

# Complaints Handling Procedure

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## **1. Introduction**

Nexus operates Metro and is responsible for trains and stations (excluding Sunderland station which is managed by Northern Trains. Please see their website for more information at [northernrailway.co.uk](http://northernrailway.co.uk)).

We are committed to providing a high quality and value for money service, making sure customers are at the heart of everything we do. However, sometimes we don't get things right, therefore it's important that we encourage customer feedback to help us identify what we need to do better.

This document details the policies and processes we have in place to help us take the corrective action required to make improvements to our services.

## **2. Promoting awareness**

At Metro we believe in actively encouraging our customers to provide feedback, to help us to improve service delivery. How to make a complaint is detailed in the following areas:

- Metro Customer's Charter
- Conditions of Carriage
- The Travel North East website
- Metro social media pages

## **3. Ownership of complaints**

If we receive a complaint or claim referring to another operator's service such as Network Rail or other agencies, we will acknowledge receipt of the correspondence and forward details to the appropriate party, within five full working days of receipt. In the acknowledgement we will confirm who the correct party is and their contact details. Should the complaint involve us as well as another operator(s) then we will make best endeavours to co-ordinate the responses.

Where the complaint concerns one of our third party suppliers (for example cleaning, replacement bus, car park providers), we will request the supplier to investigate the complaint and on receipt of their feedback

we will provide a response.

#### **4. Easily accessible to all**

We have created a customer version of the Complaints Handling Procedure. The 'Customer Complaint Procedure' which clearly details who to contact and the information we require to manage complaints effectively.

To assist in the effective management of complaints, Metro provides various access routes to receive feedback:

- Customer Service Advisors deployed at stations and on trains are trained to receive and pass on complaints, that require a response from Customer Relations.
- Travel North East website: [travelnortheast.uk/contact](http://travelnortheast.uk/contact). To make it easier for customers to contact Customer Relations via the website, we have introduced 'two click' navigation from the home page. A link to service standards can be found at [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/information/customers-charter-performance-and-customer-satisfaction](http://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/information/customers-charter-performance-and-customer-satisfaction).
- Direct email address for Customer Relations [customerrelations@nexus.org.uk](mailto:customerrelations@nexus.org.uk).
- Direct telephone number for Customer Relations 0191 202 0747 (lines open Monday to Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm, excluding Bank Holidays).

If a customer chooses to raise their complaint with Metro through a third party or intermediary, we will offer a full and fair response back to the third party

The Travel North East website aims to comply with all of the Guidelines for UK government websites, as well as all the priority 1 and 2 checkpoints to achieve compliance with the Worldwide Web Consortiums (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 1.0, Level AA, and to maintain this standard as a minimum. Further information can be found at [travelnortheast.uk/accessibility](http://travelnortheast.uk/accessibility).

## **5. Respecting equality and diversity**

All frontline employees are provided with disability awareness training which covers how they can support customers with visual and/or hearing impairments, learning difficulties and/or physical impairments while they are travelling on Metro. Our customer service teams training includes recognising those temporarily disabled through illness, injury or surgery.

We also consider unseen disabilities and how this could effect customer's interaction with frontline employees while travelling. We train our frontline teams to provide appropriate support.

Basic sign language is delivered to frontline teams and supplemented with the British Sign Language leaflet that is available to Metro employees on their mobile devices.

If a customer is unable to make a complaint, a friend, relative or support worker can act as advocate as long as they have been given permission to do so by the customer. We will reply back to the person who is acting on the customer's behalf.

If a customer requires service or complaint process information in another format such as audio, large print, braille or a specific language, this can be organised upon request.

## **6. Respecting complaint confidentiality**

We will adhere to the Data Protection Act 1988 to ensure that customer confidentiality is protected and will not divulge confidential information to third parties unless we have the customer's consent.

To assist in our continual drive to improve customer service, a Nexus representative may contact customers to carry out a short questionnaire relating to the quality of our response to their communication. If a customer would prefer not to be contacted they can opt out.

A link to the Privacy Policy is available on the home page or [travelnortheast.uk](http://travelnortheast.uk) and is available from the Customer Relations team. This policy details what information we hold and how it is collected. It also details our commitment to the security of data held and how it is used.

## **7. Organisational structure and people**

All complaints are managed in-house by the Customer Relations team based in Newcastle upon Tyne.

We employ people who are naturally engaging with demonstrable customer service experience.

For our front line teams, we hold assessment days that test candidate's responses when faced with a difficult situation or scenario, for example an irate passenger.

## **8. Training and development**

Training is provided in-house and details the full range of customer, systems and written processes staff will utilise. There is then an ongoing process of training and assessment in the work place to drive continual improvement.

## **9. Processes and protocols**

If a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the Metro service in their communication, we will treat this as a complaint and not general feedback.

We take ownership of complaints. This means one member of Customer Relations will be responsible for the receipt, investigation and response to the customer. In times of absence, it may be necessary to assign a customer's case to another team member to ensure response targets are met.

