

What next for Passengers' Charters?

Final Report

Transport Focus

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Introduction

Introduction

- The introduction of Customer Reports has given rise to questions about the future purpose of the Passengers' Charter since both documents cover some of the same areas in terms of passengers' rights and there may be a danger of 'information fatigue' and confusion simply from the proliferation of different publications.
- The Department for Transport (DfT) asked Transport Focus to undertake a review of Passengers' Charters to help assess their continued role and usefulness in the context of consumer protection and passenger rights.
- The project has included desk research and expert interviews to seek an understanding of the role of Passengers' Charters and assess whether - or to what extent - a charter is an effective platform for communicating passenger rights.

Research objectives and methodology

- There were two phases of the research project. The first consisted of desk research focusing on how charters are used, both within and outside the transport industry. This report is focused on the second phase which included 16 in-depth interviews with key figures from across the rail industry and the field of consumer representation. The objectives were:
 - understand the current state of communication of customer rights inside and outside of the rail industry
 - provide suggestions for presenting consumer rights more effectively
 - refine and inform the hypotheses by providing workable examples and recommendations
 - arrive at suggestions for how the rail Passengers' Charters could be improved and alternative forms of presentation.

Research objectives and methodology

- The following organisations participated in the research interviews:

Train operating companies

- Cross Country Trains
- South West Trains
- Northern Rail

Industry body

- Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)
- Department For Transport (DfT)
- Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
- Transport for London (TfL)

Passenger body

- London TravelWatch
- Transport Focus

Consumer body

- Resolver
- Which?

Summary – understanding the need for a successful Passengers' Charter



Findings and recommendations from the literature review

- Functioning as contracts between service providers and users, the Passengers' Charter is required as part of the franchise agreement to include arrangements on compensation for passengers. All Passengers' Charters must also contain a range of additional elements such as safety, security or luggage and information for disabled passengers.
- Many of the Charters go beyond the franchise agreement requirements and provide welcome additional protections/beneficial offers for passengers. Once committed, as part of a franchise agreement, the terms of a charter cannot normally be lessened during the course of that franchise.
- The desk research has highlighted that the potency of the traditional Passengers' Charter as mediums for customer rights communication has been diminished by the power of consumer driven alternative approaches to expression, such as intermediaries, peer review sites and social media campaigns.
- This 21st century proliferation in social media outlets, has brought a new two-way dynamic to the relationship between companies and customers and as a result of the dominance of the citizen-consumer, individuals have greater power in bringing organisations to account.
- The literature review has highlighted that there is a pressing need for organisations to improve the communication of customer rights. The desk research highlighted instances where some corporations are making an effort to provide softer customer contracts that are much more customer inclusive.
- Successful examples include informal language, different forms of media, visually engaging formats, a more cooperative tone and a scenario-based customer rights provision.

Findings and recommendations from the literature review

- In line with many other sectors and industries, communication of customer rights in the rail industry requires change. To help guide this change, the desk research uncovered important characteristics that can be identified in instances where consumer rights are being communicated effectively.
- Using the criteria provided, the desk researchers tested the rail Passengers' Charters and found that they did well on many areas. At the same time, many were still struggling to ensure that the appropriate balance was maintained between ensuring that the necessary content was included and presenting that content in a customer friendly style.

Requirement	How rail Passengers' Charters compare
Clear, accurate and accessible information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible online but only if aware of what searching for, for example "Passenger Charter"
Available in different formats e.g. downloadable, printable booklet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available online with some available as a PDF download. Some included as a webpage • No other obvious channels for attainment e.g. in print, on social media
Easy to locate information clearly promoted on company website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charters were rarely prominent on TOC website • Unlikely to 'stumble' across them
Written in Plain English – using simple language that everyone can understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the whole, yes. Still some jargon existing in places
Ensure Charter is relevant to consumer needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes – contains all the information that passengers would require
Transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some examples of statements not being quantified, but still considerably better than comparative sectors both inside and outside the UK
Honest and open tone – collaborative rather than isolating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone is more statement driven than conversational
Include alternative channels for advice, information and independent routes to redress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links included to alternative sources of information as well as telephone numbers, addresses etc.

- The qualitative research, carried out with key figures from the rail industry and the field of consumer representation, further examined the need for Passengers' Charters in the rail industry. As part of this they tested the hypothesis for successful communication highlighted in the desk research and provided recommendations for improvement.

