

## Helping people use our railways: empowerment and awareness

### Disabled People's Protection Policies

13 March 2014 Workshop

#### Opening remarks from Anna Walker, Chair, Office of Rail Regulation

Good afternoon, welcome to those who are just joining us and welcome back to those who were here this morning for very useful and robust conversation on passenger complaints handling.

As John has said, this afternoon we will be focussing on our work with Disabled People's Protection Policies, but more importantly looking at what is working in the current system and what more can be done within the existing licence and funding framework to empower passengers to make informed and confident choices when they use the railway.

It is a pleasure to welcome such a diverse group here this afternoon to have this conversation with us. We have present operators, rail users, and consumer and disability groups who represent them.

While we may all be considering this challenge from a number of different perspectives we do have a common goal: we all want to maximise use of the railway and help ensure it is delivering quality services to those that use or rely on it.

We acquired responsibility last year for approving train operators' Complaints Handling Procedures and Disabled Peoples Protection Policies from the Secretary of State, bringing the approval and enforcement functions together in one place. We want to hear your views today to help us in defining how we will be taking forward the work we have been asked to do.

Today we will be seeking your input in three specific areas.

First – what in the current system is working well? We know that there are over eleven million people with a limiting long term illness, impairment or disability in Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> How well are the provisions and systems in place to facilitate rail by these people working? We would like to hear your views and experiences. And particularly we would like to hear about examples of best practice and views on whether these can be implemented more widely.

Second – how can we ensure that train operators identify and deliver passenger assistance that specifically accounts for the wide range of needs

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<sup>1</sup> [Office of Disability Issues 2011/12 Source: Family Resources Survey\(DWP\)](#)

that people have? Particularly how can we – ORR – as the regulator – monitor operator performance, and what information might we need to assure us, and the public, that passenger assistance is working well? Today’s conversation will provide an opportunity to explore this issue.

Thirdly – what can industry do to raise awareness?

We have recently commissioned research into disabled people’s awareness of assistance available when they travel by train. The results of this research are summarised in your delegate pack and we will be publishing a fuller report shortly.

The research told us that of the 350 disabled people surveyed only 10% had seen, heard or read information from train operators about disabled passengers’ rights to assistance. 70% of respondents were unaware of any type of specific scheme to help disabled people and, when we explained the Passenger Assist service, only 9% of respondents had heard of this before.

We would like to hear your views on what more could be done to improve awareness of the assistance available.

Through all of this we would like to encourage discussion of how collaboration can lead to better outcomes. We know the experiences of people in this room, both in using rail services and delivering them, can provide insight into how we can all work together to build on best practice and further improve the travel experience for disabled people.

We welcome the opportunity today to encourage robust debate on what improvements could be made, what is working well and what industry should be doing more of and how, collectively, we can unlock greater potential for travel and give all travellers the tools they need to make confident journey choices.

To help explore some of these issues it is my pleasure to welcome Dr. Alice Maynard.

Dr Maynard is the founder and managing director of Future Inclusion and has significant experience working in the transport industry. She served as Head of Disability Strategy for Network Rail from 1998 to 2003 and is currently chair of Transport for London’s Independent Disability Advisory Group and a member of the Roads Taskforce. She has also provided advice on inclusion issues to HS2 and Crossrail.

Please join me in welcoming Dr Maynard.

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