Annual rail consumer report 2024 to 2025

Covering the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025



Executive summary

Passengers across Great Britain made 1.7 billion journeys by rail this year, an increase of 7% on last year. For every journey, we want travellers to feel confident about the experience they can expect. This report highlights our key interventions to protect passengers during 2024 to 2025 and our forward plan.

Purchasing train tickets and revenue protection practices

Passengers have significant choice over where to buy their train tickets, and which type of ticket to buy for their journey. They need to be provided with clear and accurate information to enable

them to make the best decisions for them.

Building on work started last year, we secured increased transparency for passengers on fees charged by some retailers when rail tickets are purchased through websites and apps. All eight retailers that we engaged with made changes that addressed our concerns.

Separately, in November, a number of concerns came to light on train operators' revenue protection practices and as a result the Secretary of State for Transport asked ORR to urgently review this matter, including the use of penalty fares and prosecutions. The overriding priority in doing so was to ensure that fare evasion was being addressed, but in a way that was fair to passengers and in line with the correct procedures.

As part of this review we considered whether ticket terms and conditions are clear and communicated effectively. Our report found that current revenue protection practices in rail are not working as well as they need to and require improvement in the interests of passengers, the rail industry and taxpayers. We have identified key areas for improvement and have made targeted recommendations that will address these issues.

The next step is for the Secretary of State and Department for Transport (DfT) to consider the recommendations and how (and the extent to which) these should be implemented. While our role is now complete, we stand ready to support this in any way we can.

Related to this we will finalise our review of the existing industry code of practice on the provision of key information to passengers on rail tickets and services, including its status and scope. This Code was developed to support rail ticket retailers in understanding the requirements of consumer law and to share the best practice that we have observed in this area.

Enabling disabled people to access travel by rail

Our rail network should be accessible to all, and this year we have seen a 17% increase in the number of bookings for passenger assistance.

Our passenger research suggests that satisfaction with assistance where it is delivered is high, but that service reliability has remained largely static at industry level and needs to improve.

Northern Trains was the poorest performer in our passenger research last year for the reliability of assistance provision. We requested an improvement plan to address this and have closely monitored its implementation. Northern committed to delivering a wide range of actions designed

to deliver improvements for passengers. They have made good progress and, over the year ahead, our focus will shift to monitoring the realisation of benefits for passengers.

To help drive improvements across the wider industry, we consulted on a new framework for benchmarking operators' performance in delivering assistance. We have amended our framework in response to consultation feedback. We will use quantitative data to assess operators' delivery of assistance, and will qualitatively assess the capability improvements of the poorest performers. We will be publishing our first benchmarking report in the Autumn.

This year, we have also reviewed industry performance in key areas that contribute to the passenger experience of assistance.

We reviewed the reliability of help points at stations and found that passengers cannot consistently rely on help points to get the information and help they may need. We asked station operators to review their approaches to monitoring the availability of help points, and they have reported to us a range of positive steps being taken to improve help point reliability.

We also reviewed the communications between staff at boarding and destination stations, drawing on learnings from five busy stations. We identified opportunities for operators to reduce risks in the handover of key passenger information between stations through use of an electronic, rather than phone, handover. We are asking operators of the stations that deliver the largest volumes of assistance to review their approach to this handover process and submit conclusions, and any proposals for change, to us.

Separately we have started to publish biannual data on the reliability of passenger lifts at stations. Network Rail recognises the need to improve how it identifies, communicates and rectifies lift faults and has shared an improvement plan with us. We will continue to monitor its progress closely.

Finally, to support improvements in the complaints and redress processes for disabled passengers, we have shared the steps taken by five operators whose disabled passengers reported the highest barriers to engaging with complaints processes; and launched a consultation that proposes to require all operators to determine redress claims for failed passenger assistance on a case-by-case basis, recognising the varying circumstances and impacts for passengers when passenger assistance is not delivered as requested.

Protecting passengers when services are disrupted

Passengers' journeys may be disrupted by engineering work needed to maintain the network, or by unplanned challenges such as extreme weather, staff availability, or infrastructure issues.

This year we have reassessed passenger information where rail replacement services are in place for planned engineering works. The industry has made some positive progress following the recommendations we made in our report last year. We also identified some areas where further focus is needed, particularly in relation to the information provided during the journey itself. We have made some further recommendations to industry and are continuing to provide bilateral feedback to operators.

