



Southern has completed pilot sessions at Hove and Arundel stations to re-familiarise passengers with train travel. More images below.

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## Southern offers helping hand to people in Sussex returning to the railway

With restrictions easing and the rules around leisure travel becoming more relaxed, rail operator Southern has been reaching out to local communities to support those with additional needs who may be nervous about using the railway again.

Working with its partner of over five years, [The Aldingbourne Trust](#), Southern has completed pilot sessions at Hove and Arundel stations to re-familiarise passengers with train travel. The sessions share information on the steps the leading train company has taken to keep people safe during the pandemic, as

well as offering an opportunity for the groups to ask any questions to help boost their confidence when using the rail network.

The Aldingbourne Trust supports people across Sussex who have learning disabilities and additional needs, such as autism. The pilot sessions with Southern aim to offer in-depth, personal support to members of the Trust to ensure they feel safe, comfortable and confident about returning to rail.

Feedback from the pilot sessions shows that 100% of the group felt comfortable about the new rules following the re-familiarisation exercise and felt confident about using the train again. 94% said they were planning to use a Southern train for a day out over the summer.

The re-familiarisation activity comes alongside recent research from Southern's parent company, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), which reveals that [41% of Brits are looking forward to a change of scenery](#) now that lockdown restrictions have eased. A further 37% of those surveyed said they can't wait to explore the UK, with views from the train window being one of the most missed parts of travelling by rail (31%).

**Angie Doll, Managing Director for Southern and Gatwick Express, said:** "It's great to see more people coming back to rail and we know it may be a little daunting for those who haven't travelled for a while. That's why we're working with organisations like The Aldingbourne Trust to take our reassurance guidance on cleaning and safety to the next level. We'll be expanding our tailored re-familiarisation sessions to wider groups in the community to ensure everyone feels completely confident to use our trains again."

**Roland Leask, from The Aldingbourne Trust comments:** "Our members and volunteers appreciated the re-familiarisation course. It was a lovely welcome back to the railway and great to see familiar faces again. The sessions definitely gave our members more confidence to use the trains again and we're very thankful to GTR for their support."

The welcome back tours are part of GTR's commitment to make small but important improvements based on customer feedback, helping to make

services more accessible. Read more here: [UK's largest rail network pledges better assistance for millions across the South East | Govia Thameslink Railway \(mynewsdesk.com\)](#).

**ENDS**

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*For more information, contact the press office on 0203 750 2031.*

### **Govia Thameslink Railway**

Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) operates Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern and Gatwick Express services as follows:

- Thameslink – cross-London services between Bedford/Peterborough/Cambridge and Brighton/Horsham/Littlehampton/East Grinstead, and between Luton/St Albans and Sutton/Wimbledon/Rainham; plus services between London and Sevenoaks
- Great Northern – services between London and Welwyn, Hertford, Peterborough, Cambridge and King's Lynn
- Southern – services between London and the Sussex coast (Brighton, Worthing, Eastbourne, Bognor Regis, Hastings) and parts of Surrey, Kent and Hampshire (Ashford International, Southampton, Portsmouth)
- Gatwick Express – fast, non-stop direct services between Gatwick Airport and London Victoria

[www.southernrailway.com](http://www.southernrailway.com), [www.thameslinkrailway.com](http://www.thameslinkrailway.com), [www.gatwickexpress.com](http://www.gatwickexpress.com), [www.greatnorthernrail.com](http://www.greatnorthernrail.com)