

Friendly Communities

Age Friendly Steering Group

Site Visit

Leeds Train Station

27th June 2023



Background to the site visit

The Age Friendly Steering Group (AFSG) were invited by James Moy, Associate Sponsor for Leeds Area Improvements from Network Rail to visit Leeds Train Station for a site visit. This is a continuation of previous consultation work delivered in 2020 and 2021 with Martin McConaghy from Leeds City Council on the proposed changes to Leeds Train Station into a sustainable travel gateway.

In 2020 we reviewed the first set of plans for the development of the South Concourse to the new street entrance. We were asked to consult on seating, flooring and signage and give advice on the proposed plans.

A brief overview our recommendations included:

- Highlighting the issues with moving the bus stops whilst works were taking place.
- The importance of FREE accessible toilets
- Flooring should be level, slip resistant and not in a busy pattern. Edges should be trimmed in a darker material for people with sensory/spatial impairments.
- Handrails to all stairs and ramps
- No dark mats as they can cause issues for some people living with dementia.
- Accessible lifts should be installed to the taxi pick up/drop off point when it is moved to Bishopsgate Street to meet 'Design for All' Principles
- More benches, in a variety of styles (with arms/without, with backrests/without) some higher options, with tables with no more that 50m between benches.

As a direct result of our consultation changes were made to the plans which included adding more accessible seating.

Purpose of the June 2023 Site Visit

We were invited to learn more about the next stage of the development plan for the station, to assess the station currently from an Age and Dementia Friendly perspective and to offer recommendations for improvements. It was highlighted that this is the time to suggest major improvements due the impending large scale developments.

We opted to use the [Age and Dementia Friendly Checklist](#) which we recommend as part of our [Age and Dementia Friendly Business Initiative](#) as a framework for the site visit. The checklist focuses on three main areas: the physical environment, respect and inclusion and communication and information. Although no group member has a diagnosis of dementia people have experience of living with dementia either through personal, voluntary and professional caring roles.

Who Attended?

All members of our steering group were offered the opportunity to attend. Anne Chitty, Ann Christian Julie Badon, Bharti Dhanecha and Elizabeth Griffin agreed to facilitate the assessment. Members who couldn't attend sent feedback which was drafted into the report.

Julie Badon led the planning of the session and met with James Moy prior to the site visit. Each group member was allocated a different entrance and was asked to commute using their preferred mode to look at how the station works as a travel gateway. The group assessed their experience to the meeting point at the information desk situated at the New Street entrance/exit.

People walked, commuted by bus and drove to the station. All entrances were covered to document the journey to the meeting point covering the New Station Street entrance, Dark Neville Street entrance, Aire Street entrance and City Square entrance.

Feedback from Age Friendly Steering Group

Journey to the meeting point

Two people who commuted by bus from the Roundhay area had to walk from the Corn Exchange as their bus stop had been moved. They both commented that this was problematic as there was very limited seating during the walk to the train station. It was also busy considering it wasn't rush hour due to all the road changes in the city. They reflected that this was very disorientating. The seating that was available was either being used or at bus stops and came in the form of sloping perches which are not suitable for everyone. They both commented that they didn't have suitcases, were able to walk short distances and were familiar as Leeds residents with the city. For someone who isn't from Leeds, or has luggage, or sensory/mobility issues this could be very difficult if not impossible.



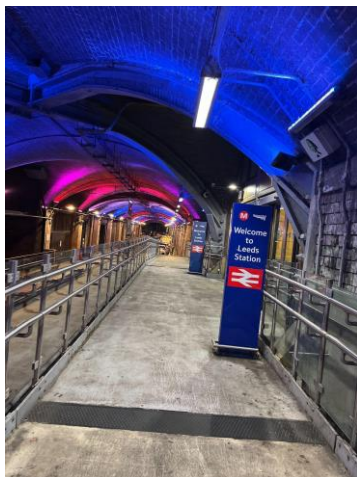
Route to the station from Boar Lane



Dark Neville (Gate Closed)

Part of King Street was closed as was the footpath to the side of the Queens Hotel and a set of traffic lights were not operational. This meant crossing from one side of the street to another and having to cross at a point where there were no drop-down curbs. This would have presented issues to a person using a walking aid or someone using a wheelchair. Positively there was signage in place regarding the closures and signage to the station which directed to the City Square entrance with an average commute time.

