



# Making Rail Accessible: Guide to Policy and Practices

11/11/2010



More Merseyrail



## Operator's Strategy

Merseyrail operates the trains on the Wirral and Northern Line in Merseyside. Merseyrail is an urban network of vital importance to the transport infrastructure of Liverpool and the region.

We run frequent services that call at 67 stations connecting Liverpool City Centre with parts of Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire giving access to work, shopping and leisure.

We are committed to caring for our disabled customers. Our goal is simply to provide trains and stations that are as accessible as possible, ensuring disabled customers enjoy the best possible access and journey comfort when travelling with us.

We acknowledge that under the Social Model of disability, it is the environment that leads to difficulty for disabled people accessing our services. We aim to build the needs of all people into our plans and policies to make it easier to use our network.

Merseyrail is committed to continuously improve the services and facilities for all older and disabled passengers and we will consider adjustments to the services we provide, to ensure that disabled passenger have the same rights of access.

We are committed to meeting the standards and guidance set out in the Department for Transport (DfT) publication: Accessible Train Station design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice published in 2010. This publication will be referred to as "the Code of Practice" throughout the document. Where, for whatever reason, we cannot meet these standards, we will consult with the DfT at the earliest stage of the design process and seek dispensation under the Code of Practice.

We will work with Passenger Focus, the Disabled People's Transport Advisory Committee "(or successor)", Merseytravel, and the DfT and local representative disabled groups in order to continuously improve the levels of service we offer to disabled customers.

We value all our customers and as such we will continue to work in a way to ensure we deliver our commitments under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) "(or successor)".

Our Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP) will be submitted to the DfT annually for approval. We will consult with the DfT if we consider making any

alterations to this policy, and no material changes will be made unless DfT approval has been received.

Details of those projects and activities to improve the facilities and access for older and disabled passenger are contained in our document “Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers”.

We will take advantage of all sources of funding available to make stations accessible such as Railways for All, National Stations Improvement Programme and any funding offered by the DfT, Merseytravel, local Councils and other funding bodies.

## **Management Arrangements**

Improving and protecting access to rail services and facilities for disabled customers is an integral part of our business strategy and our Disabled People’s Protection Policy is approved and supported by the Merseyrail Board of Directors. The Managing Director of Merseyrail is responsible for ensuring we comply with all the commitments outlined in our DPPP and with all relevant legislation.

The Merseyrail Board of Directors commit to the following:

- Review our DPPP annually or more frequently if required.
- Ensure that the designs for the refurbishment/new stations comply with the DfT’s Code of Practice.
- Actively support the Association of Train Operating Companies’ Disability Group.
- Provide the DfT with an annual report where any difficulties have been experienced with our DPPP, and our progress towards achieving those objectives within it.
- Make all manager and staff aware of their responsibilities to disabled passengers via training programmes, internal briefing and feedback via our Customer Relations department.
- Ensure all managers and staff are trained to understand our commitments within our DPPP.
- Ensure our front line staff are trained to use any equipment that is provided to assist disabled passengers, trained in communication techniques and assistance in order to meet the needs of disabled passengers.

## **Management Responsibility**

Our Projects and Procurement Director is responsible for ensuring that our commitments within our DPPP and the standards with the Code of Practice are applied to all station improvement schemes. The Customer Services Director and Operations Director are responsible for ensuring our commitments within our DPPP are met when we deliver assistance at our stations or on our trains.

We will use best endeavours to implement the standards continued within the Code of Practice into all our improvement projects. If we are not able to apply these standards, we will seek dispensation from the DfT.

All our managers and staff are made aware of their responsibilities to disabled passengers during their induction training. Our passenger – facing staff receive additional specific training, regular refresher training and briefings on assisting passengers with additional needs.

We maintain a matrix of all existing station facilities and the areas and facilities of each station that require works to be undertaken to make them accessible. The matrix is used to identify areas that will most benefit from improvement schemes.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

We recognise the importance of regular monitoring and review of the implementation and impact of our policies in delivering improvements. The Legal and Compliance Manager is responsible for compliance within Merseyrail and will monitor compliance with our policies through ad hoc checking of compliance and individual areas of the DPPP. An annual assessment of the compliance document will be completed and we will provide a report to the DfT detailing our progress in the delivery of the objectives and initiatives of the policy, the implementation of improvement, and any significant difficulties experienced within the DPPP.