We brought over 70 leaders from industry together to discuss passenger safety and welfare in stranded train incidents, informed by research that we commissioned jointly with Transport Focus. We have now set out some clear objectives for the industry to deliver collaboratively and will be reconvening with the industry in the Autumn to maintain momentum.

Throughout the year, we have continued to engage with the industry's Smarter Information Smarter Journeys (SISJ) programme that enables cross-industry improvements in passenger information.

ORR sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman

The Rail Ombudsman provides an independent service for resolving complaints where passengers are not satisfied with an operator's response.

We sponsor the Rail Ombudsman and have continued to hold it to account for effective delivery of its contractual requirements.

We have agreed a continuous improvement plan with the Ombudsman based on the results of ORR commissioned research looking at awareness, perception and accessibility of the service. As a result, the Rail Ombudsman has committed to improving passenger and train operator user experience of the service and has recently introduced a new website and case management system.

Other improvements include: the transition from text phone to Relay UK; the introduction of a new WhatsApp channel; and targeted engagement and signposting of the service with vulnerable and lower awareness groups.

Infographic: Key figures

Covering the period from April 2024 to March 2025. Percentage point differences reflect a comparison with the previous year.

322,409
passenger complaints were responded to by operators, down 8% on last year[1]



More than 20,000
passengers told us about their experiences of making complaints to train operators[2]



97%
of complaints were responded to by train operators within 20 working days, and 77% within ten working days[1]



99%
of delay compensation claims were processed by train operators within 20 working days, which was the same as last year[3]



45
rail organisations including train and station operators and a third party retailer are now members of the Rail Ombudsman scheme[4]



1.7 billion
journeys made. This is around the same as pre-pandemic levels[5]



249,048
Disabled Persons Railcards were issued, up 28% on last year, saving passengers a third on fares[6]



415,575
passenger bookings were made for assistance, up 17% on last year[7]



More than 8,000
passengers told us about their experiences of using booked assistance[8]



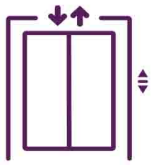
78%
of booked assistance users received all assistance booked, up 2pp on last year[8]



94%
of passengers who received assistance at a station were satisfied with the assistance provided by staff, this is ths same as last year[8]



1,351
passenger lifts across the rail network. This is up 59 from last year[9]



7.1
faults per lift. This is up 5% on last year[9]



4,500
Help Points covering 83% of stations on the GB rail network[10]



Infographic sources:

1. ORR Passenger rail service complaints statistical release
2. ORR Passenger satisfaction with complaint handling survey
3. ORR Delay compensation claims
4. Rail Ombudsman: Participating Service Providers
5. ORR Passenger rail usage statistical release
6. ORR Disabled Persons Railcards factsheet
7. ORR Passenger assistance factsheet
8. ORR Passenger Assist User Experience Survey
9. ORR Passenger lifts at stations factsheet
10. ORR Reliability of help points at stations report

Note: pp = percentage points

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Our consumer role

ORR protects the interests of rail and road users, improving the safety, value and performance of railways and roads, today and in the future.

Our regulation of the rail sector makes a difference for passengers at every stage of their journey, from planning a journey and booking a ticket, through to travelling and redress where things go wrong.

We want passengers to feel confident about the experience they can expect when travelling by rail. Our passenger-facing work focuses on five key areas:

- ticket retailing and passenger rights;
- passenger information;
- accessible travel;
- complaints and compensation; and
- sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman.

We define the minimum acceptable standards for the passenger experience, hold operators and retailers to account against those standards, and drive continuous improvement across the

industry. Our work is underpinned by requirements set out in consumer law, conditions in the licences that we issue to passenger train and station operators, and health and safety legislation.

We oversee all mainline train and station operators and retailers against common standards, including:

- those operated by and for the Department for Transport, the Scottish and Welsh Governments, and Transport for London;
- open access and heritage operators; and
- third-party rail ticket retailers.

We use a range of information sources to help us prioritise our work and identify where there is an opportunity to drive improvements or where we need to intervene to protect passengers from harm. This includes commissioning ongoing and ad-hoc passenger research and collecting information from industry. Our core expectation is that if something has gone wrong, it is fixed quickly by the operator or retailer. To help secure this outcome, we may:

- monitor activity more closely and require more frequent reporting
- request improvement plans
- escalate issues in line with our economic enforcement policy.

