

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

How you can make a complaint,
and how we will handle it



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Introduction

This Customer Complaints Handling Procedure explains how to make a complaint, how we differentiate between feedback and a complaint, and our monitoring and reporting arrangements.

In addition this booklet details how we use feedback and complaints to improve our services, and how we develop our teams managing such contacts.

If you are not happy in any way, we will take your comments and complaints very seriously and do everything we can to make it right.

We aim to resolve all complaints to your satisfaction, quickly and effectively, without the need for the involvement of third parties. However, the policy also gives further information on independent bodies you can contact if you are unhappy with the response we have provided. Details about how to submit a complaint and an explanation of that process are also detailed below.

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Complaint or feedback?

A complaint is defined as; “any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer or potential customer about service delivery or company or industry policy where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.”

Our customer services team receive training on how to correctly log complaints on our system which includes how to separately classify complaints and feedback.

Both our customer relations and social media teams are trained to probe further when they receive negative feedback to help determine whether these communications are complaints.

All complaints and feedback are gratefully received and used to help improve our services. Details of how to make a complaint or leave feedback on our services, are detailed in this document.

Talk to us

Our staff

The first thing to do if you are unhappy with our service is tell one of our people. They are all trained to help and will try, where possible, to resolve your complaint immediately. This may include involving their supervisor or manager.

If your complaint cannot be resolved on the spot, we will pass it on to our Customer Solutions team.

Our frontline teams also have access to information to inform you how to submit a complaint to our Customer Solutions team directly.

Our Customer Solutions team

Our Customer Solutions team is there to help you and there are several ways to get in touch:

- **Email:** customers@LNER.co.uk
- **Post:** LNER
Freepost RTUH-TUGH-GCLZ
Cramlington
NE23 1WG
- **By phone:** Call us on 03457 225 333
Opening times: Monday to Sunday 08:00–22:00
(Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day)

When you call us outside the above times, an automated message will confirm the department is closed and advise of the above opening times.

When contacting the team, to help us respond to you promptly, make sure you tell us your name, provide us with contact details so we can respond to you, tell us the name of the station or time and date of the train service your complaint relates to, and let us know as much detail as possible, including a copy of your train tickets.

All complaints will receive an acknowledgement and reference number, for ease of communicating with us, and a response issued to ensure concerns are fully addressed.

Where your complaint relates to a service provided to us by one of our suppliers, we will handle it ourselves, liaising with the supplier in the process. If your complaint relates to the services of another train company, we will let you know who it needs to be referred to, and with your agreement pass it on to them.



Our website

The simplest way to get in touch with us is through our website, **LNER.co.uk**

From here you can complete an online form to tell us about anything, good or bad, find answers for many questions about our services or download other information such as our Passenger's Charter.

Through social media

Our Social Media team is here around the clock and will be happy to discuss your complaint, answer your queries or receive your feedback through Facebook or Twitter.

- **Facebook:** LNERail
- **Twitter:** @LNER

If we cannot help resolve your issue immediately, we will direct you to our Customer Solutions Centre, who will be able to investigate your concerns and come back to you.

Accessibility

We understand some people have specific access barriers, or whose first language may not be English, and may therefore have difficulties communicating with us. We handle these cases sensitively and give our responses in an appropriate format.

We make provisions for customers who are visually impaired or hard of hearing such as through our Text Relay service or by providing materials in alternative formats such as large print.

We are happy to process complaints or feedback from guardians, carers or support workers who are acting on your behalf, providing we have your written permission.

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How we deal with your complaint

Making a complaint directly to a member of our staff

If your complaint is made in person to one of our team they will try and resolve it on the spot, involving their supervisor or manager if appropriate.

If your complaint cannot be resolved, it will be passed to our Customer Solutions team.

Making a complaint to the Customer Solutions team

The team will undertake a full and fair investigation into your complaint before responding to you. If you have provided a contact phone number, they may call you to resolve your complaint over the phone or to obtain further information if this is needed to investigate your complaint in a robust manner.

If your complaint concerns one of our people, whilst we will confirm whether an internal investigation has been initiated by their line manager, we will not confirm what action has been taken against the individual or details of the investigation.

If you're unhappy with the response you receive, you can request your case be escalated within our business. Your case will be reviewed by a Senior Manager who will make further contact with you to attempt to reach a resolution. If after review, you remain unhappy, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman.

The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve ongoing complaints/disputes between us and our customers. It is free to use their services and they are independent of the rail industry.

The Ombudsman does not take sides and instead looks at the evidence available, and will help us both to try to reach an agreement. If an agreement can't be reached, they will make a decision based on the evidence they've received.

