

# Complaints handling procedure

## 1. Introduction

You and your feedback are vital to us. We are committed to taking complaints seriously and using the insight we gain to make changes to improve our business.

We know it is important that you are able to make complaints easily and that we respond appropriately with a promise of redress or action. Where we have got it wrong, we accept responsibility and say we are sorry.

We have designed our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) to ensure we investigate your complaints and give them fair and careful consideration.

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is when you tell us that you are dissatisfied with our service or our policies or those of our industry partners. You don't have to have bought a ticket to complain - you can make a complaint if you find any aspect of our service unacceptable. It may relate to:

- The quality and standard of services and facilities
- Failure to provide an advertised service
- The conduct or attitude of a member of our staff
- Inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff

## 2. How to make a complaint

You should make a complaint as soon as possible so we can investigate and resolve it promptly. There are various ways you can complain.

### 2.11 How to contact us about your complaint

#### In person

As all our staff have had customer service training, you can talk to any of them and they will do their best to support you. When dealing with a complaint our staff will consider:

- Can they resolve it on the spot by giving you an apology, explanation or solution?

- If they can't, can another member of staff help to resolve it then and there?
- Do you they need to refer you or advise how to send your complaint to our Customer Relations team for further investigation?

If you are complaining directly to our staff about something that lies within their area of responsibility, they should make every attempt to resolve it then. If the responsibility for the problem lies elsewhere, they will tell you how to contact our Customer Relations team.

You can talk to local station managers. You may have to make an appointment as they are in charge of more than one station.

We hold regular Meet the Manager events. You can find out when and where we hold them on

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

#### In writing

You can make your complaint in several ways. You can:

- Send us an email
- Send us a tweet (if you want it to be reported and a reference number provided, we will need to refer you to Customer Relations)
- Complete the feedback form on our website
- Write us a letter
- Pick up a form from one of our stations

At our stations you can find our Customer Relations contact details on the information poster.

#### By telephone

You can speak to one of the team from 07:00 to 22:00 every day except Christmas day.

When you phone us you'll get through to our answering service. You can then choose from the options on offer to speak to the right person. We aim to answer 97% of all calls and 80% of those within 30 seconds.

## By textphone

If you have a hearing impairment you can contact us by textphone from 07:00 to 22:00, every day except Christmas Day.

## 2.2 Information to include in your complaint

It helps us if you can state clearly what happened, why you are making a complaint and what you would like us to do. Please also send us any supporting documents you have, such as tickets or photos. This can help us to deal with your complaint more effectively.

The more information you can give us the better, please try to include the following:

- Your title and full name
- Your email address and mobile or phone number, and your preferred method of communication
- Your full postal address
- Date, time and location of the incident
- If the incident was on a station, the name of the station
- If it was on a train, the time and destination of the train
- If your complaint is about the condition of a facility, where it is, for example: - Waiting room on platform two
  - Toilet in the third coach of the train
- If you need someone to act on your behalf, please make sure they provide evidence of your authority to do so.

## 3. How we deal with your complaint

### 3.1 Overview

We have designed our CHP to be simple and streamlined, giving our staff responsibility to resolve complaints quickly. They know when they can deal with a complaint themselves and when they should refer it upwards.

We will investigate all complaints thoroughly to ensure our response is fair and factual. We will give you a full explanation and, where appropriate, an

apology. If your complaint includes more than one issue, we will deal with each aspect according to its priority.

We log every complaint with a unique reference number on our database. This means we can keep track of our progress dealing with your complaint, and check we're keeping to our targets for responding to customers.

When we deal with your complaint there are three key questions we consider:

- What are the specific issues?
- What is your expected outcome?
- Is your expected outcome reasonable or achievable?

When we reply with our response, we will address the issues raised in your complaint.

So you can be sure that we will investigate your complaint according to our CHP, you should try to make your complaint within 28 days of the incident. This is the same time limit set in the National Rail Conditions of Carriage for claiming a refund for a delay. We will still deal with complaints made later than this guideline but some information that might assist us is less likely to be available.

### 3.2 Time frame to deal with your complaint

The length of time it takes us to resolve your complaint depends on the complexity of your complaint and what it involves.

You should note the following timescales refer to the day our reply leaves our offices so please allow time for postal delivery. We define working days as Monday to Friday and don't include weekends or bank holidays.

