



Valid from 1 March 2015 until further notice

Making Rail Accessible

Guide to Policies and Practices

virgintrainseastcoast.com

Virgin
trains
east coast

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Welcome to a new beginning

Welcome to Virgin Trains East Coast, your new train operator along the East Coast Main Line. From 1 March 2015 we aim to give you the service you want and deserve along one of the UK's finest routes.

The joint venture between Virgin and Stagecoach is set to create something amazing, and we want you to join us.

This document, together with the booklet 'Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers', sets out our policies for customers with disabilities. These guides detail the arrangements and services we provide to ensure access to the rail network is as easy as possible.

Your views and suggestions are important to us. We'd love to hear from you. If you have any comments about how we can improve our service for disabled passengers please contact our Customer Relations team:

By post

Virgin East Coast Customer Relations
Freepost RSRJ-LJCK-GHST
Plymouth
PL4 6AB

By telephone

08457 225 333

By email

customers@virgintrainseastcoast.com

Opening hours

Monday to Sunday 07.00-22.00
(Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

Alternatively please feel free to use one of our Customer Comments and Compliments forms online at virgintrainseastcoast.com

David Horne
Managing Director
Virgin Trains East Coast

Our commitment to customers with disabilities

We strive to make travelling easier for customers with disabilities as we understand the challenges they face on the rail network. We will not discriminate against people with disabilities who wish to use our services and are committed to improve their access to the rail network by providing additional support.

We will continue to operate and support all services and facilities currently in place and commit to continuously improve. This includes delivering an investment programme to enhance accessibility to our stations.

This document forms part of our Disabled Person's Protection Policy (DPPP) and fulfils our obligations under our Passenger and Station Licences, the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Guidance on Disabled Person's Protection Policies, the DfT's "Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled Passengers: A Code of Practice" and the requirements of legislation such as the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act.

We are committed to meeting the services, standards and guidance contained in the DfT's current "Accessible Train Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice" (The Code). When installing or refurbishing trains and facilities at stations, we will comply with the European Technical Specification for Interoperability relating to persons with reduced mobility (PRM TSI).

We will identify where existing services and facilities do not comply with the requirements of The Code and work to make these better. We will strive to ensure any changes, improvements or investments that are carried out comply with the standards of The Code. Where we are not able to fully meet the standards, we will consider alternative measures or seek dispensation where it is not possible to achieve compliance. This policy will be reviewed in the light of any updates to The Code or the PRM TSI.

We proactively talk to rail industry partners, national and local representatives of disabled passengers and stakeholders in the communities we serve to identify opportunities for improvement, on our trains and across the National Rail network.

Our aim is to support the creation of consistent and high quality standards of access across the rail network for customers with disabilities. We fully support the Disabled Persons Railcard and the system used to book assistance, Passenger Assist.

Continuous improvement, future developments and investment

Improvement to access

We will work and consult with colleagues across the rail industry, including other train operating companies, Network Rail, ATOC and representatives of customers with disabilities, such as the Disabled Person's Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), to identify and make improvements to access across our services, the National Rail network and the wider transport network. This includes:

- seeking continuous improvement in the service we provide to customers with disabilities
- identifying shortfalls in accessibility at the stations we operate and work to identify improvements
- working to identify and secure additional funding for accessibility improvement projects, in particular the 'Access for All' initiative
- working with the operators of stations where our trains call, but do not manage, to deliver improvements to our customers. In particular with Network Rail at London King's Cross, Leeds and Edinburgh
- making sure that when improvements are made to our stations, the needs of disabled customers are considered. This will include providing appropriate signage, tactile and step-free walking routes
- ensuring every new ticket machine we install offers the Disabled Person's Railcard discount
- we will work with colleagues across the rail industry to improve connections with other transport modes, taking into account the provision of accessible vehicles
- we will update our policies to reflect changes to relevant legislation or guidance.

Improvement schemes

We will deliver the following schemes to improve station access:

- to increase the quantum of accessible seating at our stations by 25%
- delivery of an annual DDA Minor Works programme which will be developed in consultation with Passenger Focus and approved by the DfT.

Station signage

Any contractors installing signage at our stations have to refer to 'The Code' and the RSSB 'Wayfinding at stations: a good practice guide'.

Car parking

There are designated parking bays for Blue Badge holders at all our stations to ensure easy access. Normal car parking charges apply. We monitor these spaces and, if necessary, carry out enforcement to ensure only Blue Badge holders use them.

Our aim is to balance the need for parking for customers with disabilities with the availability of spaces for others. We monitor and review this every three months. We will consult with the relevant statutory bodies and passenger representative groups before seeking approval from DfT to change the quantum of Blue Badge bays.

Emergency procedures

All our staff are trained to deal with emergencies on our trains or stations and this includes the evacuation of, and provision of assistance to, customers with disabilities.

We will identify members of staff who can assist in the most appropriate way for your safety and that of others. If you use a wheelchair, or have significant impairment to your mobility, our normal policy is not to evacuate you from our trains until appropriate support is available unless you are in a life-threatening situation. When we review our emergency procedures we will consult with representatives of customers with disabilities during this process.

Communication of this policy

We have a detailed guide called 'Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers'. You can pick up a copy of this from any staffed station our trains call at, from our Customer Relations team or you can download it from virgintrainseastcoast.com.

You can also request a copy in alternative formats such as audio or large print.

We will work with our rail industry partners, local and national representatives of travellers with disabilities and key stakeholders in the communities we serve to promote our services and our policies for customers with disabilities.

Assisted Travel

You can contact the Virgin East Coast Assisted Travel team in several ways:

Phone 03457 225 225
(select option 3 and then option 4)

Text Relay 18001 03457 22 52 25

Email assisted.travel@virgintrainseastcoast.com

Open Monday to Saturday 08:00-20:00
Sunday 10:00-20:00

The Text Relay service connects people using a text phone with other people using a telephone or another text phone. It's a fully automated service so, when required, relay assistants provide a text-to-voice and voice-to-text translation service.

For more information please see the Text Relay website textrelay.org

Virgin Trains East Coast website

Our website, virgintrainseastcoast.com, is compliant to W3C standards and has been reviewed and endorsed by the Shaw Trust (shaw-trust.org.uk/home).

Management arrangements

Executive accountability

Protecting and improving access to rail services for customers with disabilities is integral to our business strategy and is supported by our board of directors. Our Customer Experience Director has executive accountability for the delivery, development and promotion of accessibility and will ensure it is included across our business processes. This includes the development of business plans, the specification and delivery of major projects and as part of our review of business performance indicators.

Ownership throughout the organization

All our employees receive disability awareness training. This ensures that everyone understands their responsibilities to disabled customers.

Those in customer facing roles receive even more intensive training so that they not only have the knowledge but also demonstrate the appropriate behaviours when assisting customers with disabilities. This training includes the correct use of appropriate equipment, such as boarding ramps and providing assistance with confidence to customers with a range of different disabilities.

Monitoring and review

Our company internal audit programme is used to audit compliance with this document across our business. The results of these audits are presented to our board of directors every four weeks.

We review customer feedback continually and our Customer Relations team provides our directors with regular reports. These are also shared with responsible managers across Virgin Trains East Coast. The Customer Relations team also maintains a record of, and reports on, the delivery of assistance.

This policy document, and the passenger document 'Making Rail Accessible: helping older and disabled passengers', are live documents. This means we will update them to reflect the latest developments in our policies and facilities. They will be reviewed every year and, as part of this review, we will provide details of any key factors that have been identified to improve performance to the Office of Rail Regulation.