Our Consumer Expert Panel provides independent advice and challenge, and plays a key role in bringing a consumer perspective to our decisions.

We are not responsible for setting fares, awarding or monitoring management agreements with operators, or for setting the level of public subsidy in the railways – these sit with Department for Transport and Transport Scotland. We are also not responsible for enforcement of the Equality Act 2010, which sits with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

The government has proposed the establishment of a new passenger watchdog, which could take on some of ORR's consumer functions, as part of its wider rail reform agenda. We are working constructively with the Department for Transport to inform their policy development.

- ← Previous Annual rail consumer report 2024 to 2025
- → Next Ticket retailing and passenger rights

Ticket retailing and passenger rights

We want operators and retailers to be fair and transparent in all their interactions with passengers, providing information that is accurate and timely which enables passengers to make well-informed decisions and access their statutory rights as customers.

Independent review of train operators' revenue protection practices

There are a range of circumstances in which a passenger may innocently attempt to travel without a valid ticket for their journey. For example, they may make a mistake during purchase, they may accidentally board the wrong train, they may misplace their ticket or leave their railcard at home.

However, many of these reasons can also be used as excuses by passengers who deliberately choose to underpay or avoid their fare. This creates a number of 'grey areas' where it can be difficult for rail staff to determine the passenger's intent and decide how to address the situation.

In November 2024 the then Secretary of State for Transport commissioned the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to conduct an independent review of train operators' revenue protection practices. Her overriding priority in doing so was to ensure that fare evasion was being addressed, but in a way that was fair to passengers and in line with the correct procedures.

Our review considered whether ticket terms and conditions are clear and effectively communicated, and operators' revenue protection and enforcement practices. Our report set out recommendations to address five key issues:

- Make buying the right ticket simpler and easier
- Strengthen consistency in how passengers are treated when ticket issues arise
- Introduce greater consistency and fairness in the use of prosecutions
- Make information on revenue protection easy to access and understand
- Greater coordination, oversight and transparency of revenue protection activity

The next step is for the Secretary of State and DfT to consider the recommendations and how (and the extent to which) these should be implemented. While our role is now complete, we stand ready to support this in any way we can.

Transparency of fees for online rail ticket purchases

We asked eight third-party retailers to make changes to their websites and apps to increase the transparency of the fees they charge during the booking process.

Throughout 2024, we had constructive and positive engagement with these retailers and all made changes that addressed our concerns. The changes made include incorporating fees into the total price at the earliest opportunity, making information about fees more transparent throughout the booking process, and providing improved FAQs on fees.

Fees for ticket refunds

Last year, in response to recommendations that we made to industry and DfT, the maximum administration fee for processing rail ticket refunds was reduced from £10 to £5. This year, we carried out an assurance review to ensure that retailers were accurately informing their customers of a maximum £5 fee. We identified several cases where the information was wrong and secured changes.

Regulatory framework for ticket retailing and passenger rights

Our work is underpinned by:

- our consumer law investigation and enforcement powers, which we hold concurrently with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA);
- obligations set out in train and station operating licences; and
- commitments set out in industry-owned documents such as the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

In April 2025, the enforcement and unfair commercial practices provisions of the Digital Markets, Competition & Consumer Act 2024 came into effect. The Act consolidates and enhances enforcement powers and consumer rights, including strengthening of the provisions relating to the drip-pricing of mandatory fees. We have powers under the Act concurrently with CMA.

Our priorities for April 2025 to March 2026

We will:

- review the existing Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services, including its status and scope; and
- continue to monitor risks to passengers across the ticket retailing landscape and identify where we need to intervene.

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- → Next Passenger information

Passenger information

We want passengers to have accurate and timely information about their travel options, so that they can plan and make journeys with confidence, including during disruption.

Better information about planned rail replacement buses

In 2023, we set out what operators need to do to improve passenger information for journeys that involve planned rail replacement services. This year, we reviewed progress and published our findings.

Information when planning a journey in advance was generally accurate and of good quality, while operator staff and agents providing information on the day were informative and friendly. We were also encouraged by the collective efforts from industry via the SISJ programme on real time tracking of rail replacement vehicles and the production of new videos outlining maps of planned disruption.

However, we were disappointed to see little improvement in the information provided on the rail replacement journey itself and set out some further recommendations to industry.

