



# Continuous Improvement Report

April 2025 – March 2026



Together, we're going places.

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# Introduction

This report sets out how TransPennine Express (TPE) has continued to improve its complaints handling and delay compensation arrangements during the period April 2025 to March 2026, in line with Licence Condition 6 (Complaints) and Licence Condition 29 (Delay Compensation).

During the year, customer contact volumes increased significantly, particularly in relation to delay compensation. Despite this rise in demand, TPE delivered sustained improvements in response times, fairness of outcomes, communication quality and accessibility. This demonstrates that improvements are embedded and resilient, rather than short-term responses to fluctuating volumes.

# How we assess the complaints experience

# How we assess the complaints experience

**TPE assesses the passenger experience of the complaints process using a broad range of insight, including:**

- Complaint volumes and key themes,
- Performance against response time targets,
- Quality assurance reviews,
- Customer satisfaction feedback,
- Independent research into complaint outcomes, and
- Escalation and appeal data.
- These sources are reviewed regularly to identify areas where improvement is required, with actions tracked through established governance arrangements to ensure changes deliver measurable and sustained benefits for customers.
- This quantitative insight is supplemented by structured qualitative engagement, including internal customer insight reviews, direct engagement through a dedicated customer panel, and ongoing analysis of Rail Customer Experience Survey (RCXS) results. RCXS insight is used to benchmark TPE's performance against other train operators and provide external context to support continuous improvement.

# Key complaint themes and learning

# Key complaint themes and learning

**Based on ORR MEL\* research during the reporting period, the most common complaint themes related to:**

- Timeliness of complaint responses,
- Clarity and explanation of decisions,
- Fairness and consistency of outcomes,
- Delay compensation and refunds, and
- Passenger Assistance for disabled and vulnerable customers.
- Learning from these themes directly informed improvement activity across complaint handling, communications, training and system changes.

\*MEL = research supplier



# Improvements made and impact for customers

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# Improvements made and impact for customers

- **Timeliness of responses**

- TPE strengthened forecasting, workflow management and decision-making processes to support faster complaint handling, including during periods of elevated demand.

- **Impact for customers**

- Over 98% of complaints were responded to within the ORR's 20 working day target.
- Performance was sustained during periods of increased complaint and claim volumes, demonstrating improved operational resilience and control.

# Improvements made and impact for customers

- **Fairness and consistency of outcomes**

- Quality frameworks, guidance and coaching were reinforced to ensure complaint and Delay Repay decisions were accurate and applied consistently.

- **Impact for customers**

- Delay Repay processing accuracy remained consistently high at 99.97%, despite claim volumes increasing by over 40%.
- Reduced escalation to second-stage review and external redress bodies.
- A 41% reduction in Ombudsman referrals over two years, reinforcing confidence that outcomes are fair and accurate.

# Improvements made and impact for customers

- **Communication, clarity and customer understanding**
  - Complaint response templates were reviewed and updated to improve clarity, tone and structure. Responses were simplified to clearly explain:
    - What decision was made,
    - Why it was made, and
    - What options are available if the customer remains dissatisfied.
- **Impact for customers**
  - Clearer explanations and improved understanding of decisions.
  - Reduced repeat contact caused by misunderstanding.
  - Sustained year-on-year improvement in customer satisfaction with complaint handling.

# Improvements made and impact for customers

- **5. Accessibility and disabled customers**

- TPE places particular emphasis on the experience of disabled customers and those requiring Passenger Assistance.
- Passenger Assistance complaints were identified as a priority improvement area during the year. A more specialist approach was introduced, supported by:
  - Strengthened training and refresher activity,
  - Clearer escalation and handover arrangements, and
  - Closer collaboration with industry partners and internal quality teams .
  - Introducing a more robust complaint investigation process

- **Impact for customers**

- Quality scores for Passenger Assistance complaints consistently above 85%.
  - Scores are based on how the advisor handled the complaint, considering the channel used.
- Reduced variability in handling and improved advisor confidence.
- Greater assurance that accessibility-related complaints are handled sensitively, consistently and fairly.

# Complaint handling performance

# Complaint handling performance

In line with ORR requirements, TPE publishes information on:

- The percentage of complaints responded to within 10 and 20 working days, and
- Average complaint response times.
- This information is published on TPE's website to ensure transparency and ease of access for customers.

# Delay Repay and Refunds

# Delay Repay and Refunds

**TPE continued to improve both awareness of Delay Repay and the claims process during the reporting period, including increased use of automation and clearer customer communications.**

**Despite significant growth in claim volumes, service quality and accuracy were maintained.**

## **Impact for customers:**

- Over 72% of Delay Repay claims were handled automatically, supporting faster resolutions.
- Claims were consistently processed within target timescales.
- Refunds were delivered 100% within service level targets, including during periods of system change.
- Fewer appeals and complaints relating to compensation outcomes – 2% lower than last year.

# Governance, learning and next steps

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**Learning from complaints is embedded through regular review of customer feedback, quality assurance insight, independent research and performance data, supported by established governance arrangements to ensure improvements are sustainable and auditable.**

**Customer insight and engagement remain a core part of this framework, informing prioritisation of improvement activity across complaints handling and Delay Repay processes.**

TPE will continue to:

- Monitor complaint themes and performance,
- Assess the impact of improvements on customer experience,
- Focus on fairness, clarity and accessibility, and
- Evolve complaint and compensation processes in line with customer and regulatory expectations.

# Summary

This report demonstrates how customer feedback has shaped our improvements from April 2025 to March 2026. We've made progress across multiple areas outlined in this report, as part of our ongoing commitment to improving journeys. We will continue to monitor performance and share regular updates as we build on this progress.