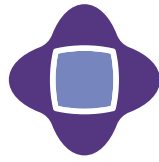


The Rail
Ombudsman



ANNUAL
REVIEW

2023



Inspiring consumer confidence

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Foreword - Kevin Grix

“Our team has continued to develop their expertise in the complex rail industry, itself undergoing change that will bring back together disparate elements, which will benefit the industry's passengers.”



2023 was a progressive year for the Rail Ombudsman, with continuity of service to consumers and the industry amidst a backdrop of change setting the agenda for our year's work. On 26 November, our five-year tenure as the Rail Ombudsman under contract with Rail Delivery Group expired, with the scheme seamlessly transitioning without a break in service to a new contract sponsored by the rail industry regulator, the Office of Rail and Road. This followed a competitive tender exercise during 2023, in which the regulator assessed our capability to not only continue delivering a first-class service to consumers and rail operators, but to build further upon the solid foundations already in place to ensure the scheme continues to evolve and deliver for all its users.

Our team has continued to develop their expertise in the complex rail industry, itself undergoing change that will bring back together disparate elements, which will benefit the industry's passengers. It is notable that 58% of cases closed by the Rail Ombudsman in 2023 were resolved at the Early Resolution stage. This figure is in part testament to our team's ability to get to grips with issues and resolve them quickly, and the value of an independent perspective in resolving many complaints. However, it does also suggest that there may be opportunity for more complaints to be resolved without escalation; the Rail Ombudsman's recommendations to the industry have sought to help operators to tackle the drivers for escalation at source. Throughout the Rail Ombudsman's period of operation, it has been clear from our casework that complexity within the industry contributes to the escalation of complaints. The prevalence of multi-operator journeys and the complications that this can present in practice has been a recurring theme.

We are pleased to note the positive collaborative working that takes place within the industry, and find our engagement with the sector invaluable in terms of the opportunity to contribute insight and to stay aware of developments in this evolving sector. We will continue to work proactively with the sector to help operators identify opportunities to improve, and will continue to provide passengers with a fair, binding resolution when a complaint does escalate.

I am proud to present this Annual Review, and I hope you enjoy reading it.

Kevin Grix

CEO and Chief Ombudsman



**OMBUDSMAN
ASSOCIATION**



Approved by Government under the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015

Full member of the Ombudsman Association

City & Guilds approved training centre

Cyber Essentials certified

2023 - Judith Turner



“The big picture in the rail industry in 2023 was one of disruption, mainly due to weather incidents and strike action. This meant that many of the cases we dealt with were around provision of information (or lack of it) on alternative services and routes. This also led to recommendations being made to individual Rail Service Providers and the industry more widely. Communicating in a timely way which can be easily understood, is crucial to providing reassurance and increasing consumer confidence and we continue to work with the sector to improve its messaging to customers.”

2023 was another landmark year for the Rail Ombudsman. We successfully re-tendered to run the scheme, and are now under the sponsorship of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

We worked hard with the ORR and Rail Service Providers throughout the latter half of 2023 to transition to the new scheme and have put in place new service enhancements and governance arrangements to complement our existing experience and expertise. The big picture in the rail industry in 2023 was one of disruption, mainly due to weather incidents and strike action. This meant that many of the cases we dealt with were around provision of information (or lack of it) on alternative services and routes. This also led to recommendations being made to individual Rail Service Providers and the industry more widely. Communicating in a timely way which can be easily understood, is crucial to providing reassurance and increasing consumer confidence and we continue to work with the sector to improve its messaging to customers.

We also provided insight into best practice in complaint handling more broadly through our experience working with other sectors through other Ombudsman schemes we operate.

In-house, the Rail Ombudsman team grows from strength to strength as we upskill and develop the individuals within it. We've developed a new 'Ombudsman Skills' training course to provide a more individual focus to enable each member of the team to flourish.

We are proud that our staff recognised this investment in their skills in our 2023 staff survey (you can read more on this on page 17), which also found:

- 1. All staff feel they're a valued member of the team:** An all-time high of 100% (up by 9% from the previous year) of respondents stated that they felt like they played an integral role in their respective teams. Our dedication and commitment to excellence truly shine through in these results.
- 2. Nine in 10 feel they're trusted to do their job.** Collaboration lies at the heart of our success and the survey results reflect this brilliantly. 88% of staff highlighted they felt trusted to make the decisions that are required in their jobs, highlighting the positive and productive teamwork culture within our organisation, which emphasises mutual respect, support, and open communication.
- 3. All staff feel they work in an inclusive environment:** Continuing the trend from the previous year, all staff members (100%) noted experiencing an inclusive culture within the company. This is a testament to our ongoing efforts to foster an environment where every voice is heard and valued.

