



# **Accessible Travel Policy**

[grandcentralrail.com](http://grandcentralrail.com)

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## Commitments to providing assistance

Grand Central is committed to helping people use the railway network with confidence, considering the wide range of different needs of the communities we serve.

Grand Central strives to provide rail services which are truly accessible to all, so that customers can travel in confidence, safe in the knowledge that extra help is available at each stage of their journey, when needed.

Our commitment to helping all customers to travel with confidence includes offering the following:

- co-ordinating assistance at stations and on our trains, or when making connections
- alternative accessible transport when stations or trains are inaccessible
- clear, consistent and up-to-date customer information
- discounts to reduce the cost of travel for disabled people and a companion

This document, our **Accessible Travel Policy**, sets out our policies and approach towards providing assistance for older and disabled customers, and those who simply need some extra help to make their journey.

Our customer leaflet, '**Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers**' provides a handy summary guide, explaining what we do to assist older and disabled customers who travel with us and the standards of service they can reasonably expect. It is available at all the staffed stations which we serve and on our website:

[www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/accessible-travel-policy/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/accessible-travel-policy/)

In this policy document, our aim is to provide information to help you understand how we plan to meet your expectations when you are travelling with Grand Central. We will explain how to find details of the assistance available, facilities and information you will need to help you to plan your journey.

## Booking and providing assistance

### Passenger Assist

Grand Central participate in an assistance booking system called **Passenger Assist** which we recommend you use to arrange your travel assistance requirements in advance. This is a rail industry-wide system used to book assistance at stations for passengers during their journey and to reserve seats and wheelchair spaces on trains where reservations are available. Our Passenger Assist team will discuss your requirements and organise assistance at any station that is accessible to you during the hours that trains are scheduled to serve that station. We consider your individual



needs to ensure there is sufficient time to make any connections in your journey. Details of train times are included on the individual station pages of the National Rail Enquiries website: [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk). We can also provide station information by post on request, including in alternative formats such as large print.

We work to agreed processes with other train companies and station operators for booking and providing assistance. This means that if your journey involves a change of train onto other operators' services, assistance can be booked through a single point of contact. We can book assistance for your whole rail journey, even where part of the journey is with other train operators or where it involves stations where our services call but where there are no Grand Central staff. By using the Passenger Assist booking system, we ensure information is relayed between station and train operators automatically at all stages of the journey.

As Grand Central does not manage or operate any of the stations at which our services call, we have very limited station-based staff presence, therefore we work in partnership with the relevant station operator through the Passenger Assist booking system to provide staff who are responsible for the station-based elements of passenger assistance. So for example, at York Station the assistance you require in and around the station, getting you to the correct platform and helping you to board is provided by LNER. This is also the case in respect of when trains are re-platformed at short notice – the station operator provides the staff to assist you in getting to the correct platform. Our Senior

Conductors on-board the train are notified of all assistance bookings via their smart device and will therefore ensure that a member of the on-board team is available to assist you at the interface between platform and train.

We will also offer you the opportunity to purchase tickets for your journey when booking assistance and, where it is possible, make reservations on trains including priority seats and wheelchair spaces. Tickets can be collected from ticket machines when available at stations or can be dispatched by post (please allow five working days for delivery).

To book assistance, please contact our Passenger Assist team who are available as follows:

**Telephone:** 0345 603 4852 (open 07:00 - 22:00, Mon – Sun, excluding Christmas Day)

**Text Relay:** 18001 0344 811 0072 (open 07:00 - 22:00, Mon – Sun, excluding Christmas Day)

**Online:** [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/passenger-assistance](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/passenger-assistance)

We will provide booking confirmation by email, where you have provided your details; or by post if requested.

We aim to provide sufficient resourcing so that your call will be answered within 30 seconds and to respond to online requests within 12 working hours. We monitor our performance against these targets on a regular basis.

Alternatively you can book using the national Freephone number:

### National Freephone

Passenger Assist: 0800 022 3720

Textphone Free SMS Passenger

Assist Forwarding Service: 0845 60 50 600

### Recommended notice period for booking assistance through Passenger Assist

journey. We are not able to guarantee seat availability on train services if they are not reserved in advance. However, we understand that this is not always possible, so don't worry if you are not able to book in advance. Many of the stations that we serve are staffed and all our trains have Senior Conductors, so where staff are available, they will always help you, *where reasonably practicable*.

The ability to travel as and when you wish is important to everyone, so we are working closely with our suppliers and rail industry partners, utilising improved technology and shared processes, to reduce the notice period for booking Passenger Assist during the call centre opening hours 07:00-22:00, in accordance with the following timescales:

- By April 2021, up to 6 hours' notice prior to travel; and
- By April 2022, up to 2 hours' notice prior to travel.



### Assistance at stations

Grand Central train services currently call at 15 different stations, none of which are managed or operated by Grand Central and the facilities at these stations varies considerably. Some of these stations are staffed by the station operator, while some have staff presence for part of the day and the remainder have no station-based staff.

When booking assistance, if your journey involves a station which does not have staff available at the time you are travelling, our Passenger Assist team will take this into account, together with the type of assistance you require and the overall accessibility of the station to ensure you can complete your journey. If our Passenger Assist team believes you may not have access to sufficient assistance at a particular station, they will discuss options with you and provide an alternative journey plan, assistance or transport to get you to your destination at no additional cost.