An overview of the current state of customer rights communication in the Rail Industry – expert opinion interviews

- In line with much other research, the view from the expert opinion interviews is that trust is critical to building better relationships between customers and train operating companies (TOC). Effective communication with passengers, particularly at times of service disruption, is seen as a key building block of trust. However, it is felt that communication between TOCs and rail passengers is seen to be ineffective and in need of improvement.
- The way passenger rights are communicated by the industry, is also perceived to be poor. There is widespread concern that passengers do not know enough about their rights and that there is a disconnect between what TOCs are doing in this area and what passengers expect from them.
- This, in turn, is exacerbated by low awareness of the core documents containing these rights (in other words the Passengers' Charter) especially amongst infrequent/leisure travellers.
- Expert opinion identified a pressing customer need for much clearer communication of customer rights with a key focus on making customer rights more accessible and relevant to the customer.
- What is clear from both aspects of the research is that a Passengers' Charter is still needed, but it needs to be far more focused in its purpose and communicated more effectively. The expert interviews concluded that many of the TOCs were not using the Passengers' Charter in the right way, treating them as 'dumping grounds' for disparate items of customer information.

"The Passengers' Charter has evolved from its initial purpose in the Major years. What we really need now is a stripped back Passengers' Charter – industry wide – we need something which is disciplined, focused and clear on what its supposed to do."

Industry body expert

"There needs to be something there, the Passengers' Charter in its current form is outdated, it needs to be written clearer and passengers need to be made more aware at the outset about what they are entitled to."

Consumer body expert

Mapping the current communication documents

- While the current communication documents suffer from a low awareness, experts were universal in their agreement that these core communication documents still have an important part to play in customer communications and should be maintained as stand-alone documents.



National Rail Conditions of Carriage (NRCOC)

Purpose: to provide a necessary contractual framework for all TOCs and rail customers who use the national rail service

Customer Reports

Purpose: the Department for Transport now requires any new franchise to issue a customer report in order to set out the franchisee's plans for the railway and its commitments to passengers. This might include providing transparent information on service performance and planned improvements to the customer experience. The reports have to be updated at least annually.

Passengers' Charter

Purpose: to state an operator's commitment to providing a safe and high quality service, setting out the standards of service that customers can expect. Useful and important information is provided on a range of issues. For example, refunds and compensation, complaints handling and how disruption is handled. The charters can provide more extensive rights than those in the NRCOC.

- In line with findings from the desk research, experts were in agreement that the majority of TOCs had to make more of an effort to ensure that the Passengers' Charter was a document that showed rail customer rights in a much simpler and customer friendly way alongside other items of important and useful information.

Passengers' Charter is still needed – but they need to have more of a focus on compensation rights



- It was felt amongst experts that clarity had to be reached on the elements that were included in the Passengers' Charter. To ensure that the content of the Passengers' Charter was as relevant as possible, expert opinion suggested that a clear focus on compensation was vital, alongside a removal of too much cross-over with Customer Reports. Consumer experts were quick to point out that updates on information about new trains were likely to aggravate customers who were looking for quick access to information on compensation and redress.

"I've had to remind an awful lot of people that Delay Repay is part of the passengers' charter. It's not a thing of its own right..."
Industry body expert
- Experts from within and outside the rail industry agree that the majority of rail passengers are only likely to access information on their consumer/passenger rights when they require compensation for a delayed service. At the same time, many experts felt that other areas need to be highlighted, but in a way that doesn't detract from the emphasis on compensation rights.
- To help aid this, experts noted the importance of clear signage to help rail customers navigate to the relevant areas. It was felt that headlines/icons should be provided denoting key areas of interest, and links to more detailed information on these topics.

"It's about what are your rights when things go wrong, secondary to that are things about booking offices, manned stations, staffing."
Passenger body expert
- Currently, compensation rights for delay scenarios are covered best by those train operators advertising Delay/Repay communications across their websites – delay repay being one of, but not the only, compensation scheme for instances of delay. The rail industry needs to ensure that Passengers' Charter are aligned more closely with the refund/compensation process.

"Most people want to know about their refund, you can make commitments on sorts of other things as well, but frankly, the customer doesn't really care."
Passenger body expert

Expert opinion on the current state of customer rights in the rail industry



There is a clear need for better communication of compensation rights for rail customers during times of poor service

It is felt there is a lack of clarity in communicating compensation entitlement and what the procedure for claiming it is when customers have received a poor service



- The knowledge that customers currently have of their rights is felt to be patchy and inconsistent across the rail network



- More specifically, awareness of compensation rights is low, with many customers not knowing what they are entitled to

- As a result of low awareness of their compensation entitlement and the processes in place to make a claim, consumer experts suggest that the vast majority of passengers who are caught up in severe delay (a minimum of 30 minutes for some operators, 60 in others) that warrant compensation do not receive anything.
- Many experts were quick to highlight that expectations of compensation were typically higher than their entitlement, indicating a lack of awareness about what TOCs were actually liable for.
- It was argued that many passengers, rather than making an official complaint or claim, simply vent their frustrations (increasingly via social media) and then 'get on with their day'. However, these events damage passengers' perceptions of, and trust in, TOCs.