We are very pleased to present our 2023 Rail Ombudsman Annual Review and hope you enjoy reading it.

Judith Turner
Deputy Chief Ombudsman

About us

The Rail Ombudsman is an independent, not-for-profit organisation approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and validated as a Full Member of the Ombudsman Association.

Our vision

Our vision is to work with the rail industry to inspire consumer confidence and resolve complaints without the need for costly litigation. We are neither a consumer champion nor a trade body. We operate independently to ensure fairness in every case.

What do we do?

We offer a free and expert service to investigate unresolved complaints about participating service providers (such as train companies).

We also support the rail industry to raise standards and improve services for passengers. We listen to both sides and seek to find a solution that the parties can both agree to. If that's not possible, we are empowered to make decisions which are binding upon Rail Service Providers; this means that they have to comply with our decisions.

We can also make recommendations to Rail Service Providers to improve the way their service is delivered and we publish case studies and data which can provide insight into common complaints.

Training

Training was once again at the heart of the Rail Ombudsman's engagement with the sector in 2023, with both short courses and accredited City & Guilds training being well attended by the industry.

The following organisations took part in our two-day City & Guilds consumer law accredited training during 2023, demonstrating their appetite to progress and improve their people's understanding and skills, to help them ultimately improve the consumer experience.



The Rail Sector Liaison Panel members during 2023:

Jon Walters (Chair)

Advice Strategy Lead, Citizens Advice

Julie Allan

Head of Customer Relations, Govia Thameslink Railway

Prof Christopher Hodges MA PhD FSALS OBE

Professor of Justice Systems and Head of the Swiss Research Programme on Civil Justice Systems, Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford. Supernumerary Fellow, Wolfson College, Oxford University. Fellow, European Law Institute

Susan James

Head of Casework, London TravelWatch and Transport Focus

John Smith

CEC Operations Manager, Northern

Mike Ross

Senior Customer Relations Manager, London North Eastern Railway

Dr Scott Hamilton

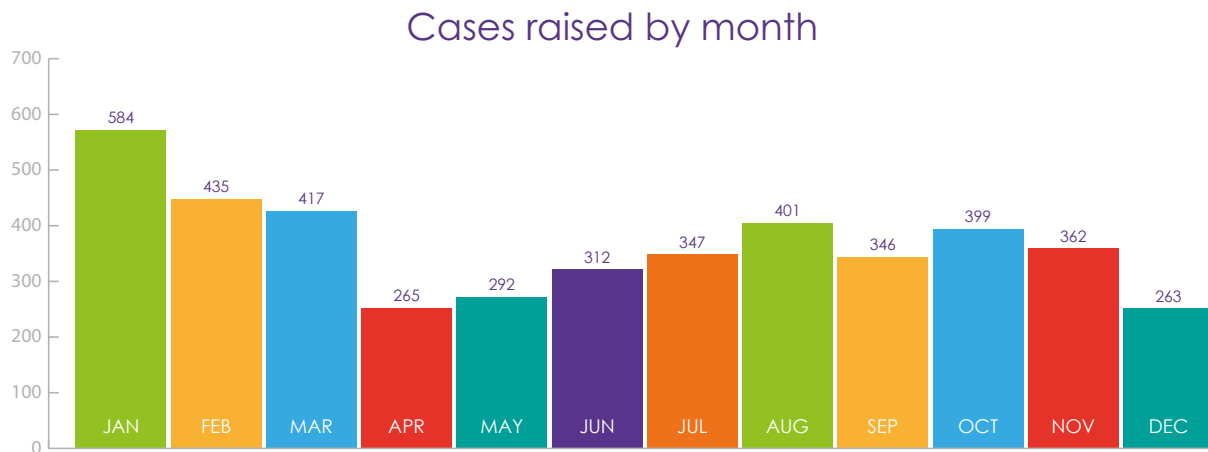
Head of Rail Ombudsman Sponsorship. Strategy, Policy and Reform, Office of Rail and Road

