



Working Together Good Practice Guide:

Supporting passengers travelling with
wheelchairs and mobility scooters:
Information for passengers
Issue 2

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Rail Delivery Group

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Guide for wheelchair and mobility scooter users

Introduction

This booklet is designed to help inform wheelchair and mobility scooter users about travelling by train with their mobility aid. It includes information on what to do before and during your journey, and contains important contacts and references to useful websites.

In Great Britain, train services are operated by a number of companies, referred to as *train operating companies* or TOCs. As well as running train services, these companies also manage most rail stations, with some of the major stations managed by Network Rail. You might not be aware, but your rail journey could involve travelling on several companies' trains, and using stations managed by different organisations.

This guide includes information about the legal duties placed on train operating companies in relation to their carriage of wheelchairs and mobility scooters. Further details are included on page 20, but key points include:

- The Department for Transport (DfT) and Office of Rail and Road (ORR) have indicated that there is **no clear basis for differentiating between wheelchair and mobility scooter devices, provided they meet the 'reference wheelchair' specification** (Length: 1200mm, Width: 700mm, Height: 1350mm, Laden weight: 300kg, and have similar manoeuvrability characteristics).
- The ORR and DfT consider that **wheelchair users do not take precedence over people travelling on mobility scooters.**
- **Some train operating companies' trains and stations are affected by accessibility constraints**, which prevent them from accommodating wheelchairs and scooters on all their rail services.

Further information

This guidance is based on findings from the following research reports:

- RSSB research report T759: Improving the methods used to provide access to and from trains for wheelchair users, published in June 2014.
- RSSB research report T1055: Improving accessibility and safety for mobility scooter users travelling by rail, published in November 2017.

Both publications can be accessed through RSSB's interactive 'SPARK' website (www.sparkrail.org), which is an online library that contains research reports and highlights opportunities for knowledge-sharing across the rail industry. You will need to register on the SPARK website to download the documents. Registration is free of charge.

Disclaimer

This guidance note has been prepared based on good practices drawn from the research studies referenced above, existing published guidance, expert knowledge, and the experience of rail industry and disability stakeholders.

The guidance note cannot guarantee the safety of passengers and staff. Alongside accompanying guidance aimed at rail staff and management teams, it aims to help ensure that a safe method of working is adopted for each instance of access to or egress from a train.

Key tips for supporting passengers travelling with mobility aids

The following recommendations come from the version of this guidance note to assist front-line rail staff when supporting passengers travelling by train with wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Do:

- Ensure you understand your TOC's policy on the carriage of passengers with mobility aids, including what to do if a passenger's mobility aid can't be accommodated on a train or at a station.
- Talk to the person, not their disability. Find out their name, where they are going, how you can assist them with their mobility aid on their journey, and keep them informed if you need to leave them.
- Guide a passenger travelling with a mobility scooter to the boarding point before collecting the boarding ramp. Ideally the ramp will already be positioned nearby to avoid carrying it through crowds.
- Check availability of on-board wheelchair space(s) before boarding and ask passengers to remove luggage or other obstructions if necessary
- Ask the passenger to explain any special features of their mobility aid to you, which might affect its use on a ramp. Check whether any brakes work before using them, or moving to the platform.
- Brief passengers before you deploy a boarding ramp, ensuring there is sufficient space for the passenger to manoeuvre their wheelchair / scooter at the base of the ramp.

