



# Impact Story : Abi from Yellow Submarine

My name is Abi, I am 21-years old. I am a wheelchair user with multiple disabling conditions



My name is Bee, I am the Access and Inclusion Program Lead at Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership

The following is a conversation between Bee (left) and Abi (right) about her experience with our travel training program - Travel Proficiency Certificate - and the impact over the past six months since her training.

Can you tell me a little bit about your involvement with Yellow Submarine; how long have you been here, what sort of things do you get up to?

So, I have been a member of Yellow Submarine since I was 9, so that's 12 years now. I started off in our youth groups and then transitioned over to adult [groups] where I am now involved in our Tuesday night group, Friday Reach group and Periscope which is our steering group which helps bridge the gap between our staff members and our actual members. We're there to give a voice to those who can't always articulate what they want, so they tell us and we tell the staff.

What sort of activities do you get up to in the Friday Reach group for example? Can you give us a flavour of what you get up to?

So currently we are doing arts and crafts in the mornings, so the last couple of weeks we've been focusing on making our own custom boards about ourselves using different techniques, so there's been a lot of glitter involved! In the afternoons we go out, so today we are going to the Story Museum, last week we went out and did some window shopping in the Westgate. We do so much, we've been to the park, we like going to the park a lot, and cafes! So we go out to different cafes, our favourite one is Cafe Nero, so if you are going past a Cafe Nero you can probably find a group from Yellow Submarine there!

So it's a mix of doing both group activities at the hub, but also going out and about?

Yes, so we try to give our members a chance to be a part of the community and for the community to see us, as we say in our motto, '#WeCan'.

So we did some travel training together six months ago now, to the best of your ability can you chat through what you remember us doing in that travel training; what really sticks with you?

So I loved the worksheets that you did with us, so going through what you need when you leave the house, things that you may need to think of. And when you showed me the app for Passenger Assist that has changed my life.

Can you chat a bit more about that, how you use it since we spoke about it?

So there have been multiple times where I've had to get the train [from Didcot to Oxford]. Being a wheelchair/mobility aid user, I have to use Passenger Assist because otherwise I can't get on and off the train. I used to have to get my caregiver to book it for me because I was so anxious talking to people on the phone that I'd say the wrong things. I tried it once and there was a whole miscommunication so my caregiver had to take over, but now with the app I can do that all independently so that has been life-changing for me to finally get that independently when it comes to my trains.

How has that now changed your travel habits?

I actually use the train more now than I ever have before; I have made friends with Passenger Assist [staff] here in Oxford, they are absolutely lovely and I haven't had any issues with them. They are just some of the nicest people I've met. When I go up to them and go 'I'm so sorry, my bus has been cancelled and I'm normally really good at booking I'm sorry' and they are like 'It's fine, my love, things like this happen - it's life.'

So you're finding that you are feeling a lot more confident in both booking and going to talk to people and knowing who to talk to at the station for support?

Yes, which is confidence I've never had before doing the travel training with you, so it has made my life so much easier and now I know I don't need to fear talking to people and they are there to help

What would you say to someone that's not sure whether to do the travel training, or they're feeling quite anxious about using the train; what advice would you give them?

I'd say go for it, I didn't think until I did the travel training that I would ever be able to travel independently on the train and it wasn't until someone backed me up and gave me that confidence. Sometimes you just need that little tiny boost to say 'ok, actually I can do this. I can defy expectations' and don't let that inner voice keep you back.

Any other comments you want to make?

Each time I use the train I'm less and less worried and I've really enjoyed it and I know the travel training that you have done has had such a massive impact for all of us and we couldn't have done it without your help and the help of the staff here at Yellow Submarine.

We want to thank our community partners at Yellow Submarine for their ongoing support and engagement with the Community Rail Partnership, and we especially want to thank Abi for allowing us to share her impact story