Our year in numbers



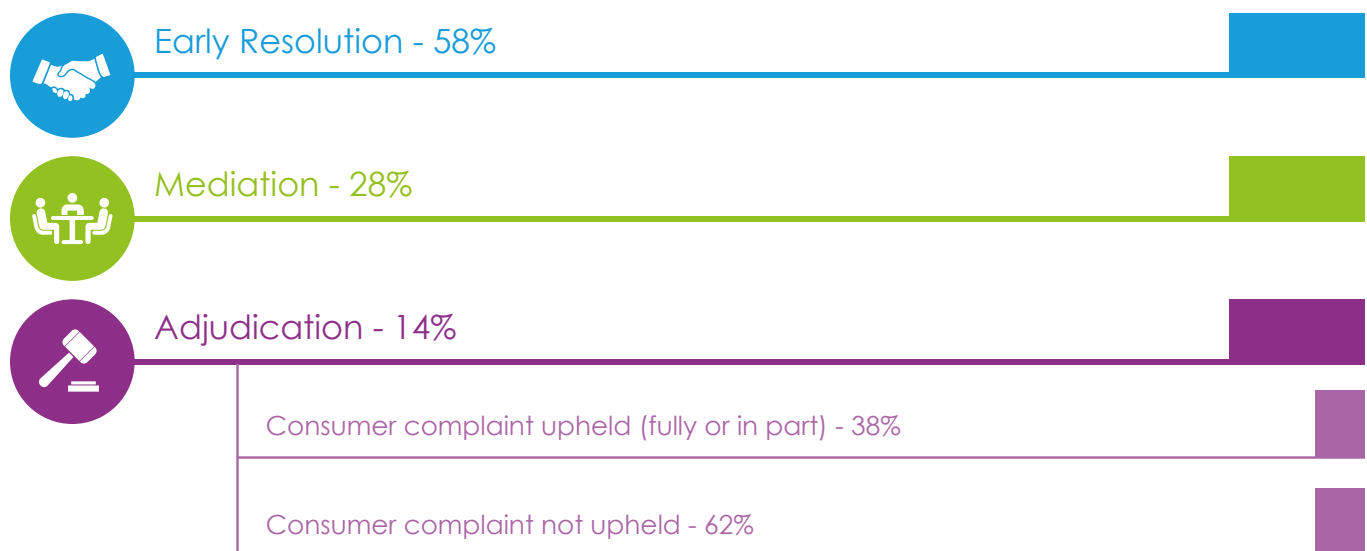
Our results for 2023

Cases raised: 4,423 Cases closed: 4,662



Early Resolution, Mediation & Adjudication

Excluding cases found to be Out of Scope and rounded to the nearest whole number.



Definitions

Consumer	An individual who has undertaken, or has attempted to undertake, a journey on a scheduled rail service, and has purchased (or has had purchased on their behalf), or has attempted to purchase, a ticket for that journey.
Participating Rail Operating Company	A rail operating company which is part of the Rail Ombudsman scheme. We sometimes refer to these as Rail Service Providers (RSPs). The full list of Participating Rail Operating Companies is available here: www.railombudsman.org/about-us/Participating-service-providers
In Scope	A complaint accepted as being eligible for the Rail Ombudsman scheme.
Out of Scope (Transferred)	A complaint that is outside the scope of the Rail Ombudsman scheme which is transferred to either Transport Focus or London TravelWatch.
Out of Scope (Ineligible)	A complaint which is deemed ineligible for the Rail Ombudsman scheme and also for Transport Focus and London TravelWatch. The majority of complaints found to be ineligible are caused by Consumers approaching the Rail Ombudsman without a deadlock letter and before the end of the 40 working day period allowed to Rail Operating Companies to resolve their complaints.
Early Resolution	A stage in the Rail Ombudsman process that provides an opportunity, in some circumstances, to quickly resolve an issue.
Complex Resolution	A stage in the Rail Ombudsman process where an Early Resolution is not possible. The Rail Ombudsman will first Mediate and then where applicable, Adjudicate to resolve an In Scope complaint.
Mediation	The process by which, assisted by an independent view from the Rail Ombudsman, a settlement in relation to an In Scope complaint can be negotiated to which both the Consumer and the Participating Rail Operating Company agree.
Adjudication	The process by which, in the event that an Early Resolution and Mediation have been unsuccessful in reaching agreement between the Participating Rail Operating Company and the Consumer, the Rail Ombudsman will investigate and make an impartial decision on the case.

ORR contract sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman

On 26th November 2023, the Rail Ombudsman commenced services to consumers and the industry under the terms of a new contract with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). This followed a five-year period of operations under the terms of a contract with Rail Delivery Group, the industry body that established the Rail Ombudsman in 2018.