- Ensure the bottom of the boarding ramp is on a flat surface, and check its stability once fitted to the train. Brace the ramp with your heel on the platform as the passenger approaches on their device.
- Ensure the correct ramp is used and ensure any fixing pins are located securely in the holes provided in line with the law.
- Remove any luggage from the passenger's mobility aid before they board the train and ensure the device's seat is set to the most stable position to reduce the risk of tipping when using the ramp.
- Consider whether the combined weight of the passenger, their mobility aid, and the rail staff member assisting is likely to exceed the safe working load (SWL) marked on the boarding ramp.
- Encourage passengers manoeuvring independently to line-up their device straight with the boarding ramp and proceed steadily along it - only attempting to turn once their device is clear of the ramp.
- Always aim to help wheelchair users to board forwards and alight backwards unless the passenger suggests a safer alternative approach. Scooter users should board and alight facing forwards.
- Contact on-board staff to find alternative locations for a passenger with a mobility aid should a wheelchair space already be occupied. Passengers who have reserved the space ultimately take priority.
- Discuss alternative ways the passenger can continue their journey, taking their needs into account, in the event a wheelchair space is double-booked or unavailable.
- Ensure all passengers travelling while seated on their mobility aid are correctly oriented in the wheelchair space with their back against any support structures provided.

Don't:

- Board a passenger travelling with a wheelchair or mobility scooter unless you know their destination/interchange station has step-free access.
- Assume colleagues at an interchange/destination station are aware there is a passenger who may need assistance on-board. Check ahead to confirm that assistance will be available.
- Attempt to board a passenger using a mobility aid unless you have seen the relevant manual handling assessment, and received the necessary training to ensure you are fully competent to do so.
- Insist the passenger uses a boarding ramp. If they are able to walk onto the train then be prepared to push/wheel their device onto the train for them after they have boarded the train.
- Forget to ask the passenger to help you deploy any parking brake, or disable a freewheel setting on a scooter, when on the train. Also check the device is powered off and parked/stored safely.
- Forget to highlight the location of any buttons a passenger can use to call for assistance during their journey, and notify on-train staff of the passenger's location on-board and where they will be alighting.
- Forget that whenever a train arrives a passenger with a wheelchair or mobility scooter may wish to alight. If you are expecting a passenger requiring assistance you may need to check on-board.

Never:

- Lift a passenger, or a heavy mobility aid, onto or off the train manually. Always use the ramp provided.

Before travelling

Check whether your origin and destination stations are staffed.

If you require boarding or alighting assistance, then it might be useful for you to check whether any stations you plan to use are staffed. This information is provided:

In the stations section of the National Rail enquiries website (http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/default.aspx)

Via National Rail Enquiries telephone information service, which can be accessed by calling 03457 48 49 50.

If your chosen station is unstaffed, then please contact National Rail Enquiries or your train operating company's passenger assistance team to arrange help with your journey (contact details are provided on pages 21 to 24 of this guide).

If you have already started your journey and the station you are using is unstaffed, then you can use a help point or help line provided at the station to contact your train operating company.

Check your mobility aid can be carried

All train companies are required to carry passengers travelling with wheelchairs and mobility scooters, as long as they meet the 'reference wheelchair' specification prescribed in regulations covering the design of dedicated spaces provided on-board public transport (700mm wide, 1200mm long, 1350mm high, 300kg laden weight, and specific

manoeuvrability characteristics).

The maximum combined weight of a person and their mobility aid is practically limited by:

- The capabilities of the individual member of staff assisting the passenger
- The maximum safe working load of the ramp (typically between 230kg and 300kg)

To avoid disappointment, and before booking any tickets, it is recommended that you check with all train companies you will be using whether your mobility aid can be accommodated on the specific rail service(s) that you wish to travel on. You should be aware that differences in the space and layout of stations and train types mean that:

- A small number of older trains can currently only carry smaller mobility aids
- Some train companies specify a minimum turning circle for mobility scooters they will carry
- Some specify different maximum laden weights for scooters
- A small number of train companies *only* accept folded scooters on some, or all, of their services

To check the precise dimensions of a mobility scooter, please look in the user manual for the device. The dimensions of over 600 popular scooters and powered wheelchairs are published on the website of the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (RICA: www.rica.org.uk).

For further details on train companies' policies, and contact details for more information on wheelchair and mobility scooter carriage, you can check the National Rail Enquiries website: http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/44969.aspx or by calling: 03457 48 49 50.

You can also pre-book accessible spaces on board some trains, and assistance from rail staff, using the rail industry's Passenger Assist service (see page 8).