During times of exceptionally high demand we're sometimes unable to meet our response times but we'll make every effort to do so. Please bear with us we will respond as quickly as possible and consult with the appropriate regulators to explain what has happened and how long the situation is likely to last and if we have to arrange emergency response times. We will do our best to keep you updated of progress.

### Complaint handling times

Our aim is to resolve most complaints quickly, so please contact us as soon as possible with the information listed in section 2.2.

We can generally give you a quick response if your complaint arises from an incident we're already aware of. For example, your journey was delayed because of a signalling problem or heavy snowfall.

In these types of cases we won't need to do extensive investigations because we already know the facts of the case.

We aim to send you a full response to a simple complaint within five working days and if our incoming numbers are not being affected by specific circumstances.

For more complex complaints needing investigation, or if we are facing high incoming numbers, we will respond within 20 working days

Some complaints can take longer to resolve as they need further investigation. This can be the case if:

- Your complaint is about several issues

- Your complaint is about an incident we don't already have information about
- Your complaint is complex and we need to investigate
- We need to ask one of our contractors, suppliers or another train operator for more information

We will carry out investigation to establish the facts of an incident to ensure a full and objective response. Our inquiries could include:

- Talking to staff
- Getting statements from witnesses
- Looking at CCTV footage
- Getting data from our automatic ticket gates or smartcard systems

We will let you know we've received your complaint and are making further investigation. We will keep our web site updated if it's likely our response times are being affected by high volumes.

### **3.3 What to do if you're not satisfied with our response**

#### **Internal appeal**

If you're not happy with the way we have answered your complaint, you may wish to contact us again. We will look at the issue and reconsider our position. Please tell us what you want for example:

- We didn't cover all of your main points
  - You don't agree with our decision
- Complaints handling procedure

A senior member of the team will review your original complaint and our response. He or she will re-examine the facts taking into account the reason why you're

not happy. We will write to you again telling you whether we stand by our original decision or have revised it. We will write to you within 20 working days of receiving your request for a review.

#### **If you're not happy with our response**

Please give us the opportunity to try to resolve your complaint. If you're unhappy with the response you receive, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman. The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve on going complaints between us and our passengers. It's free to use their services and they are independent of the rail industry. They don't take sides, but just look at the evidence available. They will help us both to try to reach an agreement, but if this doesn't happen, they will make a decision based on the evidence they've received. If you agree with their decision, then we have to act on what they say.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- You're unhappy with our final response to your complaint which will be contained in a letter or email (sometimes called a 'deadlock letter'); or
- We haven't resolved your complaint within 40 working days of receiving it; and
- No more than 12 months have passed since we sent you our final response.

There are some complaints that the Rail Ombudsman won't be able to look into, for example if it's about the way one of our services has been designed, industry policy, or if your complaint relates to an event which took place before the Rail Ombudsman service was established. If that's the case, then they'll contact you to let you know. If possible, they will transfer your complaint to another organisation that may be able to help you further, such as Transport Focus or London TravelWatch – the independent consumer watchdogs for the rail industry. They will independently review your complaint and where appropriate, follow things up on your behalf.

The Rail Ombudsman contact details and hours of operation of their contact centre:

**Website (including online chat):**  
**[www.railombudsman.org](http://www.railombudsman.org)**

**Telephone: 0330 094 0362**

**Textphone:** 0330 094 0363  
**Email:** [info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)  
**Twitter:** @RailOmbudsman  
**Post:** FREEPOST – RAIL OMBUDSMAN  
The Contact Centre team are available:

**Monday to Friday** 08:00 - 20:00

**Saturday and Bank Holidays** 08:00 - 13:00  
(excluding Christmas Day)

### 3.4

## Complaints we may not take further

Our staff are trained to remain polite and helpful.

If you use abusive language or an aggressive tone we may stop dealing with your complaint:

- In person: they may walk away, or ask a colleague for help. In extreme circumstances, the police may be called
- On the phone: our staff may end the call after issuing a warning
- In writing: they will reply but tell you it is unacceptable to address our staff in this manner and if we consider your complaint is frivolous we may not take it any further.

We may bring correspondence to an end where it is clear that despite our best efforts we are unlikely to satisfy you.