If you agree with their decision, then we have to act on what their conclusion or recommendation says.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- you are unhappy with our final response to your complaint which will be contained in a letter or email (this is sometimes known or called a 'deadlock letter');
- or
- we have not resolved your complaint within 40 working days of receiving it;
- and
- no more than 12 months have passed since we sent you a final response

If you wish to find out more about the Rail Ombudsman, please see details on the following page.

There are some complaints that the Rail Ombudsman will not be able to look into, for example if it is about the way one of our services has been designed, industry policy, or if your complaint relates to an event which took place before the Rail Ombudsman service was established. If that is the case, they will contact you to let you know.

If possible, they will transfer your complaint to another organisation that may be able to help you further, such as Transport Focus or London TravelWatch – the independent consumer watchdogs for the rail industry. They will independently review your complaint and where appropriate, follow things up on your behalf.

Contacting the Rail Ombudsman

If you wish to find out more about the Rail Ombudsman, please see details below.

- **Contact Centre team are available:**
Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00
- **Website:** railombudsman.org
- **Call:** 0330 094 0362
- **Textphone:** 0330 094 0363
- **Email:** info@railombudsman.org
- **Twitter:** [@RailOmbudsman](https://twitter.com/RailOmbudsman)
- **Post:** FREEPOST – RAIL OMBUDSMAN

We will accept any decision made by the Ombudsman as binding.

Complaints from third parties

We will accept complaints made on your behalf by a third-party intermediary meeting the same standards and timelines as if you had contacted us directly.

We will converse directly with them, so long as it is clear they have your consent to act on your behalf. If this is not clear, we will contact you to ask for your permission.

If during the handling of your complaint this consent changes, you should let us know in writing and we will stop discussing your case with the third party immediately.

Response times

If speaking to our people or contacting our Social Media team, we will try and resolve your complaint on the spot.

However, if you contact our Customer Solutions team or have your complaint referred to them, we aim to respond within 10 working days.

If your complaint is complex and requires a greater level of investigation, it may take up to 20 working days for us to respond to you. For such cases, we will provide you with a progress update within 10 working days.

In busy periods, such as following a period of major disruption, our response times may increase. However, if this happens, we will put messages on our website, on our Customer Solutions phone lines and in the email acknowledgements sent from Customer Solutions to keep you informed.

If we require additional information we will make contact with you as quickly as possible after receiving your complaint. When additional information has been requested, if we do not receive a response within 10 working days, we may close your case. We will communicate with you further to advise we have taken this action.

Dealing with frivolous or vexatious complaints

If you believe we have not met our customer service standards, we understand you may feel angry or upset. Whilst we respect the rights of our customers to express their views, we will not tolerate aggressive, threatening, or abusive behaviour of any kind.

We reserve the right to terminate any correspondence or communication we believe to be 'frivolous, vexatious or abusive', in line with our formal process. In the first instance, the case will be reviewed by our Senior Customer Relations Manager. If they support the decision to terminate further correspondence, we will then consult fully with the Office for Rail and Road, and the Rail Ombudsman, before we terminate any correspondence and inform you in writing of the reasons behind our decision. In this response, we will also include contact details for The Rail Ombudsman.

All details of frivolous or vexatious complaints will be recorded in our CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system.

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Compensation

We will offer you compensation, if appropriate, in line with our Passenger's Charter and the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

We will take account of other relevant factors when deciding on levels of compensation and use our discretion where appropriate. If you are entitled to compensation, or we deem it appropriate to offer you discretionary compensation, we will confirm this in our response to you.

For customers wishing to claim compensation because they were delayed by 30 minutes or more when travelling with us, please refer to the Delay Repay section of our website [LNER.co.uk/delay](https://www.lner.co.uk/delay)

Consumer Rights Act 2015

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 provides consumers with their rights, where a service is not performed with reasonable care and skill.

For further information regarding your rights when travelling on our services as a consumer, please visit [gov.uk/consumer-protection-rights](https://www.gov.uk/consumer-protection-rights)

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Confidentiality

Your personal details, or details about your complaint, will not be shared with third parties unless we have your consent in writing, or it is necessary to fulfil our own obligations to Members of Parliament, the Department for Transport, other train operators, The Rail Ombudsman, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, or the Office of Rail and Road. This includes other bodies carrying out statutory duties such as the police.

The Office of Rail and Road, the industry regulator, conducts research into the experiences of customers that have submitted complaints to train operators as part of its monitoring arrangements. For LNER customers, this will only include those customers who have submitted a complaint electronically. If you do not wish to participate in such a survey, an opt-out link is provided at the bottom of each response we issue.

We will fulfil our legal obligations in respect of the Data Protection Act (2015).

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Claims for loss, property damage, or personal injury

If you wish to make a claim against London North Eastern Railway for losses, property damage or personal injury, please contact our Customer Solutions team who will either deal with your claim or pass it to insurance and claims handlers.

