



Our Complaints Handling Procedure

**How to make a complaint and what you
can expect from us**

September 2026

**South Western
Railway**

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Introduction

At South Western Railway [SWR] we bring people together to get the most out of life – running 1,600 services each weekday, serving over 200 stations and 140 million customers every year.

Over 5,000 colleagues work with care and commitment to make every journey, every day, easy and reliable; connecting communities and supporting growth across our region.

We know that despite our best efforts there are times when things do not go to plan. If this happens and you are not happy with the service you have received, then let us know. It is important to us that where possible we resolve any issues you have encountered.

Your feedback and suggestions are important, as this helps us drive business wide improvements and influences the training we provide our colleagues.

This complaints' handling procedure explains:

- How you can make a complaint.
- How we will 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 to drive improvement.

We will 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 have provided.

The National Rail Conditions of Travel also detail your entitlements if the service is not to the standard expected. These are available from any staffed station, our Customer Relations team or [online](#)

At SWR we use the Office of Rail and Road's (ORR) definition of a complaint 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.'

If you would like this document in an accessible format, please get in touch. Our Customer Relations team contact details are on the last page of this document. This document is available to download as a PDF at: [Our Complaints Handling Procedure](#)

How to make a complaint – who to contact

If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service, there are several ways you can tell us. We are ready to listen.

- Talk to our station or on-board teams.
- Contact our Customer Relations team.
- On Social Media.
- Meet the Manager sessions.

Talk to our team

All our colleagues are trained to help and will try where possible to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, or if you would like to take the matter further, they will be happy to provide you with the contact details of our Customer Relations team.

Get in touch with our Customer Relations team

Our Customer Relations team are available 7 days a week, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day. We are here to listen to your feedback; answer questions and resolve any issues you may have experienced with our services. You can contact us in the way that suits you best.

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday 08:00 – 20:00

Saturday 09:00 – 18:00

Sunday 09:00 – 16:00

[Website](#)

[Live Chat](#)

[Tel:](#) 0345 600 0650

[Write to:](#) Freepost SWR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

[Text:](#) 18001 0800 52 82 100

If you need help submitting a complaint, please speak to a member of our station team or contact our Customer Relations team, who will be happy to assist you.

Our Customer Relations team contact details are on all our major publications, prominently displayed at our stations, website and via our Facebook page or our X feed.

Get in touch with our Social Media team

Our Social Media team are online 24 hours a day, except Christmas Day and Boxing Day. While our social team will do their best to respond to any feedback, issues, or questions you raise, their focus is to share train service information. This means they are not always able to respond to individual messages as quickly as you may like. Where further investigation is required, they will direct you to make a formal complaint via our website. Here is how to contact them.

X: @SW_Help

Messenger: www.facebook.com/SWRailway

Meet our managers

We hold regular Meet the Manager sessions both online and in person. These one-to-one conversations give you the opportunity to talk directly with a member of our senior management team. We will tell you about the projects we are working on to improve your railway and listen to your feedback on how we are doing. Details of these sessions will be promoted on our social media feeds, or our Customer Relations team will be able to supply you with details of the next event.

How to make a complaint – what to include

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, postal address, email and contact number.
- The time and date of your journeys.
- The stations you travelled to and from.
- A detailed description of the series of events that took place.
- Your ticket details including type of ticket, a copy or scan of the ticket and any other documents that might help.
- Any additional information that you feel will help us investigate your complaint.
- What outcome you are looking for to resolve the issue.

Accessibility

We understand some people may have specific access barriers, or whose first language may not be English, and therefore may have difficulties communicating with us. All our staff are trained to manage cases sensitively and we will provide our response in an appropriate format. We are also happy to process complaints or feedback from guardians, carers or support workers who are acting on your behalf, providing we have your written permission.

How we deal with your complaint

You can be confident that we take all complaints seriously and that they will be handled fairly and objectively. All issues raised will be considered and investigated with your view in mind. Once this is complete, we will provide an appropriate response to all the points you raise. If we have got it wrong, we will let you know, and we will work hard to prevent the same issue happening again.

Complaints service standards

When you contact our Customer Relations team, we will always:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint and provide you with a unique reference number.
- All our correspondence will be in plain English so there is no room for confusion.
- Our team will ensure that every complaint is considered fully and fairly.
- Every point you raise with us will be addressed, so you will get a full reply.
- We will do everything we can to put things right for you first time.

All complaints are recorded in our Customer Relations Management system.

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 or details of the investigation.

If your complaint involves another rail company, we will, where appropriate, forward your complaint to them on your behalf and ask them to contact you directly. We will let you know when we have done this and provide you with the contact details of the Customer Relations team responsible for handling your complaint.

