



# UNDERGROUND TRAIN TRAVEL INFORMATION SHEET

Travelling by underground train, whether in London or elsewhere, is a convenient way to get around a city. Travelling by underground with a disability is possible and SIA would like to encourage members to try it. However, there are a number of important points to consider when you have spinal cord injury (SCI) or cauda equina syndrome (CES).

Underground train systems rely on many stairs, lifts and escalators. It also relies on connecting services and lines, with connecting tunnels and walkways between stations. This can also mean there is more distance to walk or wheel than you may think. For this reason it is best to plan ahead and find out about the accessibility options available to help you have a successful journey. Transport for London (TfL), who operate London Underground have created accessibility services to enable people with mobility limitations to travel on their trains.



# PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY

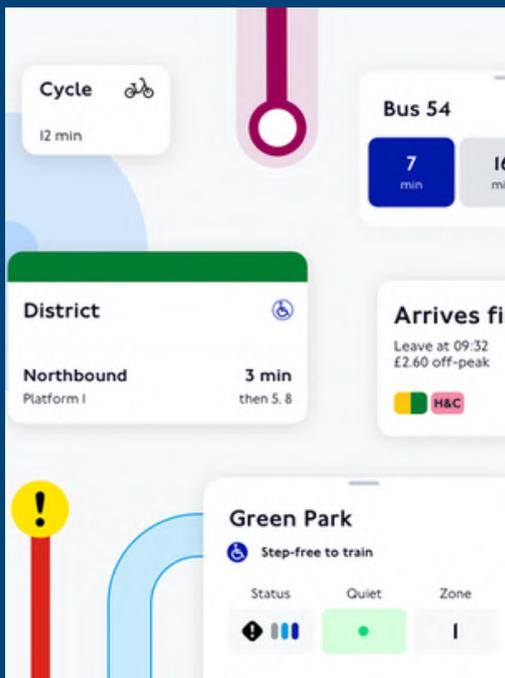
The Transport for London website helps with planning step free routes, best least walking routes, provides and links to videos and uses of ramps etc.

## PLAN YOUR JOURNEY with TfL

- [Wheelchair access & avoiding stairs](#)
- [Step Free London Transport Map.pdf](#)
- [Accessible Travel in London: Your guide to the help and support](#)



## TFL GO APP



- Use the live map to see your route and check for disruptions on your line or station.
- Check live arrival times on all bus, Tube, London Overground, DLR, Elizabeth line, tram lines and IFS Cloud Cable Car.
- Plan journeys to any station, place or address across London, choosing the quickest route, bus-only or one with step-free access.
- Choose step-free mode to plan accessible journeys. Suggested journeys will adapt automatically to current disruptions such as line closures or lift closure.
- Find station information including quieter times, and facilities such as toilet locations.
- Check walking and cycling routes for all or part of your journey.

## For outside London

If you are not using London services use National Rail enquiries and the Passenger Assist app to help with understanding and planning your route. You can also consider using [Google maps](#) or other online or local service planning tools that help with navigating route options.

All these resources can help with understanding your journey and route options, how far it is in steps, or walking or pushing wheelchair along your whole journey – door to door and back again.



## PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY (WALKING WITH ASSISTANCE)

For those who walk/use mobility equipment for some/all of the time, planning ahead will make your journeys more accessible. You can use this checklist to plan your travel:

### Ask yourself

- How do you want to travel? Do you want to use a mobility aid or book assistance? What type of mobility aid will you use?

### Think about

- Your whole journey from door to door; Would using planning services and passenger assistance services (travel support card for London transport) and make your journey easier. Use online or app services like 'the TfL go, or the 'Passenger Assist' app from National Rail.
- What activity will you have to do when you're travelling? (will you spend more time walking or standing? Will you have to carry luggage?)
- How may the journey affect how you feel? (tiredness, pain, spasms)
- How might you feel after you have arrived? (so that you can do what you want to do once you get to your destination)
- If you use apps like Google maps you can include key words like 'step free' or 'routes with least amount of steps' – to help reduce the amount of walking on your route.

