



Great  
Western  
Railway

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# Our Complaints Handling Procedure

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April 2023



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# About this document

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## Welcome to Great Western Railway.

This Complaints Handling Procedure document will help explain everything you need to know about how to make a complaint or give us feedback about the service you received from us.

You'll find out what to expect when you get in touch with us, how we will handle your complaint, and what we do with the information you give us.

At Great Western Railway (GWR) we use the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) suggested definition for a complaint...

“ Any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer, or potential customer about service delivery or company or industry policy. ”

All customer facing GWR staff receive training in how to identify and resolve customer complaints. An ability and empathy to do so forms part of our recruitment process and is embedded into the customer focused culture within GWR.

We commit to ensuring all GWR staff, including any staff working on our behalf, are aware of our Complaints Handling Procedure and know how to direct complaints to our Customer Support team.

Our Customer Support teams receive extensive training about how to identify a complaint, how to ensure each issue raised with us within that complaint is accurately recorded on our Customer Relationship Management system, and how to resolve the complaint to the passenger's satisfaction.

# Other versions of this document

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If you'd like this document in Welsh, or in an accessible format like Braille, Large Print, audio or easy read, you can go to **GWR.com**.

Or ask our Customer Support team – here's how to get in touch with them:

- Online **GWR.com/contact**
- Call **03457 000 125\*** (0800-2000)
- Email **GWR.Feedback@GWR.com**
- Write to  
**Freepost GWR CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

## More information

For more information about our commitment to you, read this document alongside our Passenger's Charter and the National Rail Conditions of Travel.

You'll find them both at **GWR.com**, and complainants may have additional rights under the 2015 Consumer Rights Act.

\* Standard network charges apply.  
Calls from mobiles may be higher.

# Giving you the best service we can

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We want your experience with us to be easy and straightforward, but we understand that when things go wrong, you want to be able to get in touch and tell us, and to know that we have listened.

If you do want to complain, we aim to make it as easy as possible for you. We know you'd probably prefer not to have to contact us at all, so we do whatever we can to make sure you don't have any reason to be unhappy.

Here are just some of the things we do to make that happen:

- We work hard to understand the reasons why customers contact us – we try to address those reasons and use customers feedback to improve our services, so you don't have to get in touch
- We make sure you can find the information you want quickly and easily
- We give our people the information, tools and training they need to answer your questions and resolve issues at the time
- If you do have to get in touch, we aim to address any complaints properly, and at the first time of asking

If things go wrong, or you have any feedback following an experience with us, we want to hear from you so we can understand what went wrong and look to put it right.

# Handling complaints fairly and efficiently

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Our complaints handling procedure not only makes it easy for you to tell us you're unhappy but helps us to put things right for you as quickly and fairly as we can.

Here's how:

- It's easy to get a copy of our complaints handling procedure. You can download a copy at **GWR.com**, or find printed copies at our staffed stations
- We write everything clearly and in plain English so there's no room for confusion
- If English isn't your first language, we'll reply clearly and appropriately for you
- We keep your details confidential
- We address every point you raise with us, so you get a full reply
- We do everything we can to put things right for you first time
- We'll make sure you are listened too, and are always treated courteously
- We monitor and audit our responses to make sure they're of a consistently high standard
- Our managers get regular updates about the complaints we receive so we can make improvements to our service where we need to
- We review our complaints handling procedure every year to make sure it's effective

## **If a third party is involved**

If your complaint involves another rail company or Network Rail, we'll send your complaint to them and ask them to send a response to you. When this happens, we will let you know, and share details of the company we have sent your complaint to.

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.

We sometimes work with third parties who can help us deliver an aspect of our service (such as car parking). If your complaint involves one of those parties, you won't need to contact them directly as we will always deal with your complaint as if we provided the service for you.

# How to make a complaint

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If you're unhappy with any aspect of our service, there are several ways you can tell us.

## **Tell our staff at the station or on the train**

We train our staff to handle complaints fairly and efficiently, and to solve any problems there and then if they can.

If they can't, their manager or supervisor can help instead, so we can try and resolve everything for you as quickly as possible.

If you want your complaint to be formally recorded, or it involves a member of GWR staff and will require investigation into what happened, we will either provide one of our **'Tell us your Views'** forms or pass your complaint to our Customer Support team.

## **Get in touch with our Customer Support team**

If you don't tell our staff on the spot, you can get in touch with our Customer Support team who'll be happy to help with your complaint.

Here's how to contact them:

- Online      **GWR.com/contact**
- Call        **03457 000 125\*** (0800-2000)
- Email      **GWR.Feedback@GWR.com**
- Write to  
    **Freepost GWR CUSTOMER SUPPORT**

In addition, our staffed GWR stations carry copies of our '**Tell Us Your Views**' forms which, once completed, can be sent to our Customer Support freepost address. Just ask a member of GWR staff and they'll be happy to give you a copy.