Scooter permit schemes

Some train companies operate mobility scooter permit schemes.

If you wish to travel by train on board a mobility scooter using these companies' services, then you will need to apply in advance for a scooter permit. When you apply you will be asked for details about your scooter's size, and other key features, so that the train company can confirm it is suitable for use on their trains.

To apply for a scooter permit you will need to contact the train company directly. Contact details for train operating companies are included on pages 21 to 24 of this guide.

Journey planning tools

If you want to plan a journey, there are useful resources available. You can access information about the layout and accessibility of every station in mainland Britain via the National Rail Enquiries website (www.nationalrail.co.uk).

Useful links are given below:

National Rail Enquiries mobile phone app:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/times_fares/84874.aspx

Stations Made Easy, an interactive online tool to help find your way around stations: <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/75001.aspx>

Contact details for train company travel assistance teams:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx#TravelAssistance

Details of the facilities available on board the train(s) you are travelling on:

http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/44967.aspx

Get a Disabled Persons Railcard for 1/3 off rail fares:

<http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/>

Pre-booking passenger assistance

What assistance is available?

Passenger Assist is an optional **free service** available to anyone who needs help when travelling by train due to a disability, temporary impairment, or older age. No railcard is required to access the service, which can include:

- Support with planning your journey, booking tickets, and making reservations
- Booking an accessible space on your desired train(s) for you and your mobility aid, if one is available when you are travelling
- Help from rail staff with navigating your departure station, carrying luggage and boarding the train
- Assistance with locating and using an accessible space on-board your train(s)
- Onboard rail staff informing you when your station is approaching
- Help from rail staff with changing trains and alighting at your final destination
- Making arrangements for a companion travelling with you

You can pre-book assistance for all stages of your journey - helping to ensure rail staff can be on-hand to provide assistance. Passenger assistance can be booked at short notice, although some TOCs may ask for up to 24 hours' notice.

Booking passenger assistance

Although not essential, some passengers choose to pre-book assistance to provide greater reassurance that staff can be available to help them on the day they travel. You can do this in several ways:

- Call National Rail Enquiries – dedicated operators will help you understand the best way to reach your destination, and they will connect you to the correct train company’s Passenger Assistance team for your route:
 - Telephone: 0800 022 3720, then select option 2 (freephone from landlines)
 - Textphone (for deaf people): 0345 60 50 600
- Directly contact the train operating company responsible for the first leg of your journey – contact numbers and web links are included on page 51 of this guide
- Online via the Disabled Person’s Railcard website:
 - www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/travel-assistance
 - Look for the ‘Passenger Assist’ link on the home page
- In person at certain staffed train stations

As part of this process, some train operators may ask a few questions to check they are able to carry you and your mobility aid. This helps rail staff to better understand the assistance you require and prevents their team from being taken up when they could be providing assistance to passengers.

Special requirements and restrictions

If you have any special requirements - such as several pieces of luggage, or if you have a large wheelchair or scooter - then please be sure to mention them when booking assistance.

In some cases, it may not be possible for you to travel with your mobility aid, due to its size or specific rail operator restrictions. You can find out in advance whether this might affect your planned journey.

Changing your plans

If, after booking passenger assistance, your journey plans should change, then you may need to catch a different train or cancel your journey altogether. Should this happen, please contact the Passenger Assist service again. They will help you adjust your journey and any assistance you have booked.

Arriving at the station

On arriving at the station please contact a member of staff who will help you, or head to the Passenger Information Desk or other pre-advised meeting point. Even if you have pre-booked Passenger Assistance you should make sure you arrive in good time for your train, since transferring to the platform can take longer than you may think.

When the rail staff first meet you, it is important to explain any particular needs you may have - for example if you are travelling with several items of luggage, or you are travelling with a companion or carer who requires a seat near you.

Please don't proceed to the platform until you have informed rail staff of your assistance requirements, and confirmed with them when and where you will be assisted onto the train.