"Most people do not know that the delay/repay mechanism only kicks in after a 30 minute delay."

Passenger body expert

"The situation in the UK is far from ideal and there is a very low uptake of compensation rights compared to Germany or France for example."

Passenger body expert

How the rail industry is communicating customer rights

There is a strong feeling from experts within and outside the rail industry that the poor perception of how the rail industry performs on customer rights is bound up in how these customer rights are being communicated

Core issues with current communication

- TOCs are not doing enough to inform passengers of their rights.
- In particular, TOCs are failing to get relevant information to customers at times of delay, when they are eligible for compensation. They are not proactive.

Secondary issues with communication

- TOCs are inconsistent in the dissemination of information to passengers.
- Existing communications are often not very user friendly and seen as dense and jargonistic.
- The industry makes little effort, beyond leaflets at stations and occasional posters, to make passengers aware of their rights and where information about them can be found.

What customers need

- TOCs to be more proactive in educating passengers about their rights, especially in regard to compensation.
- Providing relevant information to the passenger at critical 'windows of opportunity' i.e. at times of severe delay: staff announcements should be used more effectively, leaflets should be physically handed out on trains or on the platform and social media/electronic communications should be used to provide information to customers.

"We have evidence that shows for one TOC, only two in 10 passengers were told of their rights when they were delayed for more than an hour."

Consumer body expert

"There are a few things around, maybe some posters or references to helplines for Transport Focus, but most passengers do not have any indication of where to turn to."

Passenger body expert

"Passengers struggle to find out what their rights are, where to find them and what to make of them."

Consumer body expert

The need for clear communication of customer rights

Improving communication within the Rail Industry

There is an opportunity for TOCs to be more proactive in regards to communication, which will in turn improve their reputation with their customers

- Consumer body experts highlight that companies with the best customer reputation are those who confidently and clearly communicate the best outcome for customers in situations where the company has fallen short of expectations.
- Consumer and industry body experts alike, argue that TOCs need a change in mind-set to one that genuinely places the customer at the forefront. Central to this is the effective communication of customers' compensation rights when they most need them in other words at times of significant delay/disruption. This, it is argued, will have the added benefit of building trust and improving passenger perceptions of the industry.
- However, in order to better educate passengers about the level of service they should expect this communication needs to go beyond the compensation process alone. A stripped back Passengers' Charter which contains transparent and definitive rights focused, but not exclusively, on compensation, would seem to be a much better way of doing this. Provided it is widely promoted to passengers.

"In 2015 the bare minimum for anyone is publishing a leaflet that no one is going to read but that's what is happening in the rail industry at the moment."

Consumer body expert

"Once the delay kicks over to more than 30 minutes, it's a prime opportunity for TOCs to get passengers onside but currently there is very little communication in these situations and it's an opportunity missed."

Consumer body expert

Best practice – what the rail industry is doing well currently

Experts from within the industry highlighted the following examples of TOCs communicating effectively with customers

TOC	Characteristic	Evidence
Merseyrail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transparency and accountability ✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights 	Utilising poster sites across the network and the customer database to mail out when customers are entitled to compensation because of delays.
Virgin Trains (both West Coast and East Coast)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transparency and accountability ✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights 	Proactive in communicating with customers when things go wrong. In cases of severe delays leaflets containing a clear breakdown of compensation scenarios and entitlements, alongside communication channels for compensation and any compensation queries, are handed out.
Cross Country Trains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transparency and accountability ✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights ✓ Clear, simple language 	Proactive in communicating with customers when things go wrong. In cases of severe delays, they take details and contact customers within 24 hours to establish their compensation rights. They also provide easy access to a number of different communication channels, such as online forms, website and social media interaction.

"We are getting better and better at providing clearer and more simple information."

TOC Rep

"Virgin is proactive, if there is a delay, say about an hour, Virgin reaches out and offers leaflets to consumers highlighting the ways and avenues that they can take to get help."

Consumer body expert

Merseyrail always stand out as being good. They are very proactive at using things on their network when they need to be."

Industry body expert

Other examples of best practice from within the transport industry



Experts from both inside and outside the industry cited the following examples of transport organisations who are communicating effectively with their customers

Organisation	Characteristic	Evidence
EasyJet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Open, collaborative tone	Website sets out everything that you need to know in a clear and accessible manner. Emails are sent out that are fair and transparent with a content and tone that is apologetic/sympathetic.
Eurostar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Clear, simple language	Providing customer rights at point of sale i.e. compensation details with the ticket. Leaflets handed out when delays occur.
TFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Open, collaborative tone✓ Clear, simple language✓ Visually engaging	TFL provide very clear terms and conditions through their website (scenario grids) and clear accessible posters (flow chart diagrams). Both online and offline. They are also proactive in providing automatic refunds and emailing relevant information and updates to their 4.5 million registered Oyster card holders.

