

Letters to the Editor

People With Disabilities Will Stop Using Train

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my disappointment with the service provided for people with disabilities in Tullamore train station.

On the Irish Rail website, it is advised that those with mobility impairments give twenty-four hours' notice if they intend to travel by train. Leaving aside the fact that this practice is somewhat discriminatory (as no other train passenger is expected to give such notice), complying with this still does not guarantee that assistance will be provided to those who need it.

As your readers may be aware, just this January past a young wheelchair user was stranded on Platform Two owing to the fact that the lift wasn't working. On Wednesday 22 March 2017 I travelled on the train using my rollator and requested assistance getting off the train that afternoon coming home. True, I didn't give twenty-four hours' notice, but I gave as much as I could. On arrival in Tullamore there was nobody to help me off the train, meaning that I had to fling my rollator off the train onto the platform, and then myself. Had I been in my wheelchair (as I normally would be) I would have been stuck on the train at least until reaching the next station.

These stories are becoming the norm; they are not isolated incidents. I believe that there is a danger that people with disabilities will eventually stop using trains and end up sitting at home instead. This is not acceptable in 2017. I, and many others I'm sure, would be happy to engage with the management of Irish Rail in trying to find a viable solution. At any rate, as things are in Tullamore at present, there is a real threat to our autonomy as people with disabilities.

Yours etc,
Sarah Fitzgerald,
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