## MOBILITY AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

If you are able to walk for some of the time with the use of aids, ask yourself:

- If you might need to walk more than you are used to?
- Will there be space, seats and time to rest along your route?
- Will your walking/journey affect your pain levels?
- Would using a scooter or perhaps a wheelchair, or power add-on device help you go further with less tiredness?
- Will you need to carry luggage and shopping and how do you plan to do this?
- Do you want to wear a sunflower lanyard (showing that you have a hidden disability?)



## PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY (WHEELCHAIR USER)

For travellers that plan to use a manual wheelchair for most of the time, planning ahead will help make your journeys accessible.

Think about:

- Would using planning services and passenger assistance services make your journey easier? Use online or app services like the TfL GO app, or Passenger Assist from National Rail. Look for words like 'step free access', 'step free to platform' (meaning there is a ramp to get onto the train itself) and 'step free to train', and 'step free to train from street'.
- Your wheelchair skills and how confident you are in managing ramps, using lifts, going over different surfaces, and getting around crowds of people.
- How you get to things you might need at the station like ticket machines, or moving through ticket barriers?
- How you will manage your personal care? (carers)



## PLANNING YOUR JOURNEY (POWERED WHEELCHAIR USER)

As a person using a powered wheelchair for the majority of the time, underground train travel is accessible with some preparation and planning.

Think about:

- Would using planning services and Passenger assistance services make your journey easier? Use online or app services like the TfL GO app, or Passenger Assist from National Rail. Look for words like 'step free access', 'step free to platform' (meaning there is a ramp to get onto the train itself) and 'step free to train', and 'step free to train from street'.
- Your wheelchair skills for managing ramps, lifts, variable terrain, and getting around people.
- How you plan to get to facilities like ticket machines and barriers – use the family or wheelchair accessible barrier.
- Your door-to-door journey needs.
- How you will manage your personal care? (carers)
- The distance you plan to travel including the return journey and battery life.



# MOBILITY AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS

## If you are a wheelchair user:

- Lifts; Use the TfL/ assistance app or speak to staff about lifts and if they are all working.
- Wheelchair skills: are you comfortable with your wheelchair skills (using your wheelchair on different surfaces and going up/down ramps, for example) and do you know your abilities on different surfaces/ balance/ moving through crowds of people? Do you know how much you can do before you get tired?
- When using an underground train/ tube you may need to use ramps that staff put in place for you. See the TfL app for more details about ramps.
- Check that you are happy with the placement of the ramps before you use them. Ask for support if you need it.
- Sometimes a ramp might be quite steep. Ask for assistance to go up if you need it. To come down it's sometimes easier or more comfortable to reverse down. Only do this if you are sure you can do this safely, or ask for help.
- If you have advanced wheelchair skills you may not need to use the ramps.
- If you use a power add-on device remember that this will make the size of your equipment longer. It will take a larger turning circle so the space in lifts and the train may not be large enough. You might need to use advanced wheelchair driving skills.
- Battery charge: If you are using battery powered equipment or a powered wheelchair think about how far and for long your battery will last. This is important if this is a full day out, and there are large distances between platforms, connecting tubes and to and from your destination. Do you need to take a charger or spare battery?
- Know the dimension and weight of your wheelchair. London underground use the National Rail /government standard size for wheelchairs for making sure that a wheelchair space on a train is big enough. The standard size is (700mm wide by 1200mm long, weight 300 kg (including passenger)). There are a small number of older trains that can only carry wheelchairs that have a maximum width of 550mm.

# YOUR PERSONAL AND CARE NEEDS

Plan what you will need for your personal health needs during your journey and during the day including your return journey and what time you expect to return home. Plan for possible delays. Think about your:

## Toileting needs

- Find out where the toilet is or look for signs or ask for help.
- Toilets are not generally available on underground trains. Look for facilities at the stations.
- Take a toilet access key/ RDAR key with you. For further information on RADAR keys and Changing Places accessible toilet facilities (see further information).

