

Annual rail consumer report 2025 to 2026

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.

Guidance on rail retailing

Passengers must be able to quickly and easily access relevant, accurate, complete and timely information during the ticket buying process. This is a legal requirement and a fundamental component of informed passenger decision-making.

We published updated guidance on rail retailing in January 2026, following consultation. The guidance aims to assist rail retailers in meeting their consumer law obligations regarding the provision of information to passengers and promote best practice in connection with the sale and use of rail tickets, products, and services.

The guidance sets out key principles, such as what information should be made available to consumers, as well as case studies providing examples of how the principles could apply in a rail retailing context. We have designed it in such a way that consumers can understand what information they can expect to be provided with when buying rail tickets.

The guidance replaces the Code of Practice on retail information for rail tickets and services that was published in 2015.

Independent review of train operators' revenue protection practices

In June 2025 we completed an in-depth review commissioned by the Secretary of State for Transport which focused on two main areas: how train operators and ticket retailers communicate ticket conditions to consumers, and how operators enforce revenue protection, including the use of prosecutions. From this, five key areas for improvement were identified. These included making it simpler and easier for passengers to buy the right ticket by providing clearer information on restrictions; ensuring passengers are treated fairly and consistently when ticket issues arise, with a focus on genuine mistakes rather than intentional fare evasion; and introducing greater consistency and fairness in decisions to prosecute, through a common test applied across operators.

Further recommendations sought to improve transparency and understanding of revenue protection by making information on penalties, prosecutions, settlements and appeals easier to access, and to strengthen coordination and oversight by establishing a forum or body to promote best practice across the industry. Together, these measures aim to reduce confusion, improve fairness, and build greater trust between passengers and the rail industry.

The Secretary of State accepted our recommendations in full and published a comprehensive response in March 2026. The response sets out concrete steps being taken, including measures to simplify the ticket-buying process and support clearer, more transparent pricing for passengers.

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. The CMA published guidance on the price transparency provisions of the Act in November 2025.

Our priorities for April 2026 to March 2027

We will:

- continue to monitor risks to passengers across the ticket retailing landscape and identify where we need to intervene.
 - work collaboratively with DfT and the industry to inform the future landscape for rail retailing under rail reform
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