

# How to make a complaint



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## Introduction

Customers are at the heart of all that we do. However, sometimes things go wrong and we may not be able to provide the level of service that we promised.

We have designed an easily accessible system that allows you to get answers if you are not satisfied with our service. Your comments help us to identify what we need to do better so that we can take action to improve our service to you in the future.

This complaints handling procedure is available on our website ([www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)), at staffed stations that we operate and at stations that we serve. You can also contact our Customer Experience Centre and ask us to send you a copy.

All UK passenger rail operators' complaints handling procedures will also be available on the Office of Rail and Road's website ([www.orr.gov.uk](http://www.orr.gov.uk)).

Posters at stations will explain how to get a copy of the complaints handling procedure as well as how to make a complaint.

If you are not satisfied with our responses, you can contact Transport Focus (see page 10 for contact details).

## Feedback and response

Our complaints handling procedure is designed to make sure:

- it is easy to make a complaint;
- it takes account of the needs of everyone who may need to complain;
- we respond effectively to complaints; and
- a full and fair investigation takes place.

For us a complaint is:

‘Any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or company or industry policy’.

## It’s easy to make a complaint

If you want to make a complaint you can do this by:

- clicking the ‘contact us’ option on the website ([www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)) and choosing the option for ‘make a complaint’;
- writing to us at: Freepost NORTHERN RAILWAY;
- filling in a comments form, which you can get from staff at stations or on trains, and posting this to us or handing it to a member of staff; or
- phoning our Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060. This number will be answered 24 hours a day each day that trains are running. On days when trains are not running (such as Christmas Day), an answerphone message will ask you to leave your details so we can call you back.

If you would like to make a complaint, we need the following information to be able to deal with it for you.

- Your name and contact details
- Information on the service you are complaining about (for example, the time and destination of the train)
- The reason for your complaint
- A description of the problem and the inconvenience it caused
- What you would like us to do

## Taking into account everyone’s needs

If you need extra help to make a complaint you can:

- ask a member of staff at the station or on a train to help you;
- ring the Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060; or
- ask a friend, carer, support worker or guardian to help you.

Carers, support workers and guardians can act on your behalf, as long as they have your permission to do this (see also the section on confidentiality).

Our staff are all trained to value diversity and we work with a range of charities to make sure we are aware of and understand different protected characteristics.

Through everything we do, we aim to make sure that:

- we treat you fairly and with respect;
- our services and facilities are easily accessible to everyone; and
- we do what we can to make sure our service meets your individual needs.

## Our response

Our response to you will:

- look at all the main issues you raise; and
- explain the actions we are taking or have taken to deal with the problem.

If your complaint is about a train delay, you may be entitled to compensation. Our Customer Promise provides full detail of how to claim Delay Repay compensation.

## Full and fair investigation

Our staff will try to deal with your complaint immediately, if possible.

When we receive your formal complaint or comment (at a station or on a train, or by phone, in a letter or online), we will pass it to the Customer Experience Centre. The Customer Experience Centre will log the complaint and send details to the responsible line manager so they can investigate the matter fully and send you a response.

We will give a full and fair investigation to any comments and complaints we receive. Where appropriate, we will directly involve our managers and members of the senior management team to make sure we follow a consistent approach. This way we can try to avoid the same mistake happening again.

After you have received two responses from us, even though we will still try to deal with your complaint we will direct you towards Transport Focus who may also be able to help. If your complaint needs to be answered by another organisation such as Network Rail or another train operator, we will pass your complaint on to them.

## When we will take your complaint further

Sometimes we may need to raise your complaint further within our organisation. This may be necessary for a number of reasons, such as:

- if we may have broken safety rules or there has been a near miss;
- if there is an allegation of illegal behaviour;
- if you have suffered physical harm;
- if there has been an unexplained series of similar complaints;
- if there are a number of different parts to your complaint; or
- if the complaint is particularly serious.

Staff will be trained to recognise when a complaint needs to be raised and make sure it is further investigated.

## Compensation for delays

There is a separate process if your complaint is about a delay. If you are delayed for more than 30 minutes, regardless of whether we are at fault or not, we will repay some or all of the cost of your ticket. This is called Delay Repay and is explained fully in our Customer Promise.

You can claim Delay Repay compensation if one of our trains is late or cancelled and this means that you get to your destination station more than 30 minutes later than scheduled. Delay Repay compensation will usually be in the form of a free ticket to use across our network, whenever you choose. If you prefer, we can provide National Rail Vouchers which you can use to buy any rail ticket from any train operator, or we can send you a cheque.

You may have a legal right to receive compensation via the method in which you paid. Should an acceptable method not be detailed on our website or claim form, please call the Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060.

The following table explains the different levels of compensation.

**Delay of between 30 and 59 minutes:** Compensation of 50% of the cost of your single ticket or the relevant portion of your return ticket or one single ticket to anywhere on the Northern network.