If you have not booked assistance when you arrive at a station, please speak with a member of staff or at an unstaffed station make use of the Help Point, where available, to speak with Customer Services; where accessible, you may proceed to the platform and attract the attention of on-board staff, either visually or audibly, when the train arrives. Our on-board staff can help you board our service, take your seat, assist with luggage and help you alight at your destination station; however, they cannot assist you beyond the platform. If you are not able to do any of the above, please call the national free phone passenger assist line who can then arrange assistance or alternative means of getting you to your destination.

All stations at which we call have customer information screens and public announcements to keep you informed. In the event these are not working, then please speak to a member of station staff, or at unstaffed stations make use of Help Points, call our Customer Relations team (T:0345 603 4852), or refer to our website or Twitter feed.

When you have boarded a train, the Senior Conductor on-board will communicate with your destination station staff, where appropriate, to ensure you are provided with assistance to get off the train. This communication will be to a member of destination station staff responsible for receiving these calls via a dedicated telephone number at the station using the agreed industry Handover Protocol. The Handover Protocol covers both booked assistance and turn up and go travel, it also requires each station to have a responsible person to ensure this phone line is answered.

On arrival at the train's final destination station, our staff will ensure that customers who have booked through Passenger Assist are helped off the train as soon as possible and in any event within five minutes of the train's arrival into the station.

### Boarding Ramps

Portable ramps are available on board all our trains and at staffed stations to facilitate boarding and getting off trains. The ramps are specifically designed to suit the train you are travelling on, so that customers with reduced mobility can safely move onto and off the trains.

Ramps are available for all customers who require such

assistance. If you have not booked assistance, please advise a member of station staff where available, or the Senior Conductor who will arrange for the ramp to be put in place.

### **Changes and disruption to services**

When a journey changes, or we experience disruption to services, we will provide information about changes to train times, and alternative travel arrangements, in both aural and visual formats by Public Address announcements and Information Screens displayed at stations.

Where reasonably practicable, for significant changes and disruption during a journey, Senior Conductors will pass through the train to check if customers require further support, and where possible, provide assistance as required.

Our Mobile App and website show live train times, and help points are available at many stations alongside a Freephone number, providing a link to Customer Information teams who are also able to assist you in continuing your journey.

During planned engineering works, we provide clear information at stations and on our website and Social Media channels to advise passengers of alternative travel arrangements and replacement transport options.

**Twitter:** @GC\_Rail

**Facebook:** facebook.com/grandcentralrail

Occasionally a train's departure platform needs to be changed at short notice. Such a change will be shown on the customer information screens and will be announced aurally as soon as possible. When a change occurs, station staff where available will provide assistance and information to help you reach the revised departure platform, if it is accessible to you, as efficiently as possible.

### **Assistance with onward travel – buses, taxis and light rail**

If your journey involves onward travel by another means of transport, where practicable, station staff will help you to the relevant bus stop, pick up point, or taxi rank within the station boundary. They are also able to provide information about local transport more generally, including bus services and taxi companies.

Our Senior Conductors can provide assistance in getting you on or off the train, however they are not able to provide assistance around stations.

Information about the availability of accessible taxis which serve our stations is available from our Customer Relations team, who can also advise on local taxi firms who can provide accessible taxis. Where possible, this information is also included on station posters.

For further information on local bus and tram connections, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit **www.traveline.info**

### **Assistance with luggage**

We recognise that luggage can be difficult to manage in the station environment for many disabled and older people. If you need your luggage carried, please tell us when you book assistance so we can ensure that station staff, where available, are ready to help. Assistance can be given in taking customers and their luggage from train to station entrances (and vice versa) and when transferring between trains; wherever reasonably practicable.

Rail staff must be able to lift luggage items safely, so please be aware of the limits set out in the National Rail Conditions of Travel, which state that you may bring with you up to three items of personal luggage. Full details of the limits and free allowances are available from our Passenger Assist team.



### **Seats on trains**

Our trains have priority seating which has extra legroom, space for an assistance dog and is situated near the doors. These seats are for customers with disabilities, pregnant women, those with impairments or non-visible disabilities and for older people. Priority seats are clearly labelled, and other passengers are requested to give up the seat, if required by an older or disabled person.

Wheelchair spaces and accessible toilets are available on all our trains, and our Senior Conductors assist in ensuring these dedicated spaces are kept clear and wheelchair users are given priority for this space.

Wheelchair spaces and priority seats can be reserved during the booking process and we recommend that you make a reservation in advance of travelling. However, if practicable,

our Senior Conductors will make every effort to help older and disabled passengers find a seat on-board if you have not made a reservation.

### Assistance dogs

Assistance dogs are welcome on all Grand Central trains, free of charge, and can travel in any part of the train. Our Senior Conductors will be happy to ensure that you are in the most appropriate seating on board the train, to make the journey comfortable for both you and your dog. Our priority seats have extra leg room and space for an assistance dog.

## Information provision

### Our Accessible Travel Policy leaflet for customers – Making Rail Accessible

To complement this Accessible Travel Policy document, our customer leaflet, ‘Making Rail Accessible’ provides a shorter, practical guide, explaining what we do to assist older and disabled customers who travel with us and the standards of service they can reasonably expect.

