



# Independent Assessor- Annual Report 2022

I am pleased to present my Annual Report summarising my actions as Independent Assessor for the Rail Ombudsman during 2021.

Covid continues to impact us all whether that is through illness, loss of loved ones, loss of employment and impacts on public transport.

The team at the Rail Ombudsman (RO) has not been spared the effects of the pandemic on their loved ones, on themselves and on their work. Despite this, as with so many organisations, they have continued to provide excellent customer service.

I have considered three cases in the past year. The diagram below sets out a three-year comparison. It is interesting to note that following a recommendation that all stage two service complaints be given details of the IA, this has not resulted in an increase in referrals to the IA.



### 3 year summary of complaint proportions and volumes

| Year | Cases closed | IA complaints | % cases resulting in IA complaint |
|------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2019 | 2998         | 4             | 0.1%                              |
| 2020 | 3265         | 5             | 0.2%                              |
| 2021 | 1787         | 3             | 0.2%                              |

**Case A** related to the provision of loyalty points and seating plans especially when trains are cancelled. The consumer in this complaint raised some useful feedback about the ways in which train operating companies manage such issues and how the RO could communicate more effectively with consumers. In particular, the consumer believed that his case had not been fully investigated since some of his evidence had not been previously considered. This matter was resolved to the consumer's satisfaction. The RO were grateful to the consumer for the time taken to raise some issues that had been previously not considered by any of the parties involved.

**Case B** related to the ways in which the RO dealt with staffing absences- a side effect of the pandemic – and how consumers were kept informed. This was a straightforward administrative matter to resolve and has led to amendments to out of office notices, oversight of cases during absences and so on.

**Case C** related to a consumer who was unhappy with a RO decision and complained about the conduct of the staff at the RO. I found no evidence of discourteous conduct by the staff at the RO. Regrettably the RO were left with no choice but to issue an “ unacceptable actions” letter to the consumer concerned as a result of his own conduct and behaviour towards the staff at the RO. Every railway station and every train has notices about how staff expect to be treated by consumers. Staff at the RO are no different and have every right to come to work without fear of abuse or offensive language being used against them.

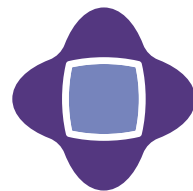
Staff at the RO have adopted a proportionate approach to dealing with consumers who are angry and upset. They will not, nor should they be expected to be subject to abuse or threats. The RO has also adapted their adjudication template as a direct result of feedback from the consumer in Case A, the template now includes specifics of the evidence that has been provided, with greater detail as to how this has been weighted and considered, resulting in greater clarity about the scope of and evidence required by the RO.

I have attended meetings to discuss my role with the Scheme Council and the Rail Sector Liaison Panel.

The RO continues its work considering complaints about train operating companies without fear or favour. They have contributed to improvements for consumers and providers alike.

**Kathryn Stone OBE**  
**January 2022**

The Rail  
Ombudsman



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