**Delay of between one hour and one hour 59 minutes:** Compensation of the full cost of your single ticket or the relevant portion of your return ticket or two single tickets to anywhere on the Northern network.

**Delay of two hours or more:** Compensation of the full cost of your ticket (single or return) or two return tickets anywhere on the Northern network.

If we publish an alternative timetable, we will work out the compensation based on that. An alternative timetable is a new timetable which we upload to industry systems before 10pm on the day before you travel.

The easiest way to claim is through our website, but if you prefer you can send us your ticket and a claim form by post or email and we will process it that way.

If you make a complaint and we think you are entitled to Delay Repay compensation, we will let you know so that you can make a claim. Claim forms are available at staffed stations or on our website.

The levels of compensation described above sets out our general policy regarding Delay Repay compensation but does not in any way limit or exclude your legal rights as a consumer for delays, cancellations, or poor service where we are at fault, under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 or otherwise.

## Respecting your confidentiality

We will keep to the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that we will protect your confidentiality.

However, please be aware that we may give some or all of your details to another person or organisation without your permission if this is necessary for us to meet our own obligations. This includes providing information to organisations such as other train operators, Transport Focus, insurers, the Department for Transport, the Office of Rail and Road or Members of Parliament.

We will not use your personal details for marketing purposes unless you give us permission to do this, by ticking the box on either the online complaints form or on the paper version.

## Other types of feedback

There is a difference between a complaint and feedback. Feedback can take the form of comments, which can be neutral, positive or negative, about services we provide. You can give us feedback without necessarily wanting us to take corrective action or carry out a formal review.

There are many ways for you to give us your feedback, including on social media, online forums or dedicated consumer websites. We try to monitor this feedback for ongoing improvement but it is not covered by this complaints handling procedure and so will not be dealt with as a formal complaint.

However, if you use social media to contact us and we think you want to make a complaint, we will prompt you to raise a formal complaint and will tell you how to do this. We don't use social media for complaints because we need your personal details to be able to deal with a complaint.

## Service standards

### It's easy to access the complaints process

Our complaints handling process is simple and easy to use and is available to download from our website. We are also happy to provide it in alternative formats (such as large print). We have worked with Plain English Campaign to make sure this complaints handling procedure is easy to understand.

### Timescales for responding to complaints

We will acknowledge complaints we receive in writing (and paper complaints forms) within five working days, and send you a full response within 20 working days.

If you send us an email or fill in the online form, you will receive an automatic response within 24 hours, and we will send you a full response within 20 days.

If you make a complaint by phone, we will provide a full response within 20 working days.

We will always try to send you a full response within 10 working days, but more difficult, complex complaints or those which need extensive investigation may take the full 20 days.

### **Keeping you informed**

If we need to carry out detailed investigations, we will keep you informed until we can provide a full response.

### **I'm still not happy**

If when you receive our full response you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, you can contact Transport Focus. They can give you more help and advice, and may be able to take the complaint further on your behalf.

### **Transport Focus**

[www.transportfocus.org.uk](http://www.transportfocus.org.uk)

Email: [advice@transportfocus.org.uk](mailto:advice@transportfocus.org.uk)

Phone: 0300 123 2350

Twitter: @TransportFocus

Post:

Freepost RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ

PO Box 5594

Southend On Sea

SS1 9PZ

## **Who is responsible for complaints**

The national rail system is an integrated network and it is important to us that network benefits are maintained for passengers. You may not know which train company to contact, or your complaint may involve more than one train operator. In these circumstances we will handle the complaint on your behalf in a clear and co-ordinated way.

If your complaint is about a specific train, ticket office or station, the train operator responsible for that train, ticket office or station will deal with your complaint, regardless of what caused the complaint. If your complaint is about a ticket you have bought, the train operator that sold you the ticket will be responsible for dealing with your complaint. If we are not responsible for dealing with your complaint, we will pass it on to the operator that is responsible. We will send you a copy of anything we send to or receive from the other operator.

## **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

The Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes Regulations came into force in October 2015. The regulations cover the contract for tickets (and any other contract for payment such as car parking) between passengers (consumers) and rail operators.

The regulations apply after we have tried to deal with your complaint using this complaints handling procedure, but have not been successful. In this case, we will tell you we cannot settle the complaint and give you information about an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider.

In our case, the Consumer Ombudsman ([www.consumer-ombudsman.org](http://www.consumer-ombudsman.org)) is the ADR provider. However, as Transport Focus already provides a mediation service for customers in the rail industry, we do not use the ADR process and any correspondence to the Consumer Ombudsman will be redirected to Transport Focus.

## Finding out more

Our full complaints handling process document is available from the Customer Experience Centre and from ORR.

If you want some help or have any questions, please call the Customer Experience Centre on 0800 200 6060 or email them at [enquiries@northernrailway.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@northernrailway.co.uk). They will be happy to help.



Visit [www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)



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