EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

Customer Complaints Procedure

This procedure explains how to complain about East Lancashire Railway services, how we will investigate and how you can ask for a review. We welcome feedback and will treat complaints fairly. Making a complaint will not affect your entitlement to use our services or exercise your legal rights.

1 Stage one resolution during your visit

If something goes wrong during your visit, please tell a member of staff or a volunteer. Where possible, they will try to put it right immediately, involving a supervisor or manager when needed. You can also contact Customer Services directly; you don't need to speak to staff on the day to make a complaint or claim a remedy.

Email: customer.services@eastlancsrailway.co.uk
Post: Customer Services, East Lancashire Railway, Bolton Street Station, Bolton Street, Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0EY
Telephone: 0333 320 2830
Online: use the contact form at www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk/contact/

Complaints received by telephone or in person will be recorded and passed to the appropriate team. Please do not post booking details, payment information or sensitive personal information on public social media. We may move a social media complaint to a private contact channel.

2 What information to provide

Please give your name and preferred contact details, booking reference if available, date and location of the incident, a description of what happened and the outcome you would like. Include relevant receipts, photographs or correspondence where helpful. Please send copies rather than original documents and never send full payment card details.

Please get in touch with us as soon as reasonably possible so we can investigate while the information is available. We will not automatically reject a complaint because it was not made on the day or within an arbitrary reporting period. Any applicable legal time limits remain unchanged.

3 Help to make a complaint

Please tell us if you need a reasonable adjustment, help recording your complaint or a response in an accessible format. We will discuss a suitable way to communicate with you. A relative, carer or other representative may complain on your behalf; we may need your consent or evidence of authority before sharing personal information.

4 Formal complaint investigation

We aim to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receipt and provide a substantive response within 20 working days of receipt. Railway Working days are Wednesday to Sunday, excluding public holidays in England. These are service targets and do not extend any legal deadline for a refund or other remedy.

Customer Services will record, coordinate and investigate formal complaints and provide the initial formal response. Our acknowledgement will identify the team handling your complaint and explain whether we need further information. We will consider your account, booking records, staff accounts and other available evidence. Serious safety, safeguarding or discrimination concerns will be referred promptly to the appropriate responsible manager.

If we cannot complete the investigation within 20 working days, we will explain why, state what remains to be done and give a revised response date. We will provide further updates at least every 10 working days while the investigation continues. We will not delay an undisputed refund simply because another part of the complaint remains under investigation.

5 Our response and putting things right

Our response will address the main issues raised, explain our findings and reasons, identify any action or remedy offered and tell you how to request a review. Where we have made a mistake, we will acknowledge it and explain what we will do to put matters right.

Depending on the circumstances, a remedy may include an apology, practical assistance, corrective action, a refund, a price reduction or another appropriate resolution. We will assess the booking terms that applied when you purchased, what was promised, what was delivered and your statutory rights. Customer cancellation charges will not automatically be applied to a complaint about a failure by ELR.

A goodwill offer is separate from any remedy you are legally entitled to receive. We will not require you to accept a voucher instead of a monetary refund that is due. Refunds will be processed within applicable legal deadlines, and any agreed next steps and timescales will be stated clearly.

6 Review by the Head of Passenger & Customer Services

If you remain unhappy with the formal response, ask Customer Services to escalate your complaint to the Head of Passenger & Customer Services. Explain which findings you disagree with and provide any further relevant information. You do not need to start your complaint again. The Head of Passenger & Customer Services will review the investigation, findings and proposed remedy and issue ELR's final internal response.

If a complaint concerns the person who would normally handle a stage, we will assign it to someone sufficiently senior who has not been involved. We aim to acknowledge an escalation request within 5 working days and issue the final response within 20 working days of receiving it. If we need more time, we will explain the delay and provide updates as set out above. The final response will explain the review findings, any revised remedy and available external options.

7 If the complaint remains unresolved

Our final response will explain any alternative dispute resolution or other external complaints arrangement available for your dispute, including relevant contact details and whether ELR is required or agrees to participate. The availability of an external scheme depends on its scope and ELR's participation; this procedure does not promise access to a particular ombudsman.

You may seek independent advice from the Citizens Advice consumer service at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/. Nothing in this procedure prevents you from obtaining legal advice, contacting an appropriate authority or pursuing a claim through the courts. You do not have to complete our internal procedure before taking urgent action, and using it does not suspend legal time limits.

8 Complaints involving other organisations

If your complaint concerns a booking agent, catering supplier or another organisation, we will explain which parts ELR can investigate. Where appropriate, we will help identify the correct contact and seek your permission before forwarding personal information where needed. We will continue to address matters for which ELR is responsible; buying through an agent does not automatically remove that responsibility.

9 Fair treatment and reasonable contact

We understand that you may be upset or frustrated. We will listen respectfully and ask that you treat our staff and volunteers with respect too. We may end a threatening or abusive interaction or place proportionate restrictions on contact where behaviour creates a safety risk or unreasonably disrupts our work.

Except where immediate action is necessary for safety, we will explain the concern, any restriction, its duration and how it can be reviewed. We will consider disability and communication needs, preserve a reasonable route for pursuing the complaint and consider relevant new evidence. Disagreement, persistence or criticism alone will not justify a restriction.

10 Privacy and learning from complaints

We will use personal information to investigate and respond to complaints, provide remedies and improve services, in accordance with our Privacy Policy and applicable data protection law. Information will be shared only where necessary and lawful. We may not be able to disclose confidential staff information or details of disciplinary action.

We will keep appropriate complaint records, monitor recurring issues and follow up agreed improvements. Complaint records will be retained under ELR's approved retention arrangements and any applicable legal requirements.

This procedure supports the ELR General Booking Terms, Conditions of Carriage and relevant product terms. It does not reduce your statutory rights or replace the terms attached to an existing booking.