

Complaints Handling Procedure

April 2023

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Introduction

Southeastern is one of the biggest and busiest train operating companies in the UK, with millions of passenger journeys made on our services every year across South East London, Kent and East Sussex.

Customer satisfaction is one of our top priorities and we're committed to consistently providing a safe, reliable, and welcoming service on every one of those journeys.

But we know that despite our best efforts there are times when things don't go to plan. If this happens and you're not happy with the service you've received then let us know. It's important to us that where possible we resolve any issues you've encountered. Your feedback also helps to drive improvement across the company and influences the training we provide our people.

This Complaints Handling Procedure explains:

- How to make a complaint
- How we'll listen and respond to your complaint, including how quickly you should expect a response
- The types of redress you might expect
- How we review and monitor the complaints we receive, and how we respond to them, to drive improvement

We'll aim to work with you to resolve any issues as quickly as possible without the need of third-party involvement. However, you can contact the Rail Ombudsman if you remain unhappy with the responses we've provided.

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How to make a complaint

- Talk to one of our frontline team
- Contact our Customer Services team
- On Social Media
- Meet the Manager sessions
- What to include with your complaint

Talk to one of our frontline team

If you're travelling on one of our trains or at one of our stations and have a complaint, question or issue please talk to one of our employees. They'll be happy to help you and will try to resolve your issue there and then. Depending on the severity of the issue they may need to involve their supervisor or appropriate manager if available. If this isn't possible, or if you'd like to take the matter further, they'll be able to provide you with the contact details of our Customer Services team.

Contact our Customer Services team

Our Customer Services team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The team's role is to help answer questions and resolve any issues you've had with our services. You can contact them in the way that suits you best. This could be:

Online/Webchat: Go to our online 'Contact Us' form (which can be found at: southeasternrailway.co.uk/contact-us/)

Telephone: 0345 322 7021 (calls are charged at local rate, including from mobiles and may be recorded).

Text Relay number: 18001 0345 322 7021 (for passengers with hearing impairments).

Post to:
Southeastern Customer Services
PO Box 8625
Swadlincote
DE11 1HZ

On Social Media

We operate our Twitter (@SE_Railway) and Whatsapp (07866 002690) accounts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (with the exception of the period between 23:00 on Christmas Eve and 08:00 on Boxing Day).

While our social team will do their best to respond to any feedback, issues or questions you raise, their focus is to broadcast train service information that is relevant to as many people as possible. This means they're not always able to respond to individual messages as quickly as you may like. Complaints may require investigation by other parts of the business and as the format of social media doesn't lend itself to providing a detailed response, it's likely they'll provide you with a link to our Customer Services team or to our online 'Contact Us' form if you want to make a formal complaint.

Meet the Manager sessions

Our 'Meet the Manager' sessions – which may be in person or online – are an opportunity for you to speak to local and senior managers and have any of your questions answered. The dates and locations of these events are published online (southeasternrailway.co.uk/meetthemanager). If you require a formal response then simply let one of the managers at the session know and it will be arranged.

What to include with your complaint

To help us fully answer your complaint and respond to you promptly, please make sure you include the following:

- Your personal details: Title, full name, address (including postcode), email and contact number
- If you're making a complaint about a particular journey or station, then please include the date and time of your journey as well as where you started, changed trains and completed your journey
- Your ticket details (if relevant): type of ticket, a copy or scan of them
- Your payment details if you believe your contact reason could result in some payment to you
- Your reason for dissatisfaction, including a description of the problem and the inconvenience caused you
- If your complaint is to do with the conduct of one of our people then if possible please include a description of the employee
- How you'd like us to resolve the issue

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How we'll respond to your complaint and how quickly you can expect a response

- How we'll respond to your complaint
- Our target response times
- If your complaint's about another train operator
- The types of redress you may be entitled to
- Claims for losses, property damage or personal injury

How we'll respond to your complaint

We define a complaint as "any expression of dissatisfaction about service delivery by the company or its agents, and/or about company or industry policy". Our employees are trained to recognise complaints using this definition and ensure that all such contacts are recorded.

