

Jacqui Russell
Head of Consumer Policy



Customer Information leads
Train Operating Companies

25 April 2024

Dear information lead,

Notifications when booked trains are cancelled or timetables are changed

Passengers are now receiving proactive notifications when trains that they have booked online, via a train operator website, are cancelled or changed more than two days before travel. This should allow them to book their tickets well in advance of travel with the confidence that they will be updated if their booked times change.

Notifying passengers if their train times change after buying a ticket online is a commitment under the [Customer Information Pledges](#). The Pledges are the regulated Code of Practice under the Passenger Information Licence Condition.

Many third-party retailers are also providing notifications to customers who have purchased tickets through their platform. We welcome the steps being taken by the Rail Delivery Group to ensure that all retailers that they licence will provide this service.

In [September 2023](#), we asked all operators to review the content of their notifications for clarity, and to review their policies on ticket flexibility with a broad focus on enabled a good customer experience. I am writing to provide an update.

Content of the notifications

We asked operators to submit a sample of their notifications to us for review. Since our first review there has been an improvement in the clarity of the messaging although we encourage operators to continue to refine the content of their notifications in response to feedback from passengers.

We identified several areas of good practice:

- Most retailers use multiple templates or dynamic text so that the notification can be tailored to the scenario. This means that messaging can be targeted and simplified.

- A number of operators have now moved the detail, which can be complicated when multiple ticket types or journey stages are involved, to a separate web page which can be accessed via a link in the notifications.
- As a minimum, passengers are currently being offered the next train that meets both operator and time conditions. In most cases passengers can use their existing ticket although on the East Coast mainline a new ticket and seat reservation is required.
- Some operators clarify that if the ticket is off peak then it is already valid on any off peak train. This is something that is not always clear when passengers use journey planners.
- Operators are clearly communicating options of a fee-free refund, although we noted that not all offer the option to do this via the online account used to purchase the ticket.

Policies on ticket flexibility

We support the work being taken forward by the Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys programme with operators to establish a cross-industry response to our request to review policies on ticket flexibility. This work will establish a code of practice that will set out the business rules that should apply when notifications are issued. This will be supported by changes to the National Rail Conditions of Travel in due course.

When the code of practice has been introduced, we will again ask train operators to submit examples of their notifications. This will provide us with assurance that operators are continuing to refine their notifications and that new policies on ticket flexibility have been implemented and are being clearly communicated.

Yours sincerely

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