"Easy Jet provides a very proactive service – the website sets out exactly what you need to know about compensation and what you need to do in the case of delays."

Passenger body expert

"TFL provide automatic refunds where we can. If there is a major disruption we can work out who was affected through contactless/oyster data and repay them at their home station."

Industry body expert

"Eurostar will provide you with leaflets at stations and are proactive in finding solutions for their customers."

Passenger body expert



Examples of best practice from outside the industry

The following are examples of organisations and industries who are communicating effectively with their customers, cited by consumer rights experts as well as personal/anecdotal evidence provided by other experts

Organisation	Characteristic	Evidence
Finance/insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Clear, simple language	The financial industry as a whole is very careful to ensure that all rights and terms are easily understood and accessed. Insurance companies also provide good examples of how to communicate lots of relevant information in a clear and accessible way.
Utility companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Open, collaborative tone	At the point of purchase, organisations are very careful to ensure that you know everything around your consumer rights. They provide helpful and customer friendly communications after the purchase to try and ensure that they can keep your custom.
John Lewis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Open, collaborative tone✓ Clear, simple language	The gold standard of customer service. They are upfront and clear and always careful to ensure that customers have access to everything they need. They are proactive in reaching out to people and are able to direct you to their T&Cs which are communicated in a clear and personable manner.
Innocent Smoothie	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Transparency and accountability✓ Open, collaborative tone	Their customer helplines are part of the marketing function and they use customer feedback to make their business stronger. Their communications are designed to be inclusive, emulating the customer in regards to tone and language.

"John Lewis are defined by the fact that when something goes wrong they will ensure that they can get it right for you."

Passenger body expert

"If you complain to Innocent Smoothie, they try and emulate the way you communicate with them and provide empathy, understanding and engagement in their reply."

Consumer body expert

Improving the Passengers' Charter



Summary: the current status of the Passengers' Charter

Experts interviewed do not believe that the majority of Passengers' Charters are fit for purpose in their current state and fail to offer rail customers a clear and accessible document

Desired role

- The Passengers' Charter is still relevant and has a specific role as a customer facing document.
- It is needed as a document that takes detailed technical references, condenses them and then summarises them back in a customer-friendly way.
- Part of the Passengers' Charter remit is to provide a customer facing reference document that backs up legal requirements related to compensation contained in the National Rail Conditions of Carriage.

Current opinion

- Many of the Passengers' Charters do not offer information in a customer friendly way and do not fulfil the criteria of effective communication identified in the desk research.

Key areas of concern

- Charter documents are too long and 'dense'.
- Existing Charters often have a legalistic tone.
- They are not transparent.
- They deviate too much from the topic of compensation rights.
- They lack empathy and warmth in terms of tone of voice.
- They are hard to find, both on TOC websites or in hard copy.

"Currently they are hard to find and hard to understand. They are not accessible for customers."

TOC rep

"They are a dumping ground for things that the customer doesn't need, like news on new trains."

Passenger body expert

"It is about providing accessible information for the consumer, by removing unnecessary stuff and making everything easier to understand."

Consumer body expert

Communicating the Passengers' Charter

TOC's need to be aware that rail customers are only interested in relevant information that is easily accessible

In order to achieve this, TOCs need to 'dial up' the most relevant areas of the Passengers' Charter for example *Compensation Scenarios* and the *Further Complaints Section* and direct this information down a number of channels. For example:



- **Building it into the sales process** by providing a 'well framed link' to the Passengers' Charter on the backs of train tickets introduced through a customer friendly scenario. For example, "Has your train been delayed by 60 minutes or more..."



- A **condensed one page document** clearly labelled with the relevant areas highlighted, which is promoted by **posters on board the train and at stations** alongside web links to a fuller online version.



- Bringing it to the customer by **placing it prominently on their own websites and sharing it with relevant consumer organisation as well as social media platforms**. Twitter was cited as the best for customer interaction.



- At relevant times, staff members need to be **empowered and used in the best way possible with leaflets handed out at stations** containing the one page document which is focused on the relevant information.

"Yes it should be visually engaging, but it's more important that it's in the right place."

Passenger body expert

"Find out where the user goes – Google? Which? put a couple of clear paragraphs there that give them choices"

Consumer body expert

"Simplification and quick access are the cornerstone of passenger rights."

