

## LATEST NEWS FROM BLUEASSIST UK LTD



**Paul and Lesley**

Thanks go to Mencap and their team who took part in the evaluation of the BlueAssist cards on First Trans Pennine Express trains ahead of the full scale launch in February.

On the 8th of December a group of volunteer travellers set out in the North of the UK to evaluate the BlueAssist cards on the First Trans Pennine Express trains.



Setting off from Grimsby, Selby, Scarborough and Hull their mission was to try out the BlueAssist system and check that the training the train staff had received had prepared them to fully support BlueAssist users.

Some of the team had written their BlueAssist questions themselves before setting out, for others a quick conversation with a support worker in the cafe helped them work out what they might need to ask.



The teams really enjoyed their day out and the feedback was positive. As a support worker said:

*"It was a pleasure to help as it ultimately improves the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our society. what we take for granted is a massive step for people who need this support and this I can see is a fantastic idea and works."*

But we did not just want to hear from the support staff but from the people who used the BlueAssist cards themselves, so we sent out a questionnaire with simple questions like; 'Did you use the card at the station or on the train?'. All the questionnaires were in simple read version or supported by Widgeit symbols.

The highlights for us were the comments about encouraging independence:

*"Using the cards gave us more confidence to be able to use public transport without support, knowing that in my local station I could ask for help"*

*"I think once more train staff understand the importance of the cards and the difference it makes to people they may want to help more."*

*"We had a fantastic day trying out the cards. The journey was not as scary, and holding the cards made you feel that you could ask for help."*



*"The staff were all very helpful and patient with me. It made the day run smoother and I was not so anxious about travelling"*

First Trans Pennine Express Staff should be congratulated for providing the support they needed, but with the respect every person deserves.

*"The staff at Hull and on the train were very helpful. They appeared to understand the cards straight away and gave special attention to them. Especially the train conductor. He was very polite and respectful. He didn't make a fuss and treated everyone with respect."*

The only time the team had reservations was at a station operated by another company, perhaps they too need to follow the BlueAssist code, we will be making sure they join in too.

**Thank you to the people of Mencap for taking this challenge and doing it so well.**