If your complaint involves a journey that features more than one rail company, we will liaise with the other companies involved to ensure you receive a co-ordinated response.

Where a complaint relates to a delay, we will ensure that we provide details of compensation arrangements and how to claim. If you were travelling on South Western Railway services, we will deal with your complaint regardless of who was responsible for the delay.

At SWR we work with a number of third parties to deliver different aspects of our service, for example cleaning providers. If your complaint involves a third party working on our behalf, you will not need to contact them directly as we will deal with your complaint.

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](#)

Our target response time

We will respond to your complaint as quickly as we can after carefully considering and investigating the points you have raised.

If you phone us, we will do our best to resolve the issue at the time of the call, but if we cannot then we will call you back or write to you within 20 working days.

If you contact us using the 'Contact Us' form on our website, email or write to us by post, we aim to respond to you within 20 working days.

Some complaints require a more detailed investigation. If this is the case, we will let you know within 20 working days.

We close 95% of cases within 20 working days. We always let you know if we need more time to respond and will keep you up to date.

If the number of complaints we get goes up unexpectedly, and we are taking longer than expected to respond, we will keep you updated. We will ensure that our website advises of this, we will also inform relevant industry partners including The Rail Ombudsman.

We continue to improve our response times to complaints.

We will report on the average time it takes us to reply and include this in our Customer Report, as well as regularly reporting our performance to the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). We shall also report when required to The Rail Ombudsman.

Dealing with unreasonably persistent or frivolous complaints

If you believe we have not met our customer service standards, we understand you may feel 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, unreasonably persistent or abusive,' in line with our formal process. In the first instance, the case will be reviewed by a member of the Contact Centre Management team. If they support the decision to terminate further correspondence, we will advise you in writing of the reasons behind the decision. This will not affect your right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman, and we will provide their details at the time the decision is made. All details of frivolous or unreasonably persistent complaints are recorded in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Remedies we might offer you

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

- An apology.
- Explanation of what went wrong.
- Action taken to correct the problem.
- An award of compensation.

Our Passenger's Charter explains our compensation and refund policy. This includes if your train is cancelled or delayed, or if you are unable to travel. It is available on our [website](#) and from all our staffed stations.

If you have been delayed by 15 minutes or more when you travel with us, you can claim [Delay Repay](#)

If you contact SWR Customer Services to make a complaint and have not applied for Delay Repay compensation, we will 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.

For further information regarding your rights when travelling on our services as a consumer, please visit gov.uk/consumer-protection-rights

Claiming for losses, personal injury, or property damage

If you need to claim for personal injury, losses or property damage contact our Customer Relations team providing as much detail as possible about your claim.

Please also make our staff aware straight away of any injury, loss, or damage you sustain whilst travelling on our trains or through our stations. Letting our staff know if there has been an issue will allow them to make areas safe and prevent anyone else suffering injury or damage.

If you report an accident or injury, this will be treated as a priority to ensure any appropriate immediate actions are taken. It will be logged in our accident reporting database and if appropriate we will 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 under the rail industry 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.

Accessible travel policy

If you booked assistance that was not provided at one of our stations, or on the train you were travelling on or intended to travel on, please contact us so that we can investigate what went wrong. Our contact details can be found on page 4.

Contacting us allows us to investigate the circumstances of your experience and consider appropriate redress based on the specific details of your journey. Further information can be found in our [Accessible Travel Policy](#)

If you were travelling on another train operator's service, we will coordinate a response on their behalf. In some cases, and with your permission, we may pass your complaint directly to the relevant operator to enable them to investigate and respond.

We understand that it is not always possible to book assistance in advance. If you travelled without a booking and requested assistance that was not provided at one of our stations or on the train you were travelling on, please contact us so that we can investigate what went wrong.

Taking your complaint further

If you are unhappy with our first reply, please let us know and we will ensure that another member of our team new to your case reviews the response and your specific concerns.

If you wish to escalate your complaint, or if we determine it needs to be, then it will be passed on to a member of our Executive Contact team to review.

We will do our best to resolve your complaint in a fair and reasonable way. However, if you are not satisfied with our responses, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman.

The Rail Ombudsman is an independent organisation. They offer a free, expert service to help resolve ongoing complaints between us and our customers.

The Ombudsman remains impartial, looks at the evidence available and will help us both to try to reach an agreement. If an agreement cannot be reached, they will decide based on the evidence they have received.

