

Customer Service Staff Practical Support

Train the Trainer
Rail 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 125–180 minutes.

Learning Objectives

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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

Recognising Passengers who Need Assistance

Suggested timings: 20–30 minutes

Purpose: To ensure that delegates **understand that many impairments and health conditions won't be immediately obvious** and that people face different types of barriers to travel.

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.

Allow around 10 minutes for pairs to discuss, a total of 10 minutes for feedback from each pair and then 10 minutes for whole-group discussion.

Basic things such as getting a seat on a crowded train can be a big challenge for the many people who may not look disabled but who 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 rail regulations. For example, someone might have a broken limb or be heavily pregnant.

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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.

Providing Safe Assistance

Suggested timings: 10 minutes

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

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

Anxiety

Suggested timings: 15 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 work in pairs or threes to answer the questions initially, followed by feedback and whole-group discussion.

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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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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 work in 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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Specific solutions:

- Use of quiet carriages
- Better vehicle maintenance to remove unnecessary noise
- Fewer microphones and only necessary announcements, e.g. next station, information about any delays and when the shop opens and closes and no sounds before announcements
- Full blinds available on windows
- Redesign of station concourses to avoid channelling passengers along corridors
- Training for all transport staff involving passengers with autism-spectrum conditions

- Consulting with, and hearing service feedback directly from people with autism-spectrum conditions
- Diagrams of train layout and the option to reserve a particular seat online for all trains.
- Concessionary rail travel available to people with autism-spectrum conditions and a companion
- Train information available in advance.

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 work in 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.

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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.

Being Dementia Friendly

Suggested timings: 10 minutes

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

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

Mobility Impairments

Suggested timings: 10 minutes

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

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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Prompts include:

- 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.
- Buffet staff will need to know that someone with arthritic hands may not be able to open packaging.

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, 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 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 on these two slides, 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.

Your Role

Suggested timings: 5–20 minutes

Purpose: Depending on the time available, 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 section 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**, 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