We wrote to operators again in July recognising further progress, building on the findings of our report, and will continue to provide bilateral feedback to operators to support ongoing

improvements for passengers.

Protecting passengers when trains are stranded

We asked industry to work together collaboratively to ensure that passenger safety and welfare is placed at the heart of stranded train incidents.

ORR and Transport Focus jointly commissioned research examining the passenger experience in stranded train incidents. Our report called for greater focus on passenger safety and welfare.

In January, we brought over 70 senior leaders together from across the industry to explore how the industry can embed best practice, and have now set out some clear objectives for the industry to deliver collaboratively. We will be reconvening the industry in October to maintain momentum on this work.

Live information on lift availability

We have continued to monitor the industry's progress in meeting our expectations, that live data on lift availability will be made easily available to both passengers and staff to support journey planning.

This project has progressed more slowly than initially planned because of unanticipated issues that affect data quality and consistency.

Live data is available through the National Rail Accessibility Map for 89% of lifts, and is available to third-party website and app developers. We want to see Network Rail continuing to move towards 100% availability, and for the data to be available through the National Rail website and to be consistent with the information on operator websites.

Encouraging cross-industry collaboration

We continue to support cross-industry collaboration that enables network-wide improvements to the provision of passenger information.

We previously challenged the industry to develop a single, transparent strategy to deliver improvements in passenger information. In response, the industry established the SISJ

programme, which is jointly led by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and Network Rail. The SISJ programme plays a central role in enabling change that requires cross-industry collaboration. Alongside, RDG's Customer Information Group (CIG) focuses on supporting operators to deliver for passengers every day.

We engage actively with both SISJ and CIG in recognition of the value that they bring in enabling improvements in the passenger experience.

Regulatory framework for passenger information

We hold operators to account against requirements set out in the Passenger Information licence condition, under which operators have adopted the Customer Information Pledges as their regulated Code of Practice.

The Pledges must be reviewed annually to drive continuous improvement. The licence requirements complement wider requirements in consumer law and the Railway Interoperability Regulations.

Our priorities for April 2025 to March 2026

We will:

- Work with industry to maintain momentum on stranded trains work and to explore how the industry will lead this work into 2026 and beyond.
- Follow-up our recommendations to industry on improving passenger information for planned rail replacement buses.
- Continue to assess operator compliance with the Customer Information Pledges, particularly during disruption, providing bilateral feedback to operators.
- Continue to engage and influence across the breadth of the SISJ and CIG work programmes, in recognition of the value they have demonstrated in enabling improvements for passengers across the whole network.

- ← Previous Ticket retailing and passenger rights
- → Next Accessible travel

Accessible travel

We want to empower confident travel by all, including disabled passengers, whether their journeys are made independently or with assistance.

Approval of operators' Accessible Travel Policies

We hold operators to account against the commitments they make in their Accessible Travel Policies (ATPs) and require operators to review their ATPs annually.

This year, we approved a new Accessible Travel Policy for London Underground Limited, which applies at the 30 stations where it delivers assistance on behalf of other operators. We also supported two new licence holders, GTS Rail Operations Limited and South Western Railway Limited, in adopting ATPs from their predecessor licence holders.

All amendments to ATPs proposed through the annual review process were minor. Separately, we approved one major ATP change within the year, from Eurostar, which established new processes for assisting manual wheelchair users in their own wheelchair, rather than a station wheelchair.

Understanding the passenger experience

We have been surveying passengers on their experience of booked assistance on an ongoing basis since 2017, and publish findings annually. This year, we have started to publish key metrics from the survey on our data portal every quarter. We use the findings to help us understand where we need to act to improve the passenger experience.

This year, more than 8,700 passengers participated. Satisfaction with the service where it is delivered is relatively high, with 94% of passengers satisfied with the assistance they received. However, the service is not reliable enough with 11% reporting that they received none of the assistance that they booked, similar to the 12% reported last year.

Securing improvements in the delivery of assistance

Northern Trains were the poorest performer in our survey last year for the reliability of assistance. At our request, Northern carried out a detailed assessment of the gaps in the passenger

assistance and proposed an improvement plan. In December, we confirmed that ORR would hold Northern accountable for the delivery of that plan. Northern has made good progress and we wrote to them in July 2025 confirming that, over the year ahead, our focus will shift to monitoring the realisation of benefits for passengers.

