



**thistle**  
ASSISTANCE  
Travel With Confidence

# A little (of your) help goes a long way



[thistleassistance.com](https://thistleassistance.com)

**Some people require a little extra assistance when travelling, especially passengers with visible or hidden disabilities.**

**Thistle Assistance is an initiative to help people feel safer and more confident when using public transport, providing them with a card or app that indicates to travel staff what assistance they may need.**



There are many reasons why some people feel anxious when travelling. Some may need more time to get to their seat or for the driver to notify them when they have reached their destination.

### **Some Facts**

Around 1 in 5 people (20%) in the UK are disabled people.

Whilst many disabled people are elderly, not all are – working age adults, young people and children may be disabled.

Some disabled people have more than one impairment.

# What is Thistle Assistance?

Thistle Assistance is free and available for anyone who needs it and is recognised by a wide range of public transport providers across Scotland, from buses, trams and trains, to planes and ferries.









It's part of Scotland's ambition to have an inclusive and accessible transport system, aiming to

improve the journey experience for anyone who requires extra assistance while travelling.

As a transport provider, you can make a big difference by looking out for Thistle Assistance users, offering help and understanding when needed.

# How does it work?

The card and app comes with a set of symbols and messages that encompass a range of disabilities and impairments. The users simply choose the ones that best describe their disability or needs, and show it to the transport staff.

 Sight	 Hearing
 Mobility	 Wheelchair
 Speech	 Pregnant
 Cognitive	 Other
I am exempt from wearing a face covering	
Notify on arrival at:	
Talk slowly and clearly	
Wait for me to sit	

Note: The card and app is for information purposes only. No ticket discount applies



# Some of our Users

## Andrew, 23, Edinburgh

*"I lost my sight when I was a kid, but am now in my twenties so I like to be as independent as possible, like travelling at weekends to meet my friends.*

*The Thistle Assistance app is a great way to tell bus drivers and other staff what kind of help I need without sharing it with the entire bus!"*



## Jean, 70, Ayr

*"I feel a bit of a burden on buses, trains and planes when other passengers have to wait for me getting on board.*

*I don't like to make a fuss so the Thistle Assistance app allows me or my husband to request help from staff without embarrassment."*



## Scott, 59, Inverness

*"I'm living with early onset dementia, and I want to remain independent for as long as I can. I like to plan a journey in advance, allowing lots of time so there's no pressure.*

*The Thistle Assistance app also means I can show transport staff when I need assistance without any fuss.*



# Here are a few things you can do to help your disabled passengers on their journey.

Remember that some impairments are not visible, so it may not be obvious what or why assistance is needed. Some may also have more than one impairment.

Try to focus on what assistance your passengers need rather than assuming based on age or appearance.

If they appear to be unsure about what help they need, try asking specific questions, such as 'Would you like me to help you find your platform?' and act on their response.

Be patient, and listen carefully to what your passenger is saying, and if you are not sure that you've understood then check and ask them to repeat themselves if needed.

Speak calmly, avoid raising your voice, use clear language, rephrase and repeat, and if necessary, try other methods of communication such as writing.

If you are wearing a face covering, some passengers, for example deaf passengers or autistic passengers, may find communicating difficult. If you need to remove face covering for a short period of time, please do so where you feel able to.

Keep an eye out for any passengers that may be taking longer to board or alight, and give them sufficient time to do so safely. Bear in mind that some passengers with mobility impairments may not stand up to leave until the train or bus has fully stopped.

Wherever you can, assist passengers who need a seat to find one. Remember that some people have non-visible impairments that mean they need to sit.

Priority for the wheelchair space should be given to wheelchair users, including children using specialist buggies as a mobility aid, and you should follow your company's guidance on what you can do to help ensure that this happens.

Never touch a passenger or their mobility aid unless the passenger has asked for assistance that requires you to touch them and have given you permission to do so.

If you are helping a passenger who has an assistance dog, do not interfere with or make a fuss of the dog. Speak only to its owner.

Be prepared to answer any questions that passengers have during the journey, and to repeat yourself if needed, as some passengers may forget what you have told them or need reassurance that they've understood correctly.

Make sure you receive Disability Equality Training from your company, ask your manager for it. The Department for Transport (DfT) has made a series of Disability Equality Training videos available on their website. However, face-to-face training developed and delivered by disabled trainers is recommended.



For more information, please visit:

**[thistleassistance.com](https://www.thistleassistance.com)**