One member hadn't been to the train station since before the pandemic. They also agreed getting to the station was complicated due to the bus stops changing and road closures. They however were very impressed with the amount of accessible seating in the South and North Concourse at the station. They also liked the addition of the departure/arrival board at multiple heights in the North Concourse with accompanying self-service ticket machine, seating and hearing loop. They however commented that the ticket booth was card only.



Dark Neville Street entrance



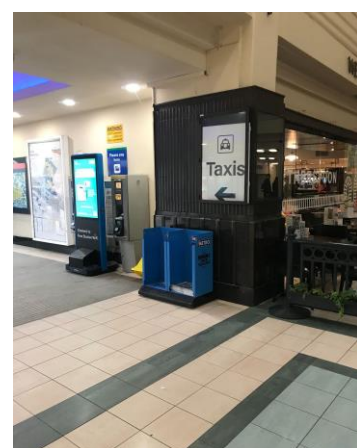
Road works outside the Dark Neville Street

There were issues when parking at Granary Wharf and using the Dark Neville Street entrance as the gate was closed which resulted in a delay. There was no signage in place to alert the gate was locked. It was also highlighted that this entrance felt underused and ominous. On the person's last visit, they used the car park at Aire Street and received conflicting information from the staff member at the car park

about car parking tickets. They also commented that you are only allowed a free 10 minutes at the multi storey but by the time you find a place 10 minutes is up.

No members of the group opted to use a taxi but lots of people commented on the issues when previously getting a taxi. The station is effectively disconnected from East Leeds for people using private hire taxis. The official taxi drop-off can only be found by a tour of the Armley Gyratory. Private hire drivers often do not want to drop off at the station and will suggest other drop off points. We are aware there has been some improvement since the implementation of the traffic flow officers and approach signage at Aire Street, but it still isn't ideal.

Whilst walking to our meeting point a group member asked a staff member what they needed to do if they couldn't use the digital ticket machine as the one located in the North Concourse was card only. The staff member (Phil) said he could support them to use the machines located near the ticket office or they could go to the ticket office and purchase a ticket. He offered to go with them to show them where they were located. They asked if there was always someone available to do this and Phil said there will always be a staff member 'Floor Walking' but they obviously could be supporting another passenger. Phil was wearing a uniform so was easy to locate and was very friendly and helpful. He highlighted some of the accessibility support offered at Leeds Train Station like passenger assistance services.



Variety of Taxis signs

We all felt the signage in the station had improved. In previous visits there wasn't signage for the move of the private hire taxi pick/up points. These are now in place at obvious points to aid waymarking. We feel preemptive waymarking/signage when changes are being made is essential during the development works. Everyone was able to get to the meeting point on time. None of our group used the online map as they didn't know it existed nor where they aware of [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#)

James Moy explained that Network Rail acknowledged that the developments to the train station are disruptive, and each phase of development will bring complexity. The Train Station requires vast development to improve accessibility and

accommodate the number of passengers that use the gateway. An added difficulty is they are limited to where and how they can develop due to the footprint of the station and the river. Each phase inevitably will cause disruption when works are ongoing, and they hope by continually consulting passenger groups they can alleviate some of the issues.

James updated that the phase to Bishopsgate including the pedestrianisation of New Street, the move of the taxis to Bishopsgate, addition of lifts and the cycle hub will not be complete until 2025.

We understand that changes can be disruptive and to develop Leeds Train Station it will take time and planning. We however know that a lot of older people are not using the train station as it isn't accessible right now. A great deal of the issues are connected to the disruption of the works on other forms of travel like buses and access to taxis. This is directly affecting the amount of older people coming into the city centre.

