

Jacqui Russell
Head of Consumer Policy



TOC MDs - Train Operating Companies
Chair – Independent Rail Retailers

23 July 2024

Dear colleague,

Notifications when booked trains are cancelled or changed

Passengers are now receiving proactive notifications when trains they have booked online are cancelled or changed more than two days before travel. In our [September 2023 letter](#) we asked operators to review their policies on ticket flexibility where a service is cancelled ahead of the day of travel, with a broad focus on enabling a good passenger experience.

New industry policy on ticket flexibility where booked trains are cancelled in advance

We are pleased that the industry's Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys (SISJ) programme has brought operators together to review policies on ticket flexibility and develop a new industry code of practice. A core new principle is that, regardless of ticket type, passengers will be able to travel two trains before or two trains after their booked train if it is cancelled in advance. This is of particular benefit to those with Advance tickets or with off-peak tickets for travel at times close to the boundary with peak periods. Passengers retain the right to a fee free refund.

The code of practice was finalised and disseminated to operators and third-party retailers by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) in June 2024. **By 18 August 2024, we expect the notifications sent by operators and third-party retailers to reflect the policies set out in the new code of practice, and for operators to have briefed passenger-facing staff.** We also expect operators, through RDG, to propose changes to the National Rail Conditions of Travel to the Department for Transport at the earliest opportunity, consistent with the new code of practice.

Requirement to provide notifications

For operators, notifying passengers if their train times change after buying a ticket online is a commitment under the [Customer Information Pledges \(D9\)](#). The Pledges are the regulated Code of Practice under the Passenger Information Licence Condition. All operators that have a national journey planner are required to adhere to this requirement.

Many third-party retailers are also providing notifications to customers who have purchased tickets through their platforms. We acknowledge the close working of all retailers (both operators and third parties) with SISJ which has allowed the industry to develop this solution together. As not all retailers are yet providing passengers

with notifications, we also welcome the steps being taken by RDG to ensure that all retailers will provide this service by April 2025. This should allow all passengers to book their tickets well in advance of travel with the confidence that they will be updated if their booked times change.

Content of the notifications

RDG has set out the minimum requirements for the content of automated notifications to passengers when booked trains are cancelled or changed. These apply to all retailers through the RDG retail licence framework. The notification must include:

- A clear headline (e.g. 'your journey has been cancelled');
- An explanation that the timetable has changed affecting their journey;
- A clear indication of which leg of the journey has been amended (e.g. outward and/or return).
- A clear explanation of the options available based on the ticket type (e.g. Advance, Off-Peak, Anytime), and what to do for customers who still wish to travel;
- A clear explanation that the customer can choose to receive a refund and what they should do;
- A clear explanation that any refund, change or rebooking of tickets will be fee-free;
- Details of the options available for customers with train connections;
- Details of how to get in touch if necessary;
- An apology for the inconvenience.

We agree that this content, clearly set out in an accessible format, should provide passengers with the information they need to understand their options.

What to do now

In order to allow us to monitor the implementation of this new industry policy we would like each train operator to:

- Inform us when you have implemented the new code of practice, which include providing briefing for relevant passenger-facing staff. This implementation needs to be from 18 August 2024 or before.
- Send us an example of a notification that will be sent to passengers that conforms with the new code of practice

Please send all replies to consumer@orr.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jacqui Russell

Jacqui Russell