

Making rail accessible: guide to policies and practices

Our strategy

We are committed to continually improving the accessibility of our services to all passengers, particularly those with disabilities or who simply need some extra assistance.

We are about to embark on linking the Marylebone to Birmingham railway line to the Bicester Town to Oxford line by 2015 which includes the building of new stations at Bicester Town and Water Eaton with accessibility and facilities for all being at the centre of our thinking.

Chiltern Railways also maintains a fund for minor improvements and are committed to working with Network Rail to support the delivery and development of Access for All schemes.

Aside from physical adjustments to stations and rolling stock, we regularly review our arrangements with a variety of stakeholder groups such as our Passengers Board which contains experts on mobility issues, statutory consultation bodies such as Passenger Focus and London Travelwatch, our industry representative body ATOC and individual interest groups.

Management arrangements

The Customer service Director is responsible for our Disabled People's Protection Policy, supported by the Head of Stations.

The Customer Service, Operations and Engineering Directors are responsible for frontline delivery and for ensuring the arrangements described in this policy are delivered at stations and on trains.

Through our governance arrangements this policy has been approved by the Executive Team and signed off by the Managing Director.

We have a number of communication and training arrangements in place to communicate the requirements of this policy to frontline staff. Our team briefing process provides a high-level brief to all employees of the company regardless of their role and this is supported by face to face briefing by line managers.

All frontline staff who are likely to have a direct role in the delivery of the arrangements described in this policy have attended a 'Disability Awareness Training' course within the last two years. Separately all new entrants to the business (regardless of role) receive classroom training as part of the company induction training arrangements.

To ensure that the business and senior managers receive feedback on the effective delivery of the arrangements described in this policy, frontline staff are required to report any issues encountered by disabled customers when using our network to our 24 hour Control

Office. These issues are reviewed by senior management team on a daily conference call. Our Customer Relations team monitors all customer complaints and comments relating to the services we provide to disabled customers. Whilst Chiltern Railways do not specifically track the return on investment of improvements for disabled people we do have regular meetings with our Passenger Board, Rail User Groups and local interest groups.

Monitoring and evaluation

Our Head of Stations will review our Disabled People's Protection Policy annually with the amended policy being formally approved by the Executive Team.

The Head of stations will also record statistics on a monthly basis containing:

- The number of assistance requests received
- The number of complaints regarding our services to disabled customers
- The number of customer service staff having completed the necessary training

In addition to this the Head of Business Assurance will undertake an annual audit of our compliance with this policy. The data collected from these sources will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of our policy and ensure that any deficiencies in our arrangements are identified and resolved. Where appropriate the Executive Team will ensure that the relevant directors implement corrective action if any deficiencies in our arrangements are identified.

In addition to these measures our Complaints Handling Procedure is designed to highlight any individual accessibility issues identified by members of the public to the relevant manager for resolution.

Before publication our DPPP will be sent annually to DfT for review and approval.

Access improvements

Chiltern Railways is committed to making every possible effort to meet the standards of the DfT's Code of Practice and PRM-TSI regulations. Our intention is that legal compliance will be a minimum standard. Wherever possible Chiltern Railways will adopt a best-practice approach to access for disabled passengers.

However, there may occasionally be circumstances where Chiltern Railways is unable to comply fully with the Code regarding:

- New or enhanced station facilities
- Refurbishment of existing rolling stock
- Station or on-train services

In these cases Chiltern Railways will approach the DfT to seek dispensation from the relevant section of the Code at the earliest possible stage after all other possible options have been considered.

A number of access improvement schemes have been completed over the last 12 months, including:

- A new footbridge with lifts at Wendover
- Fully accessible toilets at High Wycombe and refurbished facilities at Solihull
- Automatic door opening system at Dorridge
- Replacement of entrance doors at High Wycombe to provide a fully accessible facility.

Working with others

We remain in regular contact with key stakeholders through our quarterly Passenger Board. This provides an opportunity for us to update stakeholders on key issues affecting our network and gain their support for our key projects. This forum is attended by Local Authorities and statutory bodies such as London TravelWatch.

We consult the statutory bodies such as a Passenger Focus and London Travelwatch as well as our Passenger Board on the content of our improvements programmes. We also maintain a regular dialogue with our local Rail User Groups where we endeavour to attend the local meetings.

We also regularly engage with other interest groups such as BUCKS Vision and at National level we liaise with other bodies such as Age UK, Scope and RNIB via the our trade body the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).

Staff training

All new staff receive disability training as part of their company induction, whilst existing staff receive an update at least every two years. Our training provides delegates with information on our legal obligations to customers and staff and covers the following areas:

- Disability and discrimination, including the Equality Act
- The Passengers with Reduced Mobility – Technical Specification of Interoperability Rail Vehicle Regulations (PRM-TSI)
- The effects of different types of disability
- Disabled customers using the Chiltern Railways network
- Communication with disabled customers and colleagues

We include in our training a number of simulated and practical activities, including:

- Methods of leading people with visual impairments
- Assisting wheelchair users on and off the train and in station lifts.

Members of staff in customer facing roles and those who use the telephone to speak with customers are provided with specific training to assist them understand the importance of: clarity of speech,

- intonation
- emphasis
- timeliness
- language

This training is designed to raise awareness of potential communication issues and emphasise how ineffective communication can impact upon disabled customers.

Emergency procedures

Every station managed by Chiltern Railways has 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 passengers. The assistance provided to disabled passengers varies between locations based upon a risk assessment, but includes the need to identify those who may need assistance, provision of wheelchairs and ramps and identification of and direction to safe havens if normal evacuation routes are not accessible.

Our staff have all been trained in the correct emergency and evacuation procedures. Our policy is not to evacuate wheelchair passengers without the support of the emergency services unless the situation is life-threatening.

Communications strategy

Chiltern Railways works closely with local authorities and national initiatives such as the Station Zoning project to ensure that stations are clearly and consistently signposted.

All of our publicity meets industry best practice design standards which are designed to meet the needs of disabled customers. We seek to make disabled people aware of our services by methods including advertising, sending information out to other public sources (such as libraries, bus companies and local authority shops). We also work with local authorities, charities and local access groups.

We have a dedicated Minicom/Textphone number **08457 078051**. A human operator can always be contacted during our opening hours.

Chiltern Railways website www.chilternrailways.co.uk adheres to industry recognised W3C accessibility standards.

Signage on stations refers to industry best practice outlined in Sections K1-9 of Accessible Train Stations Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice. We also liaise with Local Authorities in the preparation of Station Travel plans.

Car parking

The designated disabled parking spaces at our station car parks are monitored jointly by our CCTV network and by physical patrols by the British Transport Police and our own Customer Service and Security Officers.

Enforcement of our parking scheme is undertaken by these bodies and it is our policy to prosecute persons who infringe upon the regulations.

We view our car parks as part of the entire journey experience and they fall within the remit for the Department for Transport Secure Station Accreditation Scheme. We regularly review the demand to ensure that we have sufficient car parking spaces available and commit to providing to the DfT on a periodic basis the usage figures for Blue Badge spaces where the number of designated disabled parking spaces is less than 5% of the total number of parking spaces available.

Chad Collins
Head of Stations

Chiltern Railways

If you think our way, *travel our way.*