Age and Dementia Friendly suggested Actions from the journey to the Train Station

The points below are in reflection to our journey to Leeds Train Station. The site visit report will deeper dive into recommendations on the physical environment, respect and inclusion and communication and information.

- **When bus stops are moved so far from the station there needs to be consideration to the route to the station in relation to seating and inclusive/accessible signage.**
- **Bus Company information Stand to support interconnections with bus departure time boards and representative bus staff.**
- **More fixed signage around the city centre to be implemented with average commute time as this was helpful when works are complete.**
- **Close accessible bus stops that link with the train station to all parts of the wider city. The City Square redevelopment works have cut the station off from the buses.** Can we have reassurance the proper access will be restored after the City Square development and when will that be?
- **Sign at the North Concourse ticket machine to say there are cash options available at the ticket office.**
- **Additional private hire taxi drop off point at Dark Neville Street as well as Aire Street to improve access to private hire vehicles.** Many older people/people living with dementia use private hire to get to the train station, it is also cheaper than the black and white taxis.
- **Longer free car parking to find a space**
- **Multi Story Car Park staff to give consistent, accurate information to embed that all parts work as a Leeds Travel Gateway.**
- **Ensure that a physical ticket office with trained, helpful, and friendly staff remains as we are aware there are proposed closures.**
- **Ensure that there are always members of staff available to help support people with using the ticket machines.**
- **Ensure that there is an option to purchase a ticket using cash.**

- **Clear information at Dark Neville Street on the use of the gate. If it is locked this needs to be highlighted with signage.**
- **Intuitive waymarking and signage around proposed changes before they happen and whilst they are happening.**
- **Reinstatement of a FREE circular city centre bus (when all works allow) or a bus to the bus station to embed interconnections and the Leeds Travel Gateway.**
- **Link with the new city centre access map work being completed by Rachel O’Gorman, City Centre Officer from Leeds City Council Rachel.OGorman@leeds.gov.uk**
- **Age Friendly Campaign to promote the [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) with older people’s groups**

Physical Environment

Flooring

The pavements did have obstacles due to the planned development works, these however were cordoned and signed. The flooring was slip resistant and generally not in a busy pattern. It was noted that we did attend on a dry day so could not test the slip resistance of the surfaces. There were some tiling details in the North Concourse but it was repetitive and minimal. Edges to the floors in the recently refurbished concourses were trimmed in a darker material for people with sensory/spatial impairment. This echoed the recommendations from the consultation in 2020.

Tactile paving and panels were also in place on the platforms to support people with visual impairments. There is a slight incline to New Station Street and a steep incline to Aire Street which people may find difficult which we raised with James but was informed that these were the most accessible measures that could be implemented for the spaces. The concourses are wide and would allow people using wheelchairs/aids/pushchairs to get passed. We however highlighted that this may be different at rush hour. Darker mats (not black) were at the entrance. We asked if these would be changed to consistent colours to match the flooring but was informed that this wasn't included in the current plan.

The expanse of the station needs to be noted. If you have to get from the drop off point to a far station you will have a considerable distance and will need to use the escalators or lifts. The lifts were operational when we attended. The group were not aware of the ‘Turn Up and Go’ service or the full range of travel assistance available.

Welcome

The New Station Street entrance is open, accessible, and welcoming. Many of our group were not aware that the Dark Neville Street entrance was operational. Everyone felt this was underused and felt a little scary despite all the additions to colourful lighting. The Aire Street entrance is wide and welcoming although some people have attended on match days which can feel slightly intimidating when the Weatherspoon’s outdoor area is very busy. The City Square entrance is quite small

but provides another route into the station when it is busy. We felt this could get quite busy during rush hour as it would create a 'bottleneck' but that it did provide an alternative route to avoid the walk to New Station Street or the steep slope on Aire Street. All entrances have automatic doors and have step free access. There are however issues with some of the waiting rooms as they do not have automatic doors.



New Street Entrance



Dark Neville Street Arch Entrance

Lighting

As mentioned previously Dark Neville Street is darker which presents issues around people feeling unsafe and issues for people living with dementia around deep shadows. All the other entrances are well lit and make use of natural light.