Passenger body expert

Creating a successful Passenger Charter – testing the findings from the literature review



The desk research we undertook highlighted that successful forms of pledge/charter set out to build confidence in the consumer and the relationship that they had with the organisation

They used the following aspects to achieve this:

- language that was inclusive, informal and presented in a visually engaging format.
- content with credible and relevant information combined with scenario based formats e.g. rights explained in the form of FAQs or thematically.
- pledges/charters that were clear in their responsibilities and concrete in what the consumer should expect from them.
- content that contained an element of transparency through the addition of company performance indicators.

For the purpose of the expert interviews we distilled these findings into the following characteristics that are essential to effective communication:

- clear, simple language.
- transparency and accountability.
- open, collaborative tone.
- relevant and definitive consumer rights.
- visually engaging.



What needs to go into a Passengers' Charter - language

As part of the research we tested the criteria developed from the desk research with our experts to understand how it would work in the context of a Passengers' Charter

Clear, simple language

- Keep words and language simple and straightforward by removing all complex terms and industry jargon.
- The language also needs to convey security and honesty – so use words/phrases such as *will*, *commit* and *promise* rather than more flowery language that lacks substance such as 'We will endeavour' or 'PR buzz words'.
- The word count needs to be condensed so that the full charter is kept as short as possible.
- The content needs to be focused around clear headings that indicate key areas of interest, with signposting to more information on these topics if required.

"Its about keeping Jargon out, keep information clear, simple, straightforward and easy to understand."
TOC rep

Best practice:

✓ **Clear, simple language**
Clear use of headlines are used to guide people to the relevant information. The language is straightforward and friendly.

Contents

2	Introduction	16	Finding a seat
3	National Rail Conditions of Carriage	17	Disabled and older passengers
4	Finding out about our train times, fares and station facilities	18	Lost property
6	Buying your ticket	19	Answering your enquiry
8	Keeping you informed about how your service is running	20	Keeping you update on our customer service performance
11	Delays	21	We welcome your comments
12	Refunds	23	Other useful information
13	Compensation	25	Southeastern

Room for improvement:

✗ **Clear, simple language**
Headlines provided here indicate that the document is at least 34 pages long. In addition, there's no clear signpost for compensation and some of the language used is industry specific for example 'fraudulent travel.'

Contents

1.0	Welcome	2
2.0	Introduction	3
3.0	Passengers' Charter	4
4.0	National Rail Conditions of Carriage	5
5.0	Our commitments to you	5
6.0	Customer report	9
7.0	Information to help you plan your journey	11
8.0	Buying your ticket	15
9.0	Accessibility and disabled passengers	18
10.0	Fraudulent travel	20
11.0	Our stations	21
12.0	On the train	22
13.0	Car parking	26
14.0	Thameslink Programme	27
15.0	Keeping you informed when things don't go to plan	27
16.0	Where to find information on our performance	34
17.0	Answering your enquiries	36

NB: specific examples were identified in interviews and post interview content analysis was carried out by researchers.

What needs to go into a Passengers' Charter – transparency and accountability



Transparency and Accountability

- Seen to be important, especially in light of media 'noise' about performance in the Rail Industry and a need for TOCs to improve customer perception.
- Publishing areas of customer concern provides an indication that the TOC is willing to appear transparent on areas that it needs to improve upon.
- TOCs need to use the Passengers' Charter to highlight exactly what their core responsibilities to the customer are.

"You have to make it transparent and accountable, if you don't do that then there is no trust."
Consumer body expert

Best practice

✓ Transparency and accountability

This Passengers' Charter is very clear on what the customer deserves from their service. It also highlights specific areas of customer concerns and actions made to improve the service in these areas.

We don't think that a train that is 4.59 minutes late at its destination should be counted as on time! We also recognise the importance of our trains arriving on time at all intermediate stations. From independent research we know that customers have an expectation that train punctuality and reliability should be based on actual performance.

So we will be working hard to make sure that by 8 November 2015 (the first anniversary of our franchise start date), we also report trains as arriving on time only if they arrive within one minute of their schedule.

At the time of publication (November 2014), 83.3% of trains meet this new strict standard on a moving annual average basis.

Room for improvement

✗ Transparency and accountability

This Passengers' Charter requires more transparency and accountability around actual standards achieved rather than those aimed for. There is also no recognition of customer concerns and actions the TOCs would take to ensure these concerns are taken care of.

We will continue to aim for improved standards of punctuality and reliability. We will publish our reliability and punctuality figures for the previous four weeks and year at Northern staffed stations every four weeks. These figures will be independently audited every year.

Our reliability commitment requires us to operate at least 99% of services in the published timetable.

Our punctuality standards for arrival at final destination are as follows:

- short-distance services (punctuality) – We aim that at least 91 out of every 100 trains (91%) will arrive at their final destination within five minutes of the time shown in our timetables
- long-distance services (punctuality) – We aim that at least 91 out of every 100 trains (91%) will arrive at their final destination within 10 minutes of the time shown in our timetables.