Getting to the platform and the train

Staff will take you and your luggage to the boarding point before putting the ramp into position. If you need help from your companion(s) at this stage, and throughout the process, it is important to make this clear to staff from the start. Rail staff will advise you if your luggage needs to be loaded separately.

If for any reason staff need to leave you on the platform momentarily and return later to help you board the train, you will be informed when they (or another staff member) is expected to return.

If your wheelchair or mobility scooter has brakes that could be secured while waiting on the platform, (particularly if there is a slight slope) please apply them when stationary and release them before use. Please ensure you wait as far from the platform edge as you can, remaining behind any yellow line or safety marking showing a safe distance from the platform edge.

Boarding the train

Staff assisting you should ask whether you would prefer to remain seated on your mobility aid to board the train via a ramp, or whether you wish to step up onto the train. If you wish to board the train while seated on your mobility aid, via a ramp, then you should wait for rail staff to place it in position and discuss with them how it will be used.

Key things to remember when negotiating a ramp are:

- Remove any bags or attachments that could affect your mobility aid's stability, rail staff can assist you to get any luggage safely on the train
- Inform rail staff if you have any concerns about using the ramp
- You should be aware of the combined weight of you and your mobility aid



Line up your device straight with the ramp

- Control your speed so as not to collide with other passengers or obstacles
- Look out for other rail passengers, who are not always alert to the needs of wheelchair and scooter users
- Carefully line your mobility aid up at the bottom or top of the ramp, and proceed steadily and carefully in a straight line when on the ramp
- Do not rush your manoeuvre, even if others are waiting to board the train
- Do not attempt to turn until your mobility aid is clear of the top or bottom of the ramp
- Encourage companions to allow rail staff to carry out any assistance on the ramp
- Never attempt to walk up or down a wheelchair ramp, since they are not designed for pedestrian use

Wheelchair users

If you are a wheelchair user, then rail staff will aim to help you to board forwards and alight backwards so that you are always facing the train. This is usually the safest way to ensure you safely board and alight the train without incident, especially to avoid tipping on steep gradients.



If the design of your wheelchair, or particular safety features, mean you feel it is safer to alight the train facing forwards then please explain this to the member of rail staff assisting you.

Powered wheelchair users



If you need any additional assistance to board the train, such as help with directing and stabilising your chair, then don't hesitate to ask the staff member assisting you.

Rail staff are advised to follow a passenger travelling in a powered wheelchair up, or down, the ramp to ensure that it remains stable.

Mobility scooter users

If you wish to ride your mobility scooter onto the train, then station staff will always aim to help you to board and alight facing forwards.

If you wish to get off your scooter so that it can be pushed on-board the train, then you will need to put it into freewheel mode. Station staff can then push your scooter up the ramp

to be stowed in the wheelchair space on board the train. The staff member should ask you to check that the freewheel mode is disabled once your scooter is stowed on the train, with any parking brake applied to prevent the device from moving around when the train is in motion.



On the train

Before you board the train, rail staff should check that the 'wheelchair space' and (if needed) the adjacent seat are free. If necessary, rail staff should ask other passengers to clear the wheelchair space of any luggage or other items.

Once on board the train, you should park your mobility aid in the designated 'wheelchair space' by positioning it against the provided backrest. If you are travelling with a powered wheelchair or mobility scooter, please ensure the power is switched-off, any ignition key is removed, and the device is in gear or has any parking brake applied to prevent movement when the train is in motion.

If the wheelchair space is already occupied by a



wheelchair or scooter user who has booked the space, then rail staff should contact any on-train staff to identify whether there is an alternative location on-board where you and your mobility aid can be safely carried.

If you are travelling with your scooter as luggage, then the staff member assisting you should store it securely in a suitable location and inform you of where it has been placed.

Transferring to a seat

If you prefer to sit in a seat when travelling by train, then you can ask rail staff for assistance with transferring to one. Alternatively, you may prefer to travel while seated on your mobility aid.

In all instances, rail staff should ensure that you are positioned safely and comfortably on the train before allowing it to depart.