The incumbent provider, Dispute Resolution Ombudsman, was selected following a competitive tender exercise run by the Office of Rail and Road. The retention of the existing provider meant there was no break in service and the Rail Ombudsman operated as normal throughout the transition period.

The transition to ORR sponsorship sought to build on the solid foundations of the previously established scheme, with key enhancements made in the following areas:

Governance

The previous governance arrangements included a "Scheme Council" and a "Rail Sector Liaison Panel". These bodies provided oversight and gave the Rail Ombudsman access to industry and consumer landscape insight to assist its delivery of the service.

However, the structure was unconventional and the ORR saw the opportunity to change the scheme's governance to a more typical Board in place of the Scheme Council. The Board will apply relevant provisions of the UK Corporate Governance Code and will meet no less than three times per year. The Rail Sector Liaison Panel, which contained both industry and consumer interests, gave way to a Passenger Advisory Panel and Scheme Member Panel. These two separate panels allowed for greater representation without creating an unwieldy membership. Collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas will be retained through occasional joint meetings of the two panels.

You can read more about the governance of the Rail Ombudsman on our website here: <https://www.railombudsman.org/about-us/governance>.

Accessibility and awareness

As part of its sponsorship of the scheme, the ORR procured independent reviews of the Rail Ombudsman, including user testing with a "mystery shopper" element. At the time of writing, several pieces of work have recently concluded and the Rail Ombudsman and ORR are working together to identify and implement enhancements that will benefit service users and ensure the Rail Ombudsman remains at the forefront of accessible service provision.

The introduction of a WhatsApp contact channel has increased the convenience of options for getting in touch, and the replacement of the textphone service with Text Relay will enhance the options available to deaf service users in particular. You can read more about the range of accessible contact channels provided by the Rail Ombudsman on our website here:

<https://www.railombudsman.org/contact-us/> and read more about our approach to accessibility, including the formats in which our information is available, at <https://www.railombudsman.org/accessibility-3/>.

Performance

Over the last five years, the Rail Ombudsman has performed well against its aim to resolve cases within 40 working days. It is now tracking performance against more challenging targets, with the aim of reducing case handling times. However, the Rail Ombudsman will ensure that it takes the right amount of time needed to prioritise quality of service, engage both parties fully and reach the right outcome.

Recommendations to industry

In 2023, the Rail Ombudsman made 75 formal recommendations either to individual Rail Service Providers (RSPs) or to the industry more widely as a result of investigations through its case work. While non-binding, recommendations create the opportunity for the industry to review practices and implement improvements.

While a range of specific issues have arisen during casework, the themes summarised below reflect typical and recurring issues. Recommendations can be made regardless of the outcome of a particular case, with the aim of promoting continuous improvement, sharing best practice and avoiding potential issues in the future. For the Consumers who bring cases to the Rail Ombudsman, these recommendations can also be an important factor in restoring confidence for future travel.

Analysis of the recommendations has shown that information provided and whether it is understood by Consumers, is a prominent recurring theme of casework and the recommendations made.

Some examples of the recommendations that the Rail Ombudsman made during 2023 are set out below:

Complaint handling

The way complaints are handled can present tangible opportunities to improve Consumer experiences. With multiple operator journeys common, it is sometimes necessary for Rail Service Providers to transfer complaints to other providers. The Rail Ombudsman's casework has demonstrated that issues associated with complaint transfers do occur, and recommendations were made on this theme.

A typical scenario is when a consumer's complaint is transferred from one Rail Service Provider (RSP1) to another, but not received by the second Rail Service Provider (RSP2). The Consumer might then escalate their claim against both Rail Service Providers because they had not received a response from RSP2. In such cases, the consumer's claim is eligible against RSP1 if 40 working days had passed from point of contact, and against RSP2, 40 working days after transfer. As below, in the Case Studies section, in some cases RSP2 has no record of receiving the transfer, nor any contact from the Consumer, and this is why the complaint remains unanswered. The following recommendations address these issues:

- The Rail Ombudsman recommends that the Rail Service Provider and the rail industry investigates the process for transferring complaints between Rail Service Providers to determine root causes and resolve the issues with transferring claims.
- The Rail Ombudsman recommends that the Rail Service Provider provides the relevant details when transferring a claim to another Provider, so the complainant is clear on their new point of contact for any ongoing queries. A lack of contact can create uncertainty for a Consumer about how to aid progression of their claim/complaint and feed into unnecessary delays in obtaining a resolution. The originating Rail Service Provider should also follow-up the transfer to ensure this has been actioned.

