



Consultation Response

Improving Assisted Travel Office of Rail and Road

January 2018

Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to respond to the Office of Rail and Road 'Improving Assisted Travel' consultation. Accessible transport is a vital factor in determining older people's ability to access services and communities, as many older people rely on public transport to get out and about. Without appropriate transport services and infrastructure, older people can become isolated from their community and society and unable to access essential services or participate in social activities.

Comments

Age Cymru has been involved with the Welsh Government's Accessible Transport Panel, and we would draw attention to the publication of the Welsh Government's Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.¹

We would also wish to highlight accessibility issues at railway stations and on board trains:

Accessibility problems at some railway stations include physical barriers such as stairs to platforms, a lack of lifts, and difficulties in negotiating the gap between the train and the platform edge. Such barriers in the built environment may prevent some older people from being able to use rail services. We believe that wherever feasible, lifts should be available at all stations to enable passengers to cross from one platform to another. We believe that accessible drop-off points should be available at the station entrance, and that accessible ticket purchasing facilities should be provided on all platforms for ease of access.

¹ Welsh Government (2017) Policy Statement – Accessible and Inclusive Public Transport Objectives.
<https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2017-12/policy-statement-accessible-and-inclusive-public-transport-objectives.pdf>

Older people who can and want to use trains require reliable rail travel supported by adequate infrastructure, including seating, shelter and accessible toilet facilities in stations.

The provision of information about public transport services should be accessible in various formats, including printed information in a sufficiently large font size. Many older people are not able to use, or do not have access to the internet, and therefore may not be able to access such information if it is provided online only. Services provided online need to be high quality and easy to use, whilst offline services should be of equal quality and fully accessible.

We believe that passengers should be kept informed and updated with reference to any rail service disruptions, and that station facilities should enable passengers to be able to wait in comfort. The impact of service disruption or poor reliability of services would be made worse by poor facilities for those waiting (e.g. no accessible toilets, not enough seating and shelter) and a lack of accessible and updated service information.

We suggest that transport providers should engage with local access groups in communities over the design of station infrastructure and the provision of facilities to ensure that stations are both accessible and inclusive. Members of local groups could be invited on site to discuss facilities needed.

It is important that staff at railway stations and on-board trains understand the needs of older passengers. Equalities training and dementia awareness training for transport providers could help to create a supportive, inclusive and accessible transport environment.

Some older people are unable to stand unaided or for long periods, hence standing on train journeys would not be an acceptable way to travel for some people. It is important that sufficient priority seating is available on all trains so that people who are unable to stand on journeys can be seated at all times during their journey.

In addition to the provision of toilet facilities at stations, we believe it is important that toilet facilities are provided on-board all train services. The provision of toilets is vital to enable older people to maintain their dignity and to be able to participate fully in public life.

We hope these comments are useful and would be happy to provide further information if required.