Throughout the year, we have been sharing survey findings with operators every quarter, challenging the poorer performers to improve. Some operators have, as a result, developed considered plans to secure improvements for passengers who need assistance travel, which we welcome.

Improving the quality of industry data on assistance volumes and outcomes

We publish industry data on the volumes of booked assistance every quarter and operators have reported a 17% increase in bookings this year.

To provide a more complete picture, we have been working with industry to strengthen the quality of data on turn up and go assistance requests. From July 2025, we started to publish the data that is reported to us and expect the quality and completeness to improve over time.

We had low confidence in the quality and usefulness of the data reported by industry on assistance outcomes. We asked operators to comprehensively review the reporting categories, which they delivered through RDG. In April 2025, we implemented changes to our reporting requirements to reflect the categories developed by industry.

The new data should provide stronger insights to both us and operators on where assistance failures are happening, enabling action to be taken to identify causes and solutions. We welcome, for example, the work that Northern and RDG initiated in June to investigate the underlying causes where staff report that they are not able to find passengers who have booked assistance.

New benchmarking framework for passenger assistance

To strengthen our ability to hold operators to account for poor performance, we consulted on a

new framework for benchmarking operators' performance in delivering passenger assistance. We have published a response to that consultation alongside this report, and have made a number of amendments to our approach in response to the feedback received.

We will use quantitative data to rank operators' performance on their delivery of assistance, with metrics on reliability, passenger satisfaction, and staff training. Data will be drawn from our ongoing passenger survey, and we will continue to explore other potential sources of data that could add additional insight.

We will qualitatively assess the poorest performing operators on their capability to improve, including considering whether they monitor their delivery of assistance effectively, identify risks that affect performance and develop appropriate solutions, and engage with passengers and industry colleagues.

We plan to publish our first benchmarking report in the Autumn.

Communications between stations when delivering assistance

Better communication between staff at boarding and destination stations remains a key enabler for improvement in assistance outcomes, as it will help to ensure passengers who are assisted onto a train by staff will receive assistance to get off at their destination.

Our review, which focussed on learnings from five busy stations, found that use of the Passenger Assist staff app and dashboard is reducing the risk of information being lost or miscommunicated between stations. Previously, stations have relied solely on phone calls. We want to support a planned transition from phone calls to electronic handover.

We have asked operators to make better use of data to identify and address causes of assistance failure, and to review how they can make best use of the Passenger Assist staff app and dashboard to improve communications between stations. We will be asking the operators of the stations that provide the highest volumes of assists to report the findings of their review to us in the Autumn.

This year, we have approved proposals from LNER, Avanti and Northern to use the Passenger Assist system for handover between stations as a replacement for a phone call on some journeys.

Help points at stations

Help points at stations enable passengers to speak to a member of staff. They are most commonly used to ask for information about when the next train is, but they are also sometimes used to ask for passenger assistance or to report an emergency.

However, our review found that passengers cannot consistently rely on help points at stations.

We asked station operators to review their approaches to monitoring the availability of help points. Operators have taken steps to collect better data on issues impacting their help points, including through automated remote monitoring, and strengthen existing contracts with suppliers on fixing faults.

Redress for failed assistance

Redress is a way that operators can seek to put things right for a passenger where they have failed to deliver assistance as booked.

For all redress claims submitted by a passenger, operators must provide an explanation of what went wrong, what steps they have taken to prevent the failure from happening again and an appropriate remedy. This could take a variety of forms, such as an apology, a gesture of goodwill, and/or financial compensation.

We are consulting on amending our ATP Guidance to require all operators to assess and determine appropriate redress on a case-by-case basis. If we decide to make changes to our ATP Guidance, then operators may be required to amend their ATPs and to re-submit them to us for our approval

Reliability of passenger lifts

Lifts enable access to the railway for disabled passengers and others. Last year, we identified concerns about the number of faults that are occurring and an apparent decline in performance over time.

This year, we have started publishing biannual statistics on lift performance. We now expect Network Rail (who manage the majority of lifts across the rail network) to be delivering improved performance. Network Rail recognises the need to improve and has shared an improvement plan

with us. We will continue to monitor its progress closely.

Accessible rail replacement vehicles

We work with the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) to monitor provision of accessible rail replacement vehicles, supporting them in their role enforcing the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and the Public Service Vehicle (Accessible Information) Regulations.