Information during disruption

In the particular case from which this recommendation arose, the Consumer had expressed dissatisfaction about alternative travel arrangements during disruption, through social media messaging. The responding messages from the Rail Service Provider to the Consumer should have advised that cost-free alternatives were available and should always be considered before incurring additional costs. In this case, the Consumer had purchased new tickets, before contacting the Rail Service Provider, but earlier information provided by the Rail Service Provider might have prevented the Consumer from incurring further additional costs, or at least managed their expectations more effectively regarding reimbursement. This may be relatable to any scenario in which advice or information is sought in real-time.

The Rail Ombudsman recommends that Rail Service Providers consider whether there should be signposting within messaging about the need to consider cost-free alternative options in response to real-time requests about travel options during disruption.

This is to aid Consumers who are considering alternative options, to ensure they are able to make an informed choice and appreciate that if they do incur additional costs, these will not automatically be reimbursed.

Rail replacement signposting

The recommendation below was made following a case in which a Consumer evidenced an attempt to search online and follow messages from a Rail Service Provider in order to find rail replacement information. In this case, the Consumer's evidence illustrated that they were unable to find any information about rail replacement services, even though the Rail Service Provider's website signposted them to National Rail Enquiries.

The Rail Ombudsman recommends that the rail industry considers whether it is feasible to provide a mechanism to enable rail replacement service information to be available on the National Rail Enquiries website.

This recommendation highlights the requirement for a consistent approach to communicating disruption arrangements, and one that is easily accessible by any Consumer on the network.

Station information/Advance tickets

This recommendation relates to one of the highlighted case studies on the following page, in which a Consumer thought they were able to travel on the Rail Service Provider's services because their service was cancelled by a different provider operating on the same route. However, as they did not hold a valid ticket for the service, they were charged for a new ticket. Confusion about the terms of an Advance ticket during disruption is often given as a reason for being on the wrong train.

The Rail Ombudsman recommends that Rail Service Providers consider signage within their managed stations, clearly advising Consumers not to board services unless it is clear that ticket acceptance is in place. This signage would need to specify the usual process for Advance ticket holders and others, if a service is cancelled, and how ticket acceptance would be visible to passengers, if relevant.

This recommendation aims to prevent similar confusion for future passengers.

Case study: Advance tickets

The Rail Ombudsman has seen many cases relating to Advance tickets since it commenced operations in 2018. The terms and conditions applicable to Advance tickets can create confusion for some Consumers, particularly during disruption. Case Studies A and B exemplify this issue:

Case study A – Dispute relating to Advance ticket validity and the accessibility of information

Consumer A held an Advance ticket but their train was cancelled. Their ticket was for travel on a particular provider's service. Due to disruption, they believed they could travel on the next service to their destination, regardless of who the provider was. They travelled on a service operated by a different Rail Service Provider and were issued with an Unpaid Fare Notice, which they appealed and were subsequently offered a reduced payment.

Consumer A complained to the initial Rail Service Provider that there was no clear signage in the station about what to do if their service was cancelled. Consumer A highlighted that they have autism, which affects their verbal communication skills, and they therefore relied on their interpretation of the rules published online, in an attempt to avoid unnecessary conversations with a stranger. Consumer A submitted a complaint to the Rail Ombudsman as they believed they were entitled to travel on a different provider's service.

Consumer A had received a refund of their unused ticket from the ticket retailer (another Rail Service Provider). It was not disputed that Consumer A's ticket was not valid on the service upon which they travelled and the Rail Service Provider had been correct in its application of the ticket terms and conditions. The Rail Ombudsman could not comment further on the enforcement action, as it has no jurisdiction over Byelaw enforcement.

The case included an original complaint about how the case was handled by the Rail Service Provider, which was also considered by the Rail Ombudsman. At Adjudication, it was found that the Rail Service Provider had responded factually to the Consumer's appeal and complaint, but had failed to directly acknowledge the Consumer's submission about how their disability affected their response to events that day. As this aspect had not been responded to, it created uncertainty for the Consumer about whether the appeal had been fully considered, which was partly why they pursued the complaint further.

The Rail Ombudsman awarded a modest sum as compensation for complaint handling, in addition to an explanation from the Rail Service Provider to advise the Consumer how their disability had been taken into account when handling the appeal. A recommendation was made about station signage relating to Advance ticket validity, to help reduce confusion and assist Consumers who may have difficulty engaging verbally with staff.