You can be confident that we take all complaints seriously and that they'll be handled fairly and objectively. All issues raised will be carefully considered, investigated and examined with your view in mind. Once this is complete we will let you know what happened, why, who was responsible and what the outcome is. We'll provide an appropriate response to all the points you raise. If we've got it wrong we'll let you know and we'll work hard to prevent the same issue happening again.

All complaints are entered into our Customer Relations Management system.

We'll aim to answer all the points you raise as promptly as we can. Our response target times are detailed below.

In order to handle your complaint fully and fairly, we may have to carry out an investigation with our management team. If this is going to take longer than our target response time, which it sometimes can do, we'll let you know as soon as possible and tell you when to expect to hear from us. While complaints about our people will be fully and fairly investigated, we cannot tell you any specific actions we have taken with a particular individual.

Once we've completed our investigation we'll give you a full written response. We'll also ensure the points that you make are passed on to the relevant managers to prevent the same issues from happening again.

Our target response times

We'll respond to your complaint as quickly as we can after fully investigating the issue.

If you phone us, our aim is to answer your call within 30 seconds. We'll do our best to resolve the issue at the time of the call, but if we can't then we'll call you back or write to you within 10 working days.

If you contact us using the 'Contact Us' form on our website or write to us by post, we aim to respond to you within 10 working days.

Some complaints require a more detailed investigation. If this is the case, we will let you know within 10 working days that we need to

carry out further investigation and tell you when we'll get back to you. We aim to provide you with a full response in 20 working days.

As you might expect, more people contact us when things go wrong. When this happens, it may take us longer to respond to you. We'll do everything we can to prevent this from happening, including putting in place our contingency plans for busy periods. But if we can't respond to you within 10 working days, we'll send you an acknowledgement and say when we will be able to provide feedback on your complaint.

We'll also inform all passenger watchdogs and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) of the problem and brief them on any recovery plans, if necessary negotiating a short term extension to our normal response times.

If your complaint is about another train operator

In line with industry guidelines:

- If your issue is with another train operating company but you send it to us, we will forward it to the Customer Services team at that company. We'll also let you know when we've done this and to who we've sent it.
- If your journey involved multiple trips on different services we'll answer any issues that relate to our services and forward your details to the other relevant train operating companies so they can respond directly to you about their portion of your journey.
- If your complaint is about a ticket or service provided by a third-party ticket retailer please contact them directly.
- If your complaint is about the rail infrastructure e.g. level crossings or fences, please contact Network Rail. communications-crm.custhelp.com/.
- If you have a problem topping up your Oyster card at one of our stations then please let us know. For any other problem with your Oyster Card or Oyster PAYG please contact the Oyster Helpdesk at Transport for London. tfl.gov.uk/help-and-contact/.

Please note, we cannot intervene on your behalf with appeals to the independent appeals assessor (Penalty Services LTD.) or with appeals over a car parking Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) because they act independently when it comes to assessing, upholding and overturning appeals.

If your complaint is about the service that Penalty Services LTD. or the parking appeals team have provided, or the conduct of Southeastern Revenue Protection Staff, please contact us.

The types of remedies you may be entitled to

Where appropriate, we may provide a range of remedies, which could include:

- an apology
- the award of compensation
- an explanation of what went wrong
- a practical action to be taken to correct the problem

Our Passenger's Charter explains our compensation and refund policy if your train is cancelled or delayed, or if you are unable to travel. It's available on our website southeasternrailway.co.uk and from all our manned stations. Using our Delay Repay scheme, explained in the charter, you can claim if you're delayed by 15 minutes or more when you travel with us. If you contact Southeastern Customer Services to make a complaint and haven't applied for Delay Repay compensation, we'll make you aware of your entitlement.