Alternative formats such as audio and large print versions of both this leaflet and our Accessible Travel Policy are available on request, by calling our Customer Relations by phone or Text Relay, and on our website, free of charge. We aim to provide this to you within seven working days. Through our relationship with local authorities, government agencies and accessibility groups across the North we will arrange for copies of the leaflet to be supplied at key locations where public services are provided (e.g. libraries, GP surgeries, job centres, Citizens Advice bureaux, hospitals and post offices). Our community stakeholder manager will distribute leaflets to all of the local organisations we work with as well as ensuring they are available at local amenities near the stations we call at. This includes actively encouraging the use of Passenger Assist and educating those who are not aware of the service.

Where possible we also display poster notices, at a height accessible to wheelchair users, at each station Grand Central serves, advising customers how to obtain the Making Rail Accessible leaflet and this policy document.

### Trains and Stations accessibility information

We will ensure that accessibility information relating to our trains and the stations we serve is readily available to you and is kept up to date. This includes the level of step-free access available at each of the stations that we serve.

In order to achieve this, we will maintain this information in an online PDF format, available at: [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/)

**travel-assistance/passenger-assistance**, which is accessible using screen readers or other software with accessibility features (for example, Adobe Reader) and can be easily accessed via personal mobile devices.

Alternative formats such as audio and large print versions of this information are available on request, by calling our Customer Relations by phone or Text Relay, and on our website, free of charge. We aim to provide this to you within seven working days.

We will also provide the same information for use on the National Rail Enquiries website to ensure consistency of information.

### Train accessibility information

An overview of each type of train used on Grand Central services is available on our website [www.grandcentralrail.com/travelling-with-gc/on-board/our-trains/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/travelling-with-gc/on-board/our-trains/), including information on the general accessibility of each type and details of the routes on which different types of train are scheduled to run.

Following significant investment by Grand Central in refurbishing our train fleet, all Grand Central trains offer:

- Two wheelchair spaces available to book (one in first class and one in standard with associated companion seats)
- At least one Accessible toilet
- A Boarding ramp
- Designated priority seating
- Aural information
- Visual information
- A Senior Conductor to provide assistance during the journey on every train.

### Station accessibility information

For information on whether the following accessible services and facilities are available at stations served by Grand Central, please see our website [www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/) or [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/) which will cover:

- Level of platform accessibility and how access is provided (e.g. lifts, ramps or steps)
- Disabled Passenger Parking
- Accessible Set Down and Pick-Up Points
- Ticket office opening hours
- Meeting Points for assistance
- Staffing hours and Assistance availability
- Accessible Ticket machines
- Customer Information systems
- Help Points (either staffed or audio contact with our Customer Relations)
- Accessible toilets (including National Key toilets)
- Induction Loops
- Tactile paving
- Station Wheelchair availability

- Accessible waterproof waiting facilities
- Catering facilities
- Secure Station Accreditation

## Passenger journey information

We understand it is important for you to trust and have confidence in the information we provide. Some customers may travel by rail infrequently, and therefore may not know where or how to access important information, particularly during delays or during times of disruption. This section explains how we communicate accurate, clear and consistent information to you, especially if you have non-visible and sensory disabilities, at every stage of the journey – whether at home, online, on the move, at the station or on the train.

### Stations – aural and visual information

All the stations that we serve have a combination of customer information screens and automated public announcements providing accurate, clear and consistent aural and visual information.

At larger stations, a train's departure platform will sometimes need to be changed at short notice. The platform number will flash on the information screen to indicate that it has changed and the same information will be announced aurally as soon as practicable.

When a change occurs at staffed stations, where possible, the platform staff will provide assistance and information to help you reach the revised departure platform, if accessible to you, as efficiently as possible.

In the unlikely event the platform is not accessible to you, the station staff will discuss options with you and liaise with us to arrange alternative transport. For example, a taxi, to the next nearest station accessible to you, so that you can continue your journey.

At the majority of stations we serve, accessible Help Points, and a Freephone number, are in place that enable customers to speak with a member of Customer Relations who will provide any information you require for your journey.

### Trains – aural and visual information

We are committed to providing important aural and visual travel information on board the train in a format which is easy to understand.

All our trains are fitted with information screens and a public address system, and our Senior Conductors are trained to make clear and concise announcements giving train information, including details of the next station and will do so on all services that do not have pre-recorded announcements.

Senior Conductors are also trained to consider the needs of visually impaired, deaf or hearing-impaired people, when providing information. If your journey is disrupted, the Senior Conductor where possible may walk through the train to provide information and support customers. Announcements will provide enough time for you to prepare to alight the train, particularly if you require assistance.

Our Senior Conductors are also trained to consider information provision and assistance requirements on a dynamic basis relevant to journey circumstances, for instance considering the impact of crowding on board our trains which will influence how information about access to (as opposed to just provision of) accessible toilets on crowded services will be communicated.

Senior Conductors have a smart device and can look up and pass on disruption information as well as details of connecting services, facilities at stations and real-time information regarding train times.

### Connections and wayfinding

We work closely with Network Rail and the operators who manage the stations that we serve, and with relevant local authorities, to ensure that stations are clearly and consistently signposted from local roads. We also liaise with station operators and local authorities in the maintenance of Station Travel Plans for many of the stations that we serve, which include signage and interchange for other modes of transport. This is the responsibility of the Head of Customer Policy.

We are investing in stations, and part of this investment contributes to replacing and renewing signs that are no longer fit for purpose. In making these changes we liaise with Network Rail and the station operator to consider industry best practice.

