

How we can help you

Customer complaint handling procedure

Transport Focus is the independent watchdog set up by Government to protect the interests of:

- Britain's rail passengers
- England's bus, coach and tram passengers outside London, and
- England's users of the Strategic Road Network.

We are funded by the [Department for Transport](#) but our operations and policy-making are independent of government. We offer free and impartial advice on a range of transport related issues and also take up complaints on behalf of rail passengers who are experiencing difficulty in resolving problems directly with a train company.

We expect the train company to resolve your complaint satisfactorily but if you are dissatisfied with their answer or the way that they handled your complaint we might be able to help you. This document sets out how we can assist.

Our mission:

To achieve the best outcome for all transport users by challenging poor service and pushing for improvements.

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What we do

If you have a complaint which the train company has not resolved to your satisfaction then we will try to help.

We cannot get involved in your complaint until the train company has had the opportunity to resolve it. However, we always welcome feedback on the service that you have been given.

Contact details for individual train companies can be found on National Rail Enquiries:

www.nationalrail.co.uk

If you require help in making an effective complaint to the train company, either on the telephone or in writing, then please see our website or contact us for further advice:

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/help>

How we work on your behalf

If you are unhappy with the way the train company has handled your complaint, or you are unhappy with the outcome, we may be able to help. We will review your case and decide if we can escalate your complaint within the train company.

We have a team who handle passenger complaints and escalate issues with train operators. Our senior advisors will negotiate with the train company, seeking the best possible outcome for your case, based on the merits of your complaint. Wherever possible your complaint will be dealt with by the same advisor throughout.

We will undertake a full and fair investigation into your comments and complaint. In order to do this, we will need to request and review copies of all correspondence between you and the train company, and any other party involved in your complaint. We will consider whether the response you received from the train company met the following criteria:

- answered all of the issues that you raised in your complaint
- was factual and contained accurate information
- explained how the train company will attempt to prevent a reoccurrence of your complaint, or how they are working to tackle the problem
- was a personalised reply to your own concerns

- offered, where appropriate, a level of redress/reimbursement that was appropriate to your complaint and within industry national guidelines
- was clear and easy to understand
- was handled within the timescales set by the train company.

If we do not think that the train company has handled your complaint appropriately then we will ask them to reconsider it. If necessary we will escalate the issue with senior management of the train company.

We will always do our best to help resolve your complaint or enquiry to your satisfaction and we follow four key principles:

- we will aim high and seek the best possible outcome for your complaint
- we will escalate your expectations to the train company
- we will clarify our role and help you to understand what we can achieve, and
- we will try to put ourselves in your place to help us understand *your* concerns.

Whatever your complaint, we will aim to acknowledge its receipt and let you know exactly what we are doing, within five working days. We will tell you which train company we have taken your complaint up with and we will aim to do this by telephone if you have provided a number.

We will always strive to achieve our targets and response [times](#). However, there may be times when we are unable to do so, such as in periods of unexpected high demand for our service, or if there are delays in obtaining information from the train company. We will keep you informed about any delays.

If we are unable to resolve your complaint as you would wish, we may be able to provide other information about work we are progressing to improve the issue you have raised or give you contact details for other organisations who may be able to assist you further.

What we can and cannot help with

Anyone can complain to us about passenger rail services in Great Britain.

You may also contact us about a complaint you have had with a rail ticket retailer, where you remain dissatisfied with the outcome.

We can also become involved in issues that relate to other forms of transport if there is a dedicated link between the form of transport and the railway, for example a dedicated bus link into a railway service for which you can buy one 'through' ticket.

We can also deal with matters relating to the Tyne and Wear Metro and Manchester Metrolink.

We cannot deal with complaints about the London Underground. The contact details for their customer service department can be found at:

www.tfl.gov.uk/contact/4417.aspx

If you have a complaint about rail services which are operated wholly within the London area, we will forward your complaint to London TravelWatch. They are the official watchdog organisation representing the interests of transport users in and around London. If you have submitted your complaint to us, but it is within the London TravelWatch remit, we will forward this to them and let you know.

www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

There are other times when we won't be able to help you:

- if you have copied us into a complaint to the train company for information we will not get involved until they have responded and you tell us that you are not happy with the response
- if your complaint is about heritage rail services, steam railways or charter operators. However, if your journey is covered by a National Rail ticket or if you have a through ticket which connects the heritage or charter service to a journey on the National Rail network then we may be able to help you
- if it is a claim for personal injury or loss that may require professional legal advice.
- we reserve the right to not make an appeal in certain cases of a specific nature from time to time. This may be because the issue is already being addressed by us in another way, such as through a consultation exercise or other work. If we choose not to support your appeal complaint we will fully explain the reasons for our decision.