If we end our correspondence, it will be a manager who makes that decision. We will make sure you have already been referred to Transport Focus or London TravelWatch and we will advise them of our decision.

We will tell you when we're about to stop dealing with your complaint and give you the reasons why. If you write to us about a different issue, it will be treated as any other new complaint.

### 3.5

## Compensation

We will give you compensation in line with the National Rail Conditions of Travel and our Passenger's Charter.

Sometimes, if appropriate, we will offer additional compensation or goodwill gesture. This is usually in the form of National Rail travel vouchers.

You're entitled to compensation under our Delay Repay scheme if one of our trains is delayed by 15 minutes or more.

You can find details of this scheme on our website at

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

or in leaflets at our staffed stations.

## 4.

### Other information

If you have special requirements

If you need a response in a different format or language, we will do our best to provide it.

If we don't have the resources to do this in-house, we will employ translators or ask disability groups for advice. You can find out more here:

[southernrailway.com/your-journey/accessibility/](http://southernrailway.com/your-journey/accessibility/)  
[thameslinkrailway.com/contact-us/terms/dppp/](http://thameslinkrailway.com/contact-us/terms/dppp/)

### Personal information

We will not give your personal information to any other organisation, except the following, and then only if it's necessary for our investigations:

- Other train operating companies
- Transport Focus and London TravelWatch
- Other transport companies, when you ask us to
- Any other public body carrying out its statutory function

When we talk to another organisation we will comply with Data Protection legislation and guidance on handling personal information. Our privacy policy is available online.

### Complaints about staff

As we expect our staff to be professional and polite to our customers, we take complaints about staff behaviour seriously.

We pass any customer complaints or concerns about staff to the appropriate manager. They will investigate and take any necessary action.

Where we can, we will let you know the position of the manager carrying out the interview and the likely timescale of the investigation but please note we may not be able to tell you the final outcome of our enquiry for internal reasons.

### **Complaints about other train operators**

All train companies follow the same principles when dealing with complaints. If your complaint covers services provided by another transport company, we will tell you this and forward your comments to them within five days of receiving it.

### **Complaints about other organisations or contractors who provide services for us**

We will deal with a complaint about another organisation or contractor providing services when it is appropriate and most suitable. It should be noted for some specific issues we may have to forward your complaint to the contractor involved for their attention but we can generally help with:

- Cleaning services
- Car parking facilities
- Customer services
- Facilities management

We require our suppliers to co-operate with our CHP and provide any information we may ask for when we're investigating a complaint.

### **Claims for injury or loss**

If you have an accident on one of our trains or at one of our stations, or you see something you think is unsafe, please let us know as quickly as possible so that we can take appropriate action.

We always pass comments and complaints about safety on to our Safety Department.

### **Personal Injury Claims**

If you have had an accident or are injured and wish to make a claim you should write to us at:

Safety Department  
Thameslink Southern Great Northern Limited  
26-28 Addiscombe Road  
Croydon CR9 5GA

### **Damaged Property Claims**

If your property has been damaged on our trains or at our stations and you believe we were to blame, please contact us with full details including the date and time of the incident. If possible, please keep the

damaged item so you can show it to us if necessary or take photographs of the damage.

## **5. Roles and responsibilities for our Complaints Handling Procedure**

### **All staff**

As you can make a complaint to any member of our staff, we aim to make them aware of our CHP. We encourage staff to try and resolve complaints quickly and as close to the place and time of the incident as possible, but if they can't they will give you contact details for our Customer Relations team or forward on your complaint.

### **Customer Relations team**

Our team are trained to deal professionally with your comments and complaints, and work within the guidelines laid down in the National Rail Conditions of Travel

New members of our team are given a training package that provides a full understanding of our processes and procedures around handling complaints. Their training includes:

- Our company and our values
- How we expect our customers to be treated
- Interpersonal skills
- Technical skills to use our systems
- Our procedures for handling comments and complaints and information on:
  - Railway geography
  - An overview of the rail network franchise system
  - Ticket types and validity
  - Facilities on our stations and trains
  - Our penalty fare scheme
  - Our Priority Seating scheme

Following initial training new starters work alongside an experienced member of the team, who will give one-to-one coaching.

Once they're fully trained they have the authority to handle complaints themselves. They also know when they need to refer a complaint to a senior member of the team.

