

National Rail Conditions of Travel

The new NRCoT, introduced on 1 October 2016, replaced the National Rail Conditions of Carriage which, though slightly reviewed last year, have applied since May 2012.

This latest review has been one of the most significant in recent years and is a complete rewrite, which allows for greater clarity. The opportunity has been taken to close a number of loopholes.

Transport Focus is one of the bodies which has been involved in negotiations over the new Conditions but the final say rests with the industry. We welcome the changes which have brought benefits to passengers and for which we have campaigned for some time. At the same time, areas remain where we would still like to see amendments and we shall continue to press for these.

Improvements

- Written in easier-to-understand language.
- Full refunds without administration fees now available for passengers with any ticket type if their journey is abandoned due to disruption.
- Compensation for delay/disruption paid in cash rather than in Rail Travel Vouchers if the passenger prefers.
- No limit on the number of children under 5 years of age who can accompany a ticket holder.
- Luggage allowance has been simplified.
- Clarity of rights of first-class ticket holders when no first-class accommodation is available.
- Clarity over the difference in refund rights when the train service is disrupted and when passengers simply decide not to travel for personal reasons.

Disbenefits

- Entitlement to buy tickets on the train is restricted only to places served by that train if the tickets could have been bought before boarding.
- Reduction of the number of domestic animals permitted free of charge per ticket holder (was two – now one).
- Some local authority tickets can no longer be used as part of combinations of tickets allowing through journeys at a cheaper price.

Train companies can individually vary some of these terms if they wish.

Transport Focus has been pressing for further improvements, including:

- extend refunds to those passengers who have bought first-class tickets but unintentionally travel on trains without first-class seats
- passengers delayed by late incoming trains should always be allowed to use Advance tickets on the next service, regardless of the operator

- passengers who have forgotten to bring their Railcard on the journey, but can subsequently prove that it was valid for that journey, should not have to buy new tickets or pay a penalty fare.

Transport Focus is already drawing up its list of these and other items ready for when discussions begin on the next version of the NRCoT.