

Report: Joint Working Survey

Conducted by the Rail
Ombudsman, Transport Focus
and London TravelWatch.



Report – results of the Statutory Appeals Bodies / Rail Ombudsman Joint Working Survey 2024

Introduction and purpose

The Statutory Appeals Bodies (Transport Focus and London TravelWatch) and Rail Ombudsman both have responsibilities in the consumer dispute landscape, including offering consumers a route for escalation via a 'single front door' experience. Both also have a key interest in the generation of insight relating to rail industry complaints. As such, the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman must interact closely and work collaboratively, to best serve consumers, the sector and their own operational considerations.

This survey is designed to ensure the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman can identify strengths and any opportunities to improve arrangements on an ongoing basis.

Methodology

Representatives of the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman independently complete a survey form, which uses a question set previously agreed by both sets of stakeholders.

Upon completion, the organisations meet to present their feedback and discuss the findings, agreeing on a combined document.

This report presents the results of a survey conducted in June 2024.

The questions used were:

- 1) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that the 'single front door' function is being delivered optimally for their respective organisations and the consumer?
- 2) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that data and insight is available and exchanged between the organisations?
- 3) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that effective relationship management structures are in place at operational and senior levels, and do these arrangements promote collaborative working and knowledge sharing?



Results

1) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that the 'single front door' function is being delivered optimally for their respective organisations and the consumer?

Statutory Appeals Bodies response:

It is the view of the passenger watchdogs that there are some parts of the industry that could do more at the outset to provide passengers with the reassurance of an Ombudsman service.

Once passengers reach the Rail Ombudsman, the process is very simplified with little inconvenience to the passengers as all steps in the transfer onward procedure is taken on their behalf. The Rail Ombudsman engage with the passenger watchdogs continually, welcome challenges and share information and good practice.

Rail Ombudsman response:

Yes, in terms of the Rail Ombudsman and Statutory Appeals Body relationship the Single Front Door works well – a clear process is followed but the collaborative working relationships that exist at the triage and management levels mean there is always the opportunity to discuss more complicated scope matters to facilitate the most effective transfer and minimise back-and-forth. This aspect of the consumer experience should remain a fundamental objective of the Single Front Door; the Rail Ombudsman and Statutory Appeals Bodies must strive to ensure that matters of scope are resolved promptly between us without inconveniencing the consumer. This works well in practice and we should consciously aim to ensure this remains front-and-centre in our thinking.

2) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that data and insight is available and exchanged between the organisations?

Statutory Appeals Bodies response:

The passenger watchdogs could do more to share information with the Rail Ombudsman and the ability to do this is a focus of our business plans for 2024/25. Available insight at both a high and more detailed level is available to the passenger watchdogs via the portal. The sharing of information is underpinned by the Memorandum of Understanding which provides clarity on minimum expectations although the Rail Ombudsman frequently exceed this requirement.

Rail Ombudsman response:

Helpful insight is routinely shared by the Statutory Appeals Bodies with the Rail Ombudsman, particularly with regard to industry and stakeholder news and



initiatives. The Rail Ombudsman also makes use of Statutory Appeals Body publications to inform its knowledge and awareness. The Statutory Appeals Bodies play a key role in the Passenger Advisory Panel, which creates a new avenue for sharing data and insight generated by the Rail Ombudsman, in addition to established channels. Working collaboratively to ensure both Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman are best equipping each other is a welcome focus area for 24/25.

3) Are the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Rail Ombudsman satisfied that effective relationship management structures are in place at operational and senior levels, and do these arrangements promote collaborative working and knowledge sharing?

Statutory Appeals Bodies response:

At this time, the passenger watchdogs are very satisfied with engagement with the Rail Ombudsman at both senior and operational levels.

There is a strong commitment of the senior team to share insight and promote opportunities to improve the passenger experience. The senior team is also focused in participating in learning from other sectors to bring learning and good practice back to the rail industry.

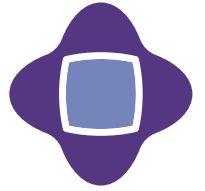
The Operational team engage fully with the watchdogs' Casework team, which enables all parties to provide an effective and timely service to appellants.

Rail Ombudsman response:

Yes, the relationships that exist at operational and senior levels are collaborative and productive – crucially, all involved are felt to be clearly focussed on our common objective of delivering a seamless consumer experience in the complaints process, and to working together in the broader sense to contribute to the industry's understanding of passenger issues and opportunities to improve.

The personable approach and willingness to discuss sometimes complex issues promptly is a key strength of the relationship – while we are separate organisations, we feel that we work effectively as a team in the context of the Single Front Door, understand each other's remits well and are all pulling in the same direction. In our joint commitment to delivering a quality service, we aim to be mutually supportive in terms of quality and promptness of our communications – the Statutory Appeals Bodies' commitment to quality undoubtedly contributes to positive Single Front Door experiences.

The Rail Ombudsman



www.railombudsman.org

November 2024