Assistance during the journey

Where provided, you can use the buttons in the wheelchair spaces to call for assistance. If there are no such facilities, the rail staff that assist you onto the train should inform you how you can obtain assistance during your journey.

The rail staff that assist you should call ahead to your destination (and/or interchange) station to inform staff that you are en-route, and where on the train you are located. They should also notify a member of on-train staff (where available) that you have boarded the train, and where you are getting off. This is particularly important if you travel on a different train to the one you had booked.

The vast majority of journeys where assistance is required are delivered successfully. Where assistance fails, please alert a member of on-train staff who will be able to help you.



Alighting from the train

You should be met by a member of staff when your train arrives at your destination station, or, if it is a terminus, shortly afterwards. If no one comes to assist you, please alert a member of on-train staff.

It is unsafe to block the train door with your mobility aid, leg, or cane, no matter how distressed you may feel.

Key things to remember, when alighting from the train using a ramp:

- If you are a wheelchair or powered wheelchair user, then rail staff will always aim to help you to alight from the train backwards.
- This is usually the safest way to avoid you falling out of your wheelchair, especially on steeper gradients found at some platforms, and helps to prevent footrests from hitting the ground before the front wheels get there.
- If the design of your wheelchair, or particular safety features, mean you feel it is safer to alight the train facing forwards then please explain this to the member of rail staff assisting you.
- Scooter users should always alight facing forwards, carefully controlling their speed on the ramp, be mindful that you will gather speed going down the ramp.
- Take care when manoeuvring, since different platform designs can mean the end of the ramp is placed close to obstructions on the platform.



- Also remember to look out for other rail passengers, who may inadvertently walk across the foot of the ramp when you are descending.
- Never attempt to alight from the train without the assistance of station or train staff.
- Never attempt to walk up or down a wheelchair ramp, since they are not designed for pedestrian use.

After you have alighted from the train you can ask station staff for directions to exits, taxis and onward public transport services.

Legal duties for rail companies for the carriage of mobility aids

Much of the UK's laws relating to railways and passenger accessibility come from the Persons with Reduced Mobility Technical Specifications for Interoperability (PRM TSI).

In addition, the Equality Act (2010) requires train operating companies in England, Wales and Scotland to ensure that it is possible for people with reduced mobility:

- To get on and off regulated rail vehicles in safety and without unreasonable difficulty, and do so while in wheelchairs.
- To travel in such vehicles in safety and reasonable comfort, and do so while in wheelchairs.

None of the regulations explicitly require rail companies to carry passengers travelling on a 'mobility scooter' or other 'mobility aid', but most GB train operators do. Although the legislation is unclear on the specifics of mobility scooters, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Office of Rail and Road (ORR) have indicated there is no clear basis in either set of regulations for differentiating between wheelchair and mobility scooter devices using a 'wheelchair space' on-board rail vehicles - provided they meet a common 'reference wheelchair' specification (Length: 1200mm, Width: 700mm, Height: 1350mm, Laden weight: 300kg, and specific manoeuvrability characteristics).

The ORR and DfT consider that, since both mobility aids can reasonably be interpreted as 'wheelchairs', wheelchair users do not take precedence for a 'wheelchair space' over people travelling on mobility scooters. The only situation where one such passenger would take priority over another is where an individual has pre-booked an accessible 'wheelchair space' with a train operating company for a specific rail journey.

This reflects rail industry policy.

List of train company assistance numbers

Arriva Trains Wales

Website: <https://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/AssistedTravel/>
Telephone: 033 300 50 501 Textphone: 0845 758 5469

c2c

Website: <http://www.c2c-online.co.uk/travelling-with-us/assistance/>
Telephone: 0345 744 422 (option 3) Textphone: 03457 444422

Caledonian Sleeper

Website: <https://www.sleeper.scot/on-board/disabled-travellers>
Telephone: 0330 060 0500 Textphone: 01463 231 951
Next Generation Text service: 18001 0330 060 0500

Chiltern Railways

Website: <https://www.chilternrailways.co.uk/disabled-traveller-information>
Telephone: 03456 005 165 Textphone: 08457 078 051