Our Delay Repay scheme and the industry arrangements set out in the National Rail Conditions of Travel do not stop you using your other rights – like those under the Consumer Rights Act – to claim for compensation or losses. You can find out more about how the Consumer Rights Act applies to our services at: nationalrail.co.uk/CRACustomerFAQs.pdf

Claims for Losses, Property Damage or Personal Injury

If you wish to make a claim against Southeastern for loss, property damage or personal injury, this should be made in writing by email or letter to our Customer Services team, giving as much detail as possible about your claim. We'll investigate your claim and respond to you in 10 working days.

If you report an accident or injury, this will be treated as a priority to ensure any appropriate immediate actions are taken. It'll be logged in our accident reporting database and if appropriate we'll also report the matter to the ORR as required by the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). Any claims will be dealt with in accordance with the Claims Allocation and Handling Agreement (CAHA) which governs all rail industry compensation claims.

Accessible Travel Policy

If you've requested assistance and it hasn't been delivered at one of our stations or on a train you were travelling on or due to travel on, we want to hear from you so we can investigate what's gone wrong. We'll provide you with the appropriate redress for your journey. More information on this can be found here southeasternrailway.co.uk/about-us/our-policies/accessible-travel-policy

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If you're not satisfied with our reply

The Rail Ombudsman

FREEPOST – RAIL OMBUDSMAN

Telephone 0330 094 0362

Textphone: 0330 094 0363

Email: info@railombudsman.org

Website: railombudsman.org

Twitter: @RailOmbudsman

- Escalations
- The Rail Ombudsman

Escalations

In our first reply, we'll try to address all the points you raise in your complaint. However, if you're unhappy with our response please let us know and we'll ensure that a member of the team new to your case reviews the response and your specific concerns. All responses will be reviewed by the quality team.

If you request for your complaint to be escalated, or if we determine it needs to be, then it will be passed on to a more senior member of the Customer Services team or manager for review.

The Rail Ombudsman

We'll do our best to resolve any problems you've had with Southeastern in a fair and reasonable way. Please give us the opportunity to try to resolve your complaint.

If you're unhappy with the responses you received, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman. The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve ongoing complaints between us and our customers. It's free to use their services and they are independent of the rail industry. They don't take sides, but just look at the evidence available. They will help us both to try to reach an agreement, but if this doesn't happen, 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 they say.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- you've received a "deadlock" letter from us which means we cannot take your complaint any further, but you remain unhappy
- we haven't been able to resolve your complaint within 40 working days of receiving it; and
- no more than 12 months have passed since we sent you our final response.

There are some complaints that the Rail Ombudsman won't be able to look into, for example if it's 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's the case, then they'll contact you to let you know. If possible, they'll 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'll independently review your complaint and, where appropriate, follow things up on your behalf.

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Privacy and Security

Southeastern is committed to protecting and respecting your privacy when you use our services. We collect your personal data, including your comments when you contact us by letter, email, web form or phone or social media.

Personal details we hold

We may hold your name, address, email address, phone number, social media name, ticket details, our correspondence with you, the compensation claims you have made and payment made by us, proof of journey or other supporting information you may provide.

To ensure that we have an accurate record of dealings between us (and for training purposes) we may, in certain circumstances, record or monitor telephone calls, however you will always be told when this happens.

All call recordings are held for a period of 1 year. Electronic copies of correspondence and emails are held for a period of 3 years.

How we use your Personal Data

Your personal data is used for administration of correspondence or processing claims you've made, such as Delay Repay as well as for fraud prevention purposes. We also use it to respond to complaints.

Sharing data with third parties

We're required to provide details of your complaint to another Train Operating Company if it relates to their services instead of ours. We may share your correspondence with the Rail Ombudsman if you've asked them to act on your behalf under a complaint handling procedure.

