbishing rolling stock and facilities at stations. If for any reason we are unable to meet the standards in the PRM-TSI or Code of Practice, we will apply for derogations against the PRM-TSI, and/or dispensations from the Code of Practice, after every effort has been made to ensure compliance.

We also follow RDG's 'Guidelines for Development Management for Stations' and the DfT/DPTAC Design Standards for Accessible Stations in planning new works, including considering the Equalities implications of all plans. Over the course of the franchise we are committed to install step free access at 6 stations which currently do not have step free access. We are buying a fleet of new trains for the Metro services which will be a uniform fleet allowing all customers to know what to expect, these will all have accessible toilets.

Throughout our franchise, we will manage a minor works programme, investing a minimum of £335,000 per year in small scale physical alterations or additions to improve accessibility of our Stations. The schemes will be reviewed and consulted annually to ensure that they consider changes in legislation, best practice and operational changes. We will work with DPTAC to assess the schemes being undertaken to ensure compliance and best available accessible benefit.

We will work with partners across the region to seek match-funding for NSIP (National Stations Improvement Programme) schemes, such as more level boarding of trains as well as Access for All (AFA) funding to improve the accessibility of our stations. We will draw on our engagement with local stakeholders to prioritise investment. Our plans will be published in our six-monthly Customer Report.

We will continue to provide free alternative transport where a disabled customer wants to travel to or from an inaccessible station. We will work closely with other train operators and Network Rail to ensure details of station and train accessibility are kept up to date, and reflect any changes to the facilities, these details are available in the accompanying Making Rail Accessible – Helping Older and Disabled Passengers as well as on the National Rail Enquiries Website.

Our Passenger Assist team is trained to discuss individual needs with passengers 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 importance of working in partnership in order to make continuous improvements to the accessibility of our stations and trains for people with disabilities. As a result, we will continue to work and consult with organisations such as Department for Transport, Office of Rail and Road, London TravelWatch, Transport Focus, local authorities and advocacy groups in order to anticipate the requirements of all our passengers, including those with disabilities.

We will also work with other train operating companies and the Rail Delivery group (RDG) to introduce a degree of consistency across the industry where possible. We will be introducing an accessibility Forum in conjunction with Disability Rights UK, representatives from disability groups across the network are welcome to join. This group will review feedback, challenge current practice, and keep us informed of any new technology or approaches from other industries which could be adopted, with the aim of improving services for disabled customers.

We will also work with other transport service providers and advocacy groups to make sure that the needs of disabled passengers are incorporated into any jointly planned integrated transport initiatives, and we are open to consultation with any groups wishing to contribute to this process.

South Western Railway promotes accessibility by partnering with the charity BlueAssistUK, who will help promote this scheme in consultation with groups representing customers with various disabilities. This scheme is designed to allow customers to easily explain the help they need using a simple blue card, with space for them to write on. A mobile phone app is also available, which can speak the words typed out. Our staff are starting to be trained to recognise BlueAssist cards prior to the scheme's roll out in 2018; they will offer any assistance that passengers may reasonably require. Once the scheme is in place, cards will be available at all staffed SWR stations.

6. Staff Training

We are committed, through the provision of training, to ensure that accessibility issues are understood both by staff, who deal directly with passengers, and by all those in management.

Disability awareness training, forms part of the initial training received by any new employees we recruit or existing employees who move into customer service roles. All our customer facing staff have had disability awareness training and we use briefings to keep people up to date our policies.

By December 2020 all customer facing staff and managers will have gone through our Delivering Great Customer Experience programme, this will focus on anticipating and responding to individual customer needs, describing specific journey touchpoints which may cause anxiety or difficulty.

Our staff will be being trained on how to recognise the BlueAssist cards and we aim to launch the service around May 2018, more details will be available at stations, on our website and through our passenger assist team.

Our customer service centre staff are all trained on how to communicate with callers who may have an impairment which may affect both parties to have a full understanding of each other's requirements.

All our customer service training will be approved by the institute of customer service and or mobility/disability rights organisation.

