

Rica Passenger Assist longitudinal study – Year 1 report

Rica is a national consumer research organisation focusing on the needs of disabled consumers. We research and publish free, practical consumer reports based on rigorous research and carry out commissioned research work with manufacturers, service providers, regulators and policy makers to improve products and services. Our aim is to increase their awareness of the needs of disabled and older consumers through specialist research.

The research reported in this document was carried out for ATOC between April 2014 and March 2015.

1 Executive summary

This study follows 51 disabled passengers making journeys with booked assistance across the national rail network. Passengers reported on all aspects of their journey from booking to leaving their destination station, evaluating the usefulness and accessibility of each stage of the journey. Each passenger was expected to complete 10 journeys in the year.

The objective of the study is to establish levels of satisfaction with the Passenger Assistance service and track possible changes over time.

It is a two year study and this report details findings from the first year.

1.1 Year 1 findings

1.1.1 Recruitment

- 51 People were recruited to the study. Of these 41 completed 10 journeys during year 1.

1.1.2 Journeys made

- 474 journeys were made during year 1.
- 205 of these were made by passengers with a mobility impairment, in 189 cases requiring a ramp to get on/off the train.
- 140 journeys were made by people with a visual impairment.
- 21 journeys were made by people with a learning disability.
- 20 journeys were made by people with a hearing impairment.

- Journeys were spread across operating companies; no journeys were reported on c2c or CrossCountry services (operating companies are identified from departure and arrival stations, so it is possible some journeys involved CrossCountry services); it is hoped that passengers will be recruited for the second year of the study who use these operators (see 2.4).

1.1.3 Booking

- Booking is done chiefly by phone (phone: 70%; online: 18%; in person: 12%).
- Passengers are largely satisfied with booking (on 92% of journeys, the passenger felt the booking agent had understood their requirements).
- In 12% of journeys the passenger did not receive a booking confirmation.

1.1.4 Information

- Passengers find it easy to find information on routes and times (84%), but less so on facilities (68%) and accessibility (65%).

1.1.5 Assistance received

- Over all, on 90% of journeys the passenger received all or some of the assistance they had booked. There is little variation in this proportion with time.
- Assistance on to the train was mostly provided when it was needed (92% of journeys); assistance to the seat less so (77%).
- Interchanges were mostly successful (booked assistance was received on 86% of journeys).
- Assistance getting off the train was provided on only 78% of journeys; where a ramp was required this was provided on 93% of journeys.

1.1.6 Satisfaction

- Staff behaviour was rated highly. Booking staff received 80% satisfaction rating, station staff 70% and on train staff 60%
- 69% of journeys were rated as good or very good.
- On 59% of journeys passengers felt confident or very confident.
- Older passengers are less likely to feel confident, as are passengers with learning disabilities.

1.2 Next steps

41 participants have been signed up for year 2 of this study. A further 9 are being recruited to ensure coverage of underrepresented operating companies.

The study will continue until April 2016 with quarterly reports and a final report in May 2016.



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2 Method

2.1 Background

Passenger Assist is the system used to book assistance for people with temporary or permanent disabilities who need extra help to access any part of a train journey across the National Rail network. Passenger Assist is owned and managed by ATOC, and utilised by the TOC and Network Rail assisted travel centres and some stations. Passengers can book assistance by phone, online or in person at rail stations. National Rail recommends that passengers book assistance at least 24 hours before they travel.

Following enhancements to the Passenger Assist booking system in 2012 ATOC decided that an evaluation of passenger experience would be useful. ATOC commissioned Rica to carry out a longitudinal study to find out more about passengers' experiences of pre-booked assistance, and to highlight what areas are working well and where improvements could be made.

The study is designed to follow 50 passengers each making 10 journeys (with booked assistance) each year for two years. Passengers are asked to complete a questionnaire on their experience of each journey (see [Appendix A](#)).

As an incentive for recording their experiences (on journeys they would have made anyway), passengers are awarded £50 of rail travel vouchers at the end of each year, subject to their having reported 10 journeys in the year. Additionally, all passengers who have completed 10 journeys in a year are entered into a prize draw to win first class rail travel for two to any destination on the UK mainland.

2.2 Sampling and recruitment

Participants for the study were recruited with the help of the Disabled Persons Railcard (DPRC) and Senior Railcard (SRC). Emails were sent to 5,000 DPRC and SRC holders asking them if they would like to take part in the research. Interested railcard holders could visit a website to fill in a recruitment questionnaire (see [Appendix B](#)).

The recruitment questionnaire asked questions about passengers' disability and their assistance requirements, and about how often they use the Passenger Assist service. In principle, this allowed Rica to select a sample of respondents to ensure that all disability groups and passenger types were represented.

Table 1 Recruitment to the study

Invited to register interest	Registered interest	Contacted	Recruited
5,000	600	516	68

In practice take up was very low (see Table 1) and in the end almost all passengers that had registered an interest were contacted. Of these 68 were recruited to the study

The 68 participants recruited at this stage had the disabilities shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Reasons for needing assistance

Mobility	35
Vision	15
Learning	8
Hearing	5
Communication	4
Behavioural (ASD)	1

2.3 Methodological difficulties

Recruitment to this project presented some difficulties. As noted above, the poor response rate made it impossible to select the sample as we would have liked. Furthermore, the requirement on participants is quite arduous, and consequently not all of the 68 recruited participants completed all (or indeed any) journeys. Table 3 shows that of the 68 participants recruited only 41 completed 10 journeys in the first year.

Table 3 Active users

Recruited	Reported at least one journey	Reported 10 journeys
68	51	41

The difficulty in recruitment also caused a delay in starting for many participants, so the journeys are not spread evenly through the year. This effect should be reduced in the second year.

As well as not being able to select participants by disability group, we were also unable to select by location, which has meant that some Operating Companies are underrepresented and c2c and CrossCountry are completely absent from the findings (no participants made

journeys using their services). In the case of CrossCountry this is because they do not manage any stations. We are working with both of these train operators to try to rectify the situation with some targeted recruitment in Year 2.

The poor response rate may be in part due to the incentive not being high enough. Those participants who were successfully recruited (and who carried out all 10 journeys in the year) mostly did so because they are regular rail travellers who want to register their views about the Passenger Assist service. It may be that people who did not have this additional motivation to take part felt it was too heavy a commitment to make 10 journeys in a year before receiving the incentive payment.

2.4 Year 2

This report covers the first year of the study – from April 2014 to March 2015. The study is continuing to the end of March 2016. 36 of the year 1 participants have been recruited for the second year; which is a good retention rate in view of the commitment levels required. The remainder of the participants will be recruited from the Rica research panel and from our contacts with disability groups, with a particular focus on those making journeys with the TOCs who were absent from the Year 1 data.

2.5 Reporting

During year 1, quarterly reports were produced which gave summary figures for the questionnaire results. This report gives more detail about the background to the project and reports and interprets the results given in the quarterly reports.

Year 2 will follow the same pattern: cumulative quarterly reports will be produced at the end of June, September, December and March and a final report during April 2016.

3 Findings

3.1 Journeys made

During year 1, 474 journeys were reported on, carried out by 51 passengers (each leg of a return trip counts as a single journey). Table 4 summarises the types of assistance that were booked for these journeys (the numbers sum to much more than 474 because many passengers booked more than one kind of assistance). Because of the nature of the sample, the majority of cases involved a mobility or visual impairment.

Table 4 Assistance required

Have a mobility impairment	205
Would need a ramp to get on the train	189
Would be using a wheelchair	166
Am visually impaired	140
Would be using a mobility scooter	36
Would need a wheelchair provided	29
Have a learning disability	21
Am hearing impaired	20
Would be transferring to a seat from a wheelchair	17
Have a different physical impairment	12
Have an age-related impairment	11

A previous study on disabled passengers who travel without booking assistance (*Disabled passengers who 'turn up and go'*. Rica November 2014) found that many prefer not to have to book unless they have to. Passengers who use a wheelchair and consequently require a ramp to access the train are less able to travel without booking assistance than those who don't.

