

## **DfT Equality Information – Complying with the Equality Duty**

The Equality Act 2010 contained a new integrated public sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

The new Duty brings together the original duties on race, gender and disability and extends to cover gender reassignment, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It requires public bodies to have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, with the aim of making society fairer.

Specific duties that will help public bodies to meet the general Duty require the Department to:

- publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the general Equality Duty by January 2012 and annually thereafter, including information relating to their employees and others affected by their policies and practices who share a protected characteristic;
- publish equality objectives by April 2012 and every four years thereafter

### ***Accessible vehicles***

#### **Trains and Buses**

By law, all new trains, trams, buses and coaches have to be accessible to disabled people, including wheelchair users. We have set deadlines for all trains and trams to be accessible by 2020, while all buses used on local or scheduled services will be required to meet accessibility standards by 2017 and coaches by 2020.

The percentage of rail vehicles that fully meet accessibility requirements rose to 41% over the year, while older vehicles have continued to receive smaller scale access improvements. We continue to work closely with train operators and owners to ensure that the industry understands what improvements need to be made by 2020.

By the end of 2012, a significant proportion of the buses operating outside London will be accessible with ramped access, well-designed handrails and, in some cases, both audible and visual announcement systems.

#### **Taxis**

We are also considering how to increase the number of accessible taxis for those who may find it difficult to use public transport. It is already unlawful for taxi drivers to discriminate against disabled people. We are considering

proposals for a consultation package to seek views on how we can encourage more accessible taxis.

More generally, the Law Commission is undertaking a comprehensive review of the law governing taxis and private hire vehicles with a view to modernising and simplifying the legislative framework.

## ***Accessible Stations***

### **Access for All**

Accessibility legislation also covers infrastructure, such as bus and railway stations. Barriers to access such as stairs or steep ramps can mean that disabled people may not have the same opportunities to travel as other people. The *Access for All* programme is improving this by installing accessible, obstacle free routes at priority rail stations. Under the programme we made £370 million (at 2004/05 prices) available to Network Rail to improve the accessibility of the railway network by 2015. The programme currently includes 153 stations, 68 are now complete and 20 are on site.

DfT has introduced a further Access for All “Mid-tier” programme worth around £37m to bridge the gap between the main and Small Schemes programmes and to help with projects that require between £250k and £1m of Government support. The work will be completed by 31 March 2014.

DfT also runs an annual Small Schemes Fund. £7m is allocated to the train operating companies each financial year to fund local and innovative access solutions at stations and since 2006 projects at over 1,000 stations have been delivered. Examples of improvements include the provision of passenger information systems, lighting, automatic doors and induction loops.

By removing barriers to access, the Access for All programme is increasing journey opportunities for disabled people to access work, healthcare, educational and leisure facilities.

### **Secure Stations**

The Department runs the “Secure Stations Scheme” which accredits those stations that have implemented a comprehensive package of security measures for both passengers and staff. It specifically addresses fear of crime by specifying that stations ask their passengers how safe they feel.

The rail industry remains committed to the scheme. There are now 1258 stations accredited under the scheme with 9 operating companies having a 100% route accreditation.

## ***Travel Concessions***

### **Concessionary Travel**

The right to free bus travel for both older and disabled people is enshrined in primary legislation. The statutory concession offers free travel for eligible older and disabled people on any local bus service in England at off-peak times. Local buses are the most commonly used mode of public transport, particularly for older people and the purpose of providing free local bus travel England-wide is to ensure that no older or disabled person in England need be prevented from bus travel by cost alone.

## ***Personal mobility***

### **Mobility Vehicles (mobility scooters & powered wheelchairs)**

A consultation on possible reforms to the laws governing the use of mobility vehicles on the public highway was undertaken from March to May 2010. It sought views on the legal classification of mobility vehicles; the design standards for mobility vehicles; the law as it currently applies to mobility vehicle users; the current requirements for vehicles that are in use; and what useful data could be collected on mobility vehicles. The consultation document is available on the DfT website at: [www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-10/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-10/).

The findings from the consultation have been considered and an announcement has been made in response to Parliamentary Questions from Ivan Lewis MP (Invalid Vehicles: Regulation) and from Annette Brooke MP (Invalid Vehicles: Safety), setting out the following issues that will be taken forward:

- options for training and incentives for vehicle users to take up training;
- a possible minimum eyesight requirement and incentives for users to meet these requirements;
- the case for increasing the unladen weight limit for powered wheelchairs only;
- the carriage of mobility scooters on public transport;
- improved guidance and information for mobility vehicle users; and
- replacing the legal term “invalid carriage” with a more suitable and contemporary term, and a review of how current legislation could be better enforced.

## **Disabled People and Motoring**

The Department works to help older and disabled people to remain mobile through the use of a private car, providing opportunities for them to maintain their independence through driving or travelling as a passenger. The Department has provided £2.7m grant funding in 2011/12 to 12 mobility centres in England to support them in providing personal mobility related information and advice to disabled people to enable them to make choices about their personal mobility.

In 2011/12 DfT is expecting the centres to assess in excess of 7000 disabled people and assist an additional 49,000 to make informed decisions through telephone, written and electronic enquiries. The number of assessments has remained at consistent levels over the last three years. 2010-11 customer satisfaction levels were at 93% showing a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by Mobility Centres.