Sundays are not included for the purpose of calculating punctuality and reliability performance.

Testing the criteria with experts – open, collaborative tone

Open, collaborative tone

- Very important to get the tone right as it has the potential to create engagement/rapport with the customer.
- As a customer facing document, the tone needs to be straightforward, polite and conversational rather than legalistic or 'official'.
- Avoid appearing patronising by considering the diverse customer base.
- TOCs could come across as collaborative by registering passengers' key issues and highlighting what they were doing about them.
- Coming across as empathetic/sympathetic when highlighting situations where they feel customers deserve compensation.

"Make it more inviting i.e. we would appreciate it if you did this, rather than No Smoking, No pushchairs, You will face criminal prosecution."
TOC rep

Best practice :

✓ Open, collaborative tone

The tone is empathetic rather than legislative and manages to be conversational and inclusive despite the subject matter.

Ticket validity

From 31 July 2015 and during normal service, all our gateline ticket barriers will be in operation so that you can validate your ticket at the beginning and end of your journey. We take a very strict approach if people do not pay fares, so you must always have with you a valid ticket or other authority to travel for the train (or trains) you use if you are travelling from a station where you can buy a ticket. The gateline ticket barriers will also be covered by CCTV.

If you cannot present a valid ticket or other authority to travel when asked, you may have to pay a penalty fare or face prosecution. This includes not having a valid ticket on your c2c Smartcard or Oyster card if you use one. We do this to deter the small number of passengers who try to avoid paying their fare. You can find full details of our Penalty Fares policy on our website at www.c2c-online.co.uk/tickets-and-fares/penalty-fares/index.

Room for improvement:

✗ Open, collaborative tone

Care must be taken to ensure that the tone is kept empathetic, engaging and customer friendly. The tone used here is a bit too legislative and commanding.

Penalty Fare Scheme

Abellio Greater Anglia operates a Penalty Fare scheme on most services with the exception of the Pay Train services mentioned above, and if you board a train at Angel Road, Cressing, Emerson Park, Needham Market, Stansted Airport or Weeley. However, if you get on a Pay Train service without a valid ticket at a station where the ticket office is open, or where a TVM is available and in working order, you will not be entitled to any special fares or discounts. You will have to buy the full Single or full Return ticket for your journey. You will not be able to use a Railcard in these circumstances, with the exception of a Disabled Persons Railcard which will be valid.

On all services other than Pay Trains you must have a valid ticket to travel, or Permit to Travel, otherwise you may be liable to pay a Penalty Fare of £20 or twice the appropriate full Single fare (whichever is the greater amount) to the next station at which your train stops. Also, you may be charged the full Single fare to your destination station if you continue your journey on the same train.

Testing the criteria with experts – relevant and definitive customer rights



Relevant and definitive customer rights

- Key to this is maintaining the balance between ensuring all relevant information is included without overloading the customer and losing engagement.
- The content needs to be layered (see clear simple language) with headers/signposts that give the customer a clear overview but with the ability to get access to more complex information if necessary.
- The Passengers' Charter must be focused around compensation rights.
- As a result, there needs to be a specific focus on the compensation claim process and customer compensation scenarios.
- Other pieces of information should be seen as 'nice to haves' and priorities should be made in regard to their usefulness to the customer.

"We need to provide the customer with an executive summary, with access to more information if they need it."
TOC rep

Best practice:

✓ Relevant and definitive consumer rights

This Charter has an easy to find section on compensation. The information is relevant and clearly communicated.

Delay Repay

If one of our trains runs late or is cancelled and because of that you get to your destination station 30 minutes or more later than scheduled, 'Delay Repay' applies.

Here's how it breaks down

30 to 59 minutes delay

Compensation of at least 50% of the cost of your single ticket or at least 50% of the cost of the relevant portion* of your return ticket.

60 to 119 minutes delay

Compensation of at least 100% of the cost of your single ticket or at least 100% of the cost of the relevant portion* of your return ticket.

120 minutes delay or longer

Compensation of at least 100% of the cost of your single ticket or at least 100% of the cost of your return ticket (i.e. both ways).

*By 'relevant portion' we mean the outward or return portion of a return ticket depending on whether you were delayed on your outward or return journey.

Compensation is normally provided as National Rail travel vouchers which can be used to buy tickets at any National Rail ticket office. Alternatively, customers can request compensation is provided in e-vouchers which can be redeemed on our website virgintrainsseastcoast.com.

Room for improvement:

✗ Relevant and definitive consumer rights

Overall this section needs more of a focus on the immediate needs of a customer and the information provided needs to be less complex.

