**26/06/20**

**Sunflower scheme introduced by Avanti West Coast for customers with hidden disabilities**

* *Train operator partners with Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme*
* *Customers can use lanyards, cards, or wristbands with recognisable sunflower logo*
* *Scheme is a discreet way for customers to indicate they have a hidden disability*

Avanti West Coast has introduced an initiative for customers to discreetly indicate they have a hidden disability while travelling.

The inter-city operator has this month partnered with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme.

Under the scheme, customers with hidden disabilities can obtain lanyards, wristbands or wallet cards with a recognisable sunflower logo, which they can show to staff to let them know they may require some extra help, time or assistance while on board.

Teams at Avanti West Coast have been briefed on the scheme, which is entirely voluntary, and from today (26 June), lanyards, cards and wristbands will also be available at Avanti West Coast stations.

Following announcements that face coverings must be worn on public transport in England and Scotland, some new products will also state the holder is exempt from these measures.

Brandon Peat, Accessibility and Inclusion Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: “As more passengers start travelling again, we are striving to make the railway more inclusive. We are incredibly proud to be part of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme, giving passengers with hidden disabilities greater confidence to travel on Avanti West Coast.”

More information on the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme can be found here: https://hiddendisabilitiesstore.com/

ENDS

**About the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme**

Since its launch in 2016, the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower has now been adopted globally by major airports and venues and in the UK, by many supermarkets, railway and coach stations, leisure facilities, the NHS, a number of police, fire and ambulance services, and an increasing number of small and large businesses and organisations.

The sunflower suggests happiness, positivity, strength as well as growth and confidence. It intends to allow everyone with Hidden Disabilities to choose to be visible when they need to be.

**About Avanti West Coast**

Avanti West Coast, operator of inter-city rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We’re on a mission to revolutionise train travel, linking together the towns and major cities of the UK to create an iconic railway the country can be proud of. We’ve got big plans including a fleet of new intercity trains, as well as the complete refurbishment of the existing Pendolino train fleet. There will be 263 more train services every week by 2022 with new routes added, and a much-improved onboard service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats and improved catering. Since 8 December, passengers have benefitted from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by just 15 minutes.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Room: <https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/>

Press Office: 0845 000 3333