Table 5 shows the number of journeys each month. As noted above, participants were slow to start because of the difficulties of recruitment. Highest numbers of journeys were made during October-December.

Table 5 Number of journeys each month

March 2014	3
April 2014	2
May 2014	3
June 2014	26
July 2014	27
August 2014	41
September 2014	50
October 2014	68
November 2014	65
December 2014	69
January 2015	35
February 2015	45

March 2015	40
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Of the 474 journeys, 397 were exactly as booked. In 58 cases the passenger travelled on a different train from the one booked, in 17 cases they travelled through different stations and in 9 cases the booked train was cancelled (in some cases more than one of these conditions applied).

Table 6 shows the total number of journeys starting and ending at stations operated by each TOC. It shows all journeys and only those where the booked journey was made.

Table 6 Station operator total journeys

	all journeys		booked journeys only	
	departures	arrivals	departures	arrivals
Abellio Greater Anglia	9	9	8	8
Arriva Trains Wales	14	13	14	12
Chiltern Railways	7	7	7	7
East Coast	13	16	8	14
East Midlands Trains	27	23	24	19
First Great Western	60	59	52	55
First TransPennine Express	16	13	15	9
Great Northern	6	6	4	4
London Midland	26	27	23	21
London Overground	1	2	1	2
London Underground	6	4	3	1
Network Rail	136	150	112	125
Northern Rail	18	22	12	20
ScotRail	8	11	5	9
South West Trains	20	19	15	14
Southeastern	13	14	13	12
Southern	44	30	38	23
Thameslink	6	7	5	3
Virgin Trains	44	42	38	39
Total	474	474	397	397

Most journeys were direct, though 137 had at least one interchange.

Table 7 Number of interchanges

direct journeys	1 interchange	2 interchanges	3 interchanges	4 interchanges
337	84	39	13	1

3.2 Satisfaction/success

3.2.1 Booking

Most journeys were booked by phone. It is possible to book travel assistance online, though many travellers may not know about this service, or be able to access it. For many passengers it is more reassuring to make a booking with a person, because you know then that it has been made successfully. 55 journeys were booked in person at a station.

Table 8 How journeys were booked

By telephone	333	70%
Online	86	18%
In person at the station	55	12%
	474	100%

Not all passengers were asked their name on booking – see Table 9. It's not clear why. Most of the bookings where the passengers was not asked their name were made at ticket offices, which may explain this pattern. Even more puzzling is that in 65 cases passengers weren't asked about routes and times for their journey. It may be that respondents are misinterpreting the question.

Disabled travellers welcome the fact that their details can be stored, so that they don't have to specify their assistance requirements every time they book a journey. They also prefer booking agents to focus on their requirements, rather than on the specifics of their disability (see Table 13).

Table 9 Information requested on booking

Name	90%
Route and times	86%
Requirements	83%
How arriving at / leaving station	77%
Nature of disability	58%

Table 10 shows the information supplied to passengers about their booking. Most received a booking reference and ¾ were advised to arrive at the departure station in plenty of time. Less than half received a seat reservation and less than one third were told how to find staff at the departure station.

Table 10 Information provided by booking staff

Gave booking reference	83%
Advised you to arrive early	74%
Advised you to find staff	56%
Gave seat/wheelchair reservation	46%
Explained where/how to find staff	29%

Most travellers received a booking confirmation:

Table 11 Booking confirmation received

Yes	88%
No	12%

Respondents were mostly satisfied that the booking agent understood their needs:

Table 12 Did you feel the booking agent understood your requirements?

Yes	92%
No	8%

Table 13 shows some negative and positive comments on the booking process. Negative comments have been classified into nine groups, positive comments into three. The quotations provide examples of each group and the numbers show how many comments were received in each group.

Table 13 Comments on the booking process – types and numbers received

Negative comments	
Booking process- incorrect booking, unable to book, told may not receive assistance, not take enough info <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “the booking was awful - first they booked me onto the wrong train, when I rang up to correct it they sent me a new booking which omitted any seats” 	30
Staff awareness- miscommunication between staff, slow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Every time I ask where to meet staff or tell the booking agent where I will meet staff but this is not transferred to the booking itself and the staff when you find them or they meet you never have that information on the paperwork” 	17
Staff manner- unhelpful, no verbal information about booking given <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “the booking agent gave me no information he sent it by email” 	15
Seating- didn't provide seat, given inappropriate seat, difficulty to book	13

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I asked and booked a seat with a large table and got a small table + no leg room” 	
<p>Not sent all/any booking information eg PA number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Although I received a confirmation from Passenger Assistance, I also usually get separate confirmations from Southern regarding both the outward and return journeys, this time I only received a confirmation about the return part of the journey.” 	13
<p>Slow booking process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It took quite a long time for the call to be connected to an agent” 	8
<p>Staff availability- no information on where to find, staff never arrived</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As usual no information given or available of how to find staff when getting there by yourself as a blind person. telling blind people to just find staff is not useful as if you can't see you can't do this! No information on meeting points given or available” 	8
<p>Over the phone not as accurate as when book in person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Ticket office you can see person taking notes whereas over the phone it seems to take much much longer” 	3
<p>Website- can't book single journey assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The on line form requires return journey to be entered even if only travelling one way otherwise you can't submit form” 	1
Positive comments	
<p>Staff manner- helpful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Due to unforeseen circumstances I had to travel back a day earlier, re-booked the travel arrangements same day. Customer services rung the stations at all points to let them know about my revised travel arrangements.” 	38
<p>Records held personal info- positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It is good that they keep records making booking easy and straightforward” 	14
<p>Impressed could book all online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I was impressed that the booking was carried out entirely online, without any need for phone calls” 	7

3.2.2 Getting information before travelling

Passengers found it relatively easy to get information on routes and times before travelling. Information on facilities and accessibility was harder to find (see Table 14, Figure 1).

Table 14 Passengers finding it easy/very easy to find information before travelling

Routes and times	84%
Facilities	68%
Accessibility	65%

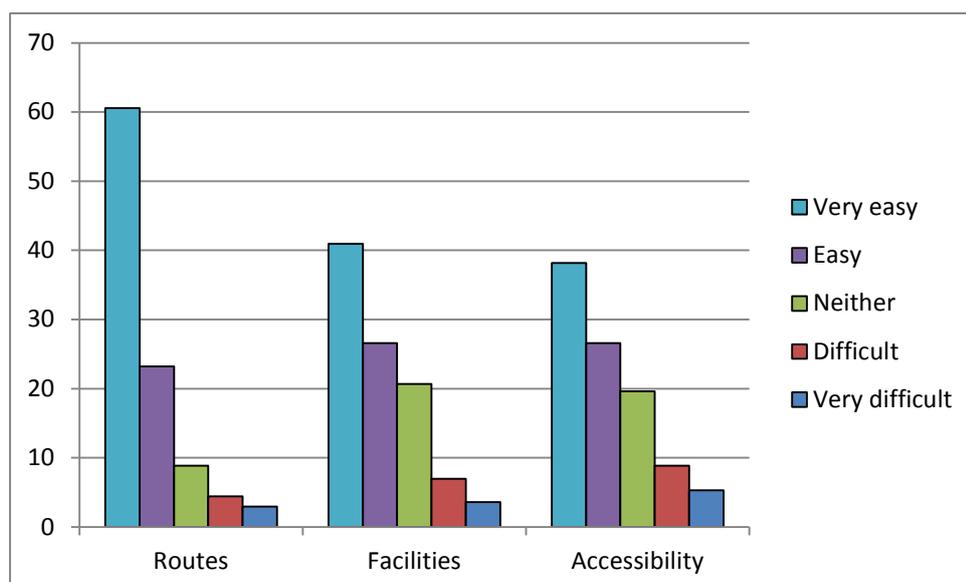
Figure 1 Ease of finding information on routes & times, facilities and accessibility

Table 15 shows some comments on why participants found the accessibility of information sources difficult or very difficult (some positive comments are included as participants found accessibility of some information sources easier than others). Negative comments have been classified into nine groups, positive comments into two. The quotations provide examples of each group and the numbers show how many comments were received in each group.