Our Customer Support team's contact details can be found displayed at our stations and trains, on the GWR website, and via our social media channels.

## **Get in touch with our Social Media team**

You can also get in touch with our social media team regarding your complaint.

They'll be happy to help and will try and find an immediate solution, or if they can't, they will pass your complaint onto our Customer Support team on your behalf.

\* Standard network charges apply.  
Calls from mobiles may be higher.

Here's how to contact them:

- Twitter **@GWRHelp**
- Facebook **facebook.com/GWRUK**

We won't discuss complaints about GWR staff on social media, and any post that identifies a member of staff will be removed and the complaint passed to our Customer Support team.

## **Meet our managers**

We hold regular sessions where you can talk to our senior managers and directors about our service if you're unhappy, or just want to find out more about our service.

You can find out when the next sessions are at **GWR.com**

## **What to include with your complaint**

We need you to tell us all the information about your journey or experience, to help us to address your complaint.

If you include the following information, it will help us investigate and respond to your complaint in our first response to you:

- The time and date of your journey/s
- The stations you travelled to and from
- The names of any staff involved
- Copies of your tickets and any other documents or evidence that might help

## **Helping you make a complaint**

You can ask a friend, family member, guardian, support worker or carer to make a complaint on your behalf.

We'll need your permission for us to deal with another person before we discuss the complaint.

This does not apply if you are the parent or guardian of a child aged 16 or under.

# Improving our service

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We know that the needs of communities and our customers change, and we want to carry on living up to your expectations, and our own high standards.

When you get in touch with us with a complaint or some feedback, we record all the details - good and bad.

We share your comments with the relevant areas of the business in daily, weekly, and monthly reports. They go to the managers and senior managers responsible, as well as our directors.

These reports help us to work out where we can improve, and what changes we need to make to give our customers a great service. That's why we're always happy to hear from you.

We will:

- Use complaint data to identify the root causes of complaints
- Take action to reduce the chance of similar issues happening again
- Regularly review our performance when dealing with complaints to improve how we deal with them

We will also provide data to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) on the number of complaints we receive and how quickly we deal with them.

## **Penalty fares**

If your complaint is about a Penalty Fare that has been issued to you, and you want to make an appeal, you can do so within 21 days of receiving the notice. Appeals can be made in writing to:

Appeals Service  
Regus  
Building 1000 Lakeside  
Western Road  
Portsmouth  
PO6 3EZ

Or by visiting **[appealservice.co.uk](https://appealservice.co.uk)**

## **Claiming for losses, personal injury or property damage**

If you need to claim for any losses beyond what compensation is set out in our Passenger's Charter, or make a claim for property damage or personal injury, please get in touch with our Customer Support team and they will advise on the next steps.

# What you can expect from us

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We work hard to handle complaints both promptly and fairly and will do everything we can to put things right for you. Here's what you can expect from us.

## **We'll get back to you quickly**

When you write to our Customer Support team, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint. We know it's important to respond promptly, so we'll aim to send a full response within 5 working days.

If we need to ask for more information, or if part of your complaint is complex, we aim to get back to you within 20 working days.

If we can't get back to you within 20 working days, we'll get in touch to let you know the reason for the delay and will update you every 10 working days until we send a full response.

We also keep our website up to date with information about our average response times to complaints, and will tell Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the Department for Transport (DfT) if we are consistently unable to meet our commitment to respond in 20 working days.

## **We'll investigate your complaint carefully**

We will fully investigate complaints appropriately. This could mean:

- Confirming the details of what happened
- Collecting evidence
- Interviewing any staff involved
- Finding out what should have been done differently
- Deciding on the appropriate response for you

## **Dealing with your complaint**

When dealing with your complaint we will always:

- Acknowledge receipt and provide you with a reference number so you can track your complaint
- Provide you with an expected response time within our acknowledgement
- Give you the details of the Rail Ombudsman within our acknowledgement
- Prioritise the complaint and escalate immediately if appropriate
- Look to understand the resolution you want to your complaint
- Investigate each complaint raised with us

## **When we respond to your complaint**

When responding to your complaint we will:

- Answer every point raised with us
- Give you an apology for what went wrong
- Make sure our response is clear and easy to understand
- Explain what went wrong and what we're doing about it
- Clearly set out any compensation due or goodwill we may provide in response to your complaint
- Wherever possible avoid technical terms, or if we do use them, clearly explain what they mean
- Identify any areas of disagreement, and explain why no further action can be taken if that's the case
- Set out your options if you're not happy with our response

## **Staff complaints**

Complaints made about GWR staff members will be recorded and forwarded to the relevant line manager so a full investigation can take place.

Due to staff confidentiality, we will not be able to share any updates about any action that has (or has not) been taken.

