



Department for Transport

Kamran Mallick
CEO
Disability Rights UK
Plexal (City) Ltd, 14 East Bay Lane
The Press Centre, Here East
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park
London, E20 3BS

From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: mark.harper@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

Our Ref: MC/424193

2 May 2023

Dear Kamran,

Thank you for your letter of 3 March, about railway staffing and the impact on disabled passengers on the railways.

The Plan for Rail outlines the changes needed to simplify and improve the passenger experience plus achieve a railway that is both financially and operationally sustainable.

Passengers should have access to a ticketing system which is user-friendly, where help and advice from a trained representative is available and is accessible to all. To do this, we want to move staff from behind the ticket office screens to help passengers wherever they are at the station and so to provide a better customer service. We have been clear that no currently staffed stations will become unstaffed as a result of this reform.

The Department pays due regard to equality issues when forming and delivering new policy, in line with the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. We have been engaging closely with the rail industry as they develop their staffing and retailing reforms and have been working with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee and passenger advocacy groups to ensure any impact on passengers is considered and mitigated where possible.

Passengers continue to have access to services such as the passenger assist scheme and are now able to pre-book their assistance up to two hours in advance of their journey, at any time of the day. All station operators must continue to establish and comply with an Accessible Travel Policy, ensuring the stations they manage are safe, secure and accessible.

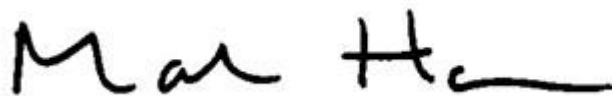
We are also developing the National Rail Accessibility Strategy which will provide industry with a cohesive, system-wide approach to delivering improvements in accessibility for both customers and staff.

Regarding the staffing on stations and on trains, Driver-Only Operation trains have operated safely in the UK for many years, and the Office of Rail and Road has approved this approach. The UK's rail network is one of the safest in Europe and our commitment to safety will not change; it remains a top priority for all parties. The proposed reforms intend to provide greater flexibility for operators to deploy staff in multiskilled customer-facing roles; they will be able to deliver more assistance to passengers with additional needs, where and when it is most needed.

The Plan for Rail sets out ambitions for station operators to roll out digital ticketing and the Department will work with industry to ensure the needs of all users are considered when determining how to move forward with rail ticketing. Physical tickets remain available for passengers to purchase.

Thank you again for your correspondence and for raising your concerns. We hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT