



Making Rail Accessible

# Helping older & disabled passengers

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

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## Introduction

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

This leaflet, 'Making Rail Accessible' provides a practical guide to travelling with Grand Central, explaining what we do to assist older and disabled customers and the standards of service they can reasonably expect.

We will explain how to find details of the assistance available, facilities and information you will need to help you plan your journey.

Our commitment to helping all customers, particularly older and disabled people to travel with confidence includes:

- assistance at the stations we serve and on our trains, or when making connections
- alternative accessible transport when stations or trains are inaccessible, or services are disrupted
- clear, consistent and up-to-date customer information
- a range of discounts to reduce the cost of travel for disabled people and in some cases for a companion

## Assistance: what is available and how to get it

### Passenger Assist

If you can arrange your travel in advance, we participate in an assistance booking system called Passenger Assist. This is a rail industry-wide system used to book assistance and extra help at each stage of your journey, which includes:

- Before you travel**
- Help with planning your journey
  - Explaining the accessibility and facilities available at stations and on our trains
  - Reserving seats and wheelchair spaces on trains where reservations are available
  - Providing the opportunity to purchase tickets, including Advance fares

- At the Station**
- Assistance to and from connecting train services and onward transport such as bus, underground, Metro and taxi within the station area
  - Help through the station and to your platform, at larger staffed stations
  - Assistance with getting on and off the train at every station





- Boarding and alighting with wheelchairs, scooters and mobility aids
- Help with luggage at larger, staffed stations

#### **On the train**

- Assistance getting you to/from your seat
- Assistance with luggage
- Advice regarding location of toilets, including accessible toilet facilities on the train
- Advice regarding catering facilities on the train
- Information and advice regarding your onward journey and any connections

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

**Telephone:** 0345 603 4852 opt. 4 (open 7 days, 24 hours from 1st April 2022, excluding Christmas Day)

**Text Relay:** 18001 0344 811 0072 (open 7 days, 24 hours from 1st April 2022, excluding Christmas Day)

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

We aim to answer your call within 30 seconds, and we aim to respond to online requests within 12 hours. We monitor our performance against these targets on a regular basis.

We recognise the ability to travel more spontaneously is important to all customers, 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. To help you with your travel needs, Passenger Assistance can be booked up to 2 hours before your journey.

Once booked, our Passenger Assist team will provide booking confirmation by email, where you have provided your details, or by post if requested.

We work with other train companies and station operators to agreed processes for booking and providing assistance. This means we can book assistance for your whole rail journey as a single point of contact, even where part of that journey is with other train operators or where it involves other stations not served by Grand Central.

When you have boarded the train, the Senior Conductor onboard will communicate with your destination station staff, where appropriate, to ensure you are provided with assistance to get off the train.

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.

#### **Turn up and go**

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 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.

Please note, where assistance has not been booked in advance, it may take a period of time to be provided and without a reservation, no guarantee can be made in respect of the availability of wheelchair spaces or priority seats on board the train. However, our Senior Conductors will make every effort to help older and disabled passengers find a seat if you have not made a reservation.

### **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 and you are unable to manage steps, 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.

### **What to expect: our commitment to passengers at every stage of the journey**

Grand Central will ensure that information and assistance is available at each stage of your journey, if and when you need it. We know that staff training plays an important part in delivering journeys which are accessible for everyone, so we work hard to provide all Grand Central colleagues with the skills and understanding they need to assist customers with a range of accessibility requirements including visible and non-visible disabilities.

## **Before you travel**

### **Accurate, updated information to help you plan your journey:**

Station information, including the accessibility of the station and the facilities available such as parking and the times that staff are present, is available to view on [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations/](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/).

Information relating to the accessibility of our trains and other useful travel assistance information can be found on our website at [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/).

Our Website and Mobile App show live train times as well as information regarding any current or future significant changes or delays to Grand Central services.

### **Purchasing your travel tickets:**

We have a range of options available for buying your tickets ahead of travel or on the day and all options enable you to enjoy any reduction to which you are entitled, such as using a Disabled Persons Railcard.



- **Online** - Our website [www.grandcentralrail.com](http://www.grandcentralrail.com) offers a range of tickets and journey planning tools. You can receive your tickets on your smart device via the Grand Central App, by First Class post (please allow five working days for delivery), or you can collect from ticket machines at stations.
- **Using our App** - You can buy your ticket on your smart device anytime, anywhere using the Grand Central App. Buy tickets securely on our App and collect your tickets within 15 minutes from station ticket machines or if you've selected the new e-ticket delivery option, just show your smart device to the Senior Conductor on the train.
- **By phone** – Contact our Passenger Assist team to purchase your ticket over the phone at the same time as booking your assistance requirements. You can receive your tickets by First Class post (please allow five working days for delivery), or you can collect from ticket machines at stations.
- **Ticket Machines at stations** - Ticket machines are available at larger stations. You can buy a range of tickets for immediate use and the machines accept most credit/ debit cards as well as cash. Please check your journey times and individual ticket restrictions when purchasing your ticket to be sure that it is valid for your planned train.
- **Station ticket offices** - You can buy the full range of tickets from staffed ticket offices using all major credit/debit cards, cash and Rail Travel vouchers.
- **On trains** - Grand Central operate a “Buy on Board” policy so you can purchase a ticket without incurring a fine or penalty during the journey from the Senior Conductor on the train.

