

# How to Use the REAL Theme in Training

Train the Trainer  
Core Modules



# Real Passenger, Real Person REAL

This training is underpinned by the fact that disabled people are real passengers and real people.

In this section, you'll find some commentary based on the 'REAL — Real Passenger, Real Person' concept that has been developed specifically for this training programme.

You might want to draw on the narrative in this section, in your own words, to introduce key parts of a longer programme or to inform any introductory remarks or ice-breakers during training sessions.

There are four core values running through this training:

1. Respect
2. Empathise
3. Ask
4. Listen

# 1. Respect

## What is respect?

It's **thinking about** and **paying attention** to the feelings, wishes and rights of others.

## How does it feel when you are not respected?

Sometimes, the colour of someone's skin means that people treat them unfairly. They expect, or don't expect certain things just because of someone's skin colour.

**They make decisions** about whether someone gets a job, say, based on this. They behave in ways that show that they don't think of them as a person but as a stereotype. They may be rude, dismissive, fearful or thoughtless. Sometimes they aren't aware they are doing this, but the other person may still feel the lack of respect. You may have experienced this.

**Sometimes it's someone's age**, for example because they are much younger or older that is the basis for a lack of respect. Sometimes it's being male or female, someone's accent or way of speaking, being of a particular religion, wearing certain clothes, expressing gender identity in particular ways, or being LGBTQ.

**Many people have experienced a lack of respect** at some time in their lives on the basis of one of these, or many other things. Some people experience this frequently or repeatedly in particular situations or interactions. For others, it's rare, but we can probably all think of at least one occasion when we weren't respected.

Many people who look, communicate or move differently from the 'perceived norm', and many people who experience barriers in the physical environment or in how services are organised, feel this lack of respect. They may feel that they don't belong in someone's home if it isn't physically accessible, or in a workplace if it makes them feel uncomfortable, or in using a service, if it is difficult, painful or distressing to use.

As well as physical barriers, cultures and policies that exclude people, the attitudes and behaviours of other people can make a big difference as to whether people feel included. A **real passenger**, a **real person**, as opposed to someone who doesn't fit, doesn't belong or who causes inconvenience for others.

And all those disability-related barriers can also be affected by some of the other things we've already talked about – such as the colour of their skin, their accent, religion or culture, their gender, and their gender identity or sexual orientation.

## How does it feel when you are respected?

Often, you don't even notice. You take it for granted. You don't need to be wary about other people's reactions to you.

When talking about race, some people refer to this as 'white privilege' – whatever else someone may be dealing with in their life, they usually don't also have to deal with negative reactions based on the colour of their skin. This 'privilege' shouldn't be that. It should be simply what everyone experiences.

The same goes for other aspects of being human, including the common experience of having an impairment or long-term health condition. If everyone was respected, it's something none of us would really have to think about.

Sometimes it is possible to notice that someone is being explicitly acknowledged and included; that they are being respected – that someone sees them as a real person; that they respect who they are; that they aren't making assumptions based on the first things they see or learn about the other person. These little behaviours signalling respect can make a huge difference in someone's life.

### Related video content:

'Sometimes I just turn around and go home'

Think about how you would define respect – what is it and what does it feel like for you?

# 2. Empathise

## Why should we empathise?

Empathy is usually defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.

We can't know exactly what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes. We can't **be** that person, because everyone and everyone's circumstances are different.

However, accepting this, we can imagine that the shoes are comfortable and that this may make them feel positive, confident, energetic. We can imagine that the shoes are too tight and cause pain or are so high that the person feels they might fall over. This experience might affect their confidence or tire them out.

This insight is useful for organisations, because it means they can think about different people's experiences and what will work for them, either in employing them or offering a service. It is also useful for individuals, because it can help us to interact with someone else in a positive way.

# How does it feel when we are treated with empathy?

No one can know exactly what another person is experiencing, and when it comes to disability, no one can know about every type of impairment or health condition, or understand exactly what it's like to face barriers to travel, employment, education or other aspects of life. However, we can all build our ability to empathise with others.

Some disabled people experience no challenges at all as they go about their lives, interacting with different people and in different environments.

Some don't experience any difficulties at all when they interact with people who respect them and are in environments that are inclusive.

Some do experience certain challenges that cause pain, fatigue, anxiety or a lack of confidence, confusion or distress. The impact of these, for many people, varies day to day. This can be for no apparent reason, but sometimes these experiences are made worse by environments that are inaccessible and by people who don't respect them and don't try to understand what they need.

That's where the opportunity to make a difference lies — to be **part of the solution**, not the problem.

Empathy can be a useful tool in helping you do that.

Some people may have had the experience of sitting in a wheelchair, trying to move around with their eyes closed, or training that builds an understanding of what it's like to live with a condition like dementia.

If we remember that this won't give us all the answers about what it's like to **be** someone, these can be useful exercises to build empathy.

One of the things to deal with when undertaking any of these sorts of exercises is to be aware of any fear you may experience about a particular impairment or health condition. This may be a natural response, but it won't usually help someone for you to show that you feel sorry for them. A better focus is on yourself — what difference you can make to how you interact with the person. That's the value of empathy — it should help you to demonstrate respect and create inclusive services.