The rail industry has an arrangement called the Claims Allocation and Handling Agreement (CAHA). All train operating companies must comply with CAHA and your claim will be processed in accordance with this agreement. Under CAHA, compensation should be dealt with by the companies for their own customers.

If some or all responsibility is allocated to another party, the insurance companies balance payments without involving the customer.

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Publicity

Customer information notices are displayed in each LNER train. The notices contain a LNER route map and contact details of our customer services team and for the Rail Ombudsman.

Our website, [LNER.co.uk](https://www.lner.co.uk) also has full details of the complaints handling process as well as all the relevant contact details you may require.



Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring

Calls and correspondence dealt with by our customer services team are regularly monitored within our Customer Contact Centre on an ongoing basis.

Each customer services representative within the team will have a selection of their cases monitored every period. This is to ensure all complaints are handled in a friendly and personal manner, all points raised are suitably addressed and any compensation is awarded in a consistent way.

We also have a variety of Customer Feedback Surveys which help us understand and improve all channels where we interact with our customers, including the processing of complaints and feedback.

Our customer services team have internal targets to deliver an excellent service to our customers, and we monitor these targets at regular management review meetings. We aim to respond to your communication within 10 working days, although this varies depending on the volume and complexity of the correspondence received.

Reporting

We always welcome complaints and feedback from customers. Our Customer Experience Management team, within which our customer contact teams sit, share the information throughout our management team to help inform decisions made to make changes and improvements to our service. We use the information for our managers to cascade key messages to their teams, specifically in relation to local issues so our people are empowered to make the changes to benefit customers from local communities.

Our frontline managers receive regular reports on complaints relating to onboard catering (including the catering teams), train managers, cleanliness and station people. This allows us to investigate and resolve issues promptly and facilitates a culture of continuous improvement and learning.

We also regularly provide comprehensive reports which contain all complaints, praise and suggestions made by customers within the previous period. This helps locally with strategy planning and decision making to improve our customer experience.

A summary of comments and complaints is also provided to our Customer Proposition Group to help inform strategic decisions made across the business. This meeting is chaired by our Customer Experience Director and has senior leadership representation from across the company.

The information also forms part of the Customer Experience Board report, which is submitted to our board of directors every four weeks to ensure the information reaches all levels of the organisation.

Finally, every four weeks we submit a report or provide information to the Office of Rail and Road, which details such things as the number of complaints, complaint categories and our performance in dealing with them, as measured by such things as response times.

Where there is a sudden or unexpectedly large increase in the volume of complaints meaning the 10-working day target to process complaints is at risk, we will inform the Office of Rail and Road, as well as other relevant organisations such as the Ombudsman, Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. Within this notification we will include the reason for the increased correspondence, any mitigation plans, the procedures to ensure the quality of responses is maintained as well as any steps taken to advise our customers. While our aim is to respond to all correspondence within 10 working days, in line with the guidance issued by the ORR, we are committed to responding to at least 95% within 20 working days. If we cannot respond fully in the timescales stated we will regularly communicate with you to advise of the status of your complaint.

When a complaint is made via Social Media, our team will try and resolve the issue immediately. If this is not possible we will assist you in raising your issue with our Customer Relations team, who will endeavour to assist you further. We record all complaint and contact details on our dedicated Customer Relations Management (CRM) system. Electronic records will be retained for 6 years and hard copies, such as written letters we receive, will be retained for 6 months.

Training and development

We are committed to ensuring our people have the knowledge, skills and are empowered to deal with a complaint about our services. Customer service training is provided in a regular and structured way and we only recruit individuals that have the right skills and behaviours.

In addition to the ongoing training for all our customer facing people, where policies or processes change or where we have identified a training need, additional action will be taken. This may include additional training or briefing either a specific team or just an individual.

Our customer services team, who handle all our complaints, receive specific training on our regulated commitments such as those detailed in this procedure, the Passenger's Charter or our Assisted Travel Policy. This is in addition to more tailored training such as letter writing, complaints investigation and resolution skills.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently and changes made when appropriate. Any proposed changes will only be made following consultation with Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. Contact details for these organisations are as follows:

Transport Focus

- **Email:** advice@transportfocus.org.uk
- **Post:** Freepost RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ
PO BOX 5594
Southend on Sea SS1 9PZ
- **By phone:** 0300 123 2350
- **Website:** transportfocus.org.uk

London Travel Watch

- **Email:** enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk
- **Post:** Freepost RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ
PO BOX 5594
Southend on Sea SS1 9PZ
- **By phone:** 020 3176 2999
- **Website:** londontravelwatch.org.uk

Our Services



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