Further training, like the use of ramps and other equipment such as induction loops, is provided as part of ongoing coaching and mentoring by local managers. Wider training on our customer culture and customer service also helps staff to perform their duties confidently and to assist older and disabled passengers.

We support our employees to gain NVQs in customer service, further demonstrating our commitment to service excellence.

We routinely produce staff briefings on aspects of accessibility or changes to legislation to keep our staff informed and able to provide the best possible service for all our passengers.

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

The number of staff who have received training during the year as well as details of our planned upcoming training timetable and content is reported to the ORR when we submit our DPPP for review.

7. Emergency Procedures

Our staff are trained in evacuation and safety procedures to ensure that the needs of all our customers are considered at all times and particularly at times of emergencies. Our policy is not to move disabled passengers before the emergency services arrive, unless they are in a life threatening position. Our policy applies to both our station and train environments.

If an emergency takes place on-board, the conductor will take responsibility for the safety of all passengers, and if there is another member of staff on-board, the conductor will appoint them to assist passengers to exit the train when it is safe to do so. If there is no member of staff to assist, the conductor will ask another passenger to assist. If any passengers use a wheelchair, again the conductor will appoint a member of staff or another passenger to stay with them until the emergency services can evacuate passengers safely from the train.

8. Communications Strategy

As part of our ongoing communication strategy, copies of our Disabled People's Protection Policy, are available at all staffed stations that we serve. It is also available from our website for download, and can be obtained by writing to us at:

www.southwesternrailway.com

Assisted Travel Team

Address

South Western Railway

Overline House

Southampton

SO15 1GW

These documents will be made available in other formats such as Audio, Large Print, Braille and Easy Read and Audio on request within seven working days from the date we receive the request. Please contact us through our website for more information on our plans to improve accessibility.

8.1 Telephone

We provide free telephone and text phone numbers for our disabled customers to allow them to contact us to arrange their travel, including making advance requests for travel assistance. Customers with reduced mobility can also use these numbers to give us feedback, buy travel 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.

During times when our Assisted Travel team is busy or the office is closed, clear automated recorded information is activated informing customers when the next Advisor is likely to be available or the opening times of the Assisted Travel team.

8.2 Website

At South Western Railway we aim to be open and accessible to all, and therefore our website has gone through extensive testing to ensure that it is available and accessible to as many customers as possible. We have ensured our website is usable by all modern text-to-speech browsers and that it is accessible by customers with colour-blindness. For those customers with poor eyesight, you will find that our website fonts resize easily to make the text larger or smaller. Please consult the help section of your device's web browser to find out how to change the text size or turn on text-to-speech functionality.

8.3 Signage

We have good working relationships with local authorities and use our regular meetings and communication structure to ensure that stations within their areas are clearly signposted, and that nearby places of interest are clearly signposted from our stations. 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.

9. Car Parking

We ensure that parking for Blue Badge holders is in accessible locations close to the station and that spaces are of the correct size.

We monitor the use of these spaces to ensure that they are sufficient to meet demand, and to discourage non-Blue Badge holders from parking in them. If people are found to be parking illegally, we will issue a Parking Charge Contravention Notice (PCCN). If we find that the spaces assigned are not sufficient to meet demand, we will, wherever possible, introduce an appropriate number of additional spaces.

We are committed to achieving Disabled Parking Accreditation by no later than 30th June 2019 in enough car parks to ensure that at least 80% of chargeable bays across the estate are in car parks subject to Disabled Parking Accreditation.

We continue to work with our industry partners and the security services to improve security across our estate, we have 107 secure stations and 29 secure parking accredited stations. We are committed through our franchise to increase the number of secure station accredited stations; details of additional secure stations will be included in future revisions of this document and reported to the Secretary of State.

The provision of pick-up and set-down points for cars and taxis is reviewed frequently, to ensure these are as close to our station entrances as reasonably practicable.

10. Contact Us

We welcome feedback on our DPPP. Our contact address is:

South Western Railway

Overline House

Southampton

SO15 1GW