## **We'll pay compensation when it's due**

If your journey is delayed or cancelled, you may be able to get Delay Repay compensation. You can find out more in our Passenger's Charter, or by visiting **[GWR.com/compensation](https://www.gwr.com/compensation)**.

If you complain about a delayed or cancelled train but haven't specifically requested compensation, we will still process a Delay Repay claim on your behalf and provide you with any compensation that may be due.

Our Passenger's Charter details instances where we commit to providing compensation such as a failed Passenger Assist, or if you have a reservation when travelling with us, and we fail to provide that booked seat and you have stood for the duration of your journey.

We look at each complaint individually. If we think you've had a particularly bad experience, that isn't covered by the Passenger's Charter, we may give you a gesture of goodwill to make up for it.

If we feel that a customer's correspondence is becoming inappropriate in any way, we may stop responding. We will always get advice from Transport Focus and London TravelWatch before we do this, and it will be a last resort.

## **Recording Complaints**

All complaints, and any other comments, are recorded on our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system against a set of categories that cover every aspect of the service we provide.

This data is collated and used to create reports that are passed to the managers responsible for that area of the business so trends can be identified, and problems resolved.

Further reports about GWR complaint data are made available to both the senior managers and the board of directors within GWR and used to contribute to high level governance and accountability for the service provided.

Each complaint made to us is important and valuable feedback on the service we have provided and feeds into our continuous improvement approach which seeks to identify the underlying causes of customer dissatisfaction.

Each area of GWR meets regularly to review performance and to plan for the future. Accurate complaints data contributes to this process.

GWR complaint data is also shared with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), independently verified, and published.

## **Record Keeping**

All complaints are recorded along with general information that helps us identify areas of improvement.

They include...

- What the complaint was about
- Journey information such as where the journey began and ended
- The date of travel
- The class of travel
- The type of ticket held
- The name of the advisor who dealt with the complaint
- The date we received the complaint, the date we responded and how the complaint was received
- Whether the complaint was signposted to the Rail Ombudsman

When recording complaint data, the contact details, and any information that could identify the complainant is not included.

# Taking your complaint further

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We'll always try to resolve your complaint promptly and fully, but if you are unhappy with our response, you can contact us again and we will review the complaint and our response.

If you remain unhappy, and let us know, a manager can review your complaint and our response, and we can advise you of the next steps.

## **Railway Ombudsman**

Please give us the opportunity to try to resolve your complaint. If you're unhappy with the response you receive, you have the right to appeal to the Rail Ombudsman.

The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve on going disputes between us and passengers. 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 must act on what they say.

You can appeal to the Rail Ombudsman if:

- You're unhappy with our final response to your complaint which will be contained in a letter or email (sometimes called a 'deadlock letter'); or
- We haven't resolved 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 or industry policy. If that's the case, then they'll 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 and 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.

Rail Ombudsman contact details:

- Web **[railombudsman.org](http://railombudsman.org)**
- Email **[info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)**
- Twitter **[@RailOmbudsman](https://twitter.com/RailOmbudsman)**
- Post **Freepost - RAIL OMBUDSMAN**

# GDPR

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Keeping your details secure is a top priority for us, we follow our Privacy Policy and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) very closely.

Here's what you can expect from us when it comes to keeping your details secure:

- We won't share confidential information with third parties without your permission in writing – unless we need to meet our responsibilities to insurers, other train companies, Transport Focus, London TravelWatch, and any statutory bodies like the DfT, ORR or the Rail Delivery Group (RDG)
- The ORR and RDG might use your information for research purposes – for example, they may contact you to find out more about why you complained – but you can opt out of this if you want to
- When you contact us, we store your personal details on our dedicated and secure systems
- We're committed to the GDPR and to protecting any personal data we hold on our systems

- We train all of our staff in how to follow GDPR, and we review our processes regularly to make sure they're in line with the act
- All correspondence sent to our Customer Support team is stored electronically on our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). Any paper mail is scanned onto the CRM and the original held in storage for 6 months before being securely destroyed

## Quality Assurance

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We regularly monitor our Complaints Handling processes to make sure they are as effective as possible and adhere to the standards and commitments we have made to our customers.

All calls to our Customer Support team are recorded and monitored to make sure we are dealing with complaints in the best way possible. We regularly review samples of both calls and correspondence sent to our Customer Support team, for quality assurance.

We also survey passengers who have used our Customer Support service to see how satisfied they were with the process, and the outcome of their complaint.



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## More information



**GWR.Feedback@GWR.com**



**GWR.com/contact**



Follow us: **@GWRHelp**



Like us: **facebook.com/GWRUK**



**03457 000 125\*** (open 0800-2000 daily)



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special deals and news. Register at  
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\* Standard network charges apply. Calls from mobiles may be higher.