Quality assuring what we do

We carry out a passenger satisfaction survey, asking those passengers who have contacted us, about the way we handled their complaint. This helps us identify areas of improvement but also the success we have.

We also carry out regular quality checks and training to ensure that our processes and responses are of a consistently good quality, addressing the points you have raised and following our four key principles. We will look at cases where the service of our advisors was not considered satisfactory or where complaints are made about our work to identify the reasons for this. We will use this information to improve our performance.

The information you give us influences change

Your feedback is important to us. It helps us to identify areas where services can be improved and helps us prioritise the issues that matter to passengers.

We review the information and issues that passengers raise with us through our handling of individual complaints so that we can identify trends or issues which affect rail passengers. This helps to shape the work that our organisation does in influencing change within the rail industry.

How to contact us

Use our website to get in touch:

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/help>

Email us at advice@transportfocus.org.uk

Call us on **0300 123 2350**. Our advisors will be able to help you find the best way to go about making a complaint and can also put you in touch with the company best placed to handle it. The call is charged at local rates (calls are recorded for training and monitoring purposes).

Our help line is available between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm at weekends. The help line is available all year round including bank holidays with the exception of Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day.

Outside these hours, you will be able to leave a message and one of our team will contact you the next working day.

Write to us. Our address is: (The address is freepost so you don't need to use a stamp)

Transport Focus
Freepost (RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ)
PO Box 5994

Southend-on-Sea
SS1 9PZ

You can also use these contact details to request information from us under the Data Protection Act 1998 or Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We will try to make provision for customers whose first language is not English, and make our reply in the appropriate language. However, we may require additional time in order to do this, and so may not be able to meet our intended targets.

We will make provision for customers who are visually impaired or hard of hearing – we will respond in large print, Braille, or on audio tape where requested. However, we may require additional time in order to do this, and so may not be able to meet our intended targets.

Our timeliness targets

If you contact us by **telephone**, we:

- aim to answer at least 95% of telephone calls that we receive during our opening [hours](#), with at least 85% answered within 20 seconds
- will handle your call in a professional, polite and helpful manner
- will keep you informed during the course of the call and explain what we are doing if we have to put you on hold
- will return your call within 24 hours, if you can't get through to an advisor and you leave us a message, or when we are next open for business.

If you contact us in **writing** (via our website, email or, post):

- we will aim to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence within five working days of receiving it
- if you contacted us before contacting the train company concerned, we will forward your complaint to them and ask them to respond to you directly. We will aim do this within five working days.
- if you want us to make a representation on your behalf to a train company, we will investigate your complaint with the train company concerned and will aim to respond to you with the outcome within 35 working days. If this is not possible then we will keep you informed about what we are doing.
- if it is a [complaint about us](#), we will aim to respond to you within 20 working days.

If you have a complaint about us

We aim to handle all passenger contacts efficiently and bring all complaints to a satisfactory resolution. Unfortunately there may be times when we are unable to achieve the outcome you want, even though we have handled your complaint in line with our procedures.

If you feel that we have mishandled your complaint or not acted appropriately, please contact us and we will look again at the case to ascertain if there are issues that we need to address in our handling of the case, for example:

- if we have been unhelpful or rude,
- failed to explain things properly or
- if we have caused unnecessary delay

We will also consider if there is anything further that could be done to progress your appeal that has not already been done.

Any complaint will not be handled by the person who dealt with the initial appeal but will be passed to David Sidebottom, Passenger Director, to examine.

If you remain dissatisfied with our investigation, your complaint can be escalated further to Anthony Smith, Chief Executive, Transport Focus. Please email your complaint to Anthony.Smith@transportfocus.org.uk.

If you still feel that we have mishandled your complaint or have not represented you appropriately then you may wish to make a complaint about us to your local Member of Parliament for England, Scotland or Wales (MP, MSP or AM), who will be able to help you further by referring the matter to the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can investigate a matter only on the grounds of administration malpractice rather than the outcome of your complaint.

The Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman's helpline will also be able to advise you further.