Case study B – Customer service dispute relating to the terms of Advance tickets

Consumer B complained to a Rail Service Provider that their staff had not applied the Advance ticket terms correctly. The Consumer held Advance tickets, purchased from the Rail Service Provider, but for travel with another provider. Consumer B had missed their connection due to disruption. Similar to Consumer A, Consumer B thought their ticket would be valid on the next service to their destination. However, they were issued with an Unpaid Fare Notice, because their ticket was not valid on the train on which they travelled. They were required to purchase a new ticket whilst on the train. Consumer B's claim could not be upheld, largely because their ticket was invalid, and there was no evidenced authorisation given to travel on a different service.

Confusion about Advance ticket terms is a commonly cited reason within complaints about Unpaid Fare Notices. For this reason, a recommendation was made to the individual Rail Service Provider and the industry, to consider what can be done to make the terms clearer, particularly at the point of disruption. This is explained further in the recommendations section.

Case study: Complaint transfers

The industry uses a complaint transfer process known as OTOC (Other Train Operating Company). This enables the transfer of complaints/claims to the correct Rail Service Provider, and is designed to reduce complexity and inconvenience for the Consumer, who may misunderstand the claims process and direct their complaints to the wrong provider. OTOC transfers are a common theme within casework, even if not the key driver of a complaint. Industry recommendations have been made to suggest a simplified complaint triage system.

OTOC transfers also arise within accessibility or assistance complaints, because Accessible Travel Policies (ATP) require a coordinated approach in responding to an accessibility claim.

Below is a case study demonstrating the value of the Rail Ombudsman's approach, which enables a case to be split between two or more Rail Service Providers:

Consumer C – Dispute split between the Rail Service Provider and the ticket retailer (both members of the Rail Ombudsman)

Consumer C held tickets purchased from the retailer (RSP2). They complained first to RSP1, because they were due to travel on their services, advising that they had not travelled because of a cancellation. The service provider (RSP1) transferred the claim to the retailer (RSP2). The retailer declined the claim for a refund, because the service ran as scheduled. During mediation, the Ombudsman liaised between all parties and considered the evidence provided by the RSP to show that Consumer C had abandoned their journey because it was showing as cancelled, but later reinstated at short notice. On receipt of this evidence, the retailer offered a full refund. Consumer C accepted the refund, in settlement of the claim against both Rail Service Providers.

The Rail Ombudsman was able to facilitate information sharing between parties, which hadn't been part of the initial response to the complaint.

Consumer D – Dispute split between two Rail Service Providers

Consumer D first complained to RSP1, with which they had intended to travel. Due to an amended timetable, Consumer D had not travelled on RSP1's services, so RSP1 transferred Consumer D's complaint to RSP2. RSP2 declined the claim and transferred it back to RSP1. The Consumer escalated their case to the Rail Ombudsman after being unable to obtain compensation from either Rail Service Provider.

The Rail Ombudsman split the case between both Rail Service Providers, and liaised between the three parties. Following a review of the case details, RSP2 accepted that Consumer D's claim for delay compensation had been rejected incorrectly. Consumer D was offered and accepted Delay Repay (equivalent to a full refund of the ticket value) and an e-voucher as full settlement of their claim.

Case study: Assistance and Accessibility

Consumer E – Prebooked assistance dispute

Consumer E prebooked assistance and subsequently complained that the Rail Service Provider's assistance staff did not collect them from the first-class lounge, as detailed within their assistance booking.

The Rail Service Provider's actions were assessed against their Accessible Travel Policy (ATP), and Accessible Station Guide (ASG). It was recognised that the use of the assisted travel lounge is recommended within these publications, but this is primarily to ensure that staff are aware of a Consumer's arrival at the station. It was also noted that Consumer E had stated that they made staff aware of their arrival in the first-class lounge.

Consumer E's request to be collected from the first-class lounge was written on the assistance booking form, and nothing on the form advised of a requirement to go to the assisted travel lounge on arrival at the station. Additionally, it was noted that the ASG highlights that the first-class lounge can be used by passengers with accessible bookings on the booked service.

The account from both parties confirmed that assistance was provided to a different Consumer from the first-class lounge, at the time Consumer E was said to be waiting there. This was further supporting evidence that such assistance was reasonably expected by the Consumer.

The lack of assistance was, in part, mitigated by Consumer E's actions in taking themselves to the platform, and obtaining assistance from platform staff. This meant that the Consumer still departed on their booked service. Although the lack of assistance to get to the platform did not delay Consumer E's train journey, it did cause time and trouble in awaiting assistance that did not arrive, in addition to navigation through a large and busy station, but without assistance and with less time than planned to get to the platform.