Blue Badge Parking

There is signage to alert the blue badge parking at Aire Street. This however is not shown on the site [map](#) but information is included on the [Leeds Train Station Guide](#). We were not aware of this guide but feel it is a very useful document that should be shared. We did not go to the multi storey car park on this visit so cannot confirm the signage or blue badge parking within the car park.

Toilets

The toilets are now all free to use. There are also accessible toilets which are located around the station which are gender neutral and accessed via radar key or via a member of station staff. The toilets in the South Concourse had seats that are a contrasting colour to the walls but not to the rest of the toilet. Some toilet doors did have internal hooks, but some were broken. The general toilets did not have handrails but were lockable, clean (enough) and had toilet paper/hand washing/drying facilities. The signage to the toilet was bold using universal symbols. We did not have time to assess the accessible toilets or the toilets in the catering and retail shops.

James Moy updated that they were limited in adding more toilets due to the plumbing at the station.

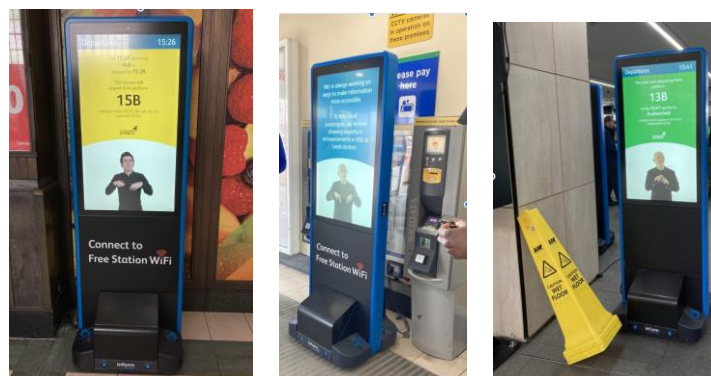


Toilet Sign in the South Concourse

Seating and Handrails

All stairs and indoor ramps had handrails. We however noted that regularly spaced seating would need to be in place at the New Station Street development due to the slight incline. We did not have time to check the outdoor slope to Aire Street to see if it had handrails. The seating in the North and South Concourse was very good. It had a variety of heights, adjustable tables, was well placed and looked like seating. The seating on the upper level is however hidden to the back behind the Pasty Shop. This also wasn't as accessible as the lower ground seating, and it wasn't signposted. As this is a mid-way point for people getting to the further platforms some people may need a rest in between. We note the seating could not be brought onto the thoroughfare as it would create obstacles. It also provided a quiet space which was again not signposted.

Deaf/Hearing Impaired Facilities



We thought it was brilliant that the hearing loop was available at the departure boards and was updated that the station had recently installed purpose-built stands that have a video of a person using BSL explaining all the access information. They are situated by Sainsbury's, by the exit at Wetherspoons and both sides of the ticket barriers. None of the group, however, use BSL. We received feedback from the deaf community that having BSL interpreters on the access videos suggests that there will

be a BSL interpreter on site and often that isn't the case so can be very frustrating if further support is required.

How to Find Us Information

The station has an online site map and Leeds Station Guide. No group members were aware of this. Throughout the station there are several information maps, touch screen units and information points. Members commented that these are good but emphasised the importance of having trained staff for those who feel they cannot or do not want to use the touch screen points.

