Annual rail consumer report 2023 to 2024

The Rail Ombudsman

The Rail Ombudsman is a free, impartial and independent service that passengers can use to escalate unresolved complaints about train and station operators.

It also plays an important role in driving continuous improvement in the rail sector by generating learning and insight from its casework that helps operators make improvements to their services.

Sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman

This year, we took over sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman.

The May 2021 Plan for Rail set out an intent for ORR to take over sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman from RDG.

Following a competitive tender process, we appointed Dispute Resolution Ombudsman as the service provider, and the transition to the ORR sponsored scheme was completed in November 2023. We have used this as an opportunity to introduce a range of improvements to the service, including:

- introduction of new passenger contact channels to provide for a more accessible service, such as a new WhatsApp channel and the option for video calls with case handlers
- improved case handling response times for certain case types to speed up the complaint resolution process for passengers
- the appointment of a board member with lived experience of disability to the Rail Ombudsman's new independent board
- the creation of a new Passenger Advisory Panel to advise the Rail Ombudsman board,

which includes representatives from disability groups and experts with lived experience of disability

- Ombudsman staff being trained in disability and vulnerability awareness by experts with lived experience of disability

Using passenger insight to drive improvements in service delivery



We commissioned a range of awareness, usability and accessibility research on the Rail Ombudsman service this year. We have published the findings, identified specific opportunities for improvement, and written to the Ombudsman asking them to set out how the insight will be used to improve their service.

Regulatory framework for the Rail Ombudsman

Under the Complaints Handling licence condition, operators are required to be members of the Rail Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is funded through charges to operators for the service it provides.

Our priorities for April 2024 to March 2025

We will continue to hold the Rail Ombudsman to account for its service delivery, driving continuous improvement where opportunities are identified, while also challenging industry to fully utilise the insight and learning generated from the Ombudsman's casework.

- ← Previous Complaints and compensation