Table 15 Comments on the accessibility of information sources – types and numbers received

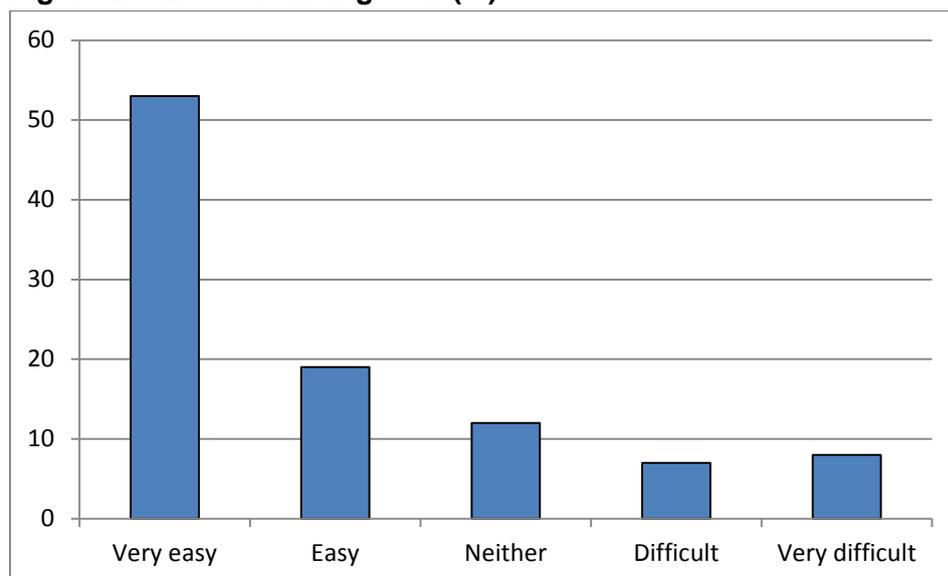
Negative comments	
Website-lacked information, hard to use, not up to date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The information on websites was either not there or hard to find and not offered by telephone staff” “Long winded/over complicated websites” 	32
Staff- unhelpful or none <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The station booked assistance but no staff found- was told someone would meet but was no staff to meet” 	22
No useful information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “No useful information about steepness of ramp access between station and street. Discovered a steep ramp between platform and forecourt.” 	9
Phone problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “do not allow you to book over the internet has to be by phone and there is not one central number but each company has its own number” 	8
Knew station so found easy- but would be difficult for someone unfamiliar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Know the station well. Would be confusing for those not used to it” 	5
Lack signage	5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “There is good ramped access direct from car park to platform, but only if you know it is there. Ticket Hall only gives access to platform by steps. There are no signs to indicate where/how to get to disabled access point.” 	
<p>Inconsistent information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The website did not work and the times and prices quoted by phone were different what I had previously found on the website. accessibility phone number was incorrect and took me to national rail enquiries” 	5
<p>Station complex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Difficult due to many possible entrances and uncertainty over passenger lifts being both in working order. A stranger to the station would struggle” 	4
<p>Not provided with information when booked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We weren’t provided with facilities information or accessibility information when we booked our assistance” 	3
Positive comments	
<p>Staff- helpful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Helped to read the train board on which platform etc by train employees. Very good” 	6
<p>Website- station information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “National rail website is excellent for all of this, I love the "stations made easy" - really helps to plan my journey” 	1

The most common class of negative comment concern the inaccessibility of information websites. There was one positive comment about the National Rail Website. The next most common concerns the availability of staff at stations.

3.2.3 At the departure station

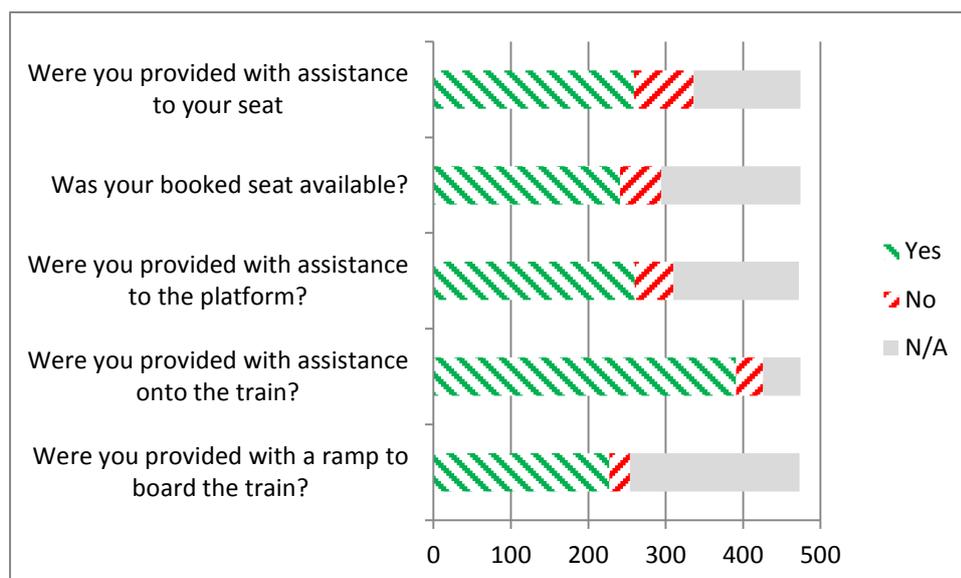
On 72% of journeys (341), passengers found it easy or very easy to find staff at the departure station. Most of these found it very easy.

Figure 2 Ease of finding staff (%)

On 82% of journeys (388), staff were aware of the passengers booking, and on 61% of journeys (291) they confirmed the details with the passenger. Passengers felt that staff understood their requirements well or very well on 74% of journeys.

- On 50 of the 310 journeys where passengers needed assistance to the platform, they didn't receive it (=16%).
- Assistance onto the train was not received on 35 of the 426 journeys when it was needed (=8%).
- A ramp to board the train was not provided on 27 of the 254 journeys when it was needed (=11%).
- Assistance to the seat was not provided on 77 of the 336 journeys when it was needed (=23%).
- The booked seat/wheelchair space was not available on 53 of the 294 journeys where a booking had been made (=18%).

Figure 3 Getting assistance on departure



Comments on assistance provided on departure are shown in Table 16. Negative comments have been classified into six groups, positive comments into three. The quotations provide examples of each group and the numbers show how many comments were received in each group.

Table 16 Comments on boarding the train – types and numbers received

Negative comments	
Seating/space- not available, unsuitable, had to move passengers or luggage, no assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “There were also two buggies parked in the wheelchair space I had booked. The train manager had to ask them to move - this took some time. The buggies were then parked in the area that is supposed to be left free for access. I needed the toilet but decided it was going to be too difficult to try to get the buggies moved” 	69
Staff information- miscommunication of info, didn't have info, forgot about passenger, unhelpful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The staff had no information on my seat and didn't take me to the booked one” “When booking assistance, I explained that I had a First Class ticket and this was added to the booking. However, the staff put me in Standard Class and did not show me to a seat despite my visual disability” 	23
Staff availability- none around, difficult to find, didn't turn up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “reliant on a member of the public to help” “No assistance with ramps onto the train despite requesting this at the booking office and being promised that someone would be down to meet me with the ramps to put me on the train” 	22
Staff manner- rude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “staff member providing assistance was rude and when I asked if 	11

they would mind ringing ahead to Brighton to let them know my exact location on the train so that they could meet me with the ramps at my carriage I was told “Don’t tell me how to do my job”.”	
Access- limited space, no ramp, no information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “because of fixed litter bin in lobby; risk of damaging chair” 	10
No or limited access to assistance alarm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Sometimes I am left without access to this alarm or without an alarm at all in the wheelchair space, this leaves me feeling very vulnerable especially when I am traveling by myself” 	3
Positive comments	
Staff manner- helpful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The ramp was there waiting for me and the staff excellent in the way they helped me” “It is pleasant to get on the train before the main boarding so much easier with my dog etc. very pleased with that service” 	57
Seating- access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Boarded train before other passengers, no luggage in space” 	8
General positive experience	6

3.2.4 On the train

Trains are not always staffed. When they are, passengers may not see on train staff during their journey. On train staff are not generally responsible for helping disabled passengers on and off trains although some trains carry ramps on board, and on train staff deploy these to allow wheelchair using passengers off the train, either routinely or in the event of platform staff being unavailable. Nevertheless onboard staff do generally make themselves known to disabled passengers and check that they are sitting where they need to be, and arrangements are in place to help them off the train at their destination.