Our Passenger Assist booking team, on-board Senior Conductors and station staff will provide you with information on how to make connections with other modes of transport, both prior to your journey and when travelling on our trains or at stations that we serve. There is also a useful information poster displayed at many stations served by Grand Central which provides onward connection information and local maps.

### Information points, Help Points and our Customer Relations team

Larger stations that we serve, such as York and London Kings Cross, have dedicated information points located on the station concourse, with clear signage to their location within the station. The information points have variable height counters with information screens and leaflets positioned so that they can be accessed by everyone.

At staffed stations that we serve, information on provision of

services is available in person at ticket offices, which are clearly signed within the station environment and from station staff. In addition, accessible help points are available, which will put you in contact with a Customer Service team who will provide any information you require for your journey.

At unstaffed stations, accessible Help Points are usually in place that enable customers to speak with a Customer Service team who will provide any information you require for your journey. In addition, an information poster is displayed at a height that can easily be read by a wheelchair user, at all stations served by Grand Central, which provides relevant contact details for our Customer Relations support team.

We are committed to ensuring our staff, whether in person at stations and on the train, or via phone/email to our Customer Relations support team, have up-to-date information available to them that includes:

- The facilities, services and accessibility of all the stations at which Grand Central trains call
- Timetables for all Grand Central services
- Information on fares and ticketing
- Information relating to connections with other operators' train services
- Information regarding accessibility onto other forms of transport
- Delays, disruption, diversions and emergencies which affect the advertised timetable
- Confirmation of any arrangements that have been made through Passenger Assist, including bookings by other operators

### Our website

We are committed to working towards achieving the industry-recognised Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which define how to make web pages and content more accessible for people with disabilities. The accessibility of our website will be fully reviewed to WCAG standards prior to July 2021 with any necessary changes being implemented as soon as possible after this review.

To help you find the information you need, we also provide a homepage link to our Assisted Travel page

**[www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/)** which explains the Passenger Assist service in a clear and concise manner, using plain English and avoiding the use of rail industry jargon.

It provides the necessary contact information and provisions for you to book assistance and purchase a ticket to travel (including details of any national discounts available to disabled passengers or persons with reduced mobility). It also sets out information of on-board facilities and station information, including

accessibility information, staff availability and our Customer Relations opening times.

It also provides links to pages which detail information on any temporary reductions in accessibility and any delays and disruptions to facilities and train services where relevant.

It also informs you of any restrictions on the use of mobility aids including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

In addition, there is a link to help you access the 'Making Rail Accessible' leaflet and details of how to obtain it in accessible formats. We also provide guidance on how you can provide feedback or make a complaint, and we include information on the availability of redress in the event something has gone wrong for an assistance booking.

## Ticketing and fares

If you are unable to buy a ticket before your journey, you can do so during the journey or at the destination station and enjoy any reduction to which you are entitled, such as using a Disabled Persons Railcard. Our "Buy on Board" policy means no one will incur a fine or penalty.

We understand that disabilities are not always visible and if you are concerned about purchasing tickets, please contact staff on stations or on trains or our Customer Relations team for advice.

Along with all other train operators, we participate in several schemes offering discounted fares, which are detailed below.

### Disabled Persons Railcard

The Disabled Persons Railcard is a discount card for tickets that allows those living with disabilities to save up to 1/3 on rail travel. If you're travelling with another adult, they will also receive 1/3 off their rail fare.

There are no time restrictions on the Disabled Persons Railcard, so you can use it to get a discount on tickets at any time of the day. Further details of eligibility criteria and how to apply for a Railcard can be found at:

**Website:** [disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)  
**Email:** [disability@raildeliverygroup.com](mailto:disability@raildeliverygroup.com)  
**Call:** 0345 605 0525  
**Textphone:** 0345 601 0132 (for people with hearing impairments)

Disabled Persons Railcard discounts are available on tickets sold by our Senior Conductors and on our website & mobile app. The discounts are also available when buying tickets through station ticket offices and automated ticket vending machines – these are controlled and operated independently from Grand Central by the respective station operators.

When purchasing a ticket on our website, there are prominent messages in place to advise customers that assistance is available for their journey.

### **If you are visually impaired**

If you are a visually impaired person travelling with a companion and you do not hold a Railcard, the following discounts on Anytime/Day tickets apply for both of you:

- Anytime Single or Return – 34% discount
- Anytime Day Single – 34% discount
- Anytime Day Return – 50% discount

No concession applies if you are travelling alone and you do not hold a railcard.

To obtain these discounts a document confirming your disability, issued by a recognised institution (for example Government Department, Local Authority, Guide Dog Ownership certification or RNIB) is required.

### **If you remain in your wheelchair for a rail journey**

If you remain in your wheelchair throughout the journey and you do not hold a Railcard, the following discounts on Anytime/Day tickets will apply:

- Anytime Single/Return – 34% discount
- Anytime Day Single – 34% discount
- Anytime Day Return – 50% discount

The same discount will apply for one person travelling with you.

### **Senior Railcard**

Available to anyone over the age of 60, a Senior Railcard provides the opportunity to save up to 1/3 on rail travel in the UK. Senior Railcards can be purchased online, over the phone or at any station ticket office with your passport or UK driving licence as proof of age.

Further details of eligibility criteria and how to apply for a get a railcard can be found at:

**Website:** [senior-railcard.co.uk](http://senior-railcard.co.uk)

**Email:** [railcardhelp@railcards-online.co.uk](mailto:railcardhelp@railcards-online.co.uk)

**Call:** 0345 300 0250

There may be other Railcards which are suitable for you. Please visit [railcard.co.uk](http://railcard.co.uk) for further information.