## **Blue Badge**

The Department provides the legislative framework for the Blue Badge (disabled parking) scheme, which allows people with severe mobility problems to retain their independence by enabling them to park close to where they need to go. The scheme is administered by local authorities and research has shown that 75% of badge holders would go out less often without a badge and 64% would be more reliant on friends and family members.

The Department is undertaking wide ranging reforms to tackle rising levels of abuse, and ensure both that badges are issued more fairly and the scheme remains sustainable in the long term for those disabled people who rely on it most.

To prevent abuse from happening in the first place, we have implemented a new badge design that is harder to copy, forge and alter. We have also provided improved powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud. To ensure that badges are issued more fairly and consistently across the country, we are amending legislation to require wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility. On 1 January 2012, the Blue Badge Improvement Service became operational. This service will reduce abuse and improve customer services.

The Department has also issued guidance to Local Authorities on administering the Blue Badge scheme and meeting their Public Sector Equality Duty by embedding equality considerations in everything they do, including decisions relating to the design and delivery of parking enforcement.

## ***Travel Assistance***

### **Assisted Passenger Reservations Service**

All transport operators have a legal duty to consider disabled people when publishing service information and providing booking and other facilities.

The Association of Train Operating Companies has awarded contracts for a replacement for the Assisted Passenger Reservation System. "Passenger Assist" will deliver a marked improvement in the way assisted travel bookings are managed and delivered, making it easier for people with reduced mobility to receive travel assistance even without having made a pre-booking. It will improve co-ordination and communication between different train operators and will streamline currently cumbersome booking procedures.

The Department has funded 50% of the project cost. The new system was launched summer 2011 and is now widely in use by the industry.

### **Disabled People's Protection Policy**

All railway license holders, including the Train Operating Companies and Network Rail are required to have a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP), which describes how they provide a service to disabled passengers at the stations they operate. We are working to ensure that DPPP implementation continues, in line with the guidance produced November 2009, and now have 17 franchised TOCs' policies in operation, with two in progress.

### **Audio Visual Systems**

The Department recognises that many people find audio and visual announcements useful for travelling. In 2009, we commissioned a research project to look at the costs and benefits of installing audio visual systems on all buses. While the Government does not intend to amend legislation to make audio visual systems mandatory, in light of the social benefits of such systems for all bus users, we are encouraging bus operators to work in partnership with their local authorities increase the uptake of these systems on a voluntary basis.

### **Travel Training**

Government will encourage local authorities and other organisations to introduce more travel training schemes which are aimed at giving various groups of people (including those with learning difficulties) the skills and confidence to use public transport safely and independently. We have recently published a report that provides guidance, promotes best practice and exchanges information on running travel training schemes for those who are seeking to develop or establish such schemes. The report is available at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/tts/traveltrainingguide/pdf/guidance.pdf>

GoSkills have [recently] completed a review for the Department of the need for qualifications by travel trainers, and are now looking into the accreditation of courses for both learners and travel trainers. GoSkills is developing National Occupational Standards for travel training and these standards will form the basis of new qualifications.

### **Staff Training**

Train Operating Companies are expected to make a number of commitments in their Disabled People's Protection Policies in relation to staff training. All staff are to receive relevant disability awareness training or disability equality training, including senior and key managers, to ensure that they are made aware of their responsibilities to disabled passengers.

The Olympic Games provide a unique opportunity to improve disability awareness training for transport staff, and the customer care given to disabled people to enable them to travel confidently and independently on public transport during the Games and after, as an on-going legacy. GoSkills has produced a disability awareness module for Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training for bus drivers and a disability awareness module for accredited training courses for taxi drivers.

### ***Travel Information***

#### **The Olympic Games**

DfT is committed to improving the accessible transport information available to the public to enable people to travel confidently and independently plan their full journey.

Over the last year, technical standards have been developed and published, which enable data about accessible journeys to be used within journey planning. One of these standards is now being implemented by one of Transport Direct's suppliers, and this will enable us to provide an improvement in the amount and quality of information that can be offered, initially within the Spectator Journey Planner (SJP) that Transport Direct is delivering for the Olympics. In particular, this will enable users to find journeys that have level access, as well as journeys where assistance will be available. The SJP was launched in July 2011, and further improvements will be considered before Games time in the light of feedback.

### **Involvement and Engagement**

The Department is considering successor arrangements for the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), should DPTAC be abolished, to ensure that the Department can continue to get disability advice. The Department, in consultation with stakeholders, has developed a number

of options and these will form the basis for a public consultation which is due to be published in early spring.

The Department meets with representatives of the wider disabled community, and with other groups on a regular basis to discuss policy issues.

For example, the Department facilitates and chairs a *Transport and Young People Group* to share knowledge and information about children and young people and transport-related issues. It has recently produced two guides, one for young people and the other for operators, aimed at improving bus travel for young people.

### **Equality Analysis**

The Department has reviewed its Equality Analysis/Equality Impact Assessment toolkit and internal guidance to enable policy makers to take account of the impact of new policies on people who share the protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010.

### **Improving the Evidence Base**

The Department has commissioned an evaluation of accessibility planning that was introduced into Local Transport Plans to help improve transport accessibility at a national and local level. The findings will be published early in 2012. Accessibility Planning broadens understanding of accessibility by bringing clarity and understanding to accessibility issues in a wider context, and through interagency working.