We manage customer contact effectively using a Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to record and process correspondence. Each customer has a designated case reference, which includes the personal information a customer has given. When a complaint is made, a case is created and a unique reference number is assigned. If a customer wishes to discuss a particular case, they can obtain this unique reference from the top right hand side of our correspondence starting with the prefix NEX or from the subject box if we replied by email.

If a customer's complaint raises a number of issues, the CRM system

enables us to record and categorise each point. This enables robust analysis to assist us in the identification of service improvements.

We always tailor our response to each of the points a customer has raised in their complaint. We will generate standard responses to customers who have submitted a claim in line with the Metro Customer's Charter, but have not raised other complaints.

If a customer contacts Metro by email or in writing, we will attach their original correspondence to the case. If a customer contacts us in person or by telephone, we will manually enter the details of their complaint to create the case.

Customer data is retained in accordance with Nexus retention policy.

## **10. Complaint handling quality controls**

We have a number of quality controls in place to ensure effective complaints handling.

These are:

Daily	<p>The Customer Relations Management team are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• copied into email replies to check the quality of response,</li><li>• monitor telephone calls and</li><li>• monitor response timescales and outstanding complaints.</li></ul>
Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Customer Relations Management team maintain complete quality control of written replies.</li></ul>
Four weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nexus carries out customer surveys to measure complaint handling satisfaction. Results are provided to the Customer Relations Manager who carries out analysis to identify failures and develop appropriate action.</li></ul>

## **11. Driving service improvements**

Handling complaints effectively is an important part of our business. We don't believe that complaints are the sole responsibility of Customer Relations and work to ensure that everyone at Metro contributes.

This ensures:

1. We listen to what our customers have to say
2. Learn from our mistakes
3. Improve the services we offer to customers

To help us make improvements it is important that we identify the root cause of complaints and take action.

We do this in a number of ways:

Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Customer Relations forward all complaints to the relevant department for investigation, monitoring and to help compose a response.</li></ul>
Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Customer Relations Manager will report the number of complaints and trends to the Customer Services Director for discussion by the Senior Leadership Team.</li></ul>
Every three months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complaint root cause analysis conducted is cascaded to the Senior Management Team for investigation and action.</li><li>• Key Performance Leadership group discussions to address root cause.</li></ul>

## 12. Response times

In line with Office of Rail and Road (ORR) Complaints Handling Procedure requirements, Metro is obligated to respond to 95% of complaints within 20 working days.

To help drive service improvements and customer satisfaction, we have set the following internal targets:

- Emails we aim to respond to 95% within five working days of receipt.
- Written and telephone: We aim to respond to 95% within ten working days of receipt.

We will try our best to reply to customers within our response time targets. If we are unable to because the complaint requires a more detailed investigation, we will let the customer know.

Where a complaint cannot be answered fully within published timescales, we will advise you of the reason for the delay and we will

update you every ten working days on our progress to resolve your complaint.

There may be times when we receive large volumes of customer contact and are unable to meet our response time targets. In this case we will inform the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

We will also put a message on the Nexus website explaining the reason why we have been unable to respond to complaints within advertised standards and the plans we will put in place to ensure the time it takes us to reply is kept to an absolute minimum.

All frontline staff are equipped to recognise a potential complaint and where possible, will endeavour to resolve it at source. If the member of staff is unable to resolve a complaint immediately or a customer wishes to submit a complaint formally for response, they will direct them to Customer Relations.

More information on complaint standards can be found on the Travel North East website at [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/information/customers-charter-performance-and-customer-satisfaction/customer-charter](http://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/information/customers-charter-performance-and-customer-satisfaction/customer-charter). We will publish how we have performed against response targets at the end of each four week period. This will detail a breakdown of the type of complaints received and response time targets.

### **13. A full and fair response**

If a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, we will follow the ORR's six step investigation process:

Step	Action
Analysis of complaint	We will make sure we identify all points raised and any facts we need to check with the customer before we proceed with any investigations.
Evidence gathering	We will check the relevant policies and procedures and liaise with the relevant departments within the organisation.

Corroboration and analysis	Our aim is to determine facts. We will always interview staff when applicable to assist in our investigations.
Application to complaint	We will identify any gaps to determine what happened with what should have happened.
The reasons	We will always identify the root cause of the failure to ensure corrective steps can be taken to make improvements to the service we provide to customers.
The response	From our investigation, we will respond to each point the complaint. Our response will be free of industry jargon and presented in plain English.

If a customer is unhappy with our initial reply, they are requested to contact us again.

A manager will review the complaint and undertake a secondary investigation.

We will reply with our findings which will include the name and position of the manager involved in the investigation.

If a customer remains unhappy with the outcome of their complaint they should contact the Rail Ombudsman if they perceive that a complaint has failed, or appears to fall within that body's stated remit.