Age and Dementia Friendly Recommendations

- Add the South and North concourse to the site [map](#) as it currently is not highlighted and this is referenced throughout [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) this can be confusing for orientation.
- Landmarks are on the map stands but not on the site map online map. Research shows people living with dementia often use landmarks to navigate.
- The two concourses also would benefit from colour coding in their paintwork and some cultural art/murals to give more Leeds based identity to the spaces. It would be great to have a Dementia Friendly Leeds Mural to raise awareness within the travel gateway.
- Short video journeys to be available to walk through the different entrances to the station and the facilities available.
- More work to promote the Travel Assistance service and turn up and go service in non digital formats with the Neighbourhood networks, at supermarkets and GP surgeries.
- Add the Leeds Train Station toilets to [The Great British Public Toilet Map](#)
- Ensure all waiting rooms have automatic doors for people using aids/adaptations and wheelchairs
- To repair all the hooks to the back of the toilet doors
- To install contrasted toilet seats to support people living with dementia and people who are visually impaired.
- To ensure the door mats are of consistent colour to the floor and not much darker as they can appear as holes to people living with dementia.
- To ensure a ticket office is still available during Monday to Friday (04.45 - 23.59) and Sundays (07.45 - 22.30) with trained staff and cash options. We are aware there are proposed closures to ticket offices across the country and have signed the relevant petitions.
- When developing, if possible add footbridges/lifts to shorten the journey to different parts of the station.
- To request that all businesses and organisations that are in the train station sign up to our [Age and Dementia Friendly Business Scheme](#) and

that they sign up to the [Come in and Rest](#) and [The Great British Public Toilet Map](#) as part of their actions. *We are aware that the seating outside the smaller shops

- **To install FREE water refill points throughout the station or request businesses sign up to the [Refill Campaign](#) to promote sustainability and reduce single use plastics.**
- **To add signage to the seating area on the upper floor and install more accessible seats**
- **To factor in a quiet waiting space for people living with dementia/ neuro divergent and include this on the map/access information.**
- **To ensure the taxis points and pick up/drop off points have sheltered roofs.**
- **To add another pick up/drop off point (possibly at Dark Neville Street as it is a long route right across the station.**
- **To have more shops/ businesses at Dark Neville Street to promote footfall and provide another cultural entrance that will promote a less intimidating feel to this part of the station.**

Respect and Inclusion

Age and Dementia Friendly Schemes

Leeds Train Station is signed up as an Age and Dementia Friendly organisation and updated its actions in July prior to the site visit which include:

- New changing places
- New seating where you can plug in your phones (wireless)
- FREE Wi-Fi
- Alzheimer's Society bucket collection/raising awareness
- Planning age and dementia staff training

The staff that we saw were not wearing dementia friend's badges. Although they were very friendly in their approach to questions at this visit. The group have in the past experienced inconsistency in staff approaches where a staff member at the information desk was abrupt and showed a lack of understanding.

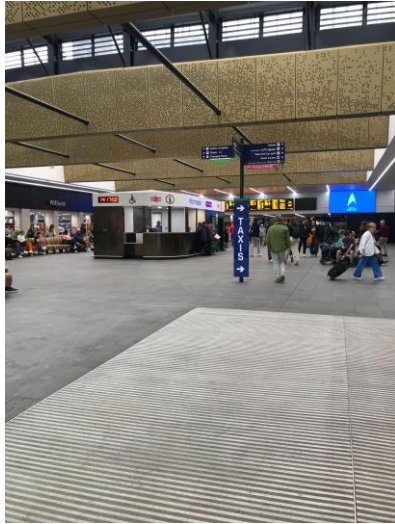
There isn't currently an Age Friendly Ambassador listed at the train station. They will be able to sign up for FREE [Wise Up to Ageism](#) training as part of their training plan.

Accessibility Services

The station has information desks, a travel centre and staff that are available to support people. This can be through the bookable passenger assistance for older or disabled passengers. This includes.

- Offering a helping hand to the station.
- Support when boarding, finding a seat, or alighting the train.
- Meeting you from your train and taking you to your next train or the exit.
- Arranging a ramp to assist you on or off your train.
- Assistance relating to a non-visible disability.

- Advising on the accessibility of other stations across the network for your onward journey.
- Carrying your bag(s) – up to three items of luggage as per the National Rail Conditions of Travel.



Information Desk (South Concourse)



Site Map

One member of our group recently used the passenger assistance service. They commented that the waiting room for assisted travel is attached to the new information office and is a very small windowless room. The four allocated Signage seats just on the outside of this building were occupied by passengers not travelling with assistance and all said they had not noticed signage.