If you agree with their decision, then we must act on their conclusion or recommendation.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- You have received a "deadlock" letter from us which means we cannot take your complaint any further, but you remain unhappy.
- We have not been able to resolve your complaint within 40 working days from receipt.
- No more than 12 months have passed since we sent you our final response.

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

The Rail Ombudsman
Freepost – Rail Ombudsman
1st Floor, Premier House
Argyle Way
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 2AD

Website: www.railombudsman.org

Email: info@railombudsman.org

Tel: 0330 094 0362

X: @RailOmbudsman

SMS/Text: 07427 580 060

Opening Hours: 09:00 – 17:00 Monday to Friday only.

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, then 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 Travel Watch – the independent consumer watchdogs for the rail industry.

Privacy information for our complaints process

When you contact us with a complaint, we need to use some of your personal information so we can look into what happened and respond to you.

We take your privacy seriously and handle your information safely and lawfully.

How we use your information

We use your details to:

- understand what went wrong.
- investigate your complaint.
- reply to you and keep you updated.
- improve our services.

Because we are a publicly owned rail operator, we use your information under our public service duties. In some cases, we also need to use your information to meet legal or regulatory requirements.

Sharing your Information

We may share some information with the Department for Transport Operator (DFTO), Office of Rail and Road (ORR) or the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). They sometimes review complaints across the rail industry to check how services are performing.

They may contact you to ask about your experience. If you do not want to take part, you can opt out at any time.

We will not share your information with anyone else unless the law requires us to.

How we keep you information safe

- Your details are stored securely in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- Paper letters are scanned into the system, and the originals are securely destroyed after 6 months.
- Only trained staff can access your information.

How long we keep your information

We keep your complaint information for 26 months after our last contact with you. After that, we delete it securely unless we are required to keep it for legal reasons.

Your data rights

You have the right to:

- see the information we hold about you.
- ask us to correct anything that is wrong.
- ask us to delete your information (in some cases).
- ask us to stop or limit how we use your information.
- object to certain uses of your information.
- withdraw consent if you have given it for optional activities.

If you want to use any of these rights, contact us at SAR@swrailway.com

If you are unhappy with how we have handled your data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at DPO@swrailway.com

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), who oversees data protection in the UK. You can find their details at www.ico.org.uk

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

As a public authority, South Western Railway is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). This means that any person has the right to ask us for any recorded information we hold and have that information provided to them unless specific limited exemptions or exceptions outlined in the FOIA or EIR apply.

You can submit a Freedom of Information request to South Western Railway by email to: FOI.SWR@dftoperator.co.uk

Continuous improvement

Monitoring

We regularly monitor our complaints handling process to make sure it is effective and adheres to the standards and commitments we have made to our customers.

Calls and correspondence dealt with by our Customer Relations team are regularly monitored by our Quality Assurance team. This is to ensure all complaints are handled in a friendly personal manner and all points raised are addressed and any compensation is awarded in a consistent way. All telephone calls are recorded for training, quality assurance and monitoring purposes.

We also have a variety of customer feedback mechanisms which help us understand and improve the service we offer our customers.

Reporting

We welcome all complaints and feedback from customers. All complaints are recorded on our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This enables us to report on customers complaints, praise, and suggestions with the wider SWR management team. This helps our teams make informed decisions related to improvements to our services. Our managers will also cascade key messages to their teams, so our people are empowered to make changes to benefit our customers.

Our frontline managers will receive regular reports related to complaints which allows them to investigate and resolve issues promptly which facilitates a culture of continuous improvement.

Training and development

We are committed to ensuring our people have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with complaints about our services. All colleagues receive customer service training, and our structured approach to recruitment ensures we recruit individuals who demonstrate the right behaviours. We believe that, where possible, customer queries are best dealt with in real time and are committed to empowering our staff to handle customer enquiries and concerns at the earliest opportunity. We also have a Back on Track system, which enables our frontline colleagues to best resolve issues face-to-face, helping customers continue their journeys as satisfactorily as possible.

In addition to ongoing training for all our customer-facing colleagues, where policies or processes change, or where we identify a training need, additional action will be taken. This may include further training or briefings for a specific team or individual.

Our Customer Relations team, who handle all our complaints, receive extensive training on our regulated commitments, including those detailed in this procedure, our Passenger Charter and our Assisted Travel Policy. This is in addition to more specialised customer service training covering areas such as complaint investigation, complaint resolution and written communication 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 Travel Watch. Contact details:

Transport Focus

Email: advice@transportfocus.org.uk

Post: Freepost RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ

PO BOX 5594

Southend on Sea SS1 9PZ

Tel: 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

Tel: 020 3176 2999

Website: londontravelwatch.org.uk

