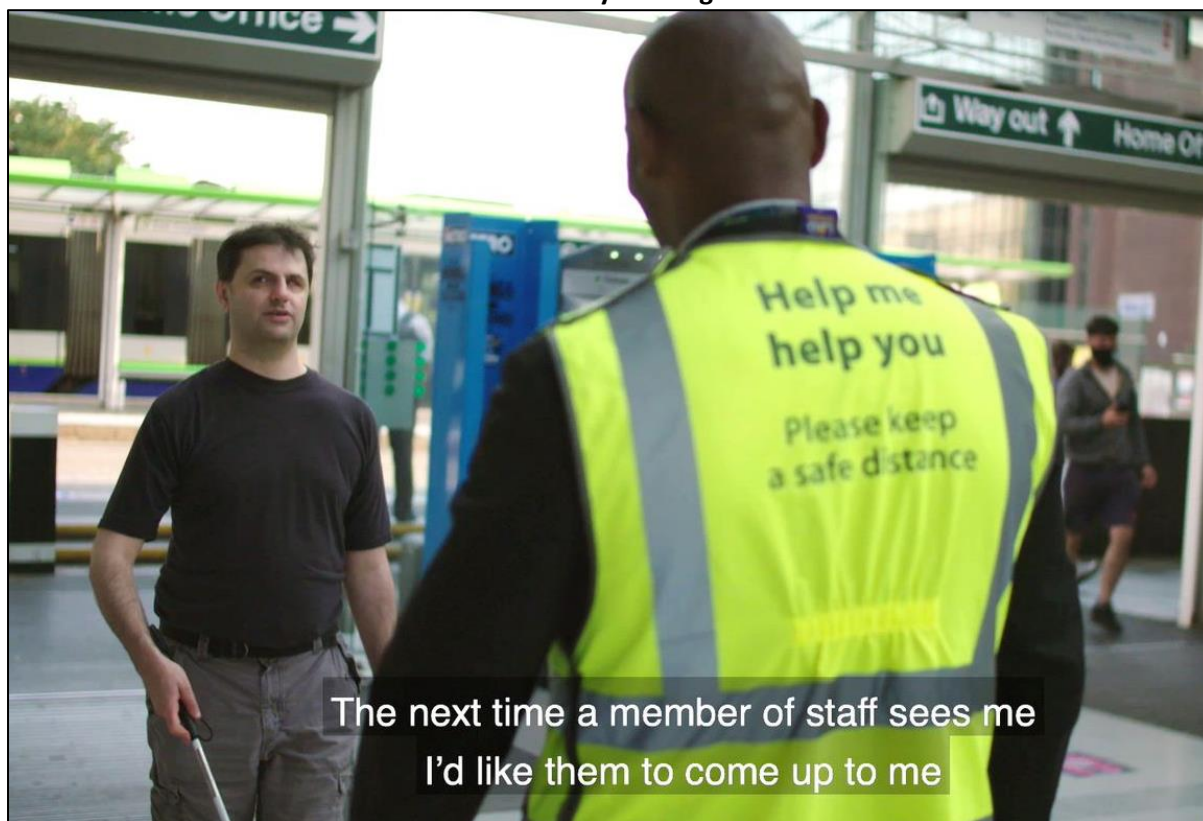


## Yusuf Osman of Croydon

A blind professional visual awareness trainer, Yusuf is a member of the GTR Accessibility Advisory Panel and features in GTR's new staff accessibility training videos



Yusuf Osman at East Croydon station. [Click here to download this picture](#) and [click here to download the staff training video](#) in which he features

Yusuf Osman, 41, was born with a deteriorating sight condition which left him blind at the age of four and has been advising GTR in providing better assistance as a member of its accessibility advisory panel for four years.

Yusuf lives in Croydon. He's a professional visual awareness trainer and also helps assess would-be and existing foster carers. He's a member of the Croydon mobility forum and the Croydon adult social care users' forum (YO: Croydon Adult Social Services Users' Panel).

"Outside lockdown, I use the train a lot. Anywhere I need to go, I go there by train, normally from East Croydon. I suffer from depression and one of the things that makes me feel good about myself is being able to travel independently; it gives me value and a sense of achievement.

"I look at assistance by GTR as adding to my independence not taking away from it. Victoria, for example, is such a busy station, that it's far easier to be guided by a member of staff to the Underground or the taxi rank than constantly bump into people, which is quite stressful.

"This new Accessible Travel Policy shows that GTR has been listening to what we have been saying on the Accessibility Advisory Panel about problems, involving us in the decision-making process and valuing what we have to say.

“The new policy is a pledge by GTR, a commitment to passengers who have difficulties travelling independently, to do everything they can to make it as painless and easy as possible, whether that’s someone elderly who needs a bit of help with the luggage or others with a wheelchair or someone with autism, a hidden disability, who might need reassurance they are going in the right direction.”

Yusuf says educating rail staff is absolutely vital, which is why he supports the GTR policy pledge of improved training, and features himself in new staff training videos.

“Sometimes, if, as a member of staff, you are very, very busy and you haven’t been given benefit of training you can do the wrong thing, even with the best will in the world. Once people have had training, they feel confident in asking what someone wants. Two blind people will have two completely different requirements – one might know the station, the other might not and will need guiding down to the platform.”

Yusuf is really looking forward to the reduction of notice required to book assistance in GTR’s policy pledge and the new mobile support teams providing assistance within 20 minutes at 41 staffed or partly-staffed stations.

“The mobile support teams would be brilliant. I use some of these 41 stations a lot and this would mean I don’t have to plan my journeys, which is so empowering. I could ring before I left home, and we would arrive at the station at the same time. It’s the reassurance of knowing someone would be there within 20 minutes, giving me greater independence and freedom to travel as and when.”

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