## **14. Compensation**

This section sets out our general policy regarding compensation when your Metro train is delayed or cancelled. Nothing in this section, or anywhere else in our complaints handling procedure limits or excludes any legal rights you may have as a consumer under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, or otherwise.

We aim to treat all refund claims with fairness. We will consider individual claims on their merits.

If the train a customer is waiting for is delayed more than 15 minutes

longer than advertised or the Metro train they are on is delayed by more than 15 minutes, we will refund the cost of the single journey.

This applies to customers purchasing a Single ticket, Pay As You Go, DaySaver, Day Rover, Transfare or MetroSaver and to Network One customers this excludes Gold Card holders and when we advertise that the journey will take longer e.g. when using the Metro replacement bus service during planned improvement works.

Claims must be submitted within 28 days of the incident to Customer Relations. We've made it easy to claim a refund, you can do this at [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints](https://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints).

If you have a season ticket, we will refund the value of a single ticket for the Metro journey made. For more information please visit:

- [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints](https://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints)
- [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/conditions-of-carriage-and-metro-byelaws](https://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/conditions-of-carriage-and-metro-byelaws)
- or contact Customer Relations on 0191 202 0747 (lines are open Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm, excluding Bank Holidays).

All ticket refunds will be processed in line with the Nexus Ticket Terms and Conditions (available at [travelnortheast.uk/ticket-terms-and-conditions](https://travelnortheast.uk/ticket-terms-and-conditions)).

To request a refund complete the online form at [travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints](https://travelnortheast.uk/ways-to-travel/metro/complaints) or call us on 0191 202 0747 (lines are open Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm, excluding Bank Holidays).

The above does not affect your statutory rights including any rights you may have under the Consumer Rights Act 2015

## 15. The Rail Ombudsman

We will do our best to resolve any problem, but if you are unhappy with our first response and you contact us again your complaint will be escalated and responded to by a manager. If you remain unhappy with our response you can contact the Rail Ombudsman for any matters relating to the operation of the Metro System. The Rail Ombudsman is there to help resolve on-going complaints. It is free to use their services and they are independent of the rail industry.



The Rail Ombudsman can be contacted through their website [railombudsman.org](http://railombudsman.org) or in any of the following ways:

Write to: FREEPOST - RAIL OMBUDSMAN

Telephone: 0330 094 0362 (Monday to Friday 9.00am-5.00pm)

Textphone: 0330 094 0363

Email: [info@railombudsman.org](mailto:info@railombudsman.org)

Twitter: @RailOmbudsman

## 16. Termination of correspondence

We reserve the right to terminate contact or correspondence with a customer in relation to any particular complaint(s) if it is established that the complaint or complainant is construed as abusive, bullying in nature or specifically diverts resources and affects the Customer Relations operation.

We expect customers to maintain a level of courtesy and politeness whilst we are given the opportunity to investigate and respond to their complaint. Our staff will not tolerate verbal abuse, threats or any manner of intimidating behaviour from customers. We reserve the right to terminate any correspondence or communication that we believe to be unreasonable, aggressive, abusive, threatening, frivolous or vexatious or which specifically diverts resources.

Should instances of this nature occur, a senior manager will review the case and consult with the ORR before terminating contact.

If this escalates into a situation where we are receiving abusive or threatening calls and letters from a specific person we will take appropriate action and notify the Police and if appropriate our solicitors. We have a duty to ensure the welfare of all our employees, and take these matters extremely seriously.

## **17. Claims for personal injury or property damage**

If a customer wishes to make a claim for losses, property damage or personal injury this should be made in writing or email Customer Relations who will ensure it is forwarded to our Claims Handler.

For the section of line between South Hylton and Pelaw the rail industry has an arrangement called the Claims Allocation and Handling Agreement (CAHA). Under this agreement, compensation will be dealt with by the company the customer has made the complaint about. If some or all responsibility is allocated to another party, the insurers will pay an agreed proportion of the claim. Claims on this section of line will be dealt with in accordance with this agreement.

For claims outside this section of line the matter will be dealt with by Nexus.

For small claims of a personal nature not related to personal injury e.g. damage to clothing, out of pocket expenses, and staff conduct, a senior manager will review the case and ensure that the correct party manages it. Should this involve a third party then the case will be forwarded as appropriate with a written acknowledgment giving relevant contact details.

## **18. Reviewing our Complaints Procedure**

Every two years the Customer Relations Manager will review Metro's Complaints Handling Procedure. Any changes will be carried out in

consultation with the ORR and Nexus.

## **19. Contact details**

### Customer Relations

- Letter: Nexus  
Customer Relations  
The Spark  
Newcastle Helix  
St James Boulevard  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE4 5DE
- Phone - 0191 202 0747 (lines open Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm, excluding Bank Holidays).
- Email – [customerrelations@nexus.org.uk](mailto:customerrelations@nexus.org.uk)
- Online – [travelnortheast.uk](http://travelnortheast.uk)