Table 17 – Table 19 show for each journey whether on train staff were present (according to the passenger), made themselves known and offered assistance. In nearly two thirds of cases where a member of staff was present they made themselves known and in over two thirds of those cases they provided assistance.

Table 17 Was there a staff member on the train (apart from the driver)?

Yes	77%
No	7%
Don’t know	16%

Table 18 If yes, did they make themselves known to you?

	All cases	Staffed trains only
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Yes	54%	65%
No	31%	35%
N/A	15%	

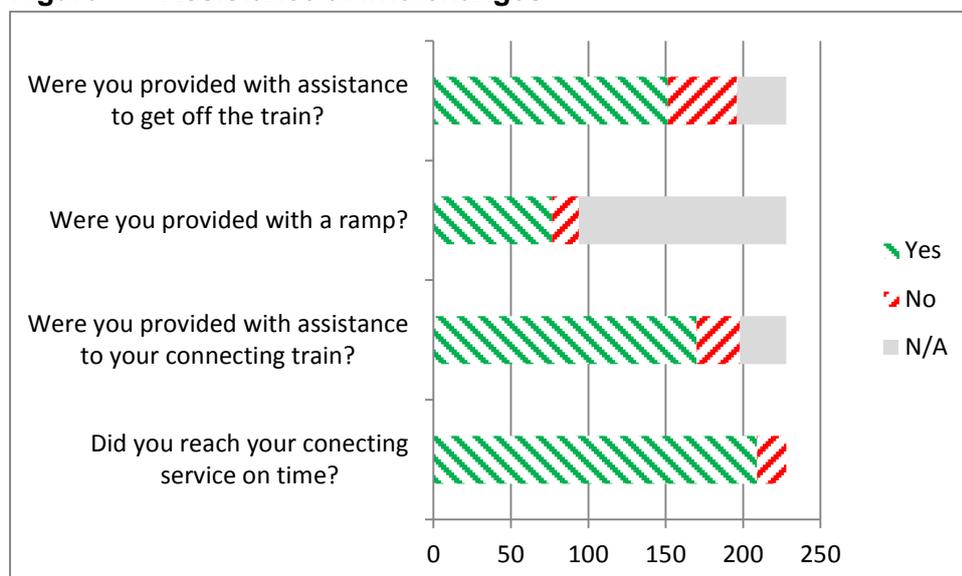
Table 19 Were you able to get assistance from them?

	All cases	Staffed trains only
Yes	42%	68%
No	21%	32%
N/A	37%	

3.2.5 Interchanges

When changing trains it is particularly important that booked assistance is available. There were over 200 interchanges in the study and of these most (92%) were successful. Figure 4 shows, however, that in a small minority of cases (19) the connecting service was missed. Inspection of the comments on this question shows that most of these failures were caused by the late running of the earlier service. Only three cases seem to have been caused by a failure in providing assistance.

Figure 4 Assistance at interchanges

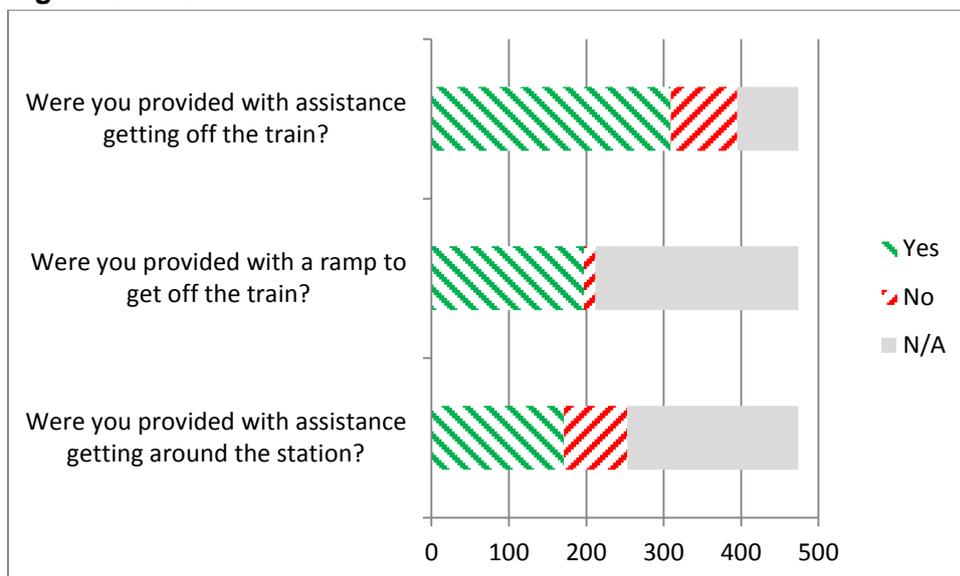


3.2.6 At the arrival station

- On 86 of the 395 journeys where passengers needed assistance getting off the train, they didn't receive it (=22%).

- A ramp was not provided to get the passenger off the train on 15 of the 212 journeys when it was needed (=7%).
- Assistance through the station was not provided on 82 of the 253 journeys when it was needed (=32%).

Figure 5 Assistance at arrival station



When booked assistance did arrive it did so within 5 minutes in 282 cases (=95%). In 15 cases (5%) it took longer than 5 minutes.

Table 20 shows some negative and positive comments on the experience at arrival stations. Negative comments have been classified into five groups, positive comments into two. The quotations provide examples of each group and the numbers show how many comments were received in each group.

Table 20 Comments on the arrival station – types and numbers received

Negative comments	
Staff availability- none, didn't turn up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I had booked ramps, buggy and luggage assistance at Euston station. We waited for nearly 10mins and no one came. Eventually we had to struggle to get the wheelchair off and myself without Ramps or assistance” • “Nobody came to help me at Glasgow Central. I was stuck on the train so long it was assumed all passengers had alighted and I kept having to press the 'Open' button to keep the doors from closing on me as I was worried they might lock with me still on board. Eventually my daughter came running up the platform; if I wasn't being met I don't know what I would have done in what seemed like a complete absence of staff either on the train or on the platform.” 	56

Staff information- miscommunication, late, forgot about passenger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Euston had not phoned through to Tamworth to tell them that I was on the train which resulted in no ramp availability. There is a large drop from the train to the platform at Tamworth which made it very difficult to get my wheelchair off and me using my crutches on our own.” “The assistance buggy man had been dispatched to the wrong platform. The train staff therefore had to phone for assistance and get the ramps themselves to get me off the train.” 	45
Access- incorrect ramp, station <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “they didn't have the right ramp for the right train” 	17
Staff manner- rude, unhelpful, slow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “didn't seem that bothered or apologetic that we had such a struggle to get off the train in time” 	13
Lack of/incorrect announcements, displays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “This was very difficult because the announcements on the train were wrong, and I got off the train at the wrong station. I had to change platforms and travel back one stop. no assistance was available.” 	5
Positive comments	
Staff manner- helpful, assistance arrived <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The gentleman who met me on the platform was VERY efficient. He appeared to have had proper training in guidance for a visually impaired client. He walked at a good speed, asked if I wanted to use lifts and was cautious on stairs. He helped me to find a taxi. He was polite and made that part of the journey really easy” “Staff & ramp ready & waiting” 	84
Familiarity- with station/process so didn't need assistance	5

3.2.7 Overall success

Table 21 shows the proportion of passengers who received the assistance they booked. It includes passengers who made a different journey from the one they had booked. Table 22 shows the same proportion, but excludes journeys that differed from the journey booked (74 journeys).