According to the data that we receive from operators, nearly all rail replacement vehicles either met accessibility standards or have an exemption from the Secretary of State.

For passengers, this means that 96% of rail replacement vehicles met accessibility standards. This is a small rise from 95% in 2023 to 2024 with improved provision of accessible rail replacement for both planned and unplanned disruption.

Regulatory framework for accessible travel

All train and station operators must establish and comply with an ATP as a condition of their licence, setting out their provision for disabled passengers.

Our published guidance defines the minimum requirements for operators' ATPs, covering areas such as:

- provision of assistance;
- staff training; and
- passenger information.

ORR also holds operators to account against accessibility standards for rolling stock and stations, which are set out in the Code of Practice on Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations and the National Technical Specification Notices that are issued by Government under the Railway Interoperability Regulations.

Our priorities for April 2025 to March 2026

We will:

- Continue to monitor operator's delivery of assistance and hold them to account for delivering improved services for disabled passengers.
- Publish our first report benchmarking operators' performance in delivering assistance.
- Publish a response to our consultation on proposed amendments to redress requirements in the ATP guidance and take forward any next steps.
- Support operators with any proposals to move to alternative approaches to communications between stations on handover.

- ← Previous Passenger information
- → Next Complaints and compensation

Complaints and compensation

Where things go wrong, we want passengers to feel confident that they will be compensated for delays, can easily complain and that their complaints will be addressed. We want operators to use learnings from all complaints to drive continuous improvement in passengers' experiences of rail.

Meeting minimum expectations

Operators report core data on their performance in handling complaints and delay repay claims to us every month. We monitor this data to identify where we need to intervene to protect passengers.

This year, performance has been generally good. The industry average over the year has seen 97% of complaints responded to within 20 working days, which is our minimum requirement, and 77% responded to within 10 working days. Similarly, 99% of delay repay claims were processed within 20 working days. No individual operator has performed substantially worse than the average during the year.

Continuous improvement

Operators should always be looking to improve their handling of complaints and delay repay claims, and they report to us annually on how they are doing that.

In order to share good practice, we published a short summary of the steps that operators are

taking to improve their delay repay claims processes and to raise awareness of passengers' entitlement to compensation.

Improving complaints processes for disabled passengers

In April 2024, we published a report on disabled passengers' experiences of complaints handling by train companies, which found that some disabled passengers experience accessibility difficulties with the rail complaints process.

We identified five operators whose disabled customers reported the most barriers to accessing and engaging with the complaints process, and asked them to review their processes.

We welcomed the initiatives they took forward in response, which we consider could be implemented more widely across other operators.

For the first time in May 2025, all operators were required to include specific consideration of the needs of disabled people in their annual complaints handling continuous improvement reports. We are in the process of reviewing those reports.

Regulatory framework for complaints and redress

We hold operators to account against requirements set out in:

- the Delay Compensation licence condition and supporting Code of Practice that defines minimum requirements; and
- the Complaints Handling licence condition, which is also supported by a Code of Practice that defines minimum requirements.

Our priorities for April 2025 to March 2026

We will:

- Assess the continuous improvements reports that operators are required to produce each year on their delay repay and complaints handling processes, with a particular focus on the

new requirement to report on improvements to disabled people's experiences of complaints handling.
- Monitor operator performance using the data they report to us each month and our ongoing survey of passenger satisfaction with complaints handling, intervening where necessary.
- Continue to challenge industry to fully utilise the insight and learning that is generated from complaint handling.

- ← Previous Accessible travel
- → Next The Rail Ombudsman

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

We continue to hold the Rail Ombudsman to account for effective delivery of its contractual requirements. In the last year we also agreed a continuous improvement plan based upon the results of ORR commissioned research looking at awareness, perception and accessibility of the service.

As a result, the Rail Ombudsman has recently improved the passenger and train operator user experience of the service through the rollout of a new website and case management system. These new systems will meet the recently updated Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2AA), and the website will also provide consumers with a British Sign Language (BSL) video version of their quick start guide.

Other improvements include:

- the transition from text phone to Relay UK;
- the introduction of a new WhatsApp channel;

- targeted engagement and signposting of the service with vulnerable and lower awareness groups;
- introduction of an annual plain English audit across all its consumer interfaces; and
- improved quality assurance processes for documents and publications to ensure a high level of accessibility and readability.

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 2025 to March 2026

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.

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