### **Purchase of advance tickets**

Advance purchase tickets are for a specific train. Where advance tickets are available for purchase, we advise that you check that the required facilities (for example, a wheelchair space) are available for the entire journey you are making before purchasing tickets. This may particularly apply for through journeys involving more than one train operator. If you purchase tickets via our website or mobile app for a journey involving multiple operators, we advise that you check with each operator regarding the specific facilities they offer on their trains, or alternatively contact our Passenger Assist team who will check on your behalf.



## Alternative accessible transport

If a station you wish to travel from is inaccessible to you, we will provide alternative transport, at no extra charge, to the nearest or most convenient station to enable you to continue your journey. For example, if there is only access via steps to some or all platforms, we will arrange alternative accessible road transport (such as a taxi) for you to the nearest suitable alternative station that is accessible to you. Please contact our Passenger Assist team, who will discuss your needs in order to arrange appropriate assistance. We recognise that circumstances will vary for individual passengers and we will take into account your specific needs when discussing alternative transport options. Similarly, if you are unsure whether the station you intend to use is accessible to you, please contact our Passenger Assist team.

Wherever possible, we aim to ensure you can travel by rail for as much of your journey as is practicable.

When we cannot run rail services due to engineering work or a replacement timetable, we aim to use rail replacement buses or coaches which comply with the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR). Grand Central is working with our regular suppliers for rail replacement transport so that, when available, fully accessible vehicles are provided. Grand Central ensure that the supply of compliant vehicles is exhausted before considering other options for rail replacement. There is currently a shortage in the market of accessible rail replacement vehicles, in particular for longer distance journeys, therefore if a vehicle does not meet your needs, we will provide alternative transport options, which station staff or our Passenger Assist team will discuss with you. During planned disruption we will ensure that you are informed of the necessary arrangements and that the wait time is similar whether it be a bus, coach, taxi or other alternative.

Where possible, 12 weeks before any major planned engineering works Grand Central will assess the requirement for accessible rail replacement vehicles, given the nature of the works and the passenger numbers. Where 12 weeks is not possible, we will do this at the earliest opportunity and then procure the use of PSVAR compliant vehicles for the planned engineering works.

When there is planned engineering work we ensure all relevant information is available at the point of purchase with warnings next to services informing passengers of any alternations to the journey. This information will be displayed on our at station engineering posters and on the website, informing passengers of the rail replacement accessibility when appropriate. Grand Central send out email messages to any passengers who have bought tickets via the Grand Central website for dates during planned engineering to ensure they are aware of any journey alternations when compared to normal. These emails contain a contact number should a customer wish to ask any further questions.

If a passenger calls to book assistance for a journey during a period of planned engineering our team will inform them of the planned works. If this means part or all of the journey will be completed by a rail replacement vehicle this is made clear to the caller. If the passenger uses our web-form to book assistance they will be contacted to inform them of the same information.

Grand Central makes every effort to ensure passengers are informed prior to travel regarding planned engineering works, including the use of station posters, web site information and social media posts. All our staff are also informed of any upcoming engineering should passengers travelling wish to ask any questions.

When we cannot run rail services due to short notice disruption to advertised train services, for whatever reason, we will use the same approach as outlined above.

## Mobility scooters and mobility aids

### Wheelchairs

All Grand Central trains can accommodate customers using a wheelchair, in the clearly designated spaces on board, providing they fit within the following dimensions:

**Width:** 700mm

**Length:** 1,200mm

**Weight:** 300kg (including the user)

If your wheelchair exceeds the above dimensions, please contact our Passenger Assist team on 0345 603 4852 (07:00 - 22:00, Mon – Sun), who will be able to offer advice.

If you ring to book assistance or use our online assistance form for your journey, and you are travelling with a family member or companion, you can request a companion seat.

### Electric Mobility Scooters

We recognise that scooters come in a variety of shapes and sizes and we try to accommodate these on board our trains if they fit within the specifications shown below. All our trains have designated wheelchair spaces, however there is a limitation on the footprint available to allow access to this space. In the situation where the mobility scooter is larger than the specification below, then these will be unable to access the coach from the vestibule area.

- 700mm wide
- 1,200mm long
- Have a turning circle radius of no more than 1,500mm
- 300kg (including the weight of the customer)
- Have an anti-tip device

We can also convey foldable scooters as luggage as long as these can be lifted by our staff or by accompanying persons.

We request that mobility scooter users transfer to a seat, rather than remain seated on their scooter while on board the train.

Other train operators and transport companies may not take your mobility scooter on board. If you need to travel with another train operator or transport company for your trip, please make sure you check their arrangements for travelling with mobility scooters.

## Delays, disruption to facilities and services, and emergencies

We understand that disruption to facilities and train services can have a significant impact on a wide range of disabled travellers and the confidence of disabled people and other passengers with reduced mobility in travelling by train. Where disruption occurs, Grand Central is committed to doing everything possible to ensure that, wherever possible, customers are able to continue their journey.

During disruption we will provide information about changes to train times and alternative travel arrangements through the Public Address and Customer Information Screens. On-board our services we are implementing a new live journey information feature, through our on board Wi-Fi, which will allow passengers to see in real time any service delays. Our on-board team are also kept up to date with live information should passengers have any further questions. Elsewhere our App and website will include live departure times and passengers can use Help Points, where they are provided, to find further information.