## Skin care

- It's important to remember your usual skin pressure care routines, for example moving forward or side to side in your seat so you can help blood to move across your skin to prevent 'pressure ulcers'. This is called 'pressure relief' and your healthcare professional can tell you about this. (See SIA knowledge hub for Skin factsheet)
- Stay hydrated.

## Tiredness

- Remember that the efforts of your travel combined with the rest of your routine and the activities you want to do for your day can lead to increased tiredness. Allow rest time so you can enjoy your day and do what you had planned to do.

## Emotional wellbeing

- Plan and prepare your trip so you feel more confident.
- Tell guards and staff what you want as clearly as you can.
- Check with the station staff to make sure that any assistance is ready for you at all the stations you are going to use on your journey, also on your return journey.

## Carer's needs

- Carer id for tickets/access
- Food and drink and breaks whilst travelling
- The return time and if this might affect your carer's working hours

# YOUR PERSONAL AND CARE NEEDS

## Things to bring

- Essential documents including: tickets/ payment cards, ID – including carer's ID and any medical paperwork that you might need.
- Medication, including: possible extra medication – depending on what activity you plan to do (extra walking or pushing) you may need to bring extra medication with you in case you feel any more pain, fatigue (tiredness), spasms than usual, or if your travel is delayed.
- Supplies for the whole of your journey plus extras in case there is a delay, including: catheters, wipes, pads etc.
- Extra clothing in case of bad weather.



Photo credit: Transport for London

## PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

Passenger assistance is available on the underground train services with the TfL GO app, or the passenger assistance service. This offers a service to disabled travellers to be able to plan accessible routes and request help such as getting on and off the train, support travelling through a station, even carrying luggage.

You can just turn up and ask for assistance, or, you can book assistance in advance on the London Underground, London Overground and Elizabeth Line as part of the Passenger Assist service. Just like on overground train services.

# PASSENGER ASSISTANCE – QUESTIONS?



Transport for London have a dedicated card to support disabled travellers on their network.

## What is the Travel Support Card?

You can use it on buses, trams, the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), the Tube, London Overground, London River Services' boat services and at Victoria Coach Station. You show the card to staff when you need help. Anyone who finds travelling difficult can have a Travel Support Card. You might have a hidden disability or you might not often travel on your own.



## How to use the card?

When you need help or support, you can show your card to any member of transport staff. There is a space on the card to write down anything that could help our staff to give you the support you need. You can also add your name and an emergency contact number.

## How to get your card?

- Download and print a Travel Support Card.
- Order one online or by calling London Travel Information on 0343 222 1234\*.
- Make your own support card:  
[travel-support-card-printable.pdf](#)



## What if I need help whilst I'm at the station?

TFL says: "Help Points can be found across our rail networks including in station ticket halls, on platforms, in walkways and on concourses. You can use a Help Point to contact staff and ask for help and information."

Photo credits: <https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/help-from-staff>

# PASSENGER ASSISTANCE – QUESTIONS?

## What if the lift isn't working?

TFL say: "If you arrive at a Tube, Elizabeth line or Overground station and the lift is unavailable, staff will help you to plan an alternative step-free journey to your destination. If there isn't a reasonable alternative route, we'll book you an accessible taxi (at our cost). The taxi can take you to another step-free station from where you can continue your journey or to your destination station within the Greater London area - whichever is quicker and more convenient for you. This could be a London Underground, London Overground, Elizabeth line, DLR or National Rail station.

## Tickets

- On the tube you can tap in and out with your contactless bank card, this is as cost effective as the oyster card.
- If you're a resident or regular user you can tap in with your oyster card.
- Oyster: A prepay smart card for London transport
- You can purchase London travel cards if you're making an all day, weekend or week travel around London.
- You can book via usual ticket vendors also National rail.
- Use your discount cards too, when travelling.