It was accepted that Consumer E was not collected from the first-class lounge, as per the assistance booking. The Adjudication considered this to be a partial failure in providing the prebooked rail passenger assistance. An award was made for the time and trouble resulting from this, in addition to a written explanation from the Rail Service Provider, providing clear instructions of how to book and use assistance from this station.

Since the Rail Ombudsman's first year of operation, we have commissioned Ipsos, an independent research agency to conduct a Consumer experience survey. This enables us to measure and track the perceptions of service users and provides us with feedback that we can use to review our ways of working and seek improvements.

In 2023, perceptions remain positive in key areas for Ombudsman staff, with accessibility being rated as a key strength, however an overall decrease in user satisfaction was noted amid a backdrop of industry disruption.

How does it work?

Ipsos contacted users of the Rail Ombudsman service, whose cases were closed between January to December 2023. Their fieldwork was conducted between February and March 2024. Consumers were asked to complete a survey that explores the full spectrum of their interaction with the Rail Ombudsman. The data captured helps to create a profile of respondents and reflect the different types of outcomes a user of the Rail Ombudsman may see.

The Rail Ombudsman is using these insights to improve and develop our service, recognising the complex factors impacting satisfaction. This project, alongside other ORR-commissioned work, will lead to published actions and responses. We look forward to providing updates on our learnings and action plan to ensure quality, impartial dispute resolution for our users. The expanded survey and detailed profiling offer valuable insights for improving our service, helping us better meet the needs and expectations of our users.

The full survey can be viewed here:

<https://static.railombudsman.org/roweb/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/04165237/The-Rail-Ombudsman-Experience-Survey-Report-2023.pdf>

Rail Ombudsman members



Profiles



Kevin Grix
Chief Executive
and Chief Ombudsman

Kevin was appointed in 2008. He read law at university and graduated with honours, prior to studying to be a Barrister in London at the Inns of Court School of Law. He was called to the Bar by the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, after successfully passing his Bar exams and is also professionally qualified by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb). Kevin has served on the Board of Directors of the Ombudsman Association, a body that advises government and helps to oversee the ombudsman and complaint handling landscape in the UK, Ireland, British Overseas Territories and British Crown Dependencies. In November 2018, Kevin was invited to join the Board of Trustees at Citizens Advice Stevenage; in 2024, he was appointed Company Secretary.

Kevin has a dual-mandate, serving also (from the 1st January 2022) as the Chief Ombudsman at the Independent Football Ombudsman (IFO), a scheme that was established by the football authorities (The Football Association, The Premier League, and The Football League) to receive and adjudicate on complaints which have not been resolved at an earlier stage. Prior to this appointment, Kevin sat on the IFO's Advisory Board between 2015 and 2021, where he advised his predecessor on football-related casework and dispute resolution procedures.

Kevin has a keen interest in consumer affairs and has appeared several times on television, radio and in the press to provide expert opinion on a range of issues that affect consumers. He has a specialist understanding of consumer law and has written and presented a series of accredited courses and seminars in this field.

Kevin was previously employed for two years as in-house legal counsel at a global certification and testing business and in 2005 he was part of the team of advisers that set up the University of Hertfordshire Law Clinic, a pro-bono legal advice centre that served the local community. Kevin's previous non-legal and ADR career includes positions in the retail, financial and online gaming industries.

Kevin and his colleague, Deputy Chief Ombudsman Judith Turner, are the co-authors of Volume 28 of Atkin's Court Forms and Precedents on Ombudsman schemes in England and Wales. Published by LexisNexis in 2020, it forms part of the UK's only encyclopaedia of civil litigation forms, precedents and procedure and is a leading authority on the process that should be followed by complainants.



Judith Turner
Deputy Chief
Ombudsman

Judith read Law at King's College London for three years before graduating with honours in 1998. She then went on to complete the Legal Practice Course (LPC) and a training contract before qualifying as a solicitor in 2001. She was previously employed by a City Law firm, practising in Commercial Law.

Judith joined the Ombudsman in 2011 and now specialises in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Since her appointment, she has written and presented a wide variety of accredited training courses on Consumer Law and Compliance tailored to the sectors within which the Ombudsman operates.

Judith is a regular speaker at industry and ombudsman conferences and events. Judith is the current Chair of the Ombudsman Association Policy Network and serves as a member of the Civil Justice Council's ADR Liaison Panel. She has written extensively on ADR and consumer issues and is the co-author of the Ombudsman content for Atkins Court Forms.