In addition, at larger staffed stations, where reasonably practicable, we seek to ensure staff are deployed to the station concourse and platforms to assist and support customers with alternative transport arrangements and other needs such as luggage.

In the event of service disruption, we aim to use rail replacement buses or coaches which are fully accessible and proactively contact customers where possible with details of the arrangements. We work with regular suppliers for rail replacement transport so that we can request fully accessible vehicles be provided during periods of disruption. However, this is sometimes more challenging when sourcing vehicles at short notice, particularly as the availability of accessible vehicles can be limited in some geographical areas.

If a vehicle does not meet your needs, we will provide alternative transport options, which the station staff or our Passenger Assist team will discuss with you. We will make all reasonable endeavours to secure accessible rail replacement buses, coaches and taxis. If we are unable to secure accessible vehicles that are appropriate for the routes they would be used on, we will explain the reasons why.

Sometimes, particularly at larger stations, a train's departure

platform will occasionally need to be changed at short notice. The platform number will flash on the information screen to indicate that it has changed and the same information will be announced aurally as soon as practicable.

When a change occurs at staffed stations, where possible, the station staff will provide assistance and information to help you reach the revised departure platform, if accessible to you, as efficiently as possible.

In the unlikely event the platform is not accessible to you, we will arrange alternative transport, for example, a taxi, to the nearest station accessible to you, so that you can continue your journey. We will discuss available options with you wherever possible.

If you have booked through Passenger Assist and any disruption to the advertised train service means your original arrangements, including connections are no longer valid, we will do our best to make contact with you and re-book any required assistance through the Passenger Assist system. We will request a contact number from you when you book assistance, which will help us to contact you in case of disruption. If we are unable to contact you for whatever reason, and disruption occurs during your journey, please ask station staff or our on-board Senior Conductor for help.

When the level of accessibility of facilities at a station or on one of our trains is less than that normally provided, for example as a result of lifts breaking down or toilets being out of use, we are committed to making every reasonable effort to provide replacement arrangements or facilities, wherever possible. This may involve making alternative transport arrangements for you to or from the nearest fully accessible station in the event of station lifts being out of order. We will also push facilities information out on our social media channels, ensure on-board staff are aware and if it means a passenger will not be able to complete their journey, for example due to lifts being out of use, we will proactively contact them to arrange a suitable alternative.

If you spot anything that may cause an issue, please let a member of staff know so that it can be rectified immediately, or the information passed on to the relevant team. If you cannot find a member of staff simply call our customer relations team or contact us using social media.

### Emergency procedures

All staffed stations that we serve have 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 and older customers, including those who use mobility scooters and wheelchairs. If you are a wheelchair user and you are in an area where no safe evacuation route exists, a place of safety will have

been pre-identified for you (accompanied by a member of staff) to await rescue by the emergency services.

The assistance provided to disabled passengers varies between locations based upon a risk assessment and includes the need to identify those who may need assistance, provision of wheelchairs and ramps and identification of and direction to safe refuge if normal evacuation routes are not accessible.

When on-board our trains, 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. Dependent on the type of incident and risks involved, we may move you to a safer part of the train until arrangements can be made to move the train to the nearest station. We will endeavour to ensure you are accompanied at all times. If it becomes essential to evacuate a train between stations, we will work closely with the emergency services to attend and provide assistance with the evacuation.

## Station facilities and services

We are committed to ensuring that the information regarding the stations served by Grand Central is up to date and customers requiring assistance are aware of any limitations and / or temporary changes or restrictions. For example, this includes:

- where stations have a physical constraint that prevents some disabled people from using it;
- where significant temporary work that affects station accessibility is being carried out;
- where there are changes to stations that would make them temporarily inaccessible (e.g. when facilities such as lifts and toilets at stations are out of order);
- where facilities on trains that materially affect disabled passengers' journeys are unavailable.

Our Head of Customer Policy has overall responsibility for ensuring the information provided by Grand Central regarding accessibility and details of the times assistance from staff is available at stations is updated, including:

- Level of accessibility from station entrance to platforms (e.g. lifts, ramps, steps)
- Staffing hours and assistance availability
- Location of Meeting Points for assistance
- Accessible waiting rooms and toilets
- Accessible car parking and set down/pick-up points

**Left -Luggage:** Of the stations served by Grand Central trains, only London Kings Cross offers a facility to leave luggage. "Excess Baggage" offers this facility, operating independently. This facility is available Monday to Sunday 07:00 – 23:00. You can pre-book storage for any heavy, awkward or high value luggage at the

station, by visiting their website ([www.left-baggage.co.uk](http://www.left-baggage.co.uk)) or by calling 020 7837 4334.

**Disabled Parking:** We work closely with Station Operators to ensure the availability of appropriate car park and disabled parking facilities. Only Sunderland and Bradford Interchange do not have station car parks, relying on a wide range of accessible transport options that can be used to get to the stations. For all the remainder, if you visit our website at [www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/) the station facilities are outlined alongside the number of parking spaces. The number of disabled parking spaces at each station is also listed as well as any charges for using the car parks. Where our customers feedback any issues regarding parking facilities, we will ensure these are passed to the relevant station operator for their action.

For full details please see our up-to-date stations facilities and services section at [www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/); or visit the National Rail Enquiries website at [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations).