We may also share your Personal Data with other Train Operating Companies for the purpose of fraud prevention. We'll only do this where there is a formal data sharing agreement in place, or where an ad hoc request is received, this will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis to ensure that any such disclosure is lawful in accordance with the Data Protection laws. We may also share your Personal Data with law enforcement bodies on an ad-hoc basis where necessary for the prevention of fraud or crime.

Our privacy policy, is available on our website southeasternrailway.co.uk/about-us/our-policies/privacy-policy which provides further detail.

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**Frivolous, vexatious
or abusive
complaints**

Our people will always treat you respectfully and with courtesy. If we consider the complaint to be frivolous, or if it's clear that despite our best efforts, we're unlikely to satisfy you, we may decide to terminate correspondence before full resolution is reached.

If a complaint contains abusive language or is aggressive in tone, whether in person, on the phone or in correspondence by any channel, we will reply, but we'll advise you in our response that this is unacceptable and that we will terminate any further correspondence with you if it continues. We may, if we deem it appropriate, report any threatening communications to law enforcement.

The decision to terminate correspondence will be authorised by the Head of Customer Relations and the reasons for the decision will be recorded in our Customer Relations Management System. We'll advise you of our decision, including the reason why, and signpost you to the Alternative Dispute Resolution provider if you wish to take the matter further.

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**Making it easy
to talk to us**

We'll ensure that it's as easy as possible for you to contact us and access this document. Copies of the policy are available to download from our website or by contacting our Customer Services team. We'll publicise our contact details on posters in stations and on board our trains, in all our major publications, such as our Passenger's Charter and leaflets, as well as on our website and on social media.

We'll ensure our complaint forms are easy to find and download from our website, and available from our stations and from onboard train employees. We'll always use plain English and avoid using railway jargon in our communications with you.

We understand that some customers may find it harder to contact us. If you prefer it, a carer, support worker or guardian can make a complaint or contact us on your behalf with your authority. All of our Customer Services team receive disability awareness training in relation to our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and any other relevant legislation.

We provide a text relay service and can provide copies of our forms and policies in large print, audio, British Sign Language, Braille and Easy Read formats on request from the Customer Services team. If English isn't your first language we'll do our best to assist you, but you may find it easier to ask a friend to contact us on your behalf.

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Our Customer Services team

- Training and Quality Assurance

The complaints handling process at Southeastern is managed by the Head of Customer Services. This role oversees the whole Customer Services team and ensures all passenger complaints are handled fairly and efficiently and that customer feedback is acted upon.

Training and Quality Assurance

All of our customer-facing team members, including those not directly employed by us – such as sub-contractors and agency employees – are trained to help our customers. We're committed to ensuring that all our Customer Services team have the knowledge and skills to deal with a complaint about our services.

All members of our team are recruited following a rigorous customer-centric selection process and are trained in customer service and complaints handling. Performance management and quality monitoring processes ensure that all team members provide consistently high-quality responses. Each period every team member from customer services has their work sampled to monitor their quality of response. Our team managers and the quality team also carry out regular team briefings and refresher training to ensure standards are maintained and any training needs addressed.

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Monitoring our performance and driving improvement

Data from our Customer Relations Management System is vital in providing insight into the passenger experience. We use this data along with information from across our business to address the root causes of dissatisfaction and help drive continuous improvement.

We review all complaints and feedback we receive. This includes monitoring the volume and reason for complaints as well as analysing the underlying cause and trends. Results are regularly reviewed at all levels of the business from a weekly highlights report to detailed analysis. These are considered at board and executive level on a periodic basis and drive our customer service strategy and strategic planning process.

We publish data detailing the number of complaints we receive per 1000 customer journeys, and the reasons, in our On Board magazine which is available on our website.

We use the ORR data portal, our internal Customer Satisfaction Survey metrics and Rail Ombudsman data to benchmark our performance against other train operating companies and to identify areas of improvement.

We review this policy annually to make sure that it is effective and complies with any industry changes such as revisions to guidelines. If you have any suggestions on how you think we could improve it, or any other aspects of our service, please let us know.