How we compensate you for delays

When we give you compensation, we'll ask you whether you'd like rail travel vouchers or an e-voucher, which will show as credit on your GWR online account. If you'd prefer to get your compensation back as money instead, just let us know and we'll send you a cheque.

Below, you'll see the details of the minimum amount of compensation we pay for delays. If the delay to your journey isn't covered, please get in touch with our Customer Support team on 03457 000 125. They'll look into what happened and get back to you as quickly as they can. If your journey is delayed because of something outside the control of the rail industry, we don't normally offer any compensation. This might be things like trespassing, vandalism, someone being hit by a train, severe weather or a security alert.

Charter Group	The time allowance	Punctuality %		Reliability %	
		Target	Trigger	Target	Trigger
High Speed Services*	10 minutes	90.0	88.0	99.2	98.2
London-Thames Valley Services**	5 minutes	92.0	89.0	99.0	98.0
Regional Suburban Services***	5 minutes	92.0	89.0	99.5	98.5
Devon Services***	5 minutes	92.0	88.0	99.5	98.5
Plymouth & Cornwall Services***	5 minutes	92.0	88.0	99.5	98.5
South Wales-South Coast Services***	10 minutes	92.0	89.0	99.5	98.5

The trigger

The trigger is the point at which we give a discount for season ticket holders. If we don't meet one of the targets, and fall below the trigger percentage in the last 12 months, we'll give our season ticket holders 5% off their next season ticket. If we miss both the punctuality and the reliability targets, and fall below both triggers, we'll give you 10% off.

Compensation for void days

A void day is when there's a serious disruption at peak time, and we haven't offered you another way to get to where you're going – like a rail replacement bus.

If we think our performance falls below an acceptable level during a peak period, we'll declare the day 'void' for the people affected. When this happens, we'll get in touch by email or post. We'll also put up posters at our stations. We'll explain what happened and the options they have for compensation – either a season ticket extension or a refund based on the number of void days. And we'll let them know how they can claim it.

We don't compensate you for any losses or other costs

If your train is delayed or cancelled, we won't give you compensation for any losses or extra costs (if you miss a plane, for example). That's in line with the National Rail Conditions of Carriage for all train companies.

If you are catching a plane, please leave plenty of time to allow for any delays to your train journey. You can ask your airline how much time you'll need to leave to check in. It's also really important to get full travel insurance.



Testing the criteria with experts – visually engaging

Visually engaging

- It is important to ensure that the document is able to get the initial engagement of the customer through clear and recognisable branding and labelling.
 - It is important for customers to know that the delay compensation process is part of the Passengers' Charter. Some of those interviewed assumed that Delay Repay, one of the compensation regimes used by train operators, had its own logo. Such a logo could be a useful way of increasing visibility and raising passenger awareness.
- Infographics and pictures should be used, where appropriate, to make the document more accessible and easy to understand.
 - It was felt to be better to communicate information with rail passengers through a simple series of infographics separated by categories, then through dense texts and complex graphs and tables.
- Icons can also be used effectively when signposting information.
- Other visual aids that were recommended by industry experts included: TFL-style compensation scenario grids and flow chart style posters.

Best practice

✓ **Visually engaging**
Icons, plenty of space and important information provided in bold lettering. All these factors make a document more engaging and accessible for customers.

Service information

-  National Rail Enquiries **08457 48 49 50**
Southeastern Customer Services **0845 000 2222** or **01732 378 751**
-  National Rail Enquiries **nationalrail.co.uk**
Southeastern **southeasternrailway.co.uk**
-  BBC Radio Kent travel bulletins
96.7FM / 104.2 FM / DAB
-  On the day and during your journey keep updated on Twitter via **@Se_Railway** and **@NRE_SEastern**
-  Download the Southeastern On Track app for up to date travel information at **southeasternrailway.co.uk/app**
-  Listen out for announcements at stations and on-board trains
-  Refer to electronic screens at stations or speak to a Southeastern employee if available.
-  Sign up for free text and email alerts at **nationalrail.co.uk/alerts** or email travel alerts at **southeasternrailway.co.uk/alerts**

Room for improvement:

✗ Visually engaging

This section is very text heavy and unappealing to read. It would benefit from a more customer-friendly layout.