Judith is the Rail Ombudsman's representative on the collaboration of European ADR schemes, Travel-Net and was instrumental in forging the relationship with Bus-Users UK, an example of the Rail Ombudsman's broad approach to engagement in order to share best-practice and influence the delivery of ADR more broadly.



Kathryn Stone OBE
Independent Assessor

Kathryn has enjoyed a 40 year career in public service, including the role of Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, an independent officer of the House of Commons overseeing the code of conduct and rules for MPs.

During her career, she spent 11 years as Chief Executive of the charity Voice UK, representing the rights of people with learning disabilities who were victims of abuse and crime. She was awarded an OBE in 2007 for her services to people with learning disabilities. She has also held the challenging role of Commissioner for the Victims and Survivors in Northern Ireland, worked for the Independent Police Complaints Commission and held the role of Chief Legal Ombudsman of England and Wales.



Rosie Tackley
Lead Ombudsman

Rosie has been Lead Ombudsman since 2021, and was directly involved in the setup of the Rail Ombudsman in 2018. She has successfully managed the team through a period of change and fluctuating demand, largely related to the pandemic, industrial action and severe weather affecting services. She is committed to exceptional customer service for both consumers and members alike. She strongly advocates a collaborative and human approach toward achieving the best outcome for all parties, wherever possible. Rosie has worked for over 6 years as an Ombudsman, and directly supervises all cases identified as involving vulnerable consumers.

Having worked previously for major charities such as Shelter and Sue Ryder, she remains committed to using her legal skills within the non-profit sector. She is secretariat for the Ombudsman Association Policy Network, and regularly attends stakeholder meetings to share insights from Ombudsman casework, including the Passenger and Member Panels.



Matthew Thomas
Head of Engagement

Matt started working with the Ombudsman in 2017, and in June 2018 began helping to establish the new Rail Ombudsman. Matt brings diverse experience spanning both sales/commercial and policy roles, gained in the private and public sectors. As Head of Engagement, Matt has a strong customer service ethos and his responsibilities include stakeholder relationship management and working with Rail Ombudsman members to generate insight from casework data. As a keen advocate of rail travel with a first-hand appreciation of the benefits it offers, Matt is always looking to work collaboratively with the industry to see real impacts on the network.

Staff experience survey

The Rail Ombudsman carried out a 10-minute, online, anonymous survey titled 'Have Your Say 2023', sent to all staff members.

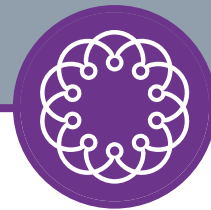
Some of the highlights gathered from the survey include:



100% of employees felt that they were a valued member of the team.



Nine out of 10 employees (88%) felt trusted to make the decisions required in their jobs.



100% of employees felt that the Ombudsman has an inclusive culture.

opportunities **success** *Socialise*
valued **recognition** **Benefits**
safe **Great** **motivation**
appreciated **PROVIDED**
People **work** **Working home** **Role**
Inclusive *Team* **TRAINING**
communication **company events**
TOOLS **Really good**

2023 Financial Statements for the Rail Ombudsman with figures in £

Income

Rail membership:	980,875
Cases:	106,268
Other income:	2,625

Total income:	1,089,768
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Expenditure

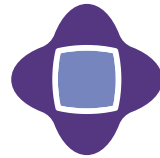
Staff costs:	686,917
Operating costs:	264,392

Net profit/loss:	138,458
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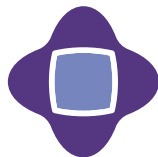
For most of 2023, the Rail Ombudsman operated under the terms of a contract with Rail Delivery Group. This involved a financial model whereby membership and cases were charged separately, as can be seen from the accounts. From 26th November 2023, the Rail Ombudsman commenced services under the current contract with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The total fee for the first contract year (i.e. 26th November 2023 – 26th November 2024) of the ORR-sponsored contract is £989,552.00.

Based on data extracted from the annual audited accounts of the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman for the 12 months ended 31 December 2023.

The Rail
Ombudsman



The Rail Ombudsman



www.railombudsman.org

Premier House
1-5 Argyle Way
Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 2AD

Registered Office

Dispute Resolution Ombudsman - Registered in England. No 8945616
Registered office: Premier House, 1-5 Argyle Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, England SG1 2AD

Inspiring consumer confidence