They also offer 'Turn up and Go' Support but underline that this may incur a wait and suggest pre booking. This is covered in the [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) They can also provide wheelchairs and travel assistance vehicles but these must be with the support of the passenger assistance team.

Financial Incentives

National Rail has a [Senior Rail Card](#) which gives 1/3 off of ticket prices. People with a Senior Railcard save on average £76 per year**, or £5.34 per journey.

Age Positive Imagery

There are no age positive images that could be seen in use within promotional materials on the site visit.

Feedback

There were information stands that asked for feedback and also covered links to the plan for developments. The guide also highlights a number of feedback options including speaking to a member of staff, calling the National Helpline, emailing or using the live chat function. The Train Station also consults with groups like ours to review services. They are also setting up a forum with disabled passengers to consult the proposed changes. We feel there is some great information but it is

mainly available in digital format and that the people that would really benefit from it are likely not to be aware of the services available.

Age and Dementia Friendly Recommendations

- **Leeds Train Station to fulfil their 2023 Age and Dementia Business actions**
- **To have an Age Friendly Ambassador on the Travel Assistance scheme.**
- **To ensure all staff undertake a Dementia Friends session and Wise Up to Ageism session**
- **Paper leaflet of the site map**
- **To ensure all staff offer consistent and friendly service.**
- **To ensure there is a BSL interpreter available at the passenger assistance team.**
- **Put a window in the passenger assistance waiting room for a pleasant waiting experience.**
- **Larger signage to the 4 designated seats outside the passenger assistance waiting room.**
- **Encourage the shops to sign up as Age and Dementia Friendly Organisations & where applicable to the Come in and Rest scheme. This could be offered as part of an Age and Dementia Friendly sign up day at the Train Station.**
- **To have more inclusive age positive imagery within resources and marketing. Examples can be found via the [Age Positive Image Library](#)**
- **To raise awareness of the passenger assistance services provided with the Neighbourhood Networks in Leeds and to have have a pop awareness stand on the South Concourse**
- **To propose a site visit with the [Up and GO DEEP Group](#)**
- **To invite the Age Friendly Steering Group back at the end of the work on Bishopsgate to review the completed works.**
- **To respond to the recommendations in this report.**

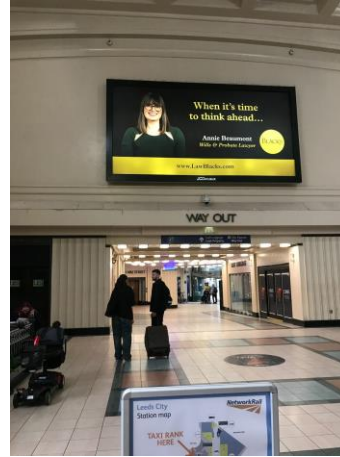
Communication and Information

Signage

We noted a vast improvement to the signage. It was bold, in clear fonts with a contrast to the surface it is mounted on. The signage has changed to a light font/dark background from consultation work with groups of people with disabilities. The signs which have a light background and dark lettering in the North Concourse will be changed. Signage was also in key places for way marking and at varying heights. Most signs were well lit. This was also demonstrated with the departure and arrival boards as they had two heights, and all the lettering was lit.



Clear Signage on Contrast Background

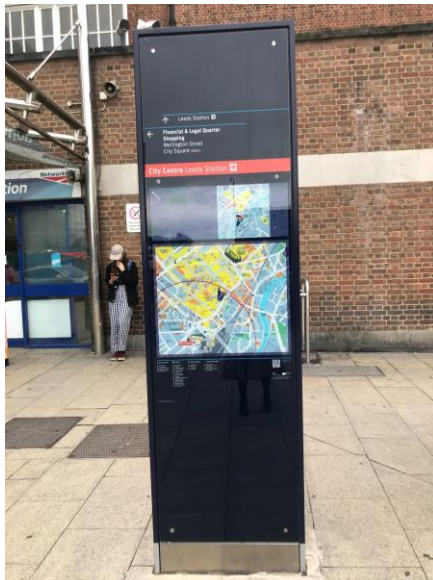


Way Out Sign (gets lost)

The doors we saw did have signs affixed to the doors they refer to to avoid confusion. We however could not check all the doors. Members of the group noted that this had not been in place when the taxi rank changed location which caused lots of confusion and disruption. The group reiterates the earlier points on pre-emptive signage when changes are taking place. Signage also had large universal symbols at the toilets. We however did not see any bilingual signage.

