

Customer Service Staff Practical Support

Train the Trainer
Bus and Coach Modules



Customer Service Staff Practical Support

This module is specifically for **customer-facing staff** and relates to recognising and providing support to passengers who need assistance. It is best used alongside other modules in the package, to address specific issues for this group of staff. These include the core modules **What is Disability?, Inclusive Communication** and **Customer Service Face to Face**.

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Suggested timings are given below. Depending on delivery and delegate numbers, the content in this module could be delivered in 130–195 minutes.

Learning Objectives

1

Understanding the practical implications of supporting disabled passengers

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Sharing good practice with colleagues and the trainer about providing practical assistance

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3

Developing empathy and understanding for disabled passengers

Guidance to Accompany Slides

Focus on Barriers

Suggested timings: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand that thinking about the challenges and barriers disabled people face to travel will help to focus them on finding solutions.

Make sure that discussion covers both visible impairments and health conditions, and things that might not be immediately apparent.

Basic things such as getting a seat on a crowded bus or coach can be a big challenge for the many people who may not look disabled but struggle to stand for a variety of reasons.

Invisible disabilities can include sight or hearing loss, arthritis and other painful conditions and a wide range of mental health issues.

Passengers may have temporary impairments that don't mean they are 'disabled' in the meaning of the Equality Act 2010, but they still have rights to assistance under other regulations. For example, someone might have a broken limb or be heavily pregnant.

Remind staff that they need to be vigilant and watch out for people who might need assistance. Encourage empathy and understanding of how a poor travel experience can damage confidence and upset someone who may also face a range of other challenges and barriers in their everyday life.

Specific Challenges Linked to Particular Conditions

Suggested timings: 10 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand **good practice** in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to passengers with a wide range of conditions and who face a wide range of travel challenges and barriers.

Pose the question — how much do you know about providing support? Ask delegates to discuss this, in groups of two or three.

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Ask delegates to work in pairs and think about how confident they feel about identifying, approaching and providing practical assistance to people with a range of symptoms and/or travel challenges.

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Allow delegates to discuss the challenges of providing safe assistance (particularly if current social distancing rules are in place) and what they have learned about what works.

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You could introduce some of the REAL theme — Respect, Empathise, Ask, Listen — at this stage.

Mental Health

Suggested timings: 5 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand good practice in interacting with and providing practical assistance to people who experience acute and/or ongoing mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder and depression.

It is crucial that staff recognise that many people experience anxiety during travel, and that staff remain patient with repeated questions that may well be linked to anxiety.

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Disruption and delays are a particular problem and some people need face-to-face reassurance beyond the audio-visual announcements.

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Remind delegates that someone may have an obvious, visible impairment — of mobility, vision or hearing, for example — and also experience mental health challenges.

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To prepare for delivering on this topic, you may like to review this resource: www.mistral-bus.com/mental-health-training-tool-launched-uk-coach-drivers/.

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You can thank anyone who shares with colleagues insight from lived experience, either from professional or personal experience or from family or friends.

Anxiety

Suggested timings: 10–20 minutes

Purpose: To **ensure that delegates understand good practice** in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to people who experience acute and/or chronic anxiety.

Use the questions on the slide to facilitate discussion. Depending on numbers, you may wish to ask delegates to divide into pairs or threes to answer the questions initially, followed by feedback and whole-group discussion.

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You can thank anyone who shares with colleagues insight from lived experience, either from professional or personal experience or from family or friends.

Autism-spectrum conditions

Suggested timings: 15 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand **good practice** in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to someone with an autism-spectrum condition.

Use the questions on the slide to facilitate discussion. Depending on numbers, you may wish to ask delegates to divide into pairs or threes to answer the questions initially, followed by feedback and whole-group discussion.

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People with autism-spectrum conditions are very diverse. Not all neurodiverse people experience the same barriers while travelling and the same solutions will not necessarily work for all of them. Roughly half of those with autism-spectrum conditions also have learning disabilities or difficulties or cognitive impairments.

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Specific travel barriers include:

- Sensory overstimulation
- Physical proximity of (too many) other people
- Difficulties in obtaining information
- Lack of training of transport staff
- Anxiety and stress
- Issues relating to hidden disabilities
- Need for a particular type of seat
- Difficulties in accessing concessionary travel

On buses, people may feel trapped because they are only able to get off at designated stops. Buses can be crowded, making it difficult to move around or to find a quieter place.

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Many of the things that create stress for some people with autism-spectrum conditions are the same things that help other passengers. There may sometimes be conflicts. For example, many people with autism-spectrum conditions would prefer low lighting on a bus, whereas people with visual impairments may prefer bright directional light.