## Alterations to facilities

When advertised facilities and services such as lifts or accessible toilets are not available, at a station or on-board our trains, we will make every effort to provide alternative facilities.

Should the facilities on which you rely for your journey become temporarily unavailable on a train or at a station, we will update the system within 24 hours of notification of a problem and provide an estimated time for when the facility will be functioning again. If we have your contact details our Passenger Assist team will endeavour to contact you by email or telephone, to make every effort to provide alternative facilities or arrangements, this includes:

- Where stations have a physical constraint preventing use by some disabled people
- Where significant temporary work affects station accessibility
- Where changes to stations make them temporarily inaccessible (e.g. lifts or station toilets out of order);
- Where changes to train facilities materially affect disabled customers; and
- Emergency engineering work

Our commitment to provide this information includes instances when stations or trains become inaccessible in the short or longer term. This information will be available to station staff and to you through our website, our Passenger Assist team and via station Help Points. As part of our ongoing review process, we will update the information on our website to ensure the details are current.

## Redress: what to do if something goes wrong with assistance

Customers are at the heart of all that we do, and we work hard to ensure we deliver assistance in the right way for every journey. However, sometimes things go wrong, and we may not be able to provide the level of service that we promised.

When assistance has been booked through Passenger Assist but has not been provided as you expected, please contact our Customer Relations team and we will investigate why this happened, and what action we intend to take to ensure it does not reoccur.

We understand the inconvenience caused when assistance is not delivered, so we will also provide you with appropriate redress for your journey.

We aim to make the process of raising an issue as simple as possible, so we provide details of how to do so in our Making Rail Accessible leaflet and on our website: [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/)

If you travelled with multiple operators we will coordinate a single response. If assistance that failed to be delivered was when travelling on another operator's train, to ensure you receive the best response, we may transfer you to that operator. We will always ask for your consent prior to doing this.

Our arrangements do not affect or limit any rights you have as a consumer under, for example, The Consumer Rights Act 2015, to a different level of compensation, including consequential loss, where Grand Central is at fault.

If you believe that it does apply to your journey, please contact our Customer Relations team on 0345 603 4852. We always consider each claim made to us on its individual merits.

## Strategy and management

In this section we set out how we:

- Embed the provision of services to disabled people within our business and our project planning
- Will continue to improve access to the railways for disabled people and those with reduced mobility
- Ensure our staff have the resources, skills and confidence to deliver assistance to customers
- Measure the success of our Accessible Travel Policies.

## Strategy

Grand Central strives to provide rail services which are truly accessible to all, so that customers can travel in confidence, safe in the knowledge that extra help is available at each stage of their journey, when needed.

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 older people, and continuously improving the quality and reliability of assistance available.

We work with our rail industry colleagues, regulatory authorities, Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Transport Focus, Community Rail Partnerships, Rail Ombudsman and other stakeholder organisations, especially those representing all customers, to further improve the information, facilities and services we provide.

Our Accessible Travel Policy fulfils our obligations under our Passenger Services Operator Licences and the ORR Accessible Travel Policy Guidance 2019 and takes into account the provisions within the Equality Act 2010.

We will ensure that all projects which replace and/or renew facilities on our trains are designed to meet the standards of the Persons of Reduced Mobility Technical Specification for Interoperability (PRM-TSI) regulations. As we do not manage or operate any Stations, we cannot make a similar commitment to station facility accessibility improvements, however we work with Station Operators and Network Rail to improve these facilities where possible, including financial contribution where appropriate.

## Management arrangements

The provision of services to disabled and older people is an integral part of our business planning process, championed by our Head of Customer Policy.

Establishing and maintaining our Accessible Travel Policy is a condition of our Passenger Service Operator Licence. For compliance purposes the Managing Director is accountable for our licence.

Our Head of Customer Policy has responsibility for implementing our Accessible Travel Policy. This includes consulting with disabled people, community groups, and charities to understand where services and facilities do not meet the needs of disabled people, and then work with the internal teams to prioritise funding requests and tie in with other projects where possible. This role will liaise with the relevant directorates and managers across the Grand Central business to work on the specific tasks that compliance with the Accessible Travel Policy necessitates.

## Monitoring and evaluation

We have a culture of "Belief in Better" and strive for continuous improvement and will therefore measure the quality of service relating to assistance provided.

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
- National Rail Passenger Survey results relating to accessibility
- Feedback from 'RAIFN – Rail Accessibility & Inclusion for the North' who are engaged as Grand Central's Accessibility User Group
- Using Passenger Assist booking data to track trends in assisted booking and monitor growth and usage, and
- Providing post-travel surveys for customers who have booked assistance to give feedback on their experience. These will complement the ORR's national survey of Passenger Assist users and help us better understand customer needs.

Periodic progress reports and core data on performance will be provided to the Board of Directors and to the ORR, highlighting the action Grand Central is taking on improving travel for disabled and older people, and our performance against the metrics we set out.

We will review this policy annually to include details of the achievements of objectives, new initiatives to improve our service to disabled customers and any difficulties we have encountered with the implementation of this policy.

### Working with disabled customers, local communities and local authorities

In preparing our Accessible Travel Policy we have taken feedback from a cross-section of disability stakeholders. Specifically, we have engaged with Transport Focus, the Rail Complaints Ombudsman, and RAIFN concerning our ongoing accessibility and inclusion proposals and the development of our accessible travel policies. Key organisations that represent the interests of customers with disabilities – including the Office for Rail and Road, the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and Transport Focus – have reviewed our Accessible Travel Policy.