The following processes are in place to monitor and evaluate our performance in meeting our commitments within our DPPP.

- We review customer feedback and our Customer Relations team report to our directors at our Service Delivery Group which is held every four weeks.
- We attend the Merseytravel Passenger Transport Authority Transport Access Panel and Transport Operations Surgery every six weeks. A large number of local disabled groups are represented on the panel

and concerns raised are minuted and brought to the attention of the appropriate Senior Manager so preventative action can be taken.

- Passenger comments and complaints are noted and brought to the attention of the relevant Managers to investigate, appropriate action taken and a personal response sent to the Passenger.
- Feedback from letters to politicians and other public representatives receive a personal response from the Managing Director.
- We participate in the Local Project Delivery Group for both Access for All and National Station Improvement Programme.

## **Access improvements**

We are committed to delivering the standards set out in the Department for Transport (DfT) publication “Accessible Train Station design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice published in July 2010.

We will ensure that any trains we bring into service will comply with the Passengers with Reduced Mobility – Technical Specification for Interoperability (PRM TSI). Where this proves to be impracticable we will seek appropriate dispensation or exemption (as appropriate) from the DfT, but only after we have exhausted all efforts to comply.

Since taking over the running of the Merseyrail network in July 2003 and with the support of Merseytravel, Network Rail, DfT and the various local councils we have implemented a large number of improvements that benefit our disabled passengers.

During 2009, we have installed Customer Information Systems (CIS) at 14 stations including Hoylake, Manor Road, Meols, Blundellsands and Crosby, Ainsdale, Kirkby (Merseyside) Fazakerley, Cressington, Aigburth, St Michaels, Rock Ferry, Port Sunlight, Bromborough Rake and Eastham Rake. All Merseyrail stations now benefit from either CIS or Information Points with CIS on at least one platform.

We have also installed accessible toilets facilities at Hall Road, Formby, Blundellsands and Crosby, Maghull, Hooton and Rock Ferry.

Major refurbishment was completed in July 2009 at Ormskirk which included the installation of an accessible toilet.

Merseyrail, with match funding from Merseytravel, has been successful in a bid for Access for All Small Schemes funding for the installation of accessible toilets at Brunswick, Aintree, Birkenhead North, Wallasey Grove Road and Lime

Street (Low Level) which will be completed by end of March 2011.

Access for All funding has also been allocated for the installation of lifts at Hooton station with a planned completion date of June 2011.

Merseyrail, Merseytravel, Network Rail are working on a scheme to improve concourse facilities at Liverpool Central station. This will include new waiting facilities, toilets and improved access to the lifts. The programme of works will take 12 months to deliver with works commencing March 2011.

## **Working with others**

Merseyrail works closely with a number of partners and stakeholders including Merseytravel, Network Rail and our local councils including Liverpool 20/20, Sefton Metropolitan Council, Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire District Council, Wirral Metropolitan Council, Cheshire County Council and Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council whilst developing improvement schemes to ensure we achieve accessibility for all our customers.

Merseyrail is also represented on a number of passenger forums including Merseytravel Transport Access Plan. When appropriate, we meet with local branches of other organisation that represent older and disabled passengers including Age UK, Bradbury Fields, Remploy, Shaw Trust and Oakfield Day Centre,

We attend the quarterly ATOC Disability Group and any associated meetings, we consult on disability issues with Merseytravel and Passenger Focus.

Our Corporate Social Responsibility Manager is responsible for working closely with our local communities. Merseyrail recognises that transport is a key element to social inclusion and we are work closely with our local communities to help achieve this. Merseyrail staff has recently worked with the Oakfield Day Centre to help produce a DVD on issues faced by disabled people whilst travelling on public transport.

## **Staff Training**

All new staff undertake disability equality training on joining the company. The training, which follows the guidance in the Code of Practice, allows staff to understand their responsibility to disabled customers, and to understand how to assist people regardless of the nature of their disability.

All frontline staff who assist passengers will receive appropriate training in the use of equipment provided to assist people with disabilities such as wheelchair ramps, induction loops and wheelchairs.