Email	customerservices@gatwickexpress.com customerservices@greatnorthernrail.com comments@southernrailway.com customerservices@thameslinkrailway.com	Telephone	Gatwick Express 0345 850 1530 Great Northern 0345 026 4700 Southern 0345 127 2820 Thameslink 0345 026 4700
Twitter	@gatwickexpress @GNRailUK @southernrailuk @TLRailUK	Textphone	Gatwick Express 0345 127 2940 Great Northern 0800 975 1052 Southern 0345 127 2840 Thameslink 0800 975 1052
App	Thameslink or Southern App - download free from the App Store and Google Play	Address	For Delay Repay and refund applications: Freeport RTGL-ELXC-HAUU Govia Thameslink Railway Unit 15 Coalfield Way ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH LE65 1JT For all other contacts: Govia Thameslink Railway Customer Services PO Box 10240 ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH LE65 9EB
Website	gatwickexpress.com greatnorthernrail.com southernrailway.com thameslinkrailway.com		

"The simpler and more engaging the better. Customers will not read through something that looks like a court summons or the small print of some insurance policy!"

Passenger body expert

Working examples for presentation of customer rights, cited by experts in the industry

Experts cited the following examples of successful presentation of customer rights

TFL



✓ Delay compensation poster

"Their station/platform posters provide you with ticketing information that is clear, easy to understand and visually engaging."

TFL

If this happens	We will...	What to do next
You make your journey but are delayed for reasons within our control by 15 minutes or more on Tube services. (This does not include any delay incurred as a result of strike action.)	refund the single pay as you go fare for the delayed journey if you were using an Oyster or contactless payment card refund the cash value, for the delayed journey, if you bought a paper single or return ticket	Sign in to your TfL online account to apply. You must apply within 14 days of the delayed journey. Find out how to apply for a refund at tfl.gov.uk/service-delay-refunds or call TfL Customer Services
You make your journey but are delayed or have to pay additional or higher fares on alternative routes for reasons outside our control.	give no refund.	Contact TfL Customer Services if you have any suggestions about how we could have handled the situation better.

✓ Compensation scenarios

"TfL get it right because they provide different ticket scenarios with information that is clear and easy to understand."

Passenger's Charter

What is it? Well, in a nutshell, it's this: we're totally committed to giving you the high quality service you deserve. Which includes:

- Punctual, reliable trains
- Clean, safe trains and stations
- Customer Service team members on each train
- Refreshments on most trains
- Making sure you have a seat if you've reserved one in advance - simple but pretty important

For full details of what else you can expect when you jump on board, take a look at our [Passenger's Charter](#)

Download a free [PDF reader](#).



VIRGIN

✓ Accessibility and Clarity

"They provide a clear indication on the website just a few bullet points, and the Passengers' Charter itself is so much easier to digest than other ones."



✓ Customer promises

"They don't provide lots of information, they are transparent and they keep it clear and simple."

Easy Jet



✗ Unsubstantial, abstract pledges

While visually engaging the desk research found that Easy Jet needed to explain more around how they intend to deliver, not just what they intend to do.

Conclusion – creating an improved Passengers' Charter

Key findings and primary recommendations

- The research has indicated that there is a clear customer need for a Passengers' Charter but many require significant improvement to make them more 'customer-friendly'.

Key research findings highlight that experts believe Passenger Charters need to:

- be made clearer and more accessible.
- focus more on the issues that are of immediate concern to rail customers – primarily delay compensation but to a lesser extent complaint handling.

As a result of these findings, recommendations are made for the following:

- increase the accessibility of the Passengers' Charter by communicating it through a greater number of offline and online channels.
- succinct signpost information, that draws attention to delay compensation and the full charter, needs to be clearly displayed e.g. within network publications, on posters and TOC websites and, potentially, as a standalone single or double-sided leaflet that can be easily distributed by staff .
- the profile of the Passengers' Charter can be raised further by providing links back to the main document on the back of train tickets as well as on relevant websites (rail and consumer) and social media platforms.
- the delay compensation process should be communicated clearly within the Passengers' Charter. There is potential benefit from the introduction of a universal, easily identifiable logo that sits alongside the TOC branding.
- information about aspects of service provision, less frequently required than compensation and complaint handling, should either remain in full or be signposted within the Charter.
- further research is required to understand how Passengers' Charter and delay compensation processes can be promoted and presented and, within the PC which items of information should be included, which shouldn't and how best to present these.

Design recommendations

Recommendations for the design of this document include the following:

- clearly branded with the TOC logo, and if agreed by the industry a new delay compensation logo easily recognisable to passengers.
- prominent positioning given to the compensation section and the further complaints section.
- clear signposts/icons provided for customers to access in-depth information on other relevant areas.
- language that is jargon free, engaging and easy to understand.
- tone that is empathetic and not too legislative or commanding.
- appearing transparent and accountable wherever possible, for example including information on actions taken as a result of customer complaints.
- pictures, infographics, scenario grids, flow charts and icons to be used wherever they can substitute words.
- recommendations also call for empowered staff who are able to provide good service as well as access to the relevant customer rights when the customer most needs them, usually at critical times of delay.

Contact Details



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