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You may want to prepare for delivering this session by learning more about autism-spectrum conditions. You can visit www.autism.org.uk and watch videos such as www.facebook.com/watch/?v=327161914601878 or www.autismspeaks.org/blog/5-activities-understand-autism.

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You can thank anyone who shares with colleagues insight from lived experience, either from professional or personal experience or from family or friends.

Dementia

Suggested timings: 15 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand good practice in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to someone with dementia.

Use the questions on the slide to facilitate discussion. Depending on numbers, you may wish to ask delegates to divide into pairs or threes to answer the questions initially, followed by feedback and whole-group discussion.

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You can thank anyone who shares with colleagues insight from lived experience, either from professional or personal experience or from family or friends.

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Practical things that can help include good signage, timetables in different formats, promoting the assistance available, a coin recognition chart and ensuring toilets are dementia friendly. You may need to take extra time to reassure passengers and to give them information clearly and simply, perhaps several times.

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Dementia Friends' advice for interacting with people who have forgotten where they are going, are on the wrong train or are wandering up and down a train or platform, perhaps looking for the toilet but not recognising the door is: Be Calm, Be Kind, Be Patient.

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You may want to find out more about dementia by visiting or watching videos, such as: **Dementia from the inside**.

Mobility Impairments

Suggested timings: 10 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand good practice in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to someone with a mobility impairment.

You can facilitate a whole-group discussion, then ask people for any insights to share with colleagues, either from professional or personal experience, such as interacting with family or friends.

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An example of a prompt is:

Do you feel confident about supporting someone with a condition such as rheumatoid arthritis that causes significant pain and sometimes a lack of mobility in the hands? If you are providing assistance you need to be aware that holding someone's arm may cause acute pain.

Providing Practical Assistance

Suggested timings: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: To **ensure that delegates understand good practice** in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to passengers with varying needs.

Encourage delegates to talk about their own experiences, share good practice and ask questions.

How to Push a Wheelchair

Suggested timings: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand good practice in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to someone who uses a manual wheelchair.

Ask delegates if they know anyone who uses a manual wheelchair. Have they ever provided assistance to someone who does? What sort of things should they think about?

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You can prompt with good practice guidance:

1. **Don't assume.** Many, if not most wheelchair users are not paralysed and can get up and walk a few steps if they need to. Don't assume the person can't understand you, can't hear you or needs your help. Try to view wheelchair users as what they are — regular people who happen to be using a different tool to get around.
2. **Speak directly to the wheelchair user.** Don't disrespect a wheelchair user by speaking to someone who is with them instead of them — especially not about them.
3. **Don't ask intrusive questions.** You don't need a full medical history. You just need to know what practical help they need. Ask.

4. **Don't touch someone's wheelchair until given permission to do so.** Most wheelchair users consider their wheelchair to be an extension of their own body, so avoid leaning on, pushing or otherwise handling their chair without their explicit permission.
5. **Don't bend down to speak to them.** Bending down to speak to a wheelchair user as you might to a child could be understood as patronising. If possible, step back so you can make eye contact and so the person doesn't need to look upwards, as that can be uncomfortable or impossible.

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You could show a video on this topic, such as: **10 Things You Must Know Before Pushing A Wheelchair.**

How to Guide a Visually Impaired Passenger

Suggested timings: 10–20 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates understand good practice in interacting with, and providing practical assistance to someone with a visual impairment.

You can present the material and then ask people for any insights to share with colleagues, either from professional or personal experience, such as interacting with family or friends.

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You could show a video on this topic, such as:

Guiding blind and partially sighted people - Giles or
Guiding blind and partially sighted people - Dolly.

Role Play

Suggested timings: 15 minutes

Purpose: To **develop confidence** in supporting a passenger who is angry or distressed, needs information on access issues, or with whom there is a substantial communication barrier.

Get people to work in pairs to explore how the disabled passenger might feel and react in each scenario and how the staff member could most helpfully respond.

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Your Role

Suggested timings: 5–20 minutes

Purpose: Depending on the time available, use this slide to **summarise key messages**, with an emphasis on the role of customer service staff, or to generate discussion.

This section can be used simply to summarise the key messages of the session (and other parts of a longer training session using other modules) or it can be used as a starting point for discussion.

REAL

Suggested timings: 5–20 minutes

Purpose: Depending on the time available, use this slide to **summarise key messages**, and remind people about the Respect, Empathise, Ask, Listen theme of the training.

You can use the train the trainer notes on REAL here and/or in other sections of the training.



REAL

Respect

REAL

Empathise

REAL

Ask

REAL

Listen

REAL Passenger **REAL** Person



Department
for Transport