For overground connecting journeys that will include the underground, your ticket will most likely include the Underground portion. Ticket booking options; online (good for journeys in advance, and ease for access) or at station ( good for spontaneous journeys), or use your contactless bank card or oyster card.

## Freedom pass

If you are a London councils resident and have a disability you may be eligible for the Freedom pass, for free/discounted travel. However, this is only eligible for you, not your companion. It may be possible to utilise your disabled rail card however if you're travelling from connecting outside London services, Which does entitle your companion to a discount. [Apply for a disabled person's Freedom Pass](#)



# DISABLED PERSONS RAILCARD

A Disabled persons railcards entitles you and your carer or companion 1/3 off for rail travel.

## Can I use my Railcard for tickets for travel on the London Underground?



With your Disabled Persons Railcard, you and an adult companion can get 1/3 off Off-Peak Day Travelcards and Anytime Day Travelcards when bought as part of your journey to London from outside London Zones 1-9 (Anytime Day Travelcards are subject to a minimum fare which is currently £22.60). Please note that your adult companion or the adult accompanying person must travel with you for the whole journey in order for them to also get the discount.

You can also get your Disabled Persons Railcard discount loaded onto your Oyster card to save 1/3 on single peak or off-peak pay as you go fares on London Underground and Docklands Light Railway services in London. You will need to have registered your Oyster in your name to do this. Simply take your Oyster card and a valid Disabled Persons Railcard to a London Underground station and ask a member of staff to set the discount for you. You can also get the discount set at Oyster Ticket Shops and Visitor Centres.

Please note that Oyster pay as you go discounts are for the Disabled Persons Railcard holder only.

If the Disabled Persons Railcard holder is travelling on a Disabled Person's Freedom Pass, they cannot use their Disabled Persons Railcard to buy a discounted ticket for an adult accompanying person.

See the Transport for London website for more details on [Oyster pay as you go](#).

# DEMYSTIFYING ACCESS LANGUAGE ON THE TUBE

## What is step-free access?

This means lifts, ramps and level surfaces so you don't have to use stairs or escalators, and can avoid the step and gap onto trains.

Plan an accessible journey.

- **Step free to train; ( solid blue )**
- **Step-free to train in one direction**
- **Step free to platform (white background)**



This mean you may need a ramp to get onto the actual train.

- **Step free to platform in one direction**



## Interchange only (step-free to platform or to train interchange only)

At stations marked with these symbols you can change between lines step-free (sometimes only in one direction), but you will not be able to get in or out of the station without using stairs and/or escalators.



## No step-free access (station at start or end of line)

These symbols show the direction of a line at stations that are not step-free. You will not be able to get in/out or interchange at these stations.



## Level access on platforms

An increasing number of platforms offer step-free access onto trains.

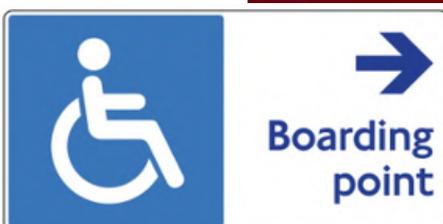
This is provided in three ways:

- Level access along the whole platform - This is available on newly built services such as the Jubilee line east of Westminster, the whole DLR network and new stations on London Overground.
- Level access boarding points (platform humps) Some of our platforms have level access boarding points. These raised platform humps make it easier for you to get on and off the train step-free. You can find out more information about level access platforms using [Journey Planner](#), [TfL Go](#) and the [Step-free Tube guide](#).

# DEMYSTIFYING ACCESS LANGUAGE ON THE TUBE

## Boarding ramps and mini ramps

- Mini ramps are available at some step-free to train stations designed to cover the small remaining step or gap between the platform and the train. Bigger boarding ramps are used to help you get on and off the train at stations where there is a larger gap between the platform and train.
- When using ramps. Be sure you are comfortable and happy with ramp placement. If the ramp is steep think about reversing down, have assistance for this.