Table 21 Journey assistance received

Received all booked assistance	297	63%
Received some booked assistance	131	27%
Received no part of booked assistance	46	10%

Table 22 Booked journey assistance received

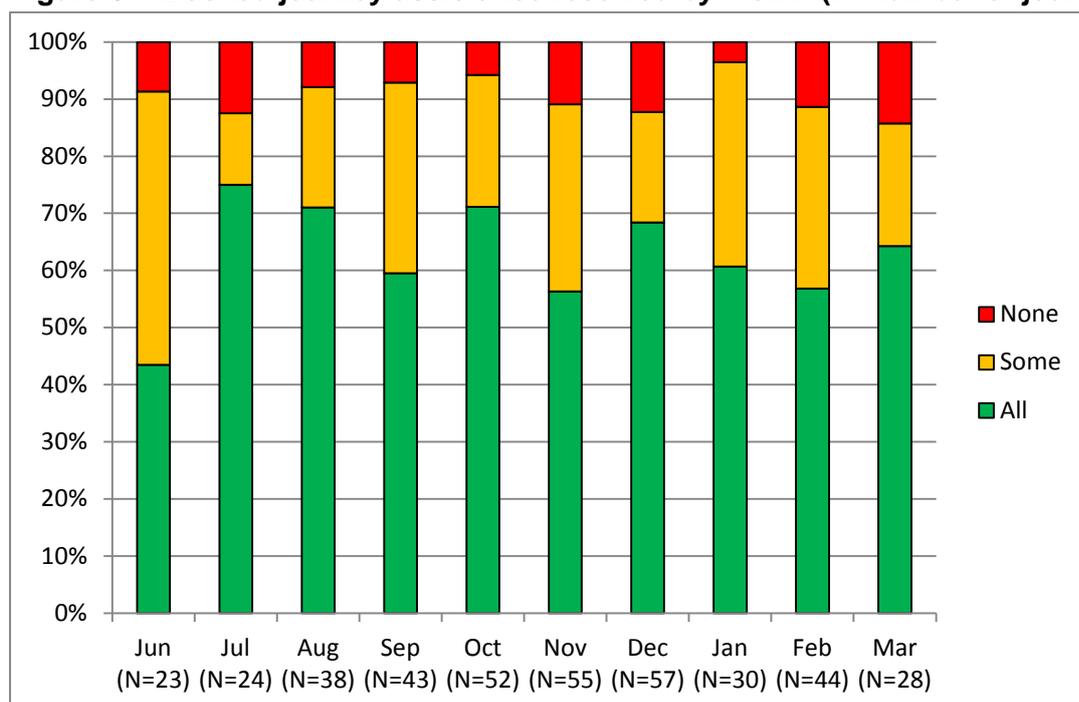
Received all booked assistance	252	63%
Received some booked assistance	107	27%

Received no part of booked assistance	38	10%
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Figure 6 shows the proportion of journeys where the booked assistance was received by month. Again, journeys where the booked journey was not made are excluded. Months before June are also omitted since the numbers of journeys were small.

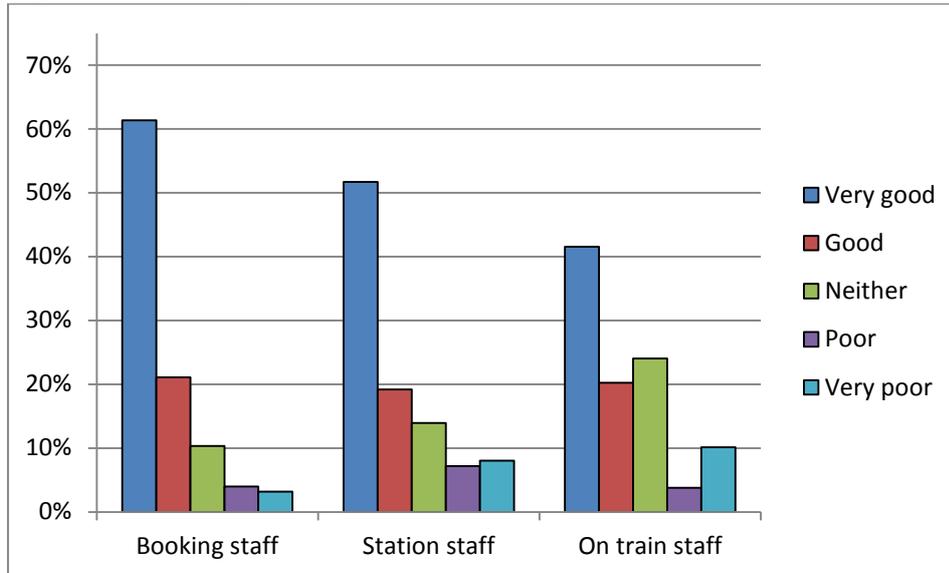
Most passengers receive some of the assistance they have booked.

Figure 6 Booked journey assistance received by month (N=number of journeys)



On the whole, passengers were pleased with staff behaviour (Figure 7). Booking staff performed best, on train staff least well.

Figure 7 Perceptions of staff behaviour



Over two thirds of journeys were rated as good or very good. However, there are still 82 journeys that were rated as poor or very poor. Passengers reported feeling confident or very confident on just under two thirds of journeys; on 109 journeys passengers felt anxious or very anxious.

Figure 8 Overall, how would you rate the assistance you received on this journey?

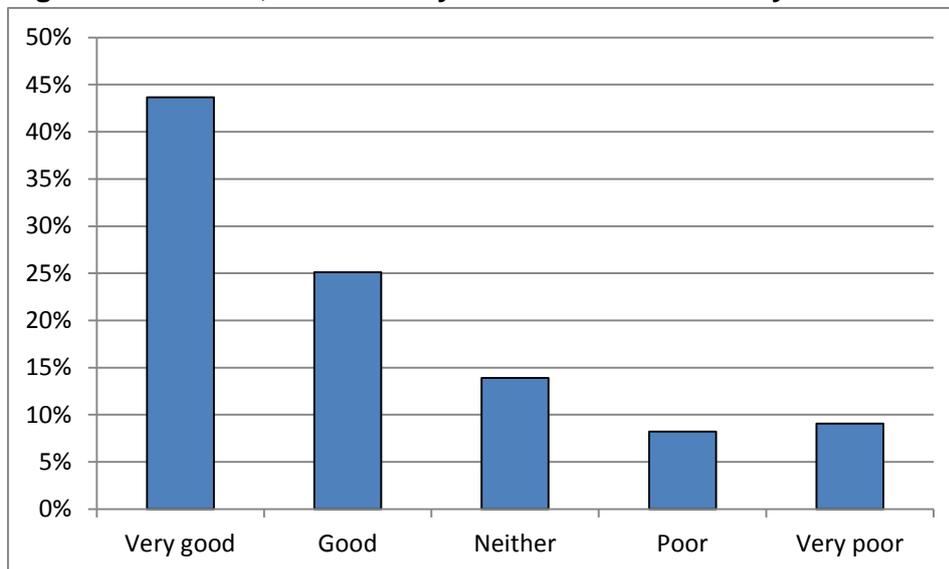


Figure 9 How confident or anxious did you feel while making this journey?

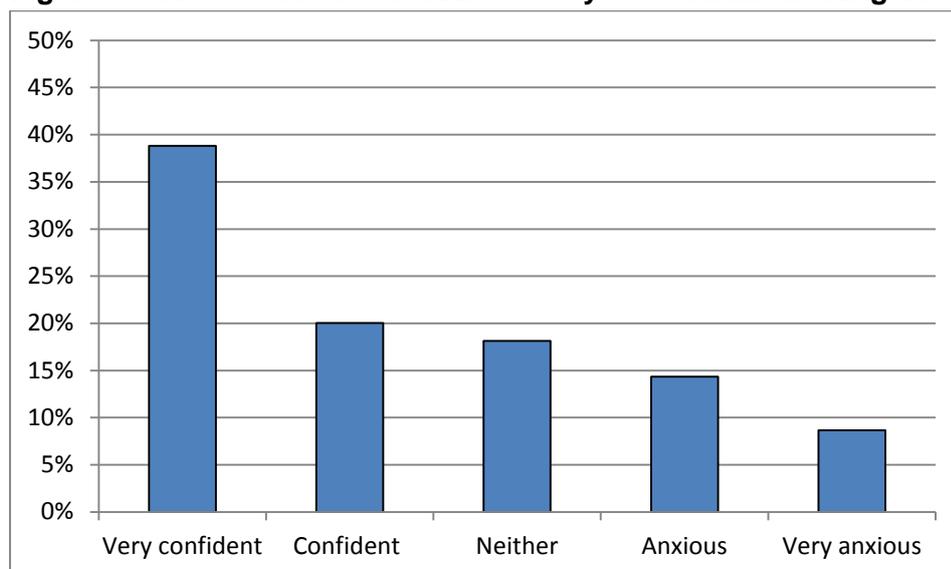


Table 23 shows some negative, positive and neutral comments on the whole journey. Negative comments have been classified into four groups, positive and neutral comments into two each. The quotations provide examples of each group and the numbers show how many comments were received in each group.