Their number is: 0345 015 4033

Web: www.ombudsman.org.uk

Privacy policy

By submitting your details to us, either by email, in writing, over the phone or via our website, you are deemed to have accepted our use of your personal information.

The data controller as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998 is the Passengers Council, operating under the name 'Transport Focus'.

Our Information Charter

We process personal information in line with both the Data Protection Act 1998 and our Information Charter.

Information we collect from you

We collect personal information from you if you contact us. This includes enquiries and complaints about rail, bus, coach or road journeys, comments and complaints about the Passenger Focus service and with feedback on the site. We may also email you in the future with updates on our work which we believe you may find of interest. If we do, you will have the option to easily unsubscribe from receiving emails should you wish.

Information collected may include personal details such as names and addresses, email addresses and details of individual queries or incidents that caused you to contact us. In addition, we collect information on the usage of our website. This usage information will not identify you individually and is stored and processed in aggregate and will not allow the identification of individual users.

We will not sell or forward your personal information to third parties to use for marketing purposes.

Please note that you are not required to provide your personal details to use the Passenger Focus website, though if you choose not to this may limit the extent to which you can use the site.

How we protect your privacy

Any personal information you provide will be held securely by Passenger Focus in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act protects your personal information and ensures that:

- we only hold and process your information for purposes that we make clear to you in advance
- we keep your information only for as long as we need to carry out these purposes

We will put in place appropriate measures that ensure your information is held and processed securely and confidentially. If you provide us with '**sensitive personal**

data' as defined by the Data Protection Act 1998, we will **never** pass this information on to a third party without your explicit consent. If you withhold such consent, it may limit the extent to which we can deal effectively with your complaint or query.

Sensitive personal data means personal data consisting of information relating to a data subject which identifies:

- (a) racial or ethnic origin
- (b) political opinions
- (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature
- (d) membership of a trade union
- (e) physical or mental health or condition
- (f) sexual life
- (g) the commission or alleged commission of any offence, or
- (h) any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings.

How we use this information

Passenger enquiries and complaints

If you contact us with a passenger enquiry or complaint, we will use the information you have provided to advise you on your rights as a passenger, on how to avoid problems and how to address any problems you may have encountered.

We may need to pass information you have provided to a service provider (normally a train operator) or to the London Transport Users' Committee operating as London TravelWatch to address a problem you have encountered. Unless you tell us otherwise, but with the exception of sensitive personal data as described above, we will assume that you have already provided your personal details as they relate to your complaint or query to the third party to which your complaint or query is directed. We will hold details of your enquiry or complaint for about three years.

If you are making a complaint or query on behalf of another person, or acting on their behalf regarding a complaint they have already made; we **may** ask you to confirm in writing that you are doing so with their authority. We **will** ask for this if the complaint is regarding an issue which involves sensitive personal data (as detailed above); or if you are requesting for any financial settlements that are awarded as an outcome of the case to be directed to anyone other than the complainant. The complainant is always classed as the person who the complaint is about, it is never the third party acting on their behalf.

Website cookies and visitor statistics

Cookies are files that a website can store on your computer when you visit the website, and are sent back to the originating website on each subsequent visit.

These files contain information about your use of a website and may contain personal details. Our website uses cookies to gather statistics on visitors' use of the site.

Transport Focus complies with current cookie law which comprises the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003; the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) (Amendment) Regulations 2011; and the Opinion on cookie exemptions of the EU Article 29 Working Party on Data Protection of June 2012.

Our full cookie policy is available on our website at:

<http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/site-information/cookies-policy>

If you wish to see the information we hold about you

You have a right to request a copy of your personal details at any time to check the accuracy of the information held by us.

If you wish to do this, please write (explaining that your interest is in personal data maintained by Transport Focus) to our freepost address or email to advice@transportfocus.org.uk

Links to other sites

Our website contains links to external websites, mainly those of train operating companies, but also those of other organisations. This privacy policy applies only to our website.

We are not responsible for the privacy practices of external sites. You should always be aware of this when you leave our site and we encourage you to read the privacy statement on any other website which collects personal information.

Changes to this privacy policy

When this privacy policy changes, we will update it on our website and amend our customer complaints handling procedure accordingly. You should always check the privacy policy before using the site, even if you have visited it in the past. This ensures that you will be aware of any changes. Changes to our privacy policy do not affect information we already hold about you.

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