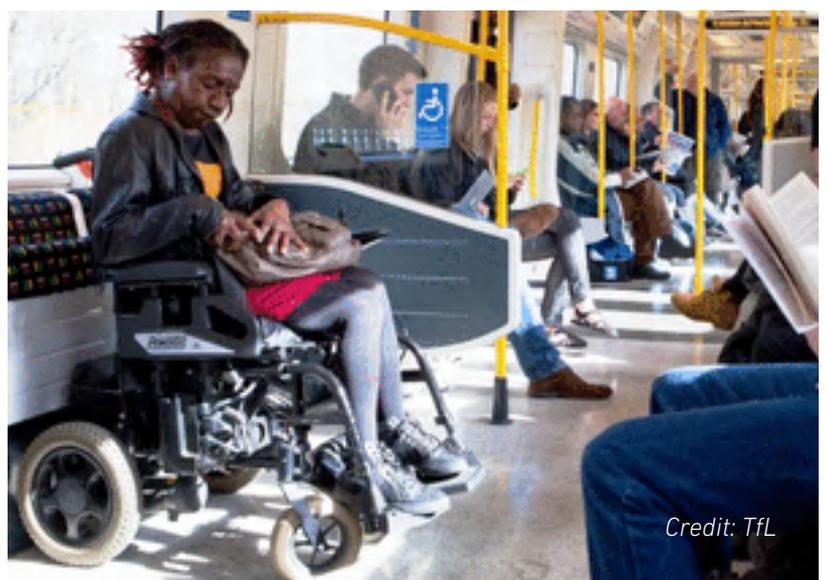
Credit: TfL

## Seating

- Seating is located at the area indicated by the signs.

## Assistance dogs

- For more information see [TfL website](https://www.tfl.gov.uk).



Credit: TfL

# YOUR RIGHTS AND PROBLEM SOLVING

It is frustrating and highly inconvenient when things don't work. When there's no ramp, or a lift is out of order, it can make you feel angry and stressed and it can ruin your day. But if something isn't right here are some tips of what to do.

## Immediate practical and coping strategies

- Take a moment to pause and take a breath. This will really help you think more clearly and speak with calmness.
- Think about your options, alert staff immediately, using the help button or asking someone.
- If the ramp or lift isn't working, ask for advice and support from the staff, who will help you with alternative travel to your destination (at the cost of the train company).
- Check available online resources or notices at the station for nearby accessible routes and options.
- Think about and explain your needs clearly and calmly, what do you need, and ask for what the options and alternatives are. It is useful to remember about language differences and the words related to your individual disability. Use simpler language to explain where possible.
- It can be helpful to document what has happened if you are claiming later. For example, you could take a photo if its appropriate and safe to do, and make a note of the time, day and location. This can help in your compensation claim, advocating for support or change for better services.
- Remind yourself - its not your fault, and often not the person you are talking to either, but a larger system failure. Its ok to feel frustrated and you are not inconveniencing anyone by expecting basic access services. Be kind to yourself, managing unexpected barriers takes strength. "I'm handling a tough situation the best I can".
- If you want to make a more formal complaint. You can speak to staff or send your comments to TfL ( Transport for London) train company or National Rail for future improvements. [Help & contacts - Transport for London](#)

# YOUR RIGHTS AND PROBLEM SOLVING

## Safety concerns

“If you have concerns about your security, your safety, have had an experience of harassment, or seen something unsafe, or that doesn't feel right or suspicious then we want to hear from you. Let us decide if what you have seen or what you know is important.”

You should tell a member of rail staff or a police officer what you have seen. You can also call 0800 40 50 40, or text 61016. In an emergency, always call 999.

See it. Say it. Sorted | British Transport Police



For more information, visit our [Travel Hub](#) or contact us at:

Spinal Injuries Association, SIA House, 2 Trueman Place, Oldbrook, Milton Keynes, MK6 2HH

e: [travel@spinal.co.uk](mailto:travel@spinal.co.uk) t: 0800 980 0501 (freephone support line: Monday - Friday 10.00am-5.00pm)