Table 23 Comments on journey over all – types and numbers received

Negative comments	
Staff information- miscommunication, forgot about passenger, rude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Train staff did not check where I was getting off although their booking system should have alerted them” “station failed to provide any sort of assistance on boarding the train and the staff in the office again bordered on being exceptionally rude!” 	64
Staff availability- none <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I felt very anxious on arrival when I did not get any help off the train. This failed assistance was extremely disappointing, especially at peak time when the station is difficult navigating with a white cane” “Staff should be more proactive in assisting disabled customers to a seat” 	39
Accessibility- staff, announcements, assistance alarm, wheelchair space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I would have felt more confident if there had been an assistance alarm should I have needed it in the wheelchair space (if there had even been a wheelchair space!)” 	18
Seat/space unavailable, unsuitable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “because I had the wrong seat I was in a lot of pain” 	16
Positive comments	
Staff manner- helpful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Every assistance staff member was friendly, efficient and interested” “I think the staff are always willing to answer all questions, at the station. The only criticism is there is never enough staff to ask, hence 	60

you will have to wait to be seen. The staff always seem to do their best”	
Journey better than normal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For once, it all worked out pretty well” 	10
General comments	
General comment on train travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Overall I would say, that you have got to have your wits about you, but for some people I would say, there needs to be more help” • “rare to have a member of staff on the train to assist when preparing to leave the train, this is usually 'self help' or other passenger assistance” 	33
Anxious- new route, previous experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Slight anxiety was only because the route was new to me and my guide dog and we had luggage” • “Anxiety always about whether or not staff will be present to assist on arrival” 	31

3.3 Experiences of different disability groups

Differences in satisfaction and confidence between disability groups (defined by passengers’ reasons for booking assistance) are not great, though there are some. For most groups, confidence levels are similar to satisfaction levels, but not for older passengers.

Figure 10 Means of satisfaction and confidence ratings, by impairment group (N=number of journeys)

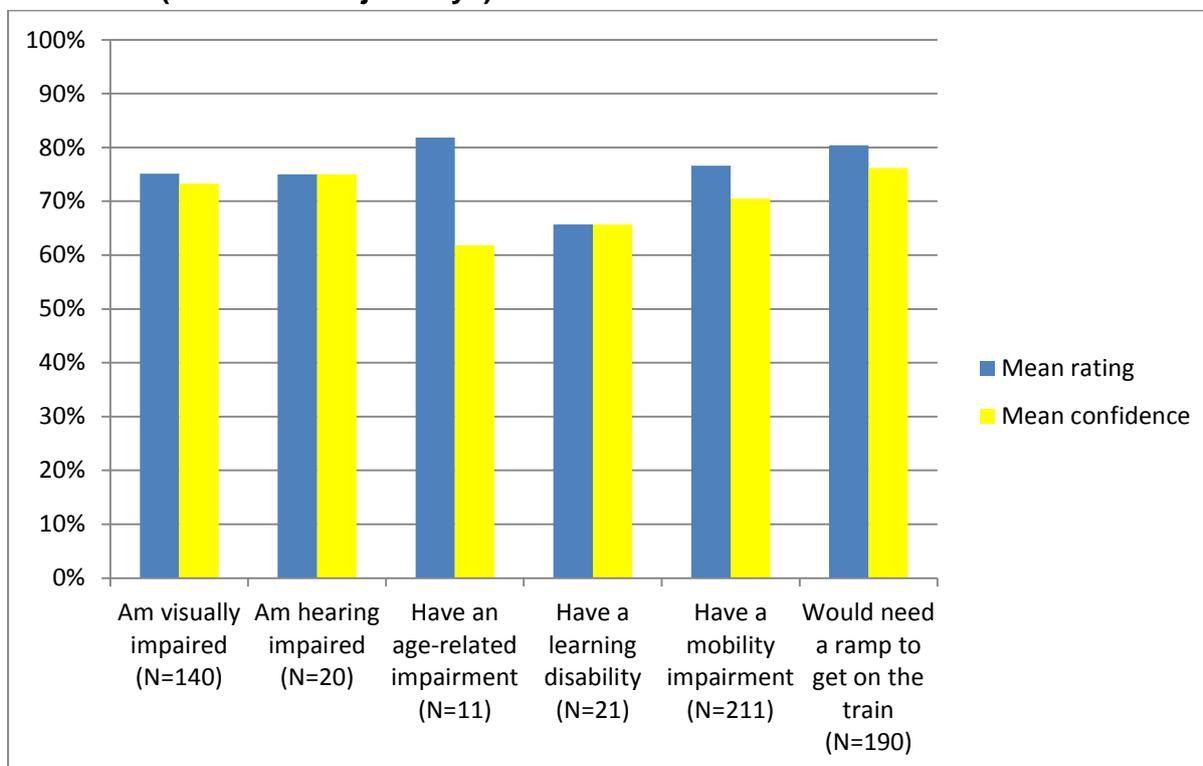


Figure 11 and Figure 12 show how the journeys in each group were rated.

Figure 11 Overall, how would you rate the assistance you received on this journey? (N=number of journeys)