Our training also covers a variety of techniques that can be used to aid communication with passengers who have communication related impairments (e.g. learning difficulties and hearing impairments).

The training also describes a variety of 'invisible' impairments (such as degenerative conditions, long term and mental illness and the appropriate techniques to assist passengers).

Our training department are presently developing a new training programme and our aim is for all staff who answer telephones to be trained in communicating clearly with people who may have difficulty speaking, hearing or understanding within the next twelve months

Refresher training and briefing is provided in order to maintain and update staff knowledge and skills therefore improve services and accessibility to all disabled passenger. The needs of individuals and frequency of refresher training will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Merseyrail has produced briefing material when there have been either changes in the law or in our policy and practices. The briefing material was sent to all members of staff. We will continue this approach and development further briefing as and when required.

## **Emergency procedures.**

An emergency is defined as being a situation where either a station or train has to be evacuated immediately because of a major incident or following advice from the Security or Emergency services.

We have special arrangements for providing assistance at times of emergency. Details of Merseyrail's emergency evacuation procedures are held at all our stations and issued to all our train crew staff.

The evacuation procedures for each station vary according to such factors as the physical layout, the presence and accessibility of facilities, and the availability of staff.

Our trains display safety information on what to do in the rare event of an on-board emergency. Evacuation guidelines are displayed in each carriage. The guidelines

use a high level of pictorial graphics to assist customers' understanding.

Where a train is not at a station, it is normal not to evacuate the train unless there is an immediate danger to life as we consider the safest option is to stay on board the train.

All trains are fitted with an emergency evacuation kit which include a ladder should there be a need to evacuate the train. All our train crew staff receive train evacuation training and this includes assisting disabled customers.

If there is any possibility that a passenger with a wheelchair has sustained injury then the emergency services will assist with the evacuation.

If the train breaks down within a specified walking distance from a station then disabled passengers with wheelchairs will remain on the train, with a member of staff, until the train can be moved safely to the nearest station, where they can alight safely from the train and continue their journey.

## **Communications strategy**

We recognise the importance of communicating relevant information, particular regarding to passenger services, to all our passengers. The release and publication of information is managed by our Marketing Team.

We are committed to ensuring widespread dissemination of information about our services and we will work with our industry partners to ensure this is broadcast as widely as possible. We provide this through a range of printed literature, our website, ATOC and NRES websites and broadcast media. Copies of our DPPP are available, free of charge, from our ticket offices, our Customer Relations team, as well as being available to download from our website at [www.merseyrail.org](http://www.merseyrail.org).

## **Telephones**

Merseyrail is committed to ensuring all recorded information given by telephone is clear. If a passenger contacts our Customer Relations department outside opening hours they will be told to contact our Control Centre which is staffed 24 hours a day.

We encourage passengers with hearing difficulties to use email or our website facilities and a number of our customer use the BT Type Talk services.

## **Websites**

Our website has been built from the ground up with accessibility in mind and meets the W3C standards. We have taken all steps possible to make sure that it is accessible for all.

## **Signage**

Merseyrail works closely with Merseytravel and the Local Authorities to ensure that stations are clearly and consistently signposted. If we identify any inadequacies in the provision of direction signage we will be engaged with the relevant Authority and Merseytravel with a view of pursuing improvements. Merseyrail is committed to follow the Code of Practice when installing new signage.

## **Car Parking**

Many stations have free parking facilities including Blue Badge spaces. The dedicated Blue Badge spaces are situated as close as possible to the station entrance.

We monitor usage of Blue Badge parking spaces. Such monitoring will enable appropriate enforcement action to be taken when non-Blue Badge holders park in designated spaces.

CCTV cameras cover car parks and the usage of Blue Badge spaces is monitored either locally or remotely at Merseyrail Control or Security Centre.

Merseyrail and Merseytravel regularly monitor car park usage and work together to make every effort to increase car parking facilities for all customers across the network. We shall endeavour to ensure that all new or refurbished Blue Badge spaces installed in our car parks conform to the Code of Practice. If we cannot conform to the Code we will ensure dispensation is sought from the DfT, once all possible means of achievement have been exhausted. All car parks on the Merseyrail network have been awarded 'Secure Car Park' status.