CrossCountry

Website: <https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/customer-service/travel-assistance>
Telephone: 0344 811 0125 Textphone: 0344 811 0126

East Midlands Trains

Website: <http://www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/travelling-with-us/accessibility-assistance/>
Telephone: 03457 125 678 Textphone: 03457 078 051

Gatwick Express

Website: <http://www.gatwickexpress.com/en/your-journey/assisted-travel/>

Telephone: 0800 138 1016 Textphone: 0800 138 1018

Grand Central

Website: <https://www.grandcentralrail.com/customer-service/travel-assistance/>

Telephone: 0344 811 0072 Textphone: 0344 556 1400

Great Northern

Website: <http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/contact-us/assisted-travel-service/>

Telephone: 0800 058 2844 Textphone: 0800 975 1052

Great Western Railway

Website: <https://www.gwr.com/plan-journey/journey-information/assisted-travel>

Telephone: 0800 197 1329 Textphone: 18001 0800 197 1329

Greater Anglia

Website: <http://www.greateranglia.co.uk/travel-information/accessibility>

Telephone: 0800 0282 878 Textphone: 18001 0800 028 2878

Heathrow Express

Website: <https://www.heathrowexpress.com/onboard/accessibility>

Telephone: 0345 600 1515

Hull Trains

Website: <https://www.hulltrains.co.uk/customer-services/assisted-travel/>

Telephone: 0800 316 1323 Textphone: 18001 0800 316 1323

Island Line

Website: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/assisted-travel>

Telephone: 0800 528 2100 Textphone: 0800 692 0792

London Northwestern Railway

Website: <https://www.londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk/travel-information/accessible-travel>

Telephone: 0800 024 8997 Next Generation Text: 18001 0800 024 8997

London Overground

Website: <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/>

Telephone: 0343 222 1234 Textphone: 020 3031 9331

Merseyrail

Website: <http://www.merseyrail.org/plan-your-journey/assisted-travel.aspx>

Telephone: 0800 0277 347 Textphone: 0151 702 2071

Northern

Website: <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/help/travel-assistance>

Telephone: 0800 138 5560 Textphone: 08456 045 608

ScotRail

Website: <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/plan-your-journey/accessible-travel>

Telephone: 0800 912 2901 Textphone: 18001 0800 912 2 901

Southeastern

Website: <https://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/travel-information/more-travel-help/assisted-travel>

Telephone: 0800 783 4524 Textphone: 0800 783 4548

South Western Railway

Website: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/assisted-travel>

Telephone: 0800 528 2100 Textphone: 0800 692 0792

Southern

Website: <http://www.southernrailway.com/your-journey/accessibility/>

Telephone: 0800 138 1016 Textphone: 0800 138 1018

Thameslink

Website: <http://www.thameslinkrailway.com/contact-us/assisted-travel-service/>

Telephone: 0800 058 2844 Textphone: 0800 975 1052

TfL Rail

Website: <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/?intcmp=52>

Telephone: 0343 222 3456 Textphone: 0800 112 3456

Transpennine Express

Website: <https://www.tpexpress.co.uk/contact-us/assistance/assisted-travel/>

Telephone: 0800 107 2149

Textphone: 0800 107 2061

Virgin Trains

Website: <https://www.virgintrains.co.uk/experience/assisted-travel>

Telephone: 08000 158 123

Textphone: 08000 158 124

Virgin Trains East Coast

Website: <https://www.virgintraineastcoast.com/customer-service/contact-us/assisted-travel/>

Telephone: 03457 225 225

Text relay service: 18001 03457 225 225

West Midlands Railway

Website: <https://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/travel-information/accessible-travel>

Telephone: 0800 024 8998

Next Generation Text: 18001 0800 024 899

PLEASE NOTE

The contact numbers are correct at time of publication (December 2017), but may be subject to change. They can also be found online at: http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx

An electronic version of this booklet, with links to additional information, is available on the [RSSB website](#).