Bearing in mind what we said about never really knowing exactly what it's like, but also the value of empathy, let's look at some of those experiences that some disabled passengers may have when they are using transport services — and how what we do can make them worse or help:

- Pain
- Fatigue
- Anxiety/a lack of confidence
- Confusion
- Distress

Many people live with chronic (ongoing) pain. They may have days that are better or worse, but for these people, physical pain is a feature of their lives for a long time. Chronic pain comes in different forms: musculoskeletal, such as chronic lower back pain; chronic neuropathic pain, caused by a nervous system dysfunction or disease; and chronic widespread pain, or fibromyalgia.



Chronic pain can mean that you tire much more easily than other people. Undertaking a journey can increase your pain and your exhaustion. Many people describe fatigue as a symptom of their condition.

Both pain and fatigue can be made worse by an uncomfortable, difficult journey or one that is longer or has more changes than planned because of delays. That's why transport services and the staff who deliver them need to think about these experiences when they plan and deliver services, including how they offer additional support to an individual.

Some people experience anxiety that is not directly related to or affected by travel. For some with an anxiety condition, travel will make their symptoms worse. Many disabled people with other conditions also experience a lack of confidence or anxiety specifically about travel — that it will worsen their pain or fatigue; that some part of their journey will be inaccessible, such as a vehicle or toilet being out of action, or assistance that has been booked not turning up, for example. They may be worried about how staff or other passengers will treat them. People with learning disabilities, for example, often face harassment, particularly on buses and trains.

Some people with learning disabilities, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment such as dementia, or some mental health conditions may feel confused and frightened if they can't access or understand information. This puts many people off travelling and many more off travelling independently, where with the right reliable information they could do so.

All these things can lead to acute distress for some people, including panic attacks. Some people experience distress for other reasons, but this can be made worse by travel challenges. People with some autism-spectrum conditions can have their senses overloaded by noise, crowds and bright or flashing lights. They may find this a huge barrier to independent travel, or to travelling at all.

These experiences may show themselves in how people behave, which may in turn have an impact on how you react to them. For example, some people who experience chronic pain say it often makes them grumpy or impatient. Some people who experience anxiety or distress can behave in ways that other people interpret as aggressive. Many people have had bad travel experiences in the past and may bring that experience to their interactions with transport staff when something else goes wrong. This is not to excuse rudeness or to say that disabled people who are aggressive or threatening to transport staff should not be dealt with in the same way as any other passenger. It is to explain where some passenger behaviours come from, and to explain that it is **rarely personal** to the member of staff who is on the receiving end.

You may experience or have experienced some of these things, and you may not have experienced them in exactly the way that has been described. That's the point of recognising that **everyone is different**.

**Related video content:** 'You feel that you're a person'

Hearing what some people's experience of disability is like won't mean that we know all about a particular disabled passenger's experiences, which is why the 'Ask' and 'Listen' parts of this training are so important. They can help us increase our awareness of what we should consider when we plan services or interact with any passenger.

# 3. Ask

Everyone in the transport industry has a part to play in understanding in general what disabled passengers might need, and what a particular passenger needs in order to travel in a dignified, safe and easy way.

For those with management responsibilities, the emphasis should be on knowing and understanding how to plan and run services in the most effective, safe, accessible and inclusive way.

Those interacting with individual passengers or designing interfaces that interact with passengers, such as websites or telephone scripts, need to be prepared, willing and able to ask the right questions to have the information needed.

# Why is it important to ask?

Individual passengers are the ones who can best tell you what they themselves need. It is important to avoid preconceptions and to be ready to listen and respond to the passenger you are dealing with at the time.

You might ask delegates to think about their specific role. What questions do they have about disability? How can they find the answers?

For those who interact directly with passengers, what forms of words do they use to ask people:

- Whether they need help
- What kind of assistance they need
- How best to communicate with them?

**Related video content:** 'A wall of silence'

Transport staff will need to think about **what they need to do** to react to or deal effectively with **what they have heard** about the passenger's needs or concerns.

# 4. Listen

## Why is listening important?

Asking the right questions of the right people is only half of the equation. You need to listen and respond to what people say.

**For those in management**, is a part of the job to regularly look at complaints and compliments? Is awareness of what people are saying on social media about the services important? How can people show they are listening?

**For those who interact directly with passengers**, how do you show someone that you understand and have heard what they are saying?

One technique is to summarise what someone has said in order to check you've understood and to make sure that the other person feels listened to, particularly if they have a complaint or have had a difficult journey.

Face-to-face staff should always consider whether there might be a need to inform managers about what passengers have said.

### Related video content:

'It gives me the choice'

Again, all transport staff will need to think about **what they need to do** to react to or deal effectively with **what they have heard** about the passenger's needs or concerns.

# REAL

## Real Passenger, Real Person

Respect  
Empathise  
Ask  
Listen

Whatever else your delegates take from this training, it's important to remember that disabled people are real passengers and real people. Delegates must remember to show them **respect**, to build **empathy** for experiences that they may not have had themselves, to **ask** what people need and want, and to **listen** and to show that they are listening.



**REAL**

Respect

**REAL**

Empathise

**REAL**

Ask

**REAL**

Listen

**REAL** Passenger **REAL** Person



Department  
for Transport