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12th April 2019

Dear Marcus

Compliance with Condition 5 of your Station Licence and GB Statement of National Regulatory Provisions: Passenger.

Thank you for your letter dated 26th March. I was most concerned to read your findings, and I hope that this response reassures you that, as stated in our Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP), Northern are fully committed to providing an Assisted Travel service for any customers requiring assistance for boarding and alighting trains and moving through our staffed stations. I also believe it shows that we are fully compliant with Condition 5.

I note the figures you quote for 2017/18 based on your research results. As you state in the footnote of your letter, the sample size was 233. Our actual recorded results show a different picture, and I hope you will agree this clearly demonstrates compliance.

This rail year Northern received over 43,000 requests for assisted travel, and during this time we received a total of 77 complaints in relation to the failure to provide the assistance as booked. This is a figure of less than 1%.

The breakdown of these 77 complaints is as follows:

- 48 complaints (62.3% of the total) were raised as result of disruption and the service not arriving as planned.
 - There are many factors that impact pre-booked assistance when disruption occurs, including last minute platform changes and lack of staff availability due to unexpected booking clashes as a result of the disruption.
 - Considering the impact of the May timetable and the amount of disruption suffered by Northern passengers as a result, we believe this clearly indicates that our recovery plans are effective. Our customer experience centre (CEC) proactively contact customers where a known disruption is going to occur and amend bookings, or provide accessible taxi's. This significantly reduces the potential impact to our customers.
 - In some instance passengers take alternative services to the original planned booking and Northern can only act on this if notified by the transporting TOC.
- 15 (19.4%) complaints related to a lack of staff availability. Disruption is the major factor, plus the national system does not restrict the number of bookings at our stations. Therefore, a number of assistance requests for the same date and time can occur. Wherever possible we do provide additional staffing to support the existing staff and 15 Complaints from over 43,000 assisted journeys would indicate in most circumstances this is effective.

- 6 complaints were generated as the customer arrived late at the station and therefore it was not possible for Northern to deliver the pre-booked assistance.
- 5 complaints related to lack of space/capacity on the service in question. Unfortunately, Northern operate a walk up and walk off service on first come first served basis and only have a limited number of accessible spaces on each of our units. These cannot currently be reserved. If a member of train encounters this issue an accessible taxi is provided by our control team.

As previously stated, we take passenger assistance very seriously indeed and receive a relatively very small number of complaints. We are certainly not complacent and we are always looking improve further. When the Northern customer relations team received any complaint in relation to failed assistance the case is thoroughly investigated with the operational team and highlighted to the senior management responsible of our assistance teams. Any learnings are shared with the wider business.

I'd be more than happy to meet and discuss further.

Kind Regards



Martin Howard
Head of Customer Experience