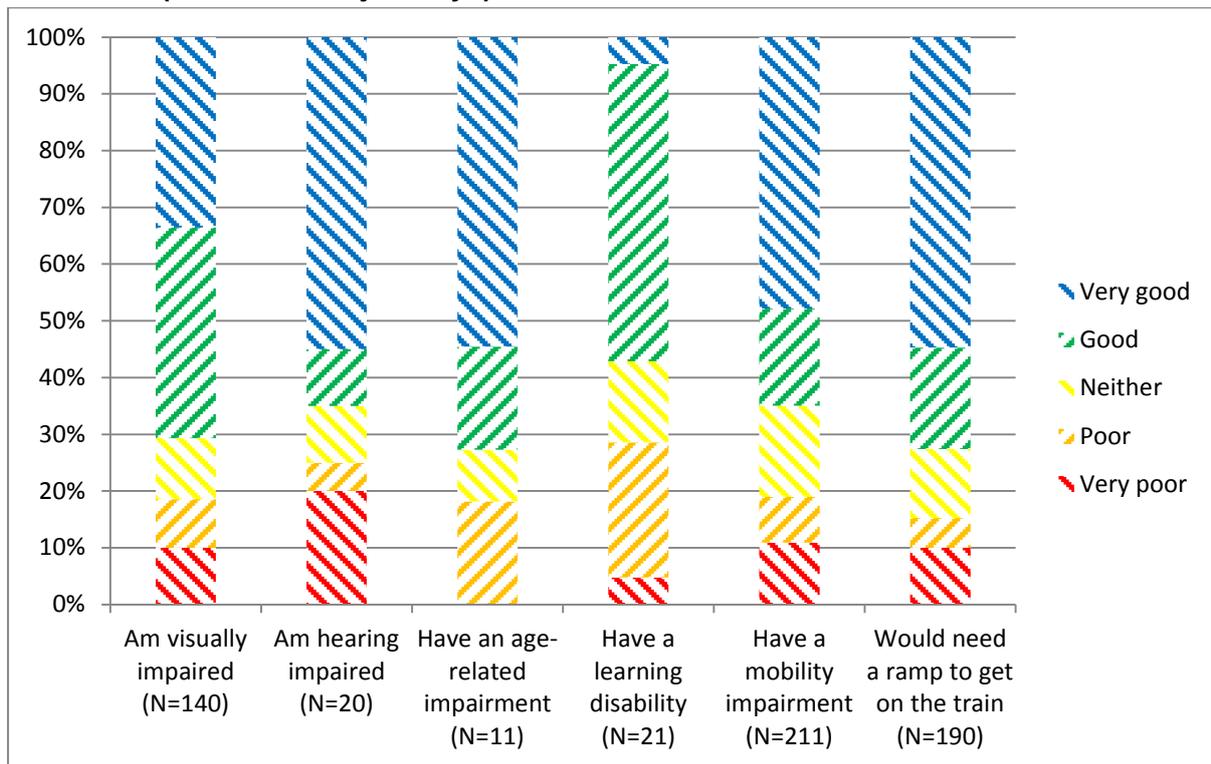
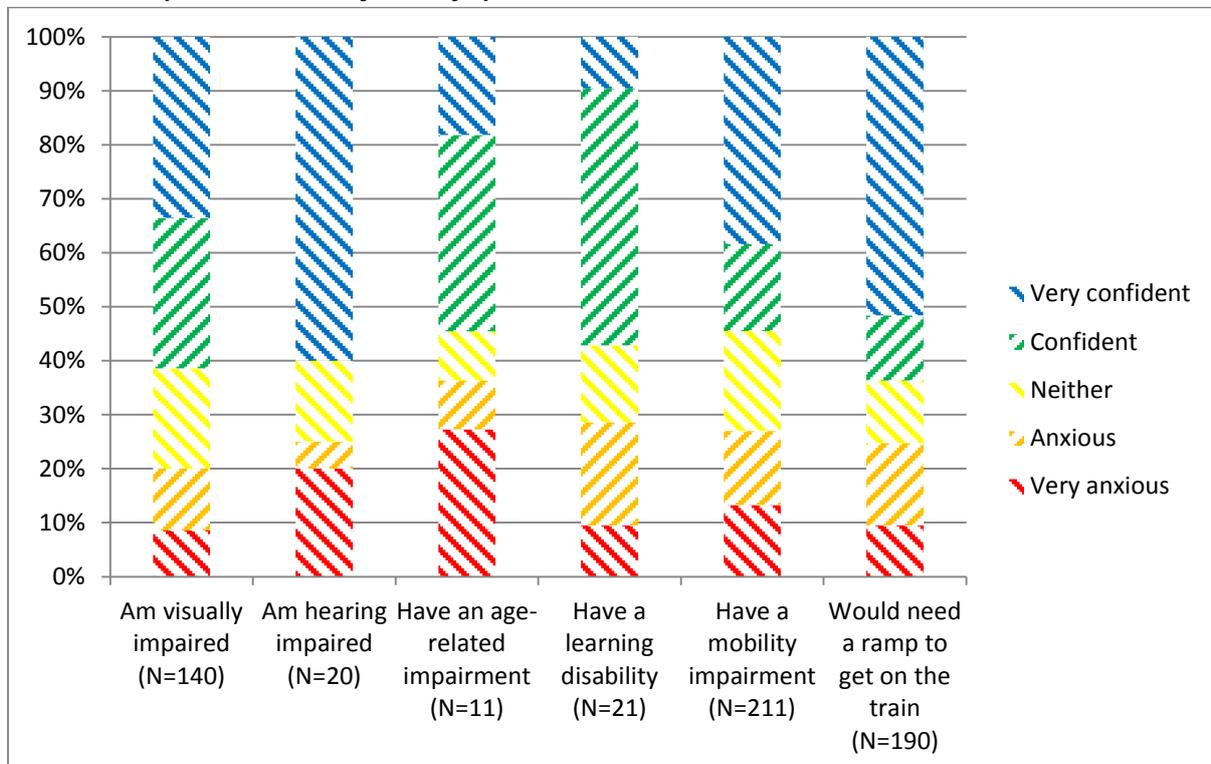


Figure 12 How confident or anxious did you feel while making this journey? (N=number of journeys)



3.4 Operating companies

Table 24 Shows numbers and percentages of journeys where all booked assistance was provided by each TOC. Only journeys that didn't differ from the booked journey are shown.

Table 24 Journeys where all booked assistance was received – booked journeys

	Departures		Arrivals	
Abellio Greater Anglia	7/8	88%	5/8	63%
Arriva Trains Wales	13/14	93%	9/12	75%
Chiltern Railways	3/7	43%	3/7	43%
East Coast	5/8	63%	4/14	29%
East Midlands Trains	23/24	96%	12/19	63%
First Great Western	43/52	83%	41/55	75%
First TransPennine Express	13/15	87%	9/9	100%
Great Northern	3/4	75%	4/4	100%
London Midland	14/23	61%	18/21	86%
London Overground	1/1	100%	2/2	100%
London Underground	3/3	100%	1/1	100%
Network Rail	94/112	84%	89/125	71%
Northern Rail	7/12	58%	11/20	55%
ScotRail	3/5	60%	8/9	89%
South West Trains	14/15	93%	10/14	71%
Southeastern	12/13	92%	9/12	75%
Southern	31/38	82%	21/23	91%
Thameslink	4/5	80%	3/3	100%
Virgin Trains	26/38	68%	31/39	79%
Total	319/397	80%	290/397	73%

3.5 Comments

3.5.1 Booking

- On the whole disabled passengers have a good experience of booking travel assistance.
- Most prefer to book by phone, though some find it easier to book in person.
- Regular travellers find it useful that their details are held on file so that they don't have to repeat them every time.
- Where there are problems with booking these are chiefly due to booking staff not giving enough/correct information to passengers regarding their booking or their journey.

- There are some specific issues regarding booking assistance online, and the difficulty of finding TOCs' booking numbers.

3.5.2 Information

- Information on services is easy to find and of good quality.
- Information on stations and facilities is less accessible. There are specific complaints about the availability of this information on the internet.
- Additionally, stations themselves sometimes create a barrier to accessibility. They are sometimes confusing and signage is sometimes poor.

3.5.3 Successes

- Passengers generally report that it is easy to find staff in stations and that they are helpful and considerate.
- Interchanges are also generally successful – assistance is available at the right time to ensure the connection is made.
- Ramps for boarding and alighting from trains are almost always available when needed.

3.5.4 Failures

However, when assistance fails, it causes considerable difficulties for passengers and can impact also on future journeys (by affecting passenger confidence).

Additionally, there are reported problems with staff behaviour:

- Staff do not always provide passengers with assistance right to the seat, even when they feel they need that assistance and have requested it specifically.
- Reserved seats/wheelchair spaces are sometimes occupied, and staff do not always assist with this.
- Staff do not always provide passengers with assistance right through the arrival station, even when they feel they need that assistance and have requested it specifically.

Table 22, repeated here, shows what proportion of journeys were fully and partially successful.

Table 22 Booked journey assistance received

Received all booked assistance	252	63%
Received some booked assistance	107	27%
Received no part of booked assistance	38	10%

Passenger Assist Diary Study: Journey Record

Use this questionnaire to record a journey made using Passenger Assist. If you make a return trip, use two questionnaires.

If you have any questions, call 020 7427 2460 or email mail@rica.org.uk

Identification

Q1 Participant ID:

Q2 Passenger Assist booking reference:

Please give details of **the journey you booked with Passenger Assist:**

Q3 Date of travel:

Q4 Departure station:

Q5 Scheduled departure time:

Q6 Arrival station:

List any interchange stations:

Q7 Interchange 1

Q8 Interchange 2

Q9 Interchange 3

Q10 Interchange 4

Q11 Did the journey you made differ from the journey you booked?

Yes

No Go to Q21

Q12 If yes, what was different? Tick all that apply.

Train was delayed

Train was cancelled

Travelled on a different train from the one I'd booked

Used different stations

Please give details of **the journey you actually made:**

Q13 Date of travel:

Q14 Departure station:

Q15 Departure time:

Q16 Arrival station:

List any interchange stations:

Q17 Interchange 1

Q18 Interchange 2

Q19 Interchange 3

Q20 Interchange 4

Information before booking

Think about the information you looked for before making your booking.