In addition there's ongoing training when policies change, when returning from long term sick leave and, if necessary, after quality monitoring.

We conduct regular monitoring sessions to check the overall quality of complaints handling and check on individual staff performance.

### Senior management

Our senior management team has overall accountability for the management and governance of our CHP and ensures that:

- Our staff are appropriately trained to sign off complaints so you can be sure we take your concerns seriously
- We have a consistent approach at all levels of the company in the way we manage, monitor and review our CHP
- We use the feedback from your complaints to improve our service and drive change across all areas of the business through effective reporting.

## 6. How we review and monitor our Complaints Handling Procedure

These procedures, and the commitments we have made, are regularly monitored and audited. The information we take from your complaints and comments is valuable to us.

Every four weeks, or more frequently, we produce internal reports on the comments we've received. They give our directors and managers a better understanding of your opinions. The reports include:

- The number of comments broken down by type, including complaints
- The number of comments that are positive or negative
- An analysis of whether this is an improvement or decline
- How Customer Relations is performing against the service level agreement including response times and the amount of comments replied to

Our Customer Satisfaction Board, chaired by the chief operating officer, considers these reports. Using this information and other sources of customer feedback, we identify improvements or problems, and track the impact that initiatives are having on our performance.

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In turn we develop improvement plans which may be based on customer insight.

We provide the Department for Transport and the Office of Rail and Road reports every four weeks.

They use them to confirm we are keeping to the promises made in our Passenger's Charter.

Our customer relations manager reviews our auditing and monitoring procedures annually and makes changes to the CHP if necessary. We consult with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch during the review.

## 7. Our contact details

### Email:

[customerservices@gatwickexpress.com](mailto:customerservices@gatwickexpress.com)

[customerservices@greatnorthernrail.com](mailto:customerservices@greatnorthernrail.com)

[comments@southernrailway.com](mailto:comments@southernrailway.com)

[customerservices@thameslinkrailway.com](mailto:customerservices@thameslinkrailway.com)

### Twitter:

[@gatwickexpress](https://twitter.com/gatwickexpress)

[@GNRAilUK](https://twitter.com/GNRAilUK)

[@southernrailuk](https://twitter.com/southernrailuk)

[@TLRAilUK](https://twitter.com/TLRAilUK)

### App:

Thameslink or Southern App – download free from the App Store and Google Play

### Website:

[gatwickexpress.com](http://gatwickexpress.com)

[greatnorthernrail.com](http://greatnorthernrail.com)

[thameslinkrailway.com](http://thameslinkrailway.com)

[southernrailway.com](http://southernrailway.com)

### Telephone:

(07:00 to 22:00 every day except Christmas Day)

**Gatwick Express:** 0345 850 1530

**Great Northern:** 0345 026 4700,

**Southern:** 0345 127 2920

**Thameslink: 0345 026 4700**

**Telephone: 020 3176 2999**

For all other contacts

**Address:**

**GTR Customer Relations  
PO Box 8644  
Derby, DE1 9RQ**

**London TravelWatch  
Dexter House  
2 Royal Mint Court  
London  
EC3N 4QN**

## **8. Contact details for The Rail Ombudsman**

The Rail Ombudsman contact details and hours of operation of their contact centre are:

**Website** (including online chat):  
**[www.railombudsman.org](http://www.railombudsman.org)**

**Telephone: 0330 094 0362**

**Textphone: 0330 094 0363**

**Email: [info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)**

**Twitter: @RailOmbudsman**

**Post: FREEPOST – RAIL OMBUDSMAN**

The Contact Centre team are available:

**Monday to Friday 08:00 - 20:00**

**Saturday and Bank Holidays 08:00 - 13:00**  
(excluding Christmas Day)

## **Contact details for Transport Focus and London TravelWatch**

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

**Website: [transportfocus.org.uk](http://transportfocus.org.uk)**

**Telephone: 0300 123 2350**

**Fax: 0845 850 1392**

**Address: Transport Focus  
Freepost RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ  
PO Box 5594  
Southend on Sea  
SS1 9PZ**

## **London TravelWatch**

**Email: [enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk)**

**Twitter: @LonTravelWatch**

**Website: [londontravelwatch.org.uk](http://londontravelwatch.org.uk)**  
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