There are several key industry partners that we work with to improve the accessibility of our services. For example:

- Network Rail – collaboration on station improvements
- Transport Focus – understanding research on customer priorities
- Passenger Transport Executives – involvement in the creation and delivery of regional transport policies

We are 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 in the communities we serve to understand and respond to their experiences. These stakeholders include:

- Local authorities
- Disability groups

- Community groups
- Rail user groups and Community Rail Partnerships

At a national level, we liaise with national organisations such as Age UK, Scope and RNIB via our trade body the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). Grand Central participate in a regular forum of disabled passengers called Rail Accessibility and Inclusion for the North (RAIFN). This forum meets periodically with the first meeting in April 2021. Grand Central work with these groups and forum to ensure that passenger's voices are heard and fed back to help service improvements.

We will actively promote the availability of assisted travel, with a particular focus on the customer leaflet, 'Making Rail Accessible'. As well as ensuring this leaflet is available to our RAIFN forum members and at staffed stations our trains call at, in prominent locations where public services are provided and online, we will also advertise the leaflet on station posters, on train services and via social media.

### Staff training

We know that staff training plays an important part of delivering a railway which is accessible for everyone, by giving Grand Central colleagues the skills and understanding they need to consider accessibility in everything we do.

Our accessibility training materials have been fully updated in partnership with a disability specialist training provider during 2020 and focus on the knowledge, skills and tools that are necessary to enable our employees to assist older customers and those with disabilities in the best possible way. The training includes the lived experience of older and disabled people who use the railway, which brings to life and demonstrates the importance of providing assistance, the individual personal impact of the services we provide, and the decisions we make. This is done using real life case studies and open discussions with disabled rail users. By working with a specialist trainer all of our staff, regardless of position, will receive a full day of training on accessibility which takes the form of an interactive classroom-based session. The practical and station specific aspects are completed by our safety team alongside in-house trainers.

### Training outcomes

The Office for Rail and Road have set out in their guidance nine mandatory training outcomes, which our training includes:

1. Understanding disabled people and their everyday challenges: challenging misconceptions and understanding barriers to access and inclusion.
2. Equality Legislation: exploring and understanding the Equality Act 2010.
3. Defining Disability: an introduction to the various definitions of disability and the appropriate terminology.
4. Recognising passengers who need assistance: exploring

- physical and non-physical impairments to enable staff to assess individual needs and provide appropriate assistance.
5. Railway Regulatory Framework: understanding regulations and policies that are relevant within the railway industry.
  6. Passenger Assist: how it works for disabled passengers and the role of railway staff in delivering the service.
  7. Communication: finding a way to communicate with disabled people with patience, respect and dignity.
  8. Accessibility in stations: the identification of accessible features at the stations where staff work as well as at the key destination stations on the Grand Central network.
  9. Providing safe assistance: duties and process to ensure that both staff and customers remain safe at all times, including
    - The use of equipment provided to assist older people and those with disabilities, such as ramps, station wheelchairs and induction loops
    - Communicating with people with different disabilities
    - Communicating clearly by phone with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding.

The learning objective is to build our colleagues knowledge and skills to enable them to best meet the needs of customers who have disabilities and/or require our support; and to this in accordance with both the law, The Equality Act 2010 and Grand Central's commitment to further improve the accessibility of our services for all of our customers.

Our Customer Relations, Passenger Assist and Social Media teams will also receive specifically designed training for communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding. This will be designed to help them understand the importance of:

- Clarity of speech
- Intonation
- Emphasis
- Timeliness
- Language

Training delivery will be supported by the specialist disability training provider, working with members of the Grand Central Accessibility Champions Group using a "train the trainer" approach. The Group will become internal subject matter experts, providing advice and resources in support of all colleagues and will help monitor our performance.

As a result, by 31 July 2021, all current customer facing Grand Central staff and management will have met the mandatory training outcomes set out above. By this date, all new Grand Central staff, including senior and key managers, as part of their induction, will also receive this training.

Where reasonably practicable, we will ensure that any agency or temporary staff that interact with customers receive an

appropriate level of disability awareness training, which will focus on Passenger Assist, communication and providing safe assistance, as outlined in outcomes 6, 7 and 9 in the mandatory training guidance noted by the ORR.

Similarly, wherever reasonably practicable, we will require the operators of rail replacement bus and coach services and taxi firms to ensure the driver of their vehicles have received appropriate training, as outlined in outcomes 6, 7 and 9 in the ORR training guidance. In these instances the training will be designed by our associated specialist training partner and training materials (this includes work books and leaflets) created given to the operators. Delivery and compliance with this training will be monitored through our road transport contract provider.

Furthermore, anyone employed at a contact centre who provides information or advice directly to passengers on our behalf will receive an appropriate version of the Grand Central training course covering, as a minimum, the Passenger Assist service and customer communication.

Following this initial training programme that will be completed by 31st July 2021, all Grand Central staff will receive a refresher training within two years of the training they have received, and as a minimum every two years thereafter; in order to ensure the mandatory training outcomes described above are maintained.

At the time of submitting our Accessible Travel Policy for review we will ensure that all statistics, legislation and language used in training are up to date.

During January 2021 and regularly thereafter, we will provide a report to ORR setting out progress against delivery of these staff training commitments.