There are glass/transparent doors to some of the waiting areas. We did not have to check to see if they were clearly marked with signage.

There is no large sign on the car park building but a small sign to the side of the road. Everyone who attended knew that this was the car park but a very large sign would be helpful for those who are not familiar with Leeds.



Orientation Maps

Maps and Guides

The Network Rail Leeds City Station Map has a symbol for Buses in the key to Services and facilities, but there is no bus symbol anywhere on the map. The map also has the wrong location for taxis.

The Network Rail Leeds City Station Guide has headings for Arriving by car, Parking and Taxis, but NOT for Buses. There is a small paragraph on page 22 but it doesn't embed the ethos of Leeds City Station as a travel gateway.

Printed Resources

We were not shown any printed resources, but they are available at the travel centre. You can also get printed resources posted (in certain circumstances) by calling the travel assistance number on 0800 022 3720. This was tested by a group member who was also updated on the accessibility information and services at Leeds Train Station.

Braille/Hearing Loops

One of our group returned to the Train Station to attend the travel centre and asked some questions on what was available. The staff were very friendly and helpful. They covered the introduction of the new purpose built stands with BSL videos as well as highlighting the [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) They were not sure on what braille materials were offered but covered the passenger assistance services for people with sight impairments.

Telephone Contact

There are a variety of numbers for people to call that are listed on the website but not a specific one for Leeds City Station. There are also telephone numbers on the information boards, you do have to look carefully for them, and they are only optional if you are on site. This can also be confusing as some of the telephone contacts relate to the train operator that you are using. There is however a number that can be found through the passenger assistance [page](#) which will direct people. One clear number for travel assistance/access enquiries would be useful for people who do not want to or have issues with using digital.

Opening Hours

The opening hours are clearly available on the website. They are also covered on [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) This however does not meet the needs of people who are again not using digital.

Booking a ticket

Members of the group attempted to buy a ticket from the digital ticket vending machine on the upper level by the escalators. This took several attempts as they missed the icon for a senior ticket. There were no staff to support at this point but with time they worked out how to use the system. There were plenty of machines across the station but importantly the Ticket Office on the North Concourse was open and took cash, Leeds Train Station Staff were also available to support. The group was not aware of how much support could be booked via the Passenger Assistance Service.

Age and Dementia Friendly Actions

- **To ensure that when the bus stops return they are added to the maps and guides**
- **To have more links with bus companies (highlighted in journey feedback)**
- **To update the new location of the taxis on the map.**
- **To have a large colourful sign on the side of the car park which faces Aire Street with the word 'Car Park'. This could be done by an artist to give a cultural element to the plain wall.**
- **Intuitive waymarking and signage around proposed changes before they happen and whilst they are happening.**
- **Check that all doors have the aligned signage on them and not adjacent as this is confusing (we didn't check all doors)**
- **Check that glass/transparent doors have signage.**
- **Have hard copies of the [Network Rail's Guide to Leeds Train Station](#) and supporting campaign to update older people via the neighbourhood networks of what is available at Leeds Train Station**
- **To update what resources are available in Braille**
- **To have a clearly marked telephone number for Travel Assistance services and opening times for people with accessibility needs. This needs to be available in a variety of places including hardcopy guides, on information boards and through a possible campaign to raise awareness of the accessibility services at the Train Station**
- **To ensure a ticket office with well trained staff remains**
- **That there are options to buy tickets with cash.**

This report was compiled by the Age Friendly Steering Group. We request a meeting to discuss the recommendations and a further site visit when this set of works are completed.