Q21 How easy was it to find information on routes/times?

Very difficult Very easy

Q22 How easy was it to find information on facilities?

Very difficult Very easy

Q23 How easy was it to find information on accessibility?

Very difficult Very easy

Q24 If any of the above were difficult, please explain your answer:

Making the booking

Q25 How did you make your booking?

- Online
- By telephone
- In person at the station

Q26 What information was requested by the booking agent? Tick all that apply.

- Name
- Nature of disability
- Requirements
- Route and times
- How arriving at / leaving station

Q27 What information did you give the booking agent about your disability? Tick all that apply.

I told them I...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am visually impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> Have an autistic spectrum disorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Am hearing impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> Would need a ramp to get on the train |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have an age-related impairment | <input type="checkbox"/> Would be using a wheelchair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a learning disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Would be using a mobility scooter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a verbal communication impairment | <input type="checkbox"/> Would need a wheelchair provided |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a mobility impairment | <input type="checkbox"/> Would be transferring to a seat from a wheelchair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a different physical impairment | |

Q28 What information did the booking agent provide?

- Gave booking reference
- Advised you to arrive early
- Advised you to find staff
- Explained where/how to find staff
- Gave seat/wheelchair reservation

Q29 Did you receive a booking confirmation?

- Yes
- No

Q30 Did you receive information on facilities?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q31 Did you receive information on accessibility?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q32 Do you feel that the booking agent understood your requirements?

- Yes
 No

Q33 Any further comments about booking?

At the departure station

Q34 How easy was it to find staff?

- Very difficult Very easy

Q35 Were staff aware of your booking?

- Yes
 No

Q36 Did staff check the details of your booking?

- Yes
 No

Q37 How well did staff understand your requirements?

- Not at all well Very well

Q38 Please rate the accessibility of the following information sources.
 1 = not at all accessible and 5 = completely accessible.

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A not used
Announcements	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Visual displays	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Q39 Were you provided with assistance to the platform?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q40 Was the information you were given about accessibility/facilities accurate?

- N/A - not given
- Yes
- No

Q41 Any other comments about the departure station?

Boarding the train

Q42 Were you provided with assistance onto the train?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q43 Were you provided with a ramp to board the train?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q44 Were you provided with assistance to your seat / wheelchair space?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q45 Was your booked seat / wheelchair space available?

- N/A - I didn't make a reservation
 Yes
 No

Q46 Any other comments about boarding the train?

On the train

For these questions, fill in 1 column for **each** train you travelled on during your journey. **Don't include your return journey here** - use another questionnaire.

Q47 Was on-train information accessible? (eg announcements, visual displays)

	Yes	No
1st train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q48 Was there a staff member on the train (apart from the driver)?

	Yes	No	Don't know
1st train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q49 If yes, did they make themselves known to you?

	Yes	No	N/A - no staff
1st train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q50 Were you able to get assistance from them?

	Yes	No	N/A - no staff / no assistance needed
1st train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5th train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Interchange

Q51 Did your journey involve changing trains?

Yes

No

Go to Q57

If yes, fill in 1 column for **each** station you changed trains at during your journey.

Don't include your return journey here - use another questionnaire.

Q52 Were you provided with assistance getting off the train?

	Yes	No	N/A - not needed
1st interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q53 Were you provided with a ramp to get off the train?

	Yes	No	N/A - not needed
1st interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q54 Were you provided with assistance to your connecting service?

	Yes	No	N/A - not needed
1st interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q55 Did you reach your connecting service on time?

	Yes	No
1st interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2nd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3rd interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4th interchange	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q56 Any other comments about changing trains?

At the arrival station

Q57 Were you provided with assistance getting off the train?

- N/A - not needed Go to Q60
 Yes
 No Go to Q60

Q58 If yes, how long did it take to arrive?

- N/A - not booked
- 5 minutes or under
- More than 5 minutes

Q59 Were you provided with a ramp to get off the train?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q60 Were you provided with assistance getting around the station?

- N/A - not needed
- Yes
- No

Q61 Was the information you were given about accessibility/facilities accurate?

- N/A - not given
- Yes
- No

Q62 If you booked a journey to an unstaffed station, did you receive appropriate assistance to reach your destination?

- N/A - the station was staffed
- Yes
- No

Q63 Any other comments about your arrival?

Staff behaviour

Train companies aim for good customer service and for all travellers to be treated with understanding and respect. Please rate the quality of service provided overall by the following staff:

Q64 Booking staff

Very poor Very good

Q65 Station staff

Very poor Very good

Q66 On train staff

Very poor Very good

Finally

Q67 Overall, how would you rate the assistance you received on this journey?

Very poor Very good

Q68 How confident or anxious did you feel while making this journey?

Very anxious Very confident

Q69 Any additional comments about your journey?

Passenger Assist diary study: Recruitment questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in our diary study. This study is being carried out by Rica, an independent research charity for older and disabled people. We are working on behalf of the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) to evaluate the Passenger Assist service.

We are looking for participants who use Passenger Assist regularly to record their experiences on some of their journeys.

To take part, you must:

- use Passenger Assist at least 10 times a year
- be willing to sign up to complete and report 10 journeys in the next 12 months

Participants are asked to give feedback on 10 of the journeys they make using Passenger Assist in the next year (a return trip counts as 2 journeys). Feedback will be given by filling in a short questionnaire - this can be done online or in print, or over the telephone if you cannot use these formats.

After completing feedback on 10 journeys, participants will receive £50 in rail vouchers. There will also be a prize draw - one participant will win two first-class return rail tickets to the destination of their choice within Great Britain.

To register your interest, please fill in this questionnaire. It asks questions about the types of journeys you make and the assistance you book. There are 21 questions that should take around 10 minutes to answer.

If you are selected for the study, we will then get in touch with more information.

The information we collect will only be seen by Rica and ATOC - click here to view our [privacy policy](#). You can find out more about Rica at www.rica.org.uk.

■

Your background

Q1 How old are you?

- 18-25
- 26-45
- 46-65
- Over 65.....

Q2 Do you consider yourself to have any of the following disabilities? Tick all that apply.

I ...

- Am visually impaired (e.g. blindness or partial sight)
- Am hearing impaired (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)
- Have a mobility impairment
- Have a learning disability.....
- Have a communication impairment
- Have an autistic spectrum disorder

Q3 Do you use a wheelchair when travelling by train?

- Always
- Sometimes.....
- Never

Q4 Do you use a mobility scooter when travelling by train?

- Always
- Sometimes.....
- Never

Q5 Do you need guiding through the station to find your way?

- Always
 - Sometimes.....
 - Never
-

■ **Q6 Do you need to borrow a wheelchair in larger stations?** ■

- Always
- Sometimes.....
- Never

Your journeys

**Q7 How many journeys do you make using Passenger Assist per year?
Count a return trip as two journeys.**

- Fewer than 10.....
- 10 to 25.....
- 25 to 100.....
- Over 100.....

Q8 Do you expect to make at least 10 journeys (5 return trips) in the next 12 months?

- Yes.....
- No

Q9 How do you usually book assistance? Tick all that apply.

- By phone
- Online
- In person at the station

Q10 What type of assistance do you book?

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Guidance through the station	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance boarding/alighting the train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ramp for boarding/alighting the train	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance reaching your seat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reservation of wheelchair space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

■ ■

■ **Q11 Do you have either of the following railcards?**

- Disabled Person's Railcard
- Senior Railcard
- No

Q12 Overall, how would you currently rate the service you've received from Passenger Assist?

- Very good
- Good.....
- OK
- Poor
- Very poor

Your location

Q13 What is your nearest railway station (not a tube or metro station)?

Q14 Do you travel to any other stations more than once a month?

- Yes.....
- No

Q15 If yes, please list them:



■

Contact details

Q16 When participating in this study, how would you prefer to fill in your diary questionnaires?

- Online
- Paper questionnaire (regular print).....
- Paper questionnaire (large print)
- By telephone.....

Q17 Name:

Q18 Address:

Q19 Postcode:

Q20 Telephone:

Q21 Email address:

End of questionnaire

Thank you

■