If you are concerned about purchasing tickets, please contact our Passenger Assist team or staff at stations or on trains for advice.

### Discounts and Railcards:

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 on our website & mobile pp, and on train by our Senior Conductors. 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.

#### 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 or Local Authority) 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 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 [www.railcard.co.uk](http://www.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 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.

### **At the station**

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

At larger stations, such as York and London Kings Cross, dedicated information points are 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, where assistance is delivered by the station-based teams, a clearly marked Meeting Point is provided, to help customers who have booked assistance to locate and meet staff. When booking with our Passenger Assist team, you will be advised as to the location of the Meeting Point. We recommend you arrive at the station at least 20 minutes prior to the departure of your train.

Once you have boarded a train, our on-board staff can help you locate your seat, assist with luggage, provide journey information and ensure you are provided with assistance to get off the train when you reach your destination. At unstaffed stations, our on-board Senior Conductors can provide assistance in getting you on or off the train, however they are not able to provide assistance around stations.

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.

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 there is any risk of you not being provided with 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.

**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. At unstaffed stations please attract the attention of the on-board staff who can also assist. Our 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.



## On the train

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.

**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.

**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 for your journey, and you are travelling with a family member or companion, we will be able to allocate 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 staff or 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.

## If things do not go as planned

We try to do everything we can to avoid them, but sometimes delays or cancellations will happen. We promise that if you are delayed, we will give you as much information as we can about what is happening.

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 and on our trains.

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

If you have booked assistance in advance, we will contact you to make alternative arrangements, particularly if there is significant disruption such as severe weather.

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

**Alternative transport** - In the event we need to use alternative transport, we aim to use rail replacement buses or coaches which are fully accessible. We work with regular suppliers for rail replacement transport so that we can request fully

accessible vehicles to 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 rail replacement vehicle does not meet your needs, we will provide alternative transport options, which station staff or our Passenger Assist team will discuss with you.

**If things go wrong** - 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. Your feedback is important to us. So, if assistance has not been provided in the way you expected, whether you booked in advance or not, please contact our Customer Relations Team using the details in the Contact Us section below and we will investigate why this happened, and what action we intend to take to ensure it does not happen again. We understand the inconvenience caused when assistance is not delivered, so we will also provide you with appropriate redress for your journey.

**Emergency Procedures** - The assistance provided to disabled passengers varies between locations based upon a risk assessment that includes 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.

## Where to get more information and how to get in touch

Detailed information regarding facilities and services for all stations at which we call can be found at [www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/stations/a-to-z/)

Detailed information regarding our rolling stock accessibility can be found at [www.grandcentralrail.com/travelling-with-gc/on-board/seating-plan/](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/travelling-with-gc/on-board/seating-plan/)

Our Accessible Travel Policy complements this leaflet and sets out in detail our policies and approach towards providing

assistance for older and disabled customers, including how we meet our regulatory obligations. It is available on our website: [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/passenger-assistance](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/travel-assistance/passenger-assistance)

Alternative formats such as audio and large print versions of both this leaflet and our Accessible Travel Policy are available on request, by contacting our Customer Relations team, and on our website, free of charge. We aim to provide this to you within seven working days.

**Contact Us** - Our Customer Relations team can provide further information regarding our services, including any queries on the day. We would also be grateful to hear your feedback on services, and if you have suggestions or would like to get involved with improving accessibility.

### Grand Central Customer Relations:

**Telephone:** 0345 603 4852 (09:00 - 17:00, Mon – Fri, excluding Christmas Day, Boxing day and New Year's Day)

**Email:** [Customer.services@grandcentralrail.com](mailto:Customer.services@grandcentralrail.com)

**Online:** [www.grandcentralrail.com/help/contact-us](http://www.grandcentralrail.com/help/contact-us)

### How to contact us via Social Media:

**Twitter:** @GC\_Rail

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/grandcentralrail](https://facebook.com/grandcentralrail)

**Instagram:** @grandcentralrail

**National Freephone**

**Passenger Assist:** 0800 022 3720

**Textphone Free SMS Passenger**

**Assist Forwarding Service:** 0845 60 50 600

**Rail Ombudsman** - Please give us the opportunity to try to resolve your complaint. If you're unhappy with the final response you receive, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman via their contact details below.

**Phone:** 0330 094 0362

**Textphone:** 0330 094 0363

**Email:** [info